

Coastal Tourism Sustainability in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Environment,  
Protected Areas, and Culture

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**Abstract**

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**Introduction:** The globalization of tourism has influenced human activity in coastal environments and consequently increased coastal tourism and tourism-associated activities everywhere, including the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates.

**Significance:** Since coastal tourism activities usually fall along a continuum from sustainable to unsustainable, assessing the context of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi is an urgent and unmet need. This thesis explores coastal tourism sustainability in Abu Dhabi across three major coastal characteristics – environment, protected areas, and culture.

**Methodology:** The study employs a mixed-methods research design to develop insights on coastal tourism and delves into processes and stakeholder interactions across social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors impacting sustainability.

**Results:** Sustainable coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi is a dynamic interaction between components of culture, environment, society, tourism, and development that support the natural characteristics of the region. This outcome is the result of a strong relationship between regional identity and the natural environment, signifying its heritage and culture as a maritime and coastal Emirate. Despite the robust policies and potential for integrating sustainable tourism practices, there is a lack of awareness on what constitutes environmentally responsible tourism, as well as conflicting stakeholder perspectives which can hinder the efficient management and development of coastal environments.

**Conclusion:** This research provides public sector brokers with recommendations and strategies to incorporate sustainability in the development of coastal tourism characteristics. It also contributes to the evolving body of tourism literature relative to the field of marine and environmental affairs.

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## List of Acronyms

ADNOC – Abu Dhabi National Oil Company  
BLT – Broker-Local-Tourist  
DCT – Department of Culture and Tourism  
EAD – Environmental Agency Abu Dhabi  
FAO – Food and Agricultural Organization  
GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council  
GNP – Gross National Product  
HANS – Human-Artifactual-Natural System  
HE – His Excellency  
HH – His Highness  
HSD – Human Subjects Division  
IFAW – International Fund for Animal Welfare  
IMF – International Monetary Fund  
IRB – Institutional Review Board  
IRBs – Institutional Review Boards  
IUCN – International Union for the Conservation of Nature  
KSA – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
LPO – Limited Participant Observation  
MENA – Middle East and North Africa  
MPA – Marine Protected Area  
MPAs – Marine Protected Areas  
PDS – Protected Destination System  
PQ – Posed Question  
RQ – Research Question  
SME – Subject Matter Expert  
SMEA – School of Marine and Environmental Affairs  
UAE – United Arab Emirates  
UNEP – United Nations Environmental Program  
UNESCO – United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization  
UNWTO – United Nations World Tourism Organization  
UW – University of Washington  
WTFI – World Tourism Forum Institute  
WTO – World Tourism Organization  
WWF – World Wildlife Fund

## **Introduction**

The field of marine and environmental affairs is a broad and rich discipline addressing several interdisciplinary issues that span the Earth's socio-ecological system. This includes an extensive list but is certainly not limited to topic areas such as marine and coastal law, marine resource management, blue-green economy, climate change, sustainability, environmental management, environmental justice, and many more. A key characteristic of research in this field is its focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century environmental issues and human dimensions of conservation, providing insights into the significance of communities dependent on marine and environmental resources.

This thesis focuses on a relatively new yet important field evolving within marine and environmental affairs - coastal tourism. Tourism as an industry is globally recognized for providing a wide range of services that meet the diverse interests of international travelers. Despite this, tourism as an area of scientific research has not met its full potential and remains understudied. As the industry and coastal tourism specifically continue to expand across socio-cultural, environmental, political, economic, and technological factors, it becomes crucial to encourage and address the evolving and dynamic nature of findings that prevail in studies such as this thesis.

In recent years, the Middle East region has gained precedence not just for its wealth accumulated through oil and petroleum reserves but also for its economic ventures into new sectors such as tourism, gaining popularity as an internationally recognized tourist destination. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), tourism occupies a pivotal position in the Emirati economy. The emirate of Abu Dhabi is the capital city and has a rich tourism sector revolving around Arab culture and heritage, natural landscapes on both land and sea, alongside architectural designs and development that are unseen in many parts of the world. Although tourism is widely recognized, coastal tourism is a relatively new area of study in the region, offering insights into the complexities of interactions within the socio-ecological system in which it operates.

## **Plan of this Thesis**

This thesis explores coastal tourism sustainability in the emirate of Abu Dhabi within the UAE, focusing on characteristics of the environment, protected areas, and culture. The thesis is broken into two sections.

Part I titled '**Basic Concepts**' comprises four chapters and introduces the reader to necessary foundational information such as definitions, theoretical concepts, and other forms of academic literature applicable to the case study in Part II. Chapter 1 introduces and defines 'coastal tourism'. Chapter 2 discusses the growth of coastal tourism, the advantages and disadvantages of its expansion, and defines the concept of sustainability in relation to the coastal zone. Chapter 3 presents conceptual models for researching tourism: the Broker, Local, Tourist (BLT) model, which examines the interactive human system of tourism and relevant stakeholders; the Human, Artificial, and Natural System (HANS), which connects the BLT model with ecological (biotic and abiotic), material, and global drivers influencing the tourism system; and the Protected Destination System (PDS), used to explore tourism development alongside conservation goals of the destination through protected areas adjacent to the region of interest. Chapter 4 describes the methodological approaches informing the mixed methods research design used in this research through relevant background information, academic sources, and procedural details of data collection and analyses. Together, the information provided in these chapters builds the framework for exploring the case study in the second section.

Part II titled '**Coastal Tourism in Abu Dhabi, UAE**', presents the reader with the case study exploring coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi, UAE, and comprises four chapters. Chapter 5 first introduces the setting with relevant background information that spans geographical and environmental characteristics, national identity, culture, political organization, economy, and tourism; followed by the major stakeholders and tourism sites relevant to the coastal zone of Abu Dhabi. Chapter 6 describes the protocol used to collect data within the mixed methods research design. Chapter 7 describes the methods employed to analyze the data and presents the results of the study. Chapter 8 discusses the significance of the results depicted in Chapter 7 geared to understanding the nature of coastal tourism and provides recommendations for integrating facets of sustainability and broadly improving the operation of the coastal tourism system. The Conclusion remarks on the significance of findings for coastal tourism studies and suggests some questions that could be fruitfully addressed in future studies.

In addition, this thesis includes five appendices containing: maps and images associated with coastal tourism sites in Abu Dhabi; a guide providing strategies and considerations for interviewing across cultures alongside a supplementary PowerPoint presentation; an autoethnographic note reflecting on the researcher's experience during the course of the study; official documentation supporting the methodology process with the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) exempt approval form, interview guiding document, survey questions, and consent forms; and additional information on the coding process and comments provided by survey participants.

## Chapter 1: Coastal Tourism

*“Tourism spaces, set apart from the mundane world for the tourists, are in part spaces of the imaginary, of fantasy, and of dreaming”.*

- Noel Salazar and Nelson H.H. Graburn (2014a:17)

Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon impacting societies globally. The continuous manifestation of social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental forces has led to the development of ‘tourism spaces’ real or imagined, satisfying the diverse tastes of travelers worldwide. These ‘spaces of exception’ have come to inhabit all facets of the human psyche, whether they may be scientific, economic, aesthetic, cultural, educational, or ethical in its motivations. One aspect of tourism that warrants great attention is the coast, consequently leading to coastal tourism development in contemporary society. This chapter introduces the perspectives in conceptualizing and defining ‘tourism’ and specifically ‘coastal tourism’, focusing on components of the coastal environment, marine protected areas (MPAs), and societies on the coast.

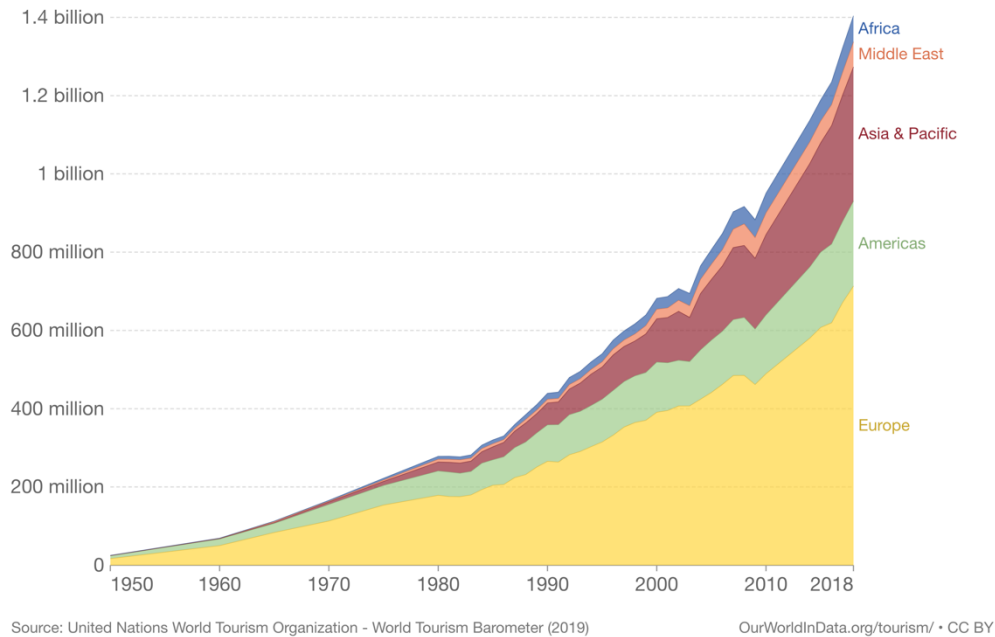
### 1.1 The Growth of Tourism

Historic in its origin, tourism is a powerful phenomenon embedded in the human experience. Throughout history, people have traveled for trade, religious pilgrimage, economic venture, war, peace, migration, leisure, etc., to experience environments with interest and curiosity. Nomadism allowed the Homosapien to travel in search of subsistence; gradually, human settlements led to economic ventures through traded goods, followed by the stratification of social class that allowed man to pursue travel for leisure. The technological innovation of the contemporary world coupled with the democratization of the travel industry has led to modern tourism, and its boundless possibilities as “Mobilities become a new code word for grasping the global” (Aihwa Ong, 2006, p. 121).

Following World War II, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recorded 25 million international tourist arrivals in 1950. Sixty-eight years later, this number has increased to 1.4 billion international arrivals per year, a 56-fold increase since 1950. In 2019, international tourist arrivals were recorded at 1.5 billion, a 4% increase from the previous year confirming tourism as a leading and resilient sector in both developed and developing economies (UNWTO, 2020). Generally, Europe, Asia, and the Pacific regions have record growth rates in international tourist arrivals. However, the Middle East recently emerged as the

fastest-growing region for international tourism arrivals in 2019, growing at almost double the global average of 8% (UNWTO, 2020).

**Figure 1.1:** International tourist arrivals per year by region (Adapted from UNWTO, as cited in Roser, 2017).



The increase in international and domestic mobilities spatially and temporally has led to the introduction of a wide choice of geographic spaces, services, and opportunities for visitors to choose from. Currently, India and China have added tens of millions of travelers to the global tourism market. Economic development coupled with political reform led to the liberalization of travel, accessing more people than at any point in history (Holden, 2016).

The hyper-mobility of tourist arrivals not only supports a system of production and consumption of services but has evolved into a cultural and ecological icon. Hence, the viability of tourism involves the interchange of ideas, people, and capital making it controversially connected to values concerning development and change associated with it. Development across economic, political, social, cultural, or environmental factors – tourism has become the forefront of such change.

## 1.2 Tourism Defined

The 'tourist' was first defined as "persons who travel out of curiosity and idleness" (Dictionnaire universel du XIX siècle in 1876, as cited in Theobald, 2012, p. 10). Besides the

common interpretations associated with 'traveler', Leiper (1979) associated it with male British aristocrats in politics, government, and diplomatic service (Theobald, 2012, p. 10). The term also connotes a "bargain hunter, who travels en masse" (Eliot, 1974, as cited in Theobald, 2012, p. 10). Others associate the word with the French word travail (meaning work, trouble, torment) for tourists who participate in the pilgrimage or some form of the organized packaged tour (Holden, 2016, p. 2).

These differing perspectives on the word itself translate into diverse interpretations across fields of economics, sociology, anthropology, geography, etc. Tourism is a field inherently fraught with controversy due to the complex spaces it emerges in, the diversity of stakeholders involved, and travelers' motivations in pursuit of 'contrast' (Miller & Ditton, 1986). As such, no one definition is likely to meet the needs of every individual.

In attempts to define tourism that satisfies a global perspective, the UNWTO defines tourism as:

"A social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourist has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure" (UNWTO).

Although this definition recognizes the multifaceted nature of tourism across social, cultural, and economic boundaries, it fails to account for the complexity of relationships and the processes by which they form locally, regionally, and internationally. The complex nature of tourism is embodied by the following statement:

"Attempts to define tourism are challenging because it is a complex amalgam of various tangible and intangible parts. These are diverse, including: feelings, emotions, experiences and desires; natural and cultural attractions; suppliers of transport, accommodation, tours, and other services; and government policy and regulatory frameworks" (Holden, 2016, p. 4).

From an economic perspective, tourism is defined by its contributions to the economy, economic development, and resources of a destination. Economists perceive this relationship

as the supply and demand of tourism services, the competitive nature of business, foreign exchange, employment, and other monetary factors. Producers of tourism amenities are categorized as the '*host*' responsible for creating, developing, and marketing services and goods to attract visitors to destinations. Visitors are classified as '*guests*', and the purposes of their travel lead to the commodification of resources and the development of industries.

On the other hand, geographers are concerned with the spatial aspects of tourism. They study travel flows and destinations, the dispersion of development, land use, and changes in the physical environment (Theobald, 2012, p. 10). They are concerned with the use of resources and impacts associated with tourism development. Comparable to environmentalists, geographers believe that motivations for travel are inherent to 'destinations' whereby visitors' interactions with their physical environment and the consequences of these interactions have become the focus of their research.

The sociologist perspective is concerned with human behavior and its underlying reasons for 'pursuit of contrast' or one's desire to travel. For example, tourism implies an individual's (or collective group of individuals') journey whereby the nature and purpose of the journey vary by time and across boundaries. This suggests that tourism is an activity rooted in the psyche of individuals seeking to explore encounters and the components associated with them (Reid, 2003, p. 103). British sociologist John Urry conceptualizes the social behavior of tourism through the 'tourist gaze' or perceptions composed of the collection and interaction of signs (Urry, 2011, p. 4). The tourist gaze heightens the act of seeing as:

“When we go away, we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate that it will do so. In other words, we gaze at what we encounter. This gaze is socially organized and systemized. People gaze upon the world through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires, and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age, and education” (Urry, 2011, pg. 2).

According to Urry (2011), tourism encompasses a complex social and psychological relationship between individuals and society. The social practices of defining tourism are based on the following key characteristics:

- Tourism is a leisure activity as opposed to the nature of work.

- As people cross boundaries, relationships arise across space and time.
- The journey occurs in sites outside of one's usual place of residence or work with the clear intention to return home in a short period of time.
- The places gazed upon are for purposes of contrast distinct from work-related activities.
- Rapid mobilization has led to new socialized forms of provision to cope with the mass character of the tourist gaze.
- The places individuals travel to are chosen because there is anticipation through dreams, fantasy, pleasure, etc., resulting in a stimulating and sensory experience.
- There is a greater sensitivity towards visual elements (such as landscapes, townscapes, photographs, postcards, film, etc.).
- Tourism involves the collection of signs.
- Tourism providers are challenged with keeping the visitor motivated by re-producing new objects to cater to the gaze (which are complex and cut across socio-economic-cultural characteristics).

Despite the ever-changing nature of tourism socially, scholars identify motivations of tourism as – 1) a means of escape, 2) for self-reflection and development, and 3) the activity and the forces (emotional, historical, cultural, social, etc.) driving its performance. Hence, tourism is driven by the concern for contrast – the places, environment, people, and artifactual components are where tourists encounter contrast through their collective interpretation of 'signs' and within the 'tourist spaces' that form, a variety of activities take place through continuous interactions, reorganization, and reproduction.

This thesis defines tourism as *a system comprised of the destination and its stakeholders in which tourists travel in pursuit of contrast (radical, modest, business, recreational, educational, etc.) to interact with people, places, objects, culture, etc. spatially and temporally for a temporary period of time.*

### **1.3 Coastal Tourism Defined**

One dimension of tourism development gaining momentum in tourism research is coastal tourism. Coastal tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the contemporary economy. Regions in the Pacific (composed of Australia, New Zealand, American Samoa, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, New Caledonia, the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua

New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, and Vanuatu) have benefitted from an annual visitor arrival growth rate of 3.6% since the 1990s (Bridges, 2002: 148, as cited in Miller et al., 2002, p. 5). White sanded tropical beaches have become prime tourism requirements, and these shorelines have given visitors the opportunities to undertake other activities, whether they may be water or land-based. For example, 49% of tourists visiting the Caribbean do so for its beaches, while 28% conduct sightseeing, and 17% in water sports.

In addition to meeting the needs of tourists, coastal economies form the livelihoods of many individuals, where approximately 25% of jobs in the Caribbean are directly or indirectly tourism related (Miller et al., 2002, p. 5). Activities such as fishing and wildlife watching, which were day-to-day activities of coastal communities, have been transformed into leisure and sports industries. According to the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), whale watching is a billion-dollar worldwide industry (Miller et al., 2002, p. 5). Fishing has become competitive with the introduction of tournaments for game fishing and derbies attracting international anglers across the globe (Miller et al., 2002).

Despite the different facets of development on the coast (people, places, things, etc.) – the marine environment and its relation to tourism have received less attention than problems linked to shoreline management, resource exploration and management, ecosystem and biodiversity restoration, and environmental sustainability. Traditionally, tourism in marine affairs has emphasized the negative consequences of infrastructure development and congestion on the natural environment (Miller & Ditton, 1986). However, the dynamic interactions between social, cultural, political, and economic factors of development in coastal tourism call attention to the forces of globalization and its implication in the real world.

The rise of coastal tourism as a scientific and policy specialty has gained scholarly attention in coordination with other marine-related problems in journals such as – Coastal Zone Management, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Tourism, Coastal Conservation, Ocean and Coastal Management, Coastal Studies and Society, Marine Policy, Geography, and Urban Studies, etc. The growing concern for environmental conservation alongside development compels the need to consider both the positive and negative effects of tourism on marine environments and societies and is too powerful to be ignored.

Building on the definition of tourism discussed in the section before, this thesis defines coastal tourism as:

“A process of interactions between stakeholders, the destinations associated with the coastal environment, and visitors’ pursuit of contrast within the natural and cultural resources of a system governed by socio-political-economic factors” (Miller et al., 2002).

The components associated with the coastal tourism system generally comprise its coastal environment and the society influenced by socio-political-cultural-economic factors. In addition to the coastal environment, this thesis discusses Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) (in coastal environments) associated with coastal tourism, which is relevant to the case study of coastal tourism in the emirate of Abu Dhabi (see Chapter 5).

#### **1.4 The Coastal Environment**

The emergence of cultural ecology stresses the inherent relationship between human beings and their physical environment. Environment and tourism are inextricably linked as people’s motivation for travel is to gaze upon iconic and exotic natural resources. The natural environment has become pivotal to the attractiveness of destinations by providing a “backdrop” to sites, enhancing physical and social expressions within visitors and the communities they are found in (Farrell & Runyan, 1991, p. 26-27). For example, even in destinations known for cultural and commercial attributes, a significant portion of their character arises from environmental aspects such as water bodies, mountains, harbors, deserts, valleys, etc. (Farrell & Runyan, 1991, p. 27). Some examples of these destinations globally include – Elephant Island in Antarctica, the Scottish Highlands, the Grand Canyon in the United States, Seljalandsfoss in Iceland, Peyto Lake in Canada, etc.

This has led to an attitudinal shift from the more orthodox concerns associated with coastal tourism (such as natural resource management, shoreline restorations, coastal recreation, etc.) towards newer facets of nature-based tourism (green tourism, responsible tourism, environmental-friendly tourism, sustainable tourism, etc.) in coastal environments to instill environmental values and awareness in individuals.

The conflicting characteristics of perspectives and activities that take place on the coast are reflected in its designation. Hence, no single definition satisfies the wide range of stakeholders involved, visitor motivations, community members, characteristics of the natural environment, etc. This thesis describes the coastal zone to encompass the resources, processes, and activities (biological, physical, social, cultural, economic, etc.) between the

seaward reaches of the continental slope and the upland limits of the coastal watershed (Ditton & Miller, 1986, p. 223). Coastal resources are natural (such as fisheries, beaches, seascapes), cultural (historical landmarks, ethnic communities, etc.), or man-made (technology, globalization, etc.).

In addition to the rich source of culture, history, and natural values provided to visitors, other services supported by the coast include – climate regulation through carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, biodiversity conservation, cultural preservation of coastal communities, and food sovereignty for society, etc. Ultimately, a healthy coastal zone can lead to socio-economic benefits that spill over to societies through the symbiotic relationship between tourism and its natural environment.

Recently, the relationship between people, marine parks, and the environment have expanded to incorporate tourism (Plummer & Fennell, 2009). One feature of coastal environments associated with tourism are MPAs. The multiple values and uses associated with the coastal zone have led to the proliferation of MPAs for economic growth, environmental conservation, restoration, and enhancing societal and spiritual values.

### **1.5 Marine Protected Areas and Coastal Tourism**

The rise in populations migrating to the coast and pursuits of contrast by travelers have led to challenges at the interface of space and quality of life. This has led to the establishment of protected areas (marine and terrestrial) that cater to the needs of the environment (physical and ecological setting), and human activities while minimizing externalities and consequences of the globalization of the tourism industry (Grenier et al., 1993). The diverse intentions of the coastal tourism industry have led to competition between multiple-use and values associated with coastal environments. Hence, protected areas (and MPAs specifically in this thesis) aim to reconcile differences and encourage sustainable development reform (Oracion et al., 2005, p. 394).

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a protected area as:

“An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means “(IUCN, 2007a, as cited in Miller, 2008, p. 248).

This thesis focuses on the protected areas in marine environments, which is relevant to the case study in Part II (see Chapter 5). Mark Orams (2002) proposes five main categories pertinent to the management of tourism in marine environments:

1. Physical strategies such as the design and placement to permit intensive use in some areas while others remain pristine.
2. Regulatory strategies to limit access and the number of visitors and activities.
3. Economic strategies that promote desirable behaviors change using incentives or disincentives.
4. Educational strategies to instill desired change (environmental values and consciousness) through interpretative centers, signage, guided tours, and personal contact.
5. Planning strategies at the interface of urban and tourism planning.

The combination of strategies proposed above leads to varying degrees of conservation that accommodate user needs through categories of protected area management proposed by the IUCN. Figure 1.2 displays the six categories of protected areas management proposed by the IUCN. Coastal tourism-related activities fall under category II of MPA management. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in Australia is an example of an MPA that utilizes multiple-use zoning approaches to minimize impacts on critical areas of ecological importance. Thus, the needs of local inhabitants, visiting tourists, scientists, and industry continue to be met in a system that puts ecosystem requirements ahead of all others (Kelleher & Kenchington, 1988, as cited in Agardy et al., 1990, p. 205).

The nature and operation of MPAs are heavily dependent on the primary objectives it hopes to achieve. For example, in some areas, conservation may be the primary driver, whereas others prioritize traditional uses, and so forth. These objectives ultimately influence the size of the geographical space, shape, and other design characteristics of the protected area and its implementation. The rise in tourism associated with coastal environments has led to tourism being considered one of the most important uses in protected area planning and management. Controlled tourism is non-extractive and non-degrading and can have economic and social spillover effects that benefit local peoples (Agardy et al., 1990, p. 205).

The objectives of MPAs in coastal environments encompass a broad range of objectives proposed by Agardy, 1990:

- Conserve critical ecological processes, habitats, and species
- Sustain traditional uses
- Encourage educational outreach
- Accommodate scientific research
- Provide controlled habitats for ecological restoration
- Guarantee public access to shorelines
- Institute limitations to the use of resources
- Facilitate political empowerment of local and directly dependent coastal communities
- Allow coordination with other environmental and management entities
- Aim to support sustainable and resilient use of coastal and marine resources

Visitors are inclined to visit well-managed protected areas that enhance species diversity, ensure good water quality, while keeping the urban-coastal front intact. They also gravitate towards places that value local inhabitants by:

“Protecting the ecosystem and vested interests of the local people, the MPA will foster a sense of stewardship and pride. These motivations in turn, make the area both more attractive to visitors and hospitable for the community and destination of interest” (Agardy et al., 1990, p. 206).

**Category Ia: Strict nature reserve/wilderness protection area managed mainly for science or wilderness protection** – an area of land and/or sea possessing some outstanding or representative ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring.

**Category Ib: Wilderness area: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection** – large area of unmodified or slightly modified land and/or sea, retaining its natural characteristics and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected to manage and preserve its natural condition.

**Category II: National park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation** – natural of land and/or sea designated to a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational, and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.

**Category III: Natural monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features** – area containing specific natural or natural/cultural feature(s) of outstanding or unique value because of their inherent rarity, representativeness or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance.

**Category IV: Habitat/Species Management area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention** – area of land and/or sea subject to active intervention for management purposes so as to ensure the maintenance of habitats to meet the requirements of particular species.

**Category V: Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation or recreation** – protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation or recreation – area of land, with coast or sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.

**Category VI: Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural resources** – area containing predominantly unmodified natural systems, managed to ensure long-term protection and maintenance of biological diversity, while also providing a sustainable flow of natural products and services to meet community needs.

**Figure 1.2: IUCN Protected Area Management Categories (Adapted from IUCN Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories, as cited in Miller, 2008, p. 249).**

## 1.6 Society and the Coast

Historically, the coast has been a center for human interaction that transcended geographic boundaries. The coast supports a wide range of social characteristics that cut across cultural, economic, and political pursuits of contrast. Miller & Ditton (1986) stress that travel to the coast is associated with the 'promise of contrast', which can fall into three broad categories.

The first motivation is *recreational travel*, by which the tourist prepares for contrast for physiological and mental well-being (Miller & Ditton, 1986, p. 11) reflected in many forms. Physiological forms of recreational travel include coastal tourism activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, whale watching, surfing, sightseeing, etc., to name a few. When activities undertaken in these environments create an experience or instill some form of expression (physical, emotional, psychological), they cater to the mental well-being of tourists through affective and cognitive forms. Mental well-being allows the traveler to escape the reality they left behind through pursuits of travel for personal leisure as "Vacations remain one of the few manageable utopias in our lives" (Orvar Löfgren (1999: 7), as cited in Simpson, 2017).

Second is *instrumental travel*, as the tourist deliberately secures information, resources, and obligations unavailable at home. The dimensions of instrumental travel can span economic, religious, cultural, or political purposes with available opportunities in the community and the natural environment (Miller & Ditton, 1986, p. 11). From an economic perspective, these relationships occur when coastal tourism provides opportunities for businesses and industries that take the form of hospitality services, travel agencies, tour guides, managers, destination developers, technology implementation, etc. For example, introducing new recreational activities such as scuba diving, flyboarding, or sea walking exemplifies how technological innovation has provided the foundational tools and knowledge for businesses while facilitating tourist explorations into marine environments that were not previously accessible.

The politics of coastal tourism and travel traditionally pertain to the conflicts over resource use at the land-water interface, the extent to which property and other development are regulated by public and private regulatory bodies, and the role of international organizations in the development of marine and tourism policies. The relationship between economic and political motivations in these environments has supported national defense and boundary regulation on international, national, regional, and local scales leading to profound consequences for coastal development.

On a cultural (or religious/spiritual) level, the social capital associated with coastal environments provides insights into how communities have enhanced their quality of life. Culture relative to coastal environments can form the foundations of heritage and customs of communities:

“Heritage embraces magnificent natural, indigenous and historic landscapes (natural or man-made), wildlife and healthy, intact ecosystems, historical elements (that have helped to shape the regional/national identity), cultural elements and human values, shaping regional, national, global identity; it also incorporates a strong connection to ‘place’; that is, people come to the place by choice, they are somehow transformed by it, and they choose to identify themselves with it even if they don’t live there” (Moli, 2011, p. 68).

For coastal communities, natural resources are strongly tied to historical and cultural values that permit economic benefits and social security embedded in communal values and human relationships.

The last motivation is *educational travel*, in which the tourist achieves contrast by replacing familiar physical and cultural stimuli with exotic substitutes (Miller & Ditton, 1986, p. 11). The outcome is a change in the intellectual or artistic understanding of tourists. Education travel in some way results from instrumental pursuits. For example, when tourists undertake personal leisure at an MPA, the outcome of the experience changes the visitors' environmental attitudes through a reflective experience.

Together, the three dimensions of travel emphasize the importance of interactions between the social, cultural, economic, and political elements of the destination and its environment in the coastal tourism system.

### **1.7 Transitional Comment**

Travel and tourism associated with the coastal environment is a complex and potent phenomenon that can potentially alter destinations and societies within them. Its ability to satisfy the ecological, economic, and sociological facets of development has led to the establishment of coastal tourism industries globally. However, the positive outcomes coupled with unintended consequences have raised debates against the ideals of sustainability. The next chapter discusses motivations for coastal tourism development, the unintended adverse

effects of development, and introduces the theme of sustainability relative to the coastal environment.

## Chapter 2: Coastal Tourism Development and Sustainability

*Microstates are like a canoe in the wide-open sea  
It can sail freely or be navigated with purpose  
It survives only if one has learned nature's challenges  
However, watch out for the wrath of the trickster giant  
Remember that canoe size matters, not to safety  
For there will come a time when the waves are bigger  
Bigger than even the canoe to surely sink it because life  
Depends not on the canoe size  
But on the magic of buoyancy*

Jonassen, 1999 (as cited in Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008, p. 495)

The development of coastal tourism is a controversial phenomenon with positive and negative outcomes based on the interaction of different characteristics. This thesis defines coastal tourism as a “*process comprised of tourists, people, destinations, and the activities that take part in the coastal environment and its natural and cultural resources*” (Miller et al., 2002, see Chapter 1). The recognition of social and environmental tradeoffs associated with the coastal tourism sector and its unintended externalities resulting from development have led to debates against ideals of sustainable development in coastal environments and associated societies. This chapter discusses the rise of tourism development on the coast through three lenses – ecological, economic, and sociological. This is followed by the concept of sustainability and its implications within coastal environments.

### 2.1 Coastal Tourism Development

The term ‘development’ can be regarded as having ‘more of something’ and is an outcome of growth or expansion due to the infusion of various forms of capital (natural, human, manufactured, social, cultural, economic, etc.). According to the United Nations, development is defined as:

“A comprehensive economic, social, cultural, and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting therefrom” (Kunanayakam, 2013, p. 17).

Development is a multidimensional undertaking by multiple actors, structures, and systems. It is an interactive and interdependent process of economic (infrastructure, industry, businesses, etc.), social (employment opportunities, financial stability, rights, participation, etc.), cultural (tradition, customs, history, etc.), and political (government, state, local, civil society, international organizations) entities (Kunanayakam, 2013). Coastal development is a subset of 'development' and may be defined as "*human-induced change of the landscape within sight of the coastline*". It constitutes the development of infrastructure on or near the coast for various purposes such as protection, commerce, communication, or recreation. Together, these coastal attributes support the economy and society with positive or negative effects on the environment.

The rise of coastal tourism as a form of coastal development has pervaded a significant facet of modern life since the end of World War II on a global scale. The significance of the coast was realized through the attraction for beaches and the subsequent development of seaside resorts in nineteenth-century Britain. The shoreline was a center of no restrictions, as Pimlott describes:

"The capacity of the seaside resorts, on the other hand, was unbounded. While social life at the spas was necessarily focused on the pump-room and the baths, and there was no satisfactory alternative to living in public, the sea coast was large enough to absorb all comers and social homogeneity mattered less" (Pimlott, 1947, as cited in Soane, 1992).

Historically, the development of these coastal regions harbored faster growth rates than built towns inland at 2.56 percent per annum compared with 2.38 percent, respectively, with populations doubling in almost 48 seaside towns (Urry, 2011, p. 33).

The conditions of rapid growth stem not only from the attraction towards aesthetic elements of the coast, but the unique characteristics of services relative to urban centers. These historical trends have translated into contemporary society with mass arrivals of tourists across the coastlines of Europe, East Asia, the Pacific, Americas, and with recent increases in the Middle East and South Asia. In the past, coastal tourism development has spatially focused on the beach in the slogan of the four 's' of tourism – sun, sand, surf, and sex (Hall, 2001, p. 601). However, coastal tourism today has become one of the fastest-growing industries across ecological, economic, and sociological perspectives of development. It provides visitors with a

rich source of recreational, educational, and instrumental contrasts (Miller, 1986, as cited in Grenier et al., 1993).

### **2.1.1 The Ecological Perspective**

A fundamental characteristic of coastal tourism development is the innate relationship between man and his environment. The Manila Declaration of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) emphasizes the importance of natural and cultural resources and their conservation to benefit both tourism and residents of the tourism area (WTO, 1980, as cited in Inskeep, 1987, p. 119). International organizations such as the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), alongside the WTO, have formulated the ecological motivation for coastal tourism as:

“The protection, enhancement, and improvement of the various components of man’s environment are among the fundamental conditions for the harmonious development of tourism. Similarly, the rational management of tourism may contribute to a large extent to protecting and developing the physical environment and the cultural heritage, as well as improving the quality of life...” (WTO and UNEP 1982, as cited in Inskeep, 1987, p. 119).

The different ecosystems associated with the coastal zone include – coral reefs, estuaries, salt marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, and other wetlands, warranting attitudes toward protection, conservation, and restoration. The interplay between biodiversity, geomorphology, climatology, etc., creates demand for visitors to pursue scientific, aesthetic, and recreational elements associated with ecosystem services. Hence, coastal tourism is associated with a form of nature-based tourism instilling aspects of environmental management and conservation by including the local characteristics of that society.

From an ecological perspective, industries directly involved in coastal tourism must find a medium between satisfying the demands of visitors (such as scientific, ethical, aesthetic, recreational, and economic) alongside the practices and standards of conservation, protection, and restoration. In studying tourist motivations associated with marine wildlife tourism, Miller emphasizes *duty* and *beauty* as principal characteristics of contrast that motivate tourists to seek marine wildlife while enhancing environmental awareness. I apply this conceptual understanding to the ecological perspective of the coastal tourism sector, which is crucial in inculcating sustainable environmental management practices and, consequently

‘environmentally informed tourism practices’. In attempts to satisfy ecological management standards, the two types of environmental attitudes evident in natural systems are as follows:

- *Duty*: Conservationists, scientists, and environmental behaviors complementary to the goals of environmental organizations (UNEP, World Wildlife Fund (WWF)) are concerned with environmental degradation, currently on the rise with globalization, and external pressures such as climate change, and anthropogenic uses to satisfy growing population demands. Hence the ecological perspectives of coastal tourism create efforts to educate visitors, rebuild and restore environments, and create eco-cultural awareness. Some examples of tourism motivated by the conservationist duty are seabird and wetland tourism in Korea, Jubail Mangrove Park in Abu Dhabi (see Chapter 5 and Appendix I), and the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Queensland, Australia, etc. (Miller, 2008, p. 240).
- *Beauty*: Tourists’ motivations to view nature attributes that instill interest and feelings because of the ‘picturesque’ scenes created. This can be done through a biotelic conservation ethic associated with wilderness or esthetic conservation ethics in national parks. Biotic characteristics associated with beauty include sea lion rookeries in the Bering Sea, abiotic characteristics are waves of Hawaii, and a combination of biotic and abiotic processes look at the ecosystem as a whole, such as the Great Barrier Reef.

The growth of environmentalism as a consequence of human impact on natural systems compels the need to strengthen ecological concerns of tourism in coastal environments.

### **2.1.2 The Economic Perspective**

Coastal tourism is not only recognized for its scientific and ecological importance through acts of conservation, protection, and restoration against environmental degradation. In addition, the industry supports a wide range of tourism infrastructure, attractions, facilities, services, marketing programs, employment, etc. (Inskip, 1987). The increase in processes of production, consumption, and energy exchange (Ditton & Miller, 1986) allows coastal tourism to be associated with other types of tourism activities such as – nature-based tourism, wildlife tourism, beach tourism, culture tourism, ethnic tourism, green tourism, urban tourism, rural

tourism, adventure/recreational tourism, etc. Characteristics vital to the economic success of the tourism sector include the *environment*, the *development* of activities with some form of socio-economic benefit, together creating an *experience* that is meaningful for visitors and the local community (Sharpley, 2006).

The advantage of tourism activities on the coast is the proximity of the marine environment to the urban and/or rural landscape. This provides visitors with a vast choice of services and associated tourism categories. In addition to services offered through interactions of nature, industries, businesses, organizations, and individuals employed at the coast; the globalization and innovation of technology form an essential element of the tourism economy in facilitating visitors to experience their motivations to travel as:

“Places emerge as ‘tourist spaces’ when they are inscribed in circles of anticipation, performance, and remembrance. Economically, they are produced through networked mobilities of capital, persons, objects, signs, and information. And it is out of these complex movements that certain places to play are assembled. Places are not fixed or given or simply bounded. They are ‘in play’ in relationship to multiple tourist gazes stretching in, through and over apparently distinct places” (Urry, 2011, p. 119).

The management of tourism is commonly viewed according to *hosts* and *guests*. The host “*controls the tourism resource which is viewed, worshipped, purchased, or otherwise experienced by all manner of visitors*” (Miller & Ditton, 1986, p. 5). The guests are usually “*visitors (visitors usually are associated with individuals who do not reside in the region of interest; however, visitors can also encompass residents in the region who enjoy the benefits of tourism services that form part of their leisure activities) who view, worship, purchase, and/or experience the tourism resources*”. The interactions of hosts and guests are managed by governments (national, regional, state, local, etc.), businesses (retail, travel, hospitality, recreation, etc.), or both that provide products and services to guest cultures (Miller & Ditton, 1986). Tourism services in the region of interest (the coastal zone) result from the interplay between laws, policies, the public (manager, business owners, consultants, residents, etc.), infrastructure, and technology, making the industry highly competitive. Hence, tourism must keep up with the evolving demand of tourists and the globalization of politics, culture, society,

and the economy. Thus, the economic development of coastal tourism and its attributes comprise various networks and discourses and can be reiterated as:

“Places are thus (re)produced through tourist performances that are made possible through networked relationships with other organizations, machines, and especially buildings” (Urry, 2011, p. 119).

The coastal tourism sector provides numerous economic benefits. The democratization of tourism has allowed third-world countries to reduce trade imbalances and financial instabilities by creating jobs and contributing to increases in a country’s gross national product (GNP) (Miller & Ditton, 1986, p. 4). Coastal centers allow for cross-cultural interactions through travel, transport (seaplanes, ships, cruisers, fishing boats, etc.), and trade, whereby coastal countries exchange people, resources, knowledge, ideas, opportunities, etc.

The economic prospects of coastal tourism are abundant and evolving, making it controversial and complicated. Just as natural systems can provide vast economic benefits resulting from coastal development, they are also directly or indirectly impacted by development which can have secondary effects on social systems.

### **2.1.3 The Sociological Perspective**

From a sociological perspective, the viability of coastal tourism is dependent on human behavior (Millet et al., 2002). As coastal tourism becomes organized for special purposes (such as dive tourism, scientific tourism, recreation tourism, cultural tourism, etc.), tourists are provided with activities or ‘tourism practices’. The relationship between the tourism service provider (also considered host) and the tourist (guest) is a continuous and interdependent process of invention, adoption, and diffusion (Pantzar & Shove, 2010). For example, in information technology, the user or consumer plays a critical role in the real-time development of software (Pantzar & Shove, 2010). Similarly, the continuous interaction of tourism practices by the visitor and the tourism service provider can lead to novel changes in both economy and society. Some changes are material such as the expansion of water sport activities such as paddleboarding, including flyboarding, skimboarding, cable skiing, etc. Others include exchanging knowledge or ideas that can also drive these physical or technical innovations. Hence tourism practices are comparable to the theory of practice defined by Giddens as:

“Is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of social totality, but social practices ordered across space and time .... Dependent on the specific and interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any of these single elements” (Reckwitz, 2002, ad cited in Pantzar & Shove, 2010).

The culture associated with coastal tourism encompasses the history, arts, events, religions, heritage, customs, traditions, and other components related to the coast's natural environment and human societies. Elusive by nature, culture is evolving and ever-changing as it comprises the nexus of societal, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, historical, and economic values of the host destination and community. When applying the theory of practice to culture and its services provided to tourists, cultural services are often an interaction of different elements which cannot be distinguished as singular. In the case of cultural tourism and practices, it is not only the interactive processes between cultural aspects but equally essential to recognize that the interconnectedness of tourism practices is initiated by the host destination, which can control how it influences the tourist.

Tourist services can be unique to destinations, ‘spatially fixed’, and closely linked to producers and consumers of tourism services. Expanding on the above examples, the interconnectedness between producers and consumers allows tourism services to become exciting and memorable to the tourists consuming them as it transcends physical and social boundaries (Urry, 2011). The act of tourism services can be described as:

“The outcome of a necessarily social and embodied process in which some interaction occurs between one or more producers and one or more consumers. The quality of the social interaction is itself part of the service purchased (Bryman, 2004; Boon 2007). The service partly consists of a process of production which is infused with particular social characteristics, of gender, age, race, educational background and so on” (Urry, 2011, p. 76-77).

Complementary to service providers and practitioners directly dependent on coastal tourism for economic benefits, it can also impact the lives of individuals who are neither part of the business of tourism nor a member of the community of tourists (Miller et al., 2002, p. 4).

### 2.1.3.1 Environmental Attitudes of Individuals

In addition to providing opportunities for employment and embodying the day-to-day activities of residents (in tourism sectors such as tour guides, park rangers, and managers or non-tourism sectors such as fishing, aquaculture, shipping, nuclear energy, national defense, etc.); the sociological characteristics of coastal tourism as an outcome of socio-economic-political forces instill environmental values and attitudes by which:

“A society’s choice among these conceptual and ethical positions reveals how it perceives potency, or power, to be distributed between humans and their environment.... The attribution of potency to humankind and the attribution of potency to the environment arise independently in the collective experience that is the basis of culture” (Miller et al., 1992).

The first is the *tribal ethic* characterized by the profound respect for nature, transforming into the operation of social order that equates to life in equilibrium and identification with the environment. For example, when individuals undertake traditional activities exemplifying the maritime heritage of coastal communities in the Arabian Gulf (see Chapter 5) or the cultural significance of salmon to indigenous communities in the Pacific Northwest.

Second is the *development ethic* in which both the natural environment and human society are highly potent, and the inherent existence of nature is for humans. This can have both positive and negative outcomes. For example, from the perspective of tribal societal views, if the desire is to protect natural systems, the development ethic will lead to innovations that appeal to the tribal practitioners. On the other hand, in the age of the Anthropocene, unlimited resource use alongside motivations of colonialism and capitalism encourages the creation of aggressive economic policies that lead to the exploitation of natural resources for human benefit.

The third is the *compassionate ethic* with the greatest potency towards humans relative to the environment. In this perspective, as technological innovation advances rapidly, the potential vulnerability of the environment is unmistakable (Miller et al., 1992, p. 244). However, if one recognizes the vulnerability of the environment to the impacts of development, the compassionate ethic has the potential to instill attitudes toward protection and conservation

against depredations of society (Miller et al., 1993). On the other end of the spectrum, it can also lead to extractive uses of the environment because of technological innovation.

The final perspective is the *holothetic ethic* that emerges due to weak potency attributed to the environment and human society. Hence, humans are not held responsible for the welfare of other species, or indeed of the nonliving environment, except insofar as the long-term welfare of people might be affected (Miller et al., 1992, p. 246).

The four perspectives of development discussed above lead to some form of growth or benefit for different stakeholders involved. Despite the positive intentions of stakeholders' interests in carrying out development on coastlines, conflicting perspectives in response to socio-cultural-economic characteristics governing coastal tourism development increase its potency to destroy, protect, or otherwise reconfigure coastal and marine ecosystems and societies (Miller et al., 2002). As tourism growth dominates coastal regions of the world, communities, ecosystems, and other attributes of value to society become vulnerable to potential sustainability risks.

#### **2.1.4 Negative Impacts of Coastal Tourism Development**

Despite positive outcomes for the economy, communities involved in tourism, and the experiential gains for visitors, development leads to changes and unintended consequences of some kind in the environment and society. This has led to the recognition of social and environmental trade-offs associated with coastal tourism development.

Tourism impacts on the natural environment span biological, physical, and ecological factors, further reiterating the importance and influence of human behavior on these systems. Increased demand for tourism infrastructure and consumption of tourism services puts pressure on the limited local resources of the destination across food, water, and energy resources. The indulgence of travelers to experience cultures through regional cuisines can threaten local fish stocks resulting in competitive market prices that impact accessibility and affordability by local consumers (Ghosh, 2011). The introduction of amenities such as swimming pools, golf courses, cooling systems, resorts, etc., can severely degrade water quality through pollution and increases in consumption. Often, the local sewage infrastructure cannot support the tourist population and can be impacted by other forms of tourism associated with the coast, increasing waste production and pollution across physical, biological, and ecological borders.

The development of coastal tourism can influence environmental niches. The development of cruisers is environmentally destructive as they enter highly sensitive ecological niches such as coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, etc. Apart from threatening environmental habitats, environmental degradation can lead to cultural interference of communities that hold great value to these resources as part of their customs, traditions, and way of life. The physical alterations to ecosystems resulting from land-use changes to support construction activities result in the loss of biodiversity and habitats, changes to sediment composition, and erosion while reducing the ecological benefits and aesthetic value of natural coastlines. Compelled by the holoethetic ethic, tourists' disregard for rules can profoundly impact the environment. Although water-related recreational activities on their own impact environments, divers and snorkelers are also directly engaged in ecosystem impacts when accessing sensitive areas (Ghosh, 2011).

As more people have access to technology and benefits of the travel industry, increasing mobility can exacerbate global issues such as climate change through increased carbon dioxide emissions. The effects of climate change can lead to sea-level rise and extreme weather patterns leading to the loss of beaches and shorelines (evident in regions of the Caribbean and Maldives), alongside air pollution, which can have detrimental health impacts on society.

The socio-economic costs of tourism development walk a fine line between positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, coastal tourism introduces new economic opportunities, economic stability, improved living standards, and in some ways, strengthens the autonomy of communities. However, the negative effects exacerbated by environmental degradation can lead to problems of congestion, social displacement, illegal activities, inequitable allocation of resources, loss of culture, etc.

Despite challenges associated with its development, the social-economic benefits have led to the rapid expansion of coastal tourism occupying a pivotal role in sustainable tourism marketing. However, conflicting interests of tourism operators, community goals, and visitor expectations have led to irresponsible behaviors, increased pressure on natural systems, and consequently stirred debate against sustainability on the coast and development (Miller et al., 2002).

## **2.2 Sustainable Tourism**

The concept of sustainability complements the characteristics of coastal tourism due to its social, environmental, and economic benefits (triple bottom line sustainability) marked by the convergence of economic development and environmentalism (Hardy et al., 2002). However, conflicting interests of stakeholders require careful considerations by government authorities, tourism planners and managers, community inclusion, and addressing human behaviors to enhance the sustainable evolution of coastal destinations. Although sustainable development emphasizes increased environmental awareness as a core value, the concept tends to focus on one or two of the three factors of the triple bottom line approach. For example, coastal tourism development might lead to job security and food sovereignty for populations operating tourism in an MPA. However, the lack of enforcement of regulations can negatively affect the environment disregarding aspects of conservation or protection (environmental benefits).

### **2.2.1 Defining sustainability**

The convergence of conservation and development was first illustrated at the Stockholm Conference on Humans and the Environment in 1972 in promoting the concept of eco-centered development whereby cultural, social, and ecological goals were integrated with development (Sagasti & Colby, 1993, as cited in Hardy et al., 2002). The philosophy of eco-development stemmed from the idea of 'small is beautiful', which was subsequently incorporated into the strategic management and development of tourism industries. Hardy et al. (2002) argue that sustainability in development emerges due to three visions – the conservation vision, the community vision, and the economic theory.

In coastal tourism, the *conservation vision* emerged from the romantic vision in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. "The vision valued the spiritual over the material, and humans came to be seen as part of nature, not superior to it" (Hardy et al., 2002). The aesthetic value associated with nature and its resources inculcated the desire to preserve areas in their natural state. Today, the conservation vision develops with the growing recognition of limited resources and the need to maintain characteristics of the environment for future generations (Hardy et al., 2002). This led to numerous organizations, such as the World Conservation Union, WWF, and UNEP, across national, regional, and local levels to regulate activities in the environment and foster a feeling of environmental consciousness.

The conservation vision ultimately paved the way for *economic theory* through the foundation of sustainable economic yield relative to the environment. However, as economic yield came to overpower sustainable yield, this increases pressures on the environment (as seen in the impacts of coastal tourism development) and subsequent failure of historical economic models. The following statement emphasizes the trade-off between economic benefits to society against environmental degradation:

“Economic growth always brings the risk of environmental damage, as it puts increased pressure on environmental resources. But policymakers guided by the concept of sustainable development will necessarily work to assure that growing economies remain firmly attached to their ecological roots and that these roots are protected and nurtured so that they may support growth over the long term” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987:40, as cited in Miller et al., 2002, p. 7).

In working towards sustainable economic development, it will be vital to consider interactions between social systems, people, and the places they inhabit. In 1966 Kenneth Boulding proposed an integrated system composed of the environmental characteristics and economics that incorporated environmental externalities to balance these two entities (Hardy et al., 2002). The integration of international issues of natural, social, and cultural capital across discourses and theories of neoclassical economics, spatial economics, systems ecology, human ecology, sociobiology, engineering, and psychology led to the more holistic development of economic disciplines on sustainable development.

The *community vision* in tourism development suggests that the host communities would benefit from opportunities provided by the industry (Hardy et al., 2002). The inclusion of residents and community members as part of different sectors associated with tourism, such as hospitality, accommodation, entertainment, recreation, culture, etc., makes them partners in sustainable tourism development. In addition to supporting the socio-economic needs of the community, the inclusion of community goals alongside sustainable tourism goals can reduce negative impacts such as resistance and alienation (Hardy et al., 2002).

By inculcating conservation, economy, and community perspectives, this thesis defines sustainability as “*achieving development without compromising future generations’ ability to*

*meet their own needs by inculcating scientific, economic, socio-cultural, and environmental consequences in planning and management” (Hardy et al., 2002).*

### **2.2.2 Sustainability in Coastal Tourism**

The role of sustainability in tourism emerged from the growth of mass tourism, with new perspectives to preserve local attributes of destinations, regulate the carrying capacities relative to tourist arrivals, enhance environmental and heritage values, and educate tourists. These characteristics complement the development of coastal tourism and other typologies of nature-based tourism such as protected areas, wildlife tourism, green tourism, etc. Despite these new views on the operation of tourism activities, it was given limited attention alongside sustainable development at the Earth Summit in Rio, with eco-tourism as the most prominent method to enhance sustainable tourism management. However, for this thesis, I will use nature-based tourism as an alternative to eco-tourism to emphasize the importance of human behavior, attitudes, and values of tourists, which are important in enhancing sustainable tourism practices.

The limited response to sustainable management of the tourism industry led to the 1995 Agenda for the Travel and Tourism Industry by the World Travel and Tourism Council, the World Tourism Organization, and the Earth Council, outlining the objectives and indicators for achieving sustainable development (Hardy et al., 2002).

One aspect of coastal tourism discussed in this thesis is MPAs (see Chapter 1), which aim to support the visions of sustainability through the following factors:

- Conservation – To protect, restore, or enhance marine life and habitat.
- Economy – To protect, restore, or enhance marine life and habitat while sustaining selected forms of subsistence and business whereby zoning of the region can lead to aesthetic and extractive benefits (Oracion et al., 2005).
- Community – People choose to become active in the MPA movement because the process itself has a solidarity value in bringing people together and motivating the community and visitors to take action (Oracion et al., 2005).

However, the dynamic nature of stakeholder relationships emphasizes conflicting positions held in the management of MPAs. For example, Hargrove states varying degrees of environmental ethics whereby on one end, environmental values concern enhancements in the

well-being of people at the cost of transformations to nature (such as the nutritional value of fish to people). On the other end are those environmental values which benefit humanity with no modifications to nature (such as the wildlife watching in MPAs) (Oracion et al., 2005). As globalization impacts conservation initiatives, tourism development can impact social structures when global economic interests transcend the needs of communities directly or indirectly dependent on these environments. These challenges are embodied by the management of MPAs in the Philippines by the *barangay*, which are a sovereign and economically self-sufficient political body in villages, led by chieftains, warriors, and elders and practice *bayanihan* (respect for mutual help):

“In the case of the *bayanihan*, as one of many socio-cultural “glues” that holds people together and motivates them to action, the threats of commoditization, commercialization, and business contracts introduced by tourism growth turn it more to an ideal that many Filipinos could only reminisce. The absence of *bayanihan* spirit being overtaken by personal economic gains destroys *barangay* solidarity” (Oracion, 2005, p. 396-397).

These challenges discussed above because of conflicting positions and goals for what sustainability entails have led to the resistance to establishing MPAs. The achievement of some goals over others in sustainable development (or in MPA management) can lead to winners and losers. A poorly managed MPA can be detrimental to society if regulations result in “unfair appropriation or access to resources” (Oracion et al., 2005). The establishment of MPAs suffers when morals, ideologies, or ethics are compromised, which goes hand in hand with the criteria for sustainability.

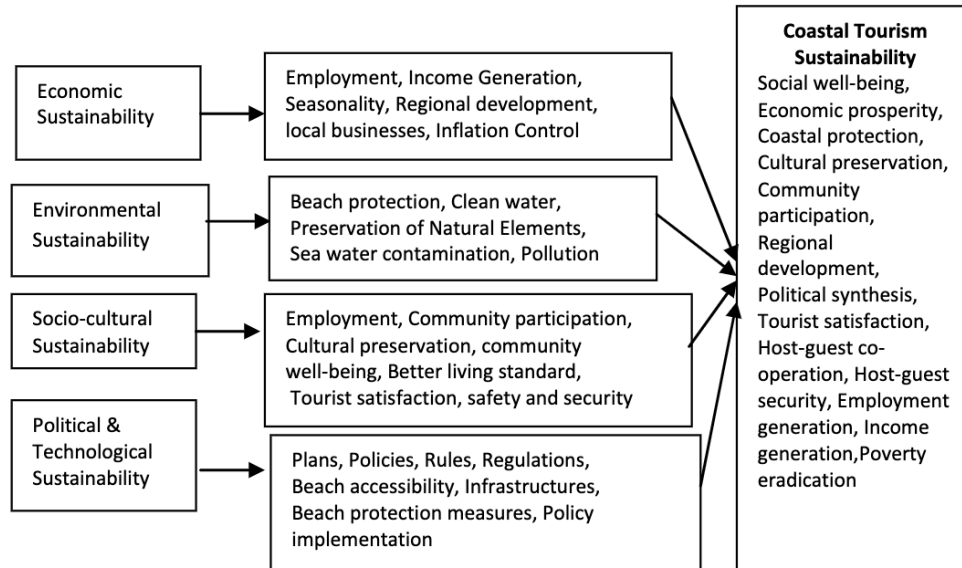
Expanding on the example above, the *barangay* citizens may very well accept the establishment of an MPA by trusted agencies and practice fishing in designated areas to rebuild the stock. On the other hand, they may also resist the implementation of an MPA due to its failure to respect local practices and enhance sustainable ‘development’ for the host community (Oracion et al., 2005, p. 397). Hence, it is crucial to understand how stakeholders respond to preservation objectives and regulations of access and behavior (Oracion et al., 2005). From the example, it becomes evident that contextual factors at the regional level, communal level, and individual level are interconnected and subject to change, consequently impacting sustainability goals by:

“The way in which different systems of ordering are either maintained or imposed on others, how questions of identity feature within environmental discourse, how social relationships get redefined, or how particular ways of doing things either get reproduced or are changed” (Fisher & Hajer, 1999, as cited in Oracion et al., 2005, p. 397).

I emphasize these debates to discuss the objectives for sustainability in coastal tourism industries in the following paragraphs and analyze aspects of MPA tourism as part of coastal tourism sustainability in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, which is the primary case study of this thesis (see Chapter 5).

Some considerations for the sustainable management of the coastal tourism industry adapted from the sustainable coastal tourism model proposed by Joseph (2017) (adapted from guidelines by the UNWTO) are as follows:

**Figure 2.1:** Sustainable Coastal Tourism Model (Adapted from Joseph, 2017) based on the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) guidelines on ‘Indicators of Sustainable Development of Tourism Destinations.’



- *Environmental Sustainability:* Coastal tourism activities should optimize environmental resources (in the coastal zone) for development without hindering vital ecological processes while conserving, protecting, and/or enhancing natural heritage and

biodiversity. Some examples of sustainable practices in the environment are reducing waste pollution, preserving water quality, preserving natural coastlines, etc.

- *Economic Sustainability*: The services provided should ensure long-term equitable socio-economic benefits to stakeholders while ensuring job and income security for the host communities. Some examples of sustainable economic indicators include income generation, inflation control, local business marketing, regional development, etc.
- *Socio-cultural Sustainability*: Coastal tourism establishments should respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance (Joseph & Pakkeerappa, 2015, p. 27). Examples include community outreach and participation, safety and security, cultural preservation and protection, etc.
- *Political and Technological Sustainability*: In addition to benefits for host communities and tourism providers, services must meet visitor standards of satisfaction, raise awareness about sustainability issues, and create a meaningful experience through sustainable innovations (recreational, instrumental, educational travels, see Chapter 1) (Joseph & Pakkeerappa, 2015). To meet these standards, policies and regulations should allow for enforcement, protection, accessibility, etc.

The above indicators are only a subset of a wide range of indicators that change based on contextual factors of the environment and the socio-economic-cultural-political forces that influence systems. This is indicated in the range of sustainable indicators developed by different organizations that span diverse disciplines.

Sustainable development concerns in tourism comprise two key questions. The first is “what is being balanced?” regarding risks associated with development. The second question is, “what is meant by balancing?” or are there alternative development methods. The third question discusses “how can balancing be accomplished?” which aims to respond to risks responsibly across environmental, social, and economic systems (Miller et al., 2008). The Coastal and Marine Tourism Congress in 2007 stated that the concept of sustainable development qualifies as a responsible ideal if two propositions are accepted:

1. The first proposition states, “it is natural for people to want to travel (as tourists and also to relocate residences); it is equally natural for people to want to change the

- world with the application of their favorite technologies and ideologies. Hence, travel and change are innate to the human experience” (Miller et al., 2008, p. 85).
2. The second is that “people have obligations regarding welfare and justice that extend beyond the individual to fellow members of a society, to other societies, and also to other species, and the environment” reiterating the relationship between social and ecological systems (Miller et al., 2008, p. 85)

The catch here is that once a specified deal is established, it should be done in a way that is respected. The challenge in tourism development is not whether people’s right to travel or induce change through innovation/ideology should override other social and ecological characteristics. Rather, the challenge is to respect both the individual and the collective by developing the ability to manage sustainable coastal tourism development, which is interdisciplinary across governance, sciences, education, and philosophy (Miller et al., 2008, p. 85).

### **2.3 Transitional Comment**

Coastal tourism has led to numerous ecological, sociological, and economic benefits for society and its natural systems. Despite these positive outcomes, the industry's exponential growth increases its potential to destroy coastal and marine ecosystems and communities (Miller & Auyong, 1991), contrasting the ideals of sustainable development. This has led to the development of sustainability indicators specific to the tourism sector (in this case, coastal tourism) to improve relationships with stakeholders while creating awareness for coastal systems. To understand the nature of these relationships and their components, the next chapter will introduce conceptual tourism models used to study the characteristics of the tourism system.

## Chapter 3: Tourism Models

*“There are many ways in which huge numbers of people and places are caught up within the swirling vortex of global tourism. There are not two separate entities, the ‘global’ and ‘tourism’ bearing some external connections with each other. Rather they are part and parcel of the same set of complex and interconnected processes. Moreover, such assembled infrastructure, flows of images and of people, and the emerging practices of ‘tourist reflexivity’ should be conceptualized as a ‘global hybrid’. It is hybrid because it is made up of an assemblage of technologies, texts, images, social practices and so on, that together enable it to expand and to reproduce itself across the globe”.*

- John Urry, 2011, p. 28

Tourism is an interesting component of human and natural systems comprising interactive processes and practices. This thesis defines tourism as a “system in which tourists travel in the pursuit of contrast to interact with people, places, things for a short period and then return home” (see Chapter 1). Components of the tourism system are increasingly fluid in their interactions within mobile societies, ultimately creating environmental, cultural, social, and economic networks (Urry, 2011, p. 64). This has led to the development of theoretical models within tourism research to better understand these interactions and processes within the system. This chapter introduces several conceptual tourism models to understand perspectives, elements, and relationships that can inform the management of tourism destinations and activities sustainably: The Broker-Local-Tourist (BLT) System, the Human-Artifactual-Natural System (HANS), the Protected Destination System (PDS), Integrative Theory of Practice. This chapter concludes with a brief explanation on the concept of the “tourist gaze” in better interpreting outcomes of interactions within the tourism system.

### 3.1 Tourism as a System

Historically, tourism was thought to be a temporary act of travel for one’s leisure. While conventional views are still evident, John Urry provides a more nuanced perspective of tourism as the sociology of mobilities beyond societies:

“Tourist places come to existence through relationships. Places float around within mobile, transnational networks of humans, technologies, objects, risks, and images that continuously connect and disconnect” (Urry, 2011, p. 64).

Tourist destinations are constructed through a “constellation of relations at a particular locus” (Massey, 1994, p. 217 in Urry, 2011, p. 64), which views tourism as a system. A systems thinking approach calls attention to the complexity of social-natural-built factors found in tourism and can entail meaningful policy responses in sustainable management. The systems thinking approach parallels understanding tourism as a practice in which human and non-human elements are continuously enacting, assembling, and reorganizing (Bispo, 2016). To this end, systems thinking reveals different perspectives of multiple stakeholders, values encompassed in interacting components, and accounts for contextual elements that might not have been captured in alternate views of tourism. The conceptual model of tourism as a system allows one to capture the diversity and complexities associated with destinations, motivations of contrast, stakeholder collaboration, and ultimately enabling tourism researchers to predict behaviors while enabling the sustainable management of social and ecological resources.

### **3.2 Destinations**

In addition to the interacting elements of the tourism system, it is worthwhile to spend some time discussing where these interactions take place, ‘tourist destinations’. Miller et al. (2013) describe contrasting themes associated with destinations. On the one hand, destinations are “real and concrete in that they are actual places that can be objectively described, measured, owned, and governed” (Miller et al., 2013, p. 118). On the other hand, destinations are “unreal and ethereal in that they also exist in people’s dreams and hopes” (Miller et al., 2013, p. 118). Different types of tourists seek different pursuits of contrast (cultural, ethnic, economic, political, ecological, technological, etc.) in locations that aim to meet both their real and unreal expectations.

The interaction of tourists in particular destinations can ultimately morph boundaries, expectations, and may also reveal contradictions in the expectations of destinations versus tourists. Hence, the destination can encompass different values and meanings for different groups of people through an individual’s interaction with their external environment, people, and objects in a particular location or, in other words, the position they occupy within the tourism system.

For tourists, destinations are the places they travel to and the activities they take part in. For locals, they may encompass day-to-day activities of their home environment, which may be positive or negative considering the motivations of tourists or industry stakeholders involved

in creating, restoring, and marketing natural or built environments. Those individuals directly dependent on tourism ultimately make deliberate decisions on the tourism system depending on their perspective. Similar to the dynamic processes and interactions of the tourism system, alongside its variations in definitions (Chapter 1), the term destination and its meaning is in a state of constant flux:

“Tourism experts have simply come to realize that the term (destination) is polysemous, hence vexing. Destinations have different degrees of significance for different kinds of people (tourists, analysts, policymakers, entrepreneurs). The meaning of destination hinges on the purposes for which it is defined in the first place. Thus, any destination definition only has value to the extent to which it helps people to achieve their particular ends” (Miller et al., 2013, p. 119).

Despite these challenges associated with defining destinations, identifying key characteristics of what a destination entails to an individual, whether it be imagery, planning, management, development, landscape, etc., can be useful in selecting the most appropriate definition that complements the individual’s purpose in pursuit of contrast. For this thesis, a destination may be defined as:

“Places where tourists plan to spend time away from home. This geographical area could be as small as a self-contained center, such as a village, town, or city, or be as broad as a region, island, or country. It encompasses all the organizations, companies, individuals, and government bodies (stakeholders) that offer products and services to people visiting the destination, as well as natural and artificial resources and attractions. More than one destination may be visited as part of a holiday for example, on a tour or cruise” (Butler, 2011 in Miller, 2013, p. 121).

In this thesis, the term destination refers to the emirate of Abu Dhabi and its coastal zone located in the UAE. The term will be used interchangeably with tourist sites of interest in the region (Chapter 5). The features and activities that attract tourists to the environment to pursue their interests can ultimately create the identity of the site – the destination.

### 3.3 The Broker-Local-Tourist Model

The first conceptual model employed in this thesis is the *Broker-Local-Tourist (BLT)* model, which is sociological in its manifestations of tourism services. The BLT model aims to highlight the human interactions within the socio-ecological system. Figure 3.1 depicts the human components of the tourism system, which differentiates individuals into three specific categories: *brokers, locals, and tourists*.

Brokers are those stakeholders who are directly involved in the supply of services that pertain to tourists' motivations. These individuals encompass commercial organizations and entrepreneurs who are in one way, or another directly involved in the management and development of different sectors within the tourism industry in particular regions. Brokers may be further categorized as the following three groups:

- *Private Sector Brokers* include organizations and individuals that supply tourist services and form a significant part of the industry. Examples of private-sector brokers include tour guides, retail entrepreneurs, and other service providers.
- *Public Sector Brokers* include governmental entities that manage, develop, and regulate the tourism industry. Examples of public sector brokers are policymakers, managers, scientists, and authoritative agents.
- *Social Movement Brokers* include organizations and individuals operating in non-governmental, non-profit, and environmental organizations addressing tourism issues and agendas.

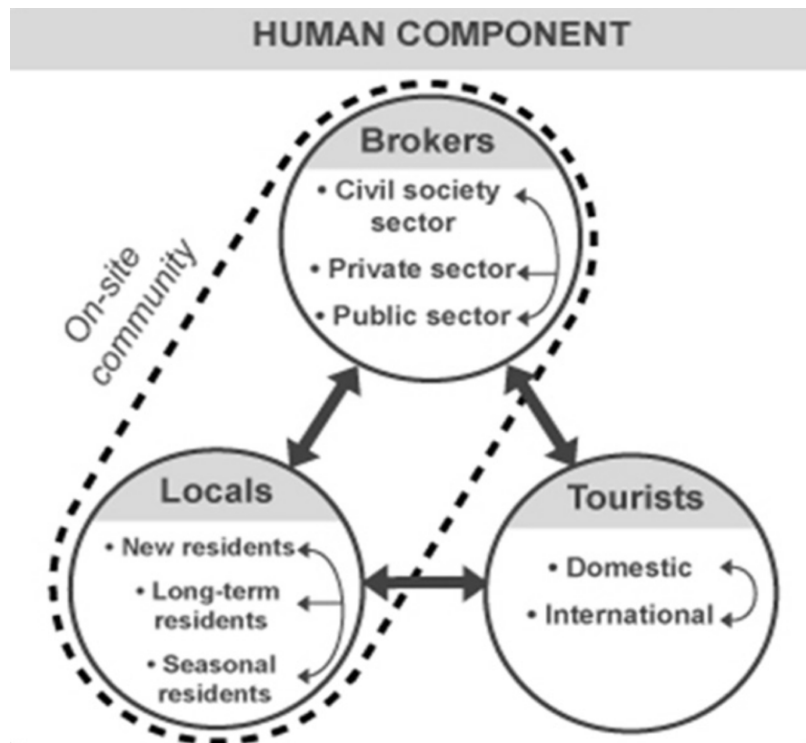
It is important to note that different subcategories of brokers within the BLT model can have different expectations that lead to conflict or consensus through their interactions in the industry.

Locals comprise individuals who reside within the vicinity of the tourist destination that do not directly engage in the supply and management of tourism services but may benefit from the activities that can form part of their culture and social lifestyle. An example of this may be locals who participate in activities such as fishing, nature walks, shopping, and other recreational activities. Brokers and locals form the onsite community in the destination.

Tourists are those individuals who travel to a particular destination in search of contrast for a short period and return home. Their search for contrast results in a wide variety of motivations for travel, making them domestic or international in origin (Miller et al., 2002). The

relationship is a dynamic process whereby some locals may move on to form part of the tourist industry, brokers comprise individuals who are local to the region, and in some cases, tourists may become residents (locals) who also provide tourism services (broker). These processes manifest throughout the course of an individual's life.

**Figure 3.1:** The Broker-Local-Tourist (BLT) Model (Adapted from Miller et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2002) illustrates the human component of the tourism system within a destination and comprises interactions with social and ecological factors (as discussed further in the HANS model).



### 3.4 Human-Artifactual-Natural System (HANS) Conceptual Model

The *Human-Artifactual-Natural System (HANS)* model is a modified framework of the two-part model - natural and human systems and socio-ecological systems, by integrating the third element of artifacts complementary to human and natural elements (Miller et al., 2014). As discussed in the section above, the *Human component* comprises *brokers, locals, and tourists* that form the BLT model. In addition to the human component, the HANS model depicts artifactual and natural components that interact within the tourism system.

The *Artifactual component* of the HANS model encompasses “*all elements of the material culture that are the products of human innovation, as well as natural and non-natural objects created or utilized by non-human organisms*” (Miller et al., 2014, p. 262). The examples of artifacts span a long list that includes:

“Influences of technologies, tools, machines, art, clothing, artificial foodstuffs, and infrastructure, devices, and instruments that meet basic transportation and access needs (roads, airports, piers, boardwalks, marinas), accommodation needs (hotels, rental homes, campgrounds, restaurants), and special activity needs (scuba equipment, cameras, binoculars)” (Miller et al., 2014, p. 262).

The examples above are human artifacts, and their inclusion in the HANS model is of great importance as:

“The explicit acknowledgment that human daily behaviors and routines are, in part, determined by our artifacts in the same way they are by cultural and social standards, language itself, and the outer environment. What we decide to wear, where we choose to interact, and what we equip ourselves to accomplish in a national park are simultaneously facilitated and constrained by artifacts” (Miller et al., 2014, p. 262).

Human artifacts can be categorized into the following two groups:

- *Hard artifacts* include physical objects or things that can be studied apart from people and nature.
- *Soft artifacts* include concepts and ideas that shape policies, laws, regulations, culture, myths, etc.

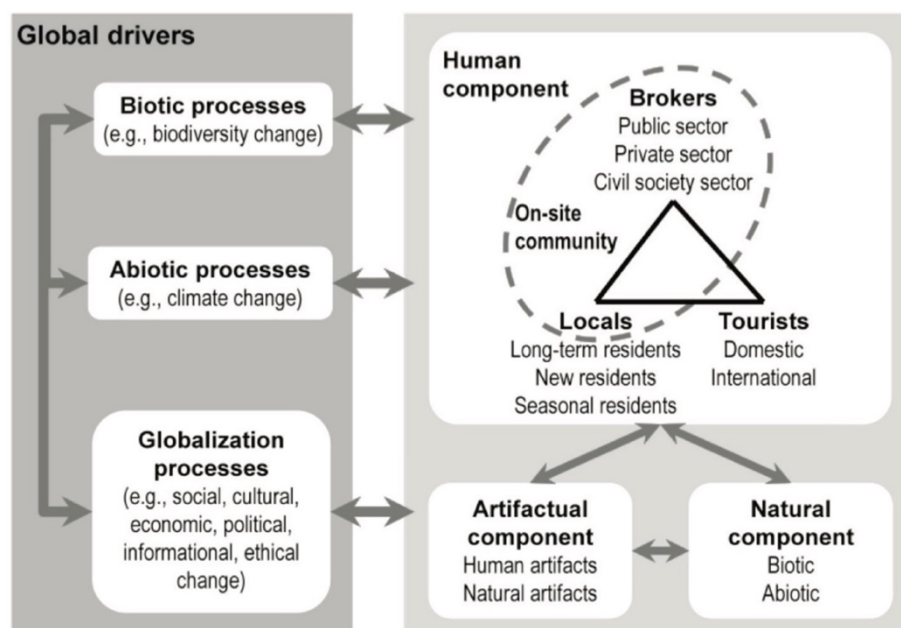
In addition to man-made artifacts, natural artifacts created by non-human organisms through biotic and abiotic factors can produce characteristics unique to destinations. Components engineered in ecosystems are some examples of natural artifacts such as dams built by beavers, nests, and hives created by birds, spiders, and bees, or coastline barriers engineered by mangroves (Miller et al., 2014, p. 263).

The *Natural* component consists of biotic and abiotic processes and functions in the environment that directly impacts the tourism system or its external environment. The natural component is composed of the surrounding environment unconstructed by humans, biodiversity, climatic conditions, etc.

The final component of the HANS model is *Global drivers* illustrated by Miller et al. (2014) and form three categories as follows:

- *Biotic processes* include biological and ecological processes that influence a change in biodiversity. Examples include disease outbreaks such as the current pandemic of COVID-19, bubonic plague, predation, etc.
- *Abiotic processes* are physical and chemical processes that change current environmental conditions. An example of an abiotic global driver is the effects of climate change, pollution, extreme weather events, etc.
- *Globalization processes* include social, cultural, economic, political, ethical, and informational processes that influence a change in the social order. Some examples of globalization processes include the development of artificial intelligence, wars, infrastructure development, including the current democratization of the travel industry.

**Figure 3.2:** The Human-Artifactual-Natural Systems (HANS) Model (Adapted from Miller et al., 2014) illustrates the human component (BLT model) of the tourism system within a destination and its interactions with artifactual and natural components.



### 3.5 The Protected Destination System (PDS) Model

The *Protected Destination System* (PDS) model is a framework intended to capture tourism development agendas alongside the conservation goals of a particular destination through protected areas adjacent to the region (Miller et al., 2018). The interrelationship between ecological, social, cultural, and economic factors between the tourist destination and protected area allows the protection of natural, cultural, and artifactual elements unique to a destination by supporting the residential community through commercial and economic ventures while instilling values of environmental conservation for visitors who can engage in aspects of nature, recreational, and cultural aspects of tourism. The PDS model comprises a well-managed *protected area* and a *gateway region* usually adjacent to the protected area.

The first component of the PDS model is the *protected area* which entails the conservation motivations of tourism agendas. The IUCN defines a protected area as:

“A clearly defined geographical space (land and/or sea), recognized, dedicated and managed through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values” (Dudley, 2008, p. 8, as cited in Miller et al., 2018).

The growing concern for marine environments and their resources and services that hold great ecological and cultural value to communities calls attention to the development of marine protected areas defined as:

“An area of intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved with law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment” (Kelleher and Kenchington, 1992, p. 47, as cited in Miller et al., 2018).

Although a common goal of conservation unifies all protected areas, they can differ according to the management and permittance of human activity (such as *biotelic conservation ethic* associated with wildernesses, an *extractive conservation ethic* associated with fishery zones whereby some allow extractive uses, and others prohibit harvest to rebuilt stocks, and *esthetic conservation ethic* such as national parks (Miller et al., 2018)). Often, protected areas,

whether on land or sea, combine different conservation motivations through multiple-use zoning in their establishment and management.

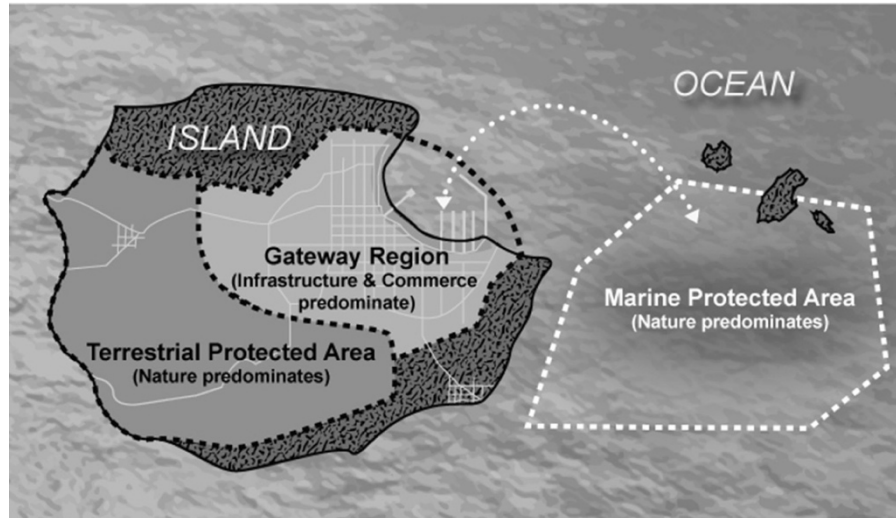
The second component of the PDS model is the *gateway region* found adjacent to the protected area. It comprises populated commercial centers for tourism and non-tourism-related activities. Gateway regions and the communities that encompass these regions showcase the life of the local society that ranges indigenous, aboriginal, residential, traditional, immigrant, and visitor lifestyles through political, social, ethnic, and cultural factors in both urban and rural settings (Miller et al., 2018, p. 129). The brokers and locals usually reside within the gateway community and are stakeholders to be considered in the protected area management (Miller et al., 2018, p. 130).

“The pulse of the gateway community, vis-à-vis the tradeoff between development and conservation objectives, is to be found in the political profiles and agendas of leaders in government and industry and, in some instances, in comprehensive land-use plans and economic strategies” (Miller et al., 2018, p. 130).

This can result in competing views for managing protected areas when tourist economic motivations may not be symbiotic to residential cultural and community needs. Complementary to cultural attributes associated with the environment of the protected area, gateway communities can also benefit from the returns of protected area-related tourism for their livelihood (Miller et al., 2018).

On the other hand, tourists use the term gateway region and protected area synonymously based on activities they wish to pursue. An example of this is when tourists participate in activities such as wildlife watching in a protected area but identify their holiday destination as Abu Dhabi. The boundaries between the gateway region and protected area are irrelevant to the tourist, but for the locals and brokers embody tools for planning and management of economic, ecological, and social activities (Miller et al., 2018). In a perfect world, both the gateway region and the protected area are of interest to tourists resulting in a synergy of great value that allows tourists to move back and forth during visits. However, brokers and locals associated with tourism are challenged with keeping the tourist enticed during this process. In some cases, only one of the two components of the PDS system may form part of the tourist’s motivation for travel.

**Figure 3.3:** *The Protected Destination System (PDS) Model (Adapted from Miller et al., 2018, p. 128).*



### 3.6 Integrative Theory of Practice

The theory of social practice proposed by German sociologist and cultural theorist Andreas Reckwitz suggests that practices depend on the interconnection across ‘bodily knowledge, forms of mental activities, “things” and their use’ (Pantzar & Shove, 2005 p. 449). He reiterates the idea of practice as:

“A way of cooking, of consuming, of working, of investigating, of taking care of oneself, or of others, etc. – forms so to speak a “block” whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements” (see Chapter 2, Reckwitz, 2002, as cited in Pantzar & Shove, 2005 p. 449).

The emergence of tourism activities is more than just services provided by tourism operators. Complementary to the theory of social practice, tourism activities occur within specific contextual factors (such as geography, climate, environment, etc.) and knowledge produced, consumed, and reproduced by brokers, locals, and tourists. Through this conceptual framework, the dynamic nature of tourism activities is a result of the interconnectedness of elements that lead to the “formation, reproduction, and dissolution of practice, and of cumulative, mutually influential, but emergent and unplanned relations between practices” (Pantzar & Shove, 2005 p. 450). An example is the ceremonial significance

of henna in Arab traditions. In this example, the henna is the material, the artwork requires skill/competence, and the ceremony symbolizes celebrations in the context of Middle Eastern cultures. When the henna designs are performed during events such as weddings, it becomes part of a system of practices (or traditions) performed in Arabic ceremonies.

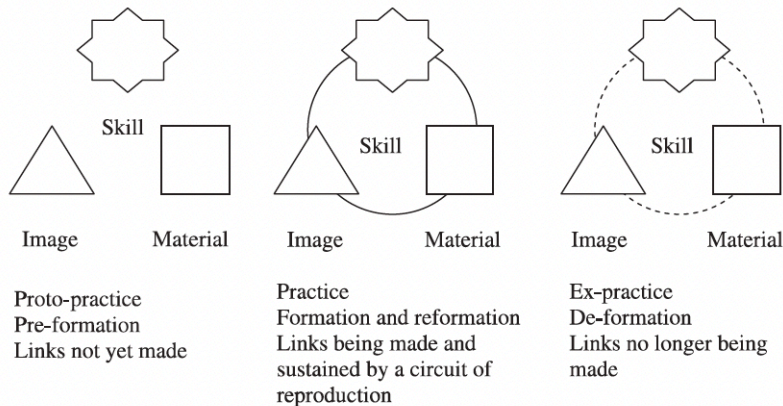
The key components that allow such practices to form are:

- *Material* – objects or things involved in the activity
- *Skill* – knowledge or competence needed to part take in the activity
- *Image* – mental activity and symbolic meaning associated with the activity

The types of practices prevail because of different interactive phases between material, skill, and image. The first phase is comprised of the elements discussed but have yet to be integrated; the second is one in which they are actively interconnected, and the third is one in which the sustained links are no longer made (see Figure 3.4) (Pantzar & Shove, 2005, p. 450).

The degree of connections, whether they are made, sustained, or broken, indicates if practices come into existence, persist, or disappear respectively. As a result of this phenomenon, practices are thought to be fluid and mobile and can form connections with other practices, leading to a ‘system of practices’. The links between these elements allow for practices to be continuously reproduced, whereas fractures limit their transformation (Pantzar & Shove, 2005, p. 450).

The case study of this thesis uses the theory of practice to describe the sites and activities that take place in the emirate of Abu Dhabi and its coastal zone, which emerge from interactions between material, skill, and image components within specific niches.



**Figure 3.4:** The Theory of Practice: Proto-practices, practices, and ex-practices (Adapted from Pantzar & Shove, 2005, p. 450).

### 3.7 Competing Tourist Gazes

The conceptual frameworks introduced in this chapter for tourism planning and management adopt a systems approach that acknowledges the inter-dynamic flows between components and actors within the system, rather than being constrained by tenure and jurisdictional responsibilities (Miller et al., 2018). The presence of different stakeholders can lead to competing perspectives on the motivations and influence how the tourism system is perceived. As illustrated in Chapter 1, Urry refers to gazing as:

“The discursive determinations of socially constructed seeing or ‘scopic regimes’ which enables how we are able to see, allowed or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen herein” (Urry, 2011, p. 2).

The concept of gaze construction and reconstruction complements the idea of power conceptualized in the tourism system (Cheong and Miller, 2000). The common misconception is that tourists hold the most power within the system due to the benefits they curtail from interactions and activities. However, it is the brokers and locals in the conjecture that have the power by instilling in tourists what they wish for them to see. This reiterates Urry’s conceptualization of tourism as socially organized in which the different components influence what and how we ‘see the world’.

According to Cheong and Miller, power and its impact on the tourist gaze are conceptualized as omnipresent in a tripartite system of tourists, locals, and brokers across different levels (Cheong and Miller, 2000). Tourism systems are sustained by the gaze at the individual level and by the productive effects of power at the institutional level (Cheong and Miller, 2000, p. 378). Urry’s concept of the tourist gaze relative to power within the system showcases the following:

“The elaborate processes by which the gaze is constructed and reinforced, and consider who or what authorizes it, what its consequences are for the ‘places’ which are its object, and how it interrelates with other social practices” (Urry, 2011, p. 2).

The dynamic nature and intentions of the gaze imply that power relations in tourist systems are fluid and constantly changing. The shifting power dynamics are dependent on contingencies, time, and place (Cheong and Miller, 2000, p. 379).

Tourists are often the targeted group considered to be power-grabbing in the system. On the one hand, the initiation of a trip by the tourist can have consequences for the brokers and locals, whereby in some cases, these tourism providers are often at a disadvantage in their need to satisfy consumer demand. On the other hand, brokers and locals hold power whereby tourists are made to abide by the norms, expectations, and constraints of the destination they intend to travel to. Hence, tourists are power-bound by the trip and components of the trip itself.

From the broker's perspective, they compel the tourist to function in a certain way by controlling tourism activities for the sake of profit or public service, which is also dynamic across different phases of tourism development (Cheong and Miller, 2000, p. 381).

Locals may not directly be involved in tourism activities and are subsequently indifferent to its consequences; they exercise their power through tourism resistance or endorsement. Furthermore, the tourist-local interaction results in power interactions and social control as an outcome of competing or complementary motivations.

Power relations formed between tourist-local-broker interactions ultimately contribute to the tourist gaze and can influence what and whose motivations are met by tourist activities. An example is when brokers hold the most knowledge and exhibit this through guided tours whereby the tourists “see through their eyes”. Brokers construct the tourist gaze through expertise, esoteric “local knowledge”, and abilities (Cheong and Miller, 2000, p. 384). Locals create the tourist gaze through their interactions with tourists, which provide social and cultural insight but, unlike brokers, have the option of exhibiting indifference to tourism. The ‘tourist gaze’ is not a matter of “individual psychology but of socially patterned and learned ways of seeing” (Urry, 2011, p. 2). The influence of power on the tourist system can lead to both positive and negative outcomes depending on motivation, actors, relationships, and time of the interaction.

### **3.8 Transitional Comment**

This chapter remarks on how tourism studies acknowledge tourism as a system through the conceptualization of various frameworks (BLT model, HANS model, PDS model, integrative theory of practice). These frameworks enable researchers to observe interactions

between human and non-human components of the system and simultaneously understand the nature of their existence by the tourist gaze and power dynamics. The concepts introduced in this chapter allow researchers to conduct research across various components of the system in examining the relationships and the processes by which they operate. The next chapter will focus on research methodologies conducted in tourism research – specifically on aspects of a mixed-methods research design relevant to analyzing the case study presented in this thesis.

## Chapter 4: Mixed Methods Research Design

*“Loosely defined concepts that, precisely because of their vagueness, are adaptable to local sites and may facilitate communication and cooperation . . . They make possible the interaction of distinctly scientific cultures and thus permit the construction of a given segment of knowledge, while on the social level they facilitate the development of intergroup alliances and therefore advance specific social interests . . . [They are] negotiable entities that simultaneously delimit and link particular territories: the domains of professional expertise”.*

- Ilana Lowy, 1992, p. 374-375

The expansion of tourism research across different academic disciplines has led to a wide range of approaches to collect, analyze, and interpret data both qualitatively and quantitatively. The primary technique employed in this thesis is a mixed methods research design composed of qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative forms of data collected in this study include semi-structured interviews, limited participant observation, and secondary information sources while also introducing concepts associated with analyses of interviews. The quantitative forms of data collected are through surveys analyzed across the Likert scale. By combining these approaches, the thesis aims to develop a holistic understanding of coastal tourism dynamics in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, UAE.

### 4.1 Introduction

A mixed methods research design employs more than one type of research method for data collection and analysis. The approach can comprise a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, a mix of qualitative methods, or a mix of quantitative methods (Brannen, 2005, p. 4). According to Johnson et al., 2007, mixed methods research is defined as:

“The type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123).

The key term in this type of research is ‘mixing’, whereby different qualitative and/or quantitative elements provide a more holistic account of the research question. By combining

approaches, the weaknesses of each technique alone are mitigated to provide a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of the topic in question across the research process (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015, p. 3).

A mixed methods research design offers several opportunities for the investigator to enhance skills across interdisciplinary disciplines; allows eclectic approaches to theory; scientific and practical justifications; technical and experiential communication; alongside universal and contextual interpretation of the topic of investigation.

Combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques enhances and strengthens the study through heightened knowledge and validity of results. The advantages of this method lie across five primary goals of mixing research techniques developed by Green et al. (1989):

- *Triangulation* acknowledges the diversity of research methods and seeks to converge, corroborate, and correspond results from different methods through a systemic approach.
- *Complementarity* elaborates, enhances, illustrates, and clarifies the results from one method with the other.
- *Development* uses the results from one method to inform the other method. This includes conclusions drawn from the study, the sampling process, implementation, and measurement decisions.
- *Initiation* allows for discovering contradicting or new perspectives by reflecting on questions or results from one method with the questions or results from the other method.
- *Expansion* allows the study to develop a broad spectrum of knowledge and inquiry using different techniques for different modes of inquiry.

Over time, the increasing use of mixed methods research strategies has allowed studies to improve credibility; understand contextual factors; provide meaning to technical details; increase the applicability of findings; generation and confirmation of hypotheses; and integrate the perspective of both the researcher and participants (Bryman, 2006).

The qualitative component of this thesis includes semi-structured interviews, limited participant observations, and secondary source information analyzed through content analysis. The quantitative component comprises surveys primarily analyzed on the Likert scale.

**Table 4.1:** A break up of all methods used in the data collection and analysis of this thesis.

	<b>Qualitative Approach</b>	<b>Quantitative Approach</b>
<b>Data Collection</b>	Semi-structured Interviews  Limited Participant Observations  Secondary Source Information	Surveys
<b>Data Analysis</b>	Interview Content Analysis	Likert Scale

#### 4.2 Qualitative Data Collection

“Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting.... The analysis strives for depth of understanding” (Patton, 1985, p. 1).

To put it simply, qualitative research approaches aim to understand a humanistic or idealistic query generated through non-numerical data. This method is used to understand human beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions adding a unique dimension to investigations that cannot be gathered from measurements of variables alone (Kalra et al., 2013). Hence, a crucial element of qualitative research lies in the authentic interpretation and representation of information gathered from participants and its contextual factors. *The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis - the human instrument* (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). This allows the research process to be flexible and responsive through non-verbal and verbal communication; clarification and accuracy of interpretations with respondents; direct sources of information (data); alongside the exploration of unintended or unusual responses (Merriam, 2002, p. 5).

Alternatively, the inductive nature of this approach allows the researcher the freedom to observe data collected for trends, and phenomena, build concepts, hypotheses, or theories relative to the deductive hypotheses tested by the data collected. The outcome of qualitative methodologies is descriptive details of the investigation in direct or indirect quotes, interviews, field notes, researcher observations, recordings, pictures, etc. Hence, the interaction between

the researcher and the researched determines the quality of data and its results throughout the research process.

The qualitative approaches of data collection that informed this thesis include semi-structured interviewing, limited participant observation, and secondary source information.

#### **4.2.1 Interviews**

Interviews as a form of inquiry have become the most common and influential mode of understanding human beings and their society through various forms and uses. The most well-known form of interviewing is a face-to-face interaction between individuals. However, other forms of interviews include group interchange, mailed or self-administered questionnaires, telephone surveys, and, currently through, video platforms such as zoom interviews (Draper, 2001, p. 645). Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, with the length of time being brief, over multiple sessions or days, as seen in life-history interviewing (Draper, 2001, p. 646).

The extensive use and forms of interviewing in the modern world have led to the emergence of an “interview society” comprising the traditional *whats* of everyday life and *hows* of people’s lives. The following observation reiterates the significance of interviews in qualitative research:

“Increasingly, interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (Draper, 2001, p. 646).

Traditionally used in social sciences, interviews have expanded into other disciplines as a source of knowledge assuming results are authentic and providing an accurate account of the participants’ selves and lives (Draper, 2001). They take on different forms in daily life through political opinion polls, marketing research, health histories, academic applications, entertainment, data analysis, etc. Hence, the interview is no longer just means of data collection within the social sciences but is considered a “universal mode of systemic inquiry” spanning social, biological, political, cultural, and ethical descriptions (Draper, 2001, p. 646-647).

The success of interviews lies first in the researcher’s ability to access the setting; in other words, “how do we get in?” Each investigation and the participants of interest can lead

to different access points through interests, culture, location, status, race, ethnicity, etc. Hence, researchers must also pay close attention to the language and culture of respondents that form the foundation of communication between the researcher and the participants. Each interviewee responds to questions posed differently, informed by personal and contextual factors. The interviewer's responsibility is to be aware of external and internal factors influencing interviews to establish trust and comprehend interviews from the respondent's perspective. Establishing rapport entails identifying and interpreting common themes or reading between the lines without superimposing the researcher's preconceived notions. The interviewer should pay attention to the progress of the interview, take notes regularly and promptly, and monitor behavioral cues while trying to be as inconspicuous as possible to keep the participant motivated and engaged throughout the process.

Other considerations are the ethical concerns of interviewing because the objects of inquiry are human subjects (Draper, 2001, p. 662). These include the researcher's degree of involvement with the target group of the study, the validity of the written investigation, manipulation of respondents, use of recording devices, etc., which can impact the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. The concerns pertinent to this thesis include informed consent from the participant, the right to privacy of their identity, and protection from harm (physical, emotional, or any other kind). The study's outcomes related to participants can be determined by the agreement reached between the interviewer and interviewee in either verbal or written formats. This entails the rights of participants to opt out of the study at any point in time, clarify concerns with the researchers, or remain anonymous. To abide by contextual, cultural, and social factors influencing the participation of interviewees in this thesis, a consent form approved by the International Review Board (IRB) was administered electronically detailing the study's research goals, participants' rights, interview procedure, permission to record the interview, confidentiality of information, and researcher's contact information.

This thesis defines an interview as *a strategic interaction in which the interviewers interact with and observe those interviewed to elicit knowledge, behaviors, feelings, and preferences on a topic of interest defined or open-ended*. This definition accounts for the flexibility of interviews that span throughout the research process:

“The investigator must be liberated from undue reverence for any particular method... [he must] make maximal use of his knowledge of the particular

research situation facing him in order to develop situationally relevant strategies” (Dexter, 2006, p. 30).

Interviews generally fall under three categories – structures, semi-structured, and unstructured. This thesis adopts a semi-structured interview as one of three qualitative approaches to data collection (see Table 4.1). The following subsections introduce relevant characteristics of the interview process, assuming it varies slightly with each interviewee interaction.

### **A. Semi-Structured Interviews**

A semi-structured interview can be described as a *verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions*. Although interviews can be flexible, a semi-structured interview offers some structure to the investigation. The interviewer can prepare pre-determined questions which unfold in a conversational manner allowing participants to explore their perspectives. Hence, the method provides focus while exploring ideas throughout the interview process. The questions form part of the researcher’s guide to elicit information geared towards the research objective:

“The guide is not meant to be read verbatim in the same order with each interview, rather, it is meant to provide structure and focus to the natural flow of conversation for each unique interview. A semi-structured interview guide often includes main open-ended questions with follow-up probe questions for the interviewer to refer to throughout the interview. This is in contrast to closed-ended (e.g., yes/no, Likert items, multiple-choice) questions you typically find on a survey instrument, which are useful for quantitative analysis” (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

Semi-structured interviews are usually conducted in person face to face. In-person interviews offer the study information indirectly pertinent to the participants through non-verbal reactions, body language, visual cues, etc. However, in some cases, face-to-face interviews are difficult to organize due to the convenience of the interviewee based on time, location, feasibility, etc. Other modes include conducting telephone interviews that may be more accessible to the participant because most people have access to phones, do not require

travel, or access to the internet (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). However, its challenges lie in recording the interview, which may have to be conducted through other technological platforms, despite its convenience. Furthermore, the researcher can no longer observe the non-verbal cues of the participant, and the lack of personal contact during this process can impact the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee during this process.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, new modes of interviewing are gaining recognition, such as video interviews through platforms such as Skype or zoom in the modern-day. This mode of interviewing offers the advantages of in-person interviews despite some drawbacks whereby participants still require access to the internet. Despite the lack of personal contact, this can be mitigated through tone and conversations between the interviewer and interviewee throughout the research process, alongside innovations in technology. The interviews in this thesis were conducted through the zoom video platform to abide by the COVID-19 health and safety regulations in Abu Dhabi.

## **B. Interview Sampling**

Sampling is a crucial component of the research process discussed relatively less than qualitative data collection and analysis. The sample chosen represents the target population relevant to the topic of interest to the researcher, usually based on criteria of qualification (inclusive or exclusive) across demographic, physical, geographical, psychological, graphical, or historical factors for participation in the study. In addition to the homogenous or heterogeneous composition of participants, the sample size is influenced by theoretical and practical considerations. However, a priori sample specification does not imply inflexibility. In addition to technical justifications of the sampling strategy employed, the validity of the sampling method must also account for context, rigor, transparency, coherence, impact, and importance (Robinson, 2014). The primary sampling techniques employed in this study include the following:

- *Purposive Sampling* strategies are non-random ways of ensuring that categories of cases within a sampling universe are represented in the final sample of the project (Robinson, 2014). The investigator has an a priori theoretical understanding of the topic and understands that specific individuals have a unique, different, or essential perspective relevant to the study and ensures their presence.

- *Snowball Sampling* involves asking participants for recommendations of acquaintances who might qualify for participation, leading to “referral chains” (Robinson, 2014).

Other sampling criteria pertinent to this thesis include the *idiographic* aim of the research, seeking a sample size that is sufficiently small for individual cases to have a locatable voice within the study and for an intensive analysis of each case to be conducted (Robinson, 2014). This can improve the scope and quality of data through an in-depth analysis of participant data – “not in terms of size but in terms of its ability to supply all the information needed for comprehensive analysis” (Yardley, 2007, p. 221). It also develops cross-case generalities while ensuring individual identity to the subject without being subsumed as part of a larger whole.

In addition, *Homogeneity* in the sample accounts for physical and contextual characteristics of the study, while *Heterogeneity* of the sample through social and demographic attributes can provide evidence that results are not restricted to a particular target group, time, or place in developing cross contextual approaches (Robinson, 2014). It is equally important to consider the trade-offs between homogeneity and heterogeneity during the sampling process to ensure the coherence of research goals and the resources available to conduct the study (Robinson, 2014).

### **C. Interviewing Across Cultures**

Participants in the study occupy different cultural backgrounds because of geography, demography, experiences, etc. Culture is subject to variation through knowledge, social systems, and behavior and consequently changes with social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors. Acknowledging cultural differences during the interview process can help improve interactions between the interviewer and interviewee by building “communicative competence, intercultural communication, and intercultural competence” (Su, 2008, p. 379). Appendix II introduces some considerations for conducting interviews with individuals from different ethnographic and cultural backgrounds that span themes of – ethnographic perspectives, cultural meaning, power, identity, gendered roles, and self-reflexivity during the interview process.

#### 4.2.2 Limited Participant Observation

Limited Participant Observation (LPO) stems from ethnographic and anthropological inquiries whereby researchers immerse themselves in the daily lives of the target group being studied to gain an “*insider’s or emic perspective of their subjects’ lives*” (Lambert, 1995, p. 86). This qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to utilize the five senses in providing a “written photography” of the investigation. The characteristics of LPO as a form of qualitative data include being an active observer, improving memory, informal interviewing, taking field notes, and patience as it entails a process of discovery. In addition to the active engagement of the researcher in the lives of the target group, the researcher should also maintain objectivity as an outsider observing insider knowledge. Accounting for the paradoxical role of the researcher, LPO can be defined as:

“The process of establishing rapport within a community and learning to act in such a way as to blend into the community so that its members will act naturally, then removing oneself from the setting or community to immerse oneself in the data to understand what is going on and be able to write about it... Participant observation is characterized by having an open, non-judgmental attitude, being interested in learning more about others, being aware of the propensity for feeling culture shock and for making mistakes, the majority of which can be overcome, being a careful observer and a good listener, and being open to the unexpected in what is learned” (DeWalt, 1998; as cited in Kawulich, 2005, p. 2 ).

LPO can enhance the depth of data by allowing researchers to investigate processes and interactions between people and their environment over time alongside socio-cultural contexts by providing a first-hand encounter of topics of interest pertinent to the study, facilitating the development of new hypotheses relative to predetermined hypotheses testing. This approach can provide a culturally competent access point for the investigator by providing detailed insights through behaviors, intentions, situations, and events as understood by the participants (deMunck & Sobo, 1998, p. 43; as cited in Kawulich, 2005). Despite its advantages to the quality of data collected, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations and trade-offs.

Often, the data collected is not an accurate representation of the culture due to the opportunistic motives of the researcher and the goals of the study leading to biases. The

gender of the researcher can further lead to differences in access points to communities and consequently impact the information collected. Other challenges span societal characteristics such as demography, geography, social structures, communication barriers, etc., which can reduce the objectivity of the research process.

To mitigate these limitations, researchers are encouraged to practice self-reflexivity to help understand biases and barriers that can interfere with interpreting what is observed. By recognizing these challenges early on during the research process, the researcher can work to replace them or use additional research techniques to improve objectivity (Ratner, 2002; as cited in Kawulich, 2005). This can aid in the researcher's acceptance into communities by producing work that is reflective and complements the participants' understanding the way they see it. The quality of data collected from LPO depends on the researcher's skills to observe, document, and interpret what has been observed. It is equally crucial for the researcher to take accurate field notes without preconceived categories from the researcher's theoretical perspective but allow them to emerge from the community under study (Kawulich, 2005, p. 8). This can generate practical and theoretical truths about the human experience grounded in the realities of daily existence (Pogrebin, 2003, p. 18).

Hence, the combination of LPO with other forms of data collection and observations enhances the understanding of contextual characteristics and human interactions without distorting information sources and their relevance to the study.

#### **4.2.3 Secondary Source Information**

Secondary source information refers to sources of data (quantitative and/or qualitative) and other information collected by other researchers and archived in some form (Stewart, 2003, p. 1). The expansion of data collection in the contemporary world across different research disciplines, through technological innovation and internet access, has led to the production of secondary source information, which, once collected for one purpose, may be used for another. Secondary information sources span governmental reports, industrial studies, archived data sets, syndicated information services, journal articles, books, to the unpublished observations of a knowledgeable observer. The data collected from secondary sources can either inform an issue related to the original purpose for which it was collected or address new issues different from its intended purpose.

The collection of data and information from secondary sources can be beneficial to the researcher as it saves time, expenses, and resources spent on collecting data that already

exists. Furthermore, the investigation into data already available can help inform researchers of what is lacking in current sources of information. It can also help develop methodologies for studying different research questions either from a single source or through a combination of various sources, thereby defining the primary research agenda of the investigator.

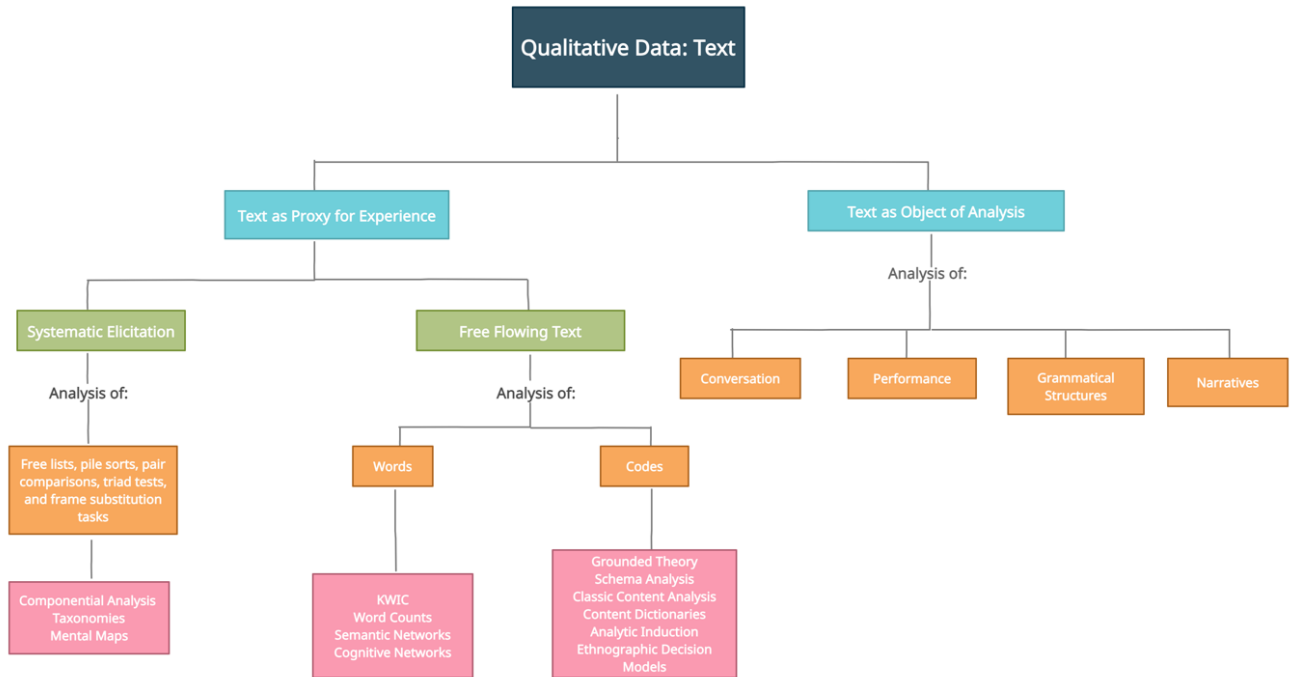
Despite its convenience, this method also has its limitations. The use of secondary resources requires the initial knowledge of their existence and access to them, which can be a timely and costly effort. In some cases, the information is not readily identifiable, notably when governmental entities can omit data not permitted for public use. Using secondary sources for specific purposes can introduce researcher bias across information collection, reporting, and interpretation (Stewart, 2003). The extensive database of sources can further complicate a study's primary research goals, resulting in erroneous and unjustified outcomes. Lastly, secondary data are also referred to as "old data", whereby terms and measures may be inappropriate for the current research. Hence, the researcher must carefully evaluate sources before their application in supplementing the investigation (Stewart, 2003, p. 6).

Some examples of secondary information sources used in this thesis include governmental websites and reports, newspaper articles, journal articles, documentaries, travel guides, books, etc.

### **4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis**

The analysis of qualitative data generally co-occurs with data collection. The expansion of qualitative research across different fields of study has led to the emergence of a broad range of analysis strategies from diverse disciplinary traditions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Hence, the researcher's strategies depend on the investigations' intended outcomes alongside the data collected. The primary form of qualitative data analyzed is in the form of text that can span different sources such as newspapers, movies, e-mails, life histories, folktales, etc. In addition to the physical component in written form, qualitative data also aims to interpret narratives of the respondent through their experiences, interests, issues, feelings, activities, etc., that provide the researcher intel into human thought and human behavior (Draper, 2001, p. 769). Figure 4.1 summarizes some key techniques of analysis associated with textual qualitative data.

**Figure 4.1:** Typology of Qualitative Analysis Techniques (Adapted from Draper, 2001).



This study analyzes the textual data collected from interviews as a proxy for experience in the form of free-flowing text. In contrast, the text as an object of analysis is analyzed by considering narratives and conversations. The outcome of these approaches is to interpret textual meaning through processes of condensation, categorization, structuring, expansion, and other ad hoc methods (Kvale, 1996). The following section will introduce the conceptual basis of these techniques and their application in qualitative data analysis.

**4.3.1 Interview Analysis: Considerations**

As mentioned earlier, the appropriateness of analysis techniques depends on the intended outcomes of the researcher and the study. For interviews, methods employed are required to transform data into ‘results’ that aim to generate new knowledge or expand understanding of the topic of interest (Hoque et al., 2017, p. 333). The analysis process can be described as follows:

“Reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing frameworks for

communicating the essence of what the data reveals” (Patton, 2002, p. 432; as cited in Hoque et al., 2017, p. 333).

### A. Organization

Organizing interview data comprise methods of analyzing words, structuring, and categorization with the intent of creating codebooks. The coding process involves identifying words, themes, concepts, or labels used to describe ideas, behaviors, incidents, attitudes, relationships, individuals, contextual factors, processes, etc., to develop a conceptual understanding of the investigation (Hoque et al., 2017, p. 335). The codes can be created by the researcher analyzing the text or stem from theoretical knowledge of the subject and secondary information sources. Table 4.2 provides the typology of codes and their application to qualitative data.

**Table 4.2:** Code Types and Applications (Adapted from Hoque et al., 2017).

Type of Code	Characteristics	Application
<i>Conceptual codes</i>	Conceptual domains and essential conceptual dimensions of the domains	Categorization and development of themes and theories
<i>Relationship codes</i>	Establishes links between conceptual codes and/or subcodes	Identification of patterns, development of themes and theories
<i>Participant perspective codes</i>	Directional views of participants (positive, negative, neutral)	Identification of positions, patterns, themes, and theories
<i>Participant characteristic codes</i>	Participant identifiers such as age, gender, position, role, etc.	Comparison of concepts across different participants
<i>Setting codes</i>	Characteristics of the setting such as organization, structures, size, contextual factors (social, economic, political, cultural, environmental)	Compare concepts and participants across different types of setting

The purpose of coding (and, more broadly, textual analysis) is to describe different dimensions that prevail in interviews. This is an iterative process where new codes may be generated and/or existing codes redefined as more data is collected until no new concepts emerge (theoretical saturation). This technique goes beyond just providing structure, condensation, and categorization of data as the data is *segregated, grouped, regrouped, and linked to consider meaning and explanation* (Hoque et al., 2017, p. 335). The categorization of coded data allows the researcher to identify similarities and differences alongside theoretical

frameworks and instigates the development of thematic interpretations and interactions. Some other considerations used in this thesis to analyze words and formulate codebooks include the following techniques described in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3:** *Different techniques and their application for the organization of textual data and building codebooks in qualitative analysis (Draper, 2001).*

<b>Methods for Organization</b>	<b>Application</b>
<i>Key-Words-in-Context (KWIC)</i>	Researchers find all places in a text where particular words or phrases appear and printing it out in the context of some number of words before and after it.
<i>Word counts</i>	The number of times words appear in the text can provide insight into patterns, trends, and aid in the development of ideas pertinent to the investigation and allow for comparisons across participants or groups.
<i>Sampling</i>	Identification of texts and selecting the unit of analysis within texts which span the entire text, grammatical segments, or sections of the text pertinent to a particular or multiple themes.
<i>Themes</i>	Themes are abstract constructs that researchers identify before, during, and after data collection. By reading the text, the researcher looks for processes, actions, assumptions, and consequences through metaphors, repetition, and content shifts which can be social, cultural, political, economic, or environmental relative to theory, personal knowledge, and/or context of the study.
<i>Codebooks</i>	These are organized lists of codes that develop from insights into KWIC, word counts, sampling, themes, etc. It includes a detailed description of each code, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and examples of text for each identified theme. These lists are developed and refined throughout the research process until the point of saturation.

## **B. Relationships and Patterns**

Contrary to the organization of the data, which aims to describe content collected in a structured manner in the investigation; identification of relationships and patterns moves beyond description to explanation by assessing the internal structure of categories and condensations of texts and how they relate to one another (Hoque et al., 2017, p. 336). These include examining what connects these categories, their functionality across interviews and the context of the study, and the consistent connections across different interview data gathered (Hoque et al., 2017). Like organization, this is an iterative and interactive process between the researcher and the study. These patterns are evident as they repeatedly occur throughout the text in various forms:

“The connections may take the form of a cause-and-effect relationship; the categories may follow the same trajectory and/or generate similar effects; they may happen in predictably different ways; they may happen in a certain order; they may happen in relation to other activities or events; and they may happen often or seldom” (Saldana, 2009; as cited Hoque et al., 2017, p. 336).

Some common ways to represent and identify interactions evident in qualitative data are described in Table 4.4. Identifying trends, relationships, patterns, etc., forms the foundation of explanations, which provides meaning to the study.

**Table 4.4:** *Different techniques and their application for the identification and representation of relationships and patterns in textual data (Adapted from Draper, 2001).*

Methods of Interconnections	Application
<i>Word Cloud Analysis</i>	A visual representation of frequency of key words. The more commonly the term appears, the larger the word appears in the image. Furthermore, this method can reduce the text to their fundamental meaning of specific words and/or phrases to identify patterns and make comparisons.
<i>Theoretical semantics</i>	By identifying concepts and themes that emerge from the participant’s experiences and subjective perspectives, the researchers seek to make connections (or in some cases divergence) to formal theories. This allows insights into how the topic of interest being studied really works.
<i>Analytic Induction</i>	A non-quantitative method for identifying causal explanations that emerge in the investigation from close examinations of the cases. The researcher must first build a definition for the phenomenon of interest that requires an explanation and propose an explanation. The cases (qualitative data) are examined to see if the explanation fits. The explanation is accepted until a new case falsifies it consequently leading to new explanations and redefining criteria of the phenomenon (iterative).

### C. Interpretation

Interpretation of the data entails showing the significance of results and drawing conclusions rather than just providing explanations. *It is about transcending the “reality” of the data and progress toward the thematic, conceptual, and theoretical* (Saldana, 2009, p. 11; as

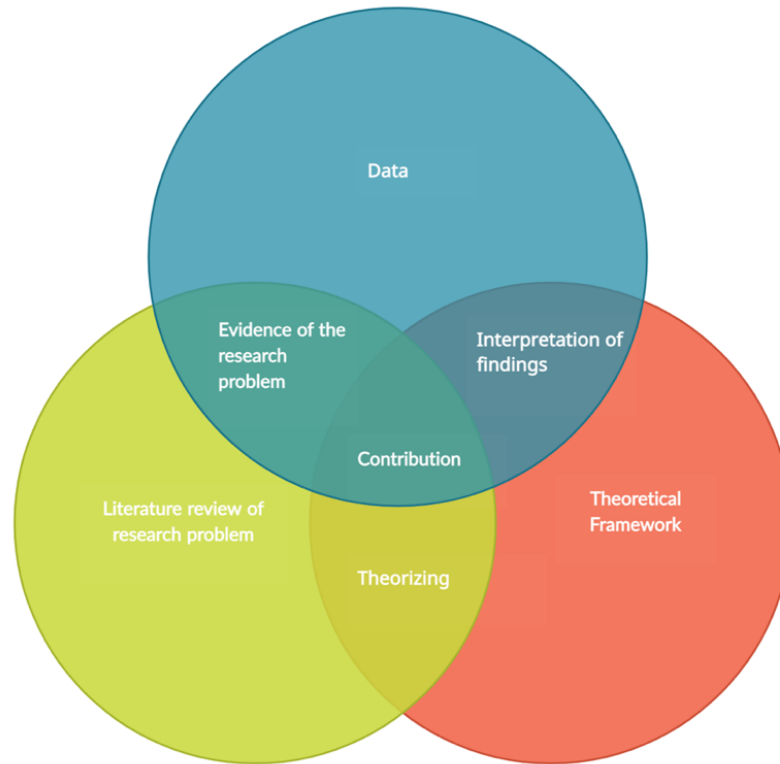
cited in Hoque et al., 2017, p. 337). The above sections dealt with organization, identification, and providing meaning; however, interpretation of meaning seeks to relate findings to the research question and deepen understanding of the investigation from the interactions of data collected, theory, researcher knowledge, narratives, conversations, etc., consequently leading to the generation of new knowledge to answer the research question. In contrast to the steps proposed above, interpretation recontextualizes the statements and meanings developed within broader frames of reference, leading to extensive textual evidence (Kvale, 1996, p. 193).

Since this takes on a broader stance to interpret the greater narrative of the study and why such meanings are important, the techniques employed are through an eclectic approach of *ad hoc methods* (Kvale, 1996, p. 203). In this case, there is no standard method used to analyze the interview; instead, it comprises an interplay and integration of techniques during analysis:

“The researcher may read the interview through and get an overall impression, then go back to specific passages, perhaps make some quantification like counting statement indicating different attitudes to a phenomenon, make deeper interpretations of specific statements, cast parts of the interview into a narrative, work out metaphors to capture the material, attempt a visualization of findings in flow diagrams, and so on” (Kvale, 1996, p. 203-204).

Figure 4.2 depicts the interaction of different components of qualitative analysis in efforts to interpret the meaning of the data collected and analyzed. Ultimately, the evidence gathered moves from descriptive to explanatory and from concrete to more conceptual and abstract understandings of the research goals through the combination of various methods of analysis (Kvale, 1996, p. 204). The final stage of the process is the researcher’s contribution, whereby he/she must be able to communicate these interpretations and their representations purposively and persuasively to develop a coherent understanding of the investigation systematically.

**Figure 4.2:** Venn Diagram depicting the interactive components for interpretation and significance of findings.



#### **4.4 Quantitative Data Collection**

Quantitative research is defined as:

“Quantifying the problem or research question and establishing the mechanisms through which one or more (quantitative) variable(s) may affect another variable. The following phrases are linked with a quantitative methodology and are used interchangeably: a deductive approach, an etic view, objective epistemology, a structured approach, systematic approach, numerically-based data collection, statistical analyses, and replicable research design” (Taheri et al., 2015, p. 155).

Contrary to the descriptive, verbal, and narrative characteristics of qualitative data in interviewing, quantitative methods focus on empirical measures of quantities and relationships

between numerical attributes that are structured and follow scientifically rigorous procedures (Bowling, 2005, p. 190). Quantitative research techniques seek to answer, 'what will be measured', 'in whom', 'at what time point', and 'how', through instruments such as surveys, experiments, or correlation studies, etc. (Holt, 2009, p. 234). A crucial component of quantitative approaches is objectivity, to produce accurate and reliable measurements through statistical analysis.

The quantitative research design often begins with a hypothesis to be tested whereby the data collected and analyzed either support or refute the hypothesis. These statements ultimately form the foundation of theories that explain situations through testable and justified evidence. Unlike qualitative data, quantitatively produced data offers comparability, generalizability, and replicable due to standardized approaches (Goertzen, 2017). The quantitative methods selected for data collection are based on their ability to enhance the reliability and validity of the study (Holt, 2009). Reliability refers to how the chosen approach collects the same data repeatedly. In contrast, the validity of the methods employed ensures that the data collected accurately measures the research's intended goals (Holt, 2009, p. 235).

The quantitative approach chosen is determined by the evidence needed to answer the research question. The primary form of quantitative data collected in this thesis is through surveys.

#### **4.4.1 Surveys**

A survey is a method of collecting information from a sample of the population of interest (Bowling, 2005, p. 190). Due to the exploratory nature of the investigation, this thesis employs a descriptive survey. The researcher does not assume a hypothesis in a *descriptive survey* but collects data to interpret overall trends, incidence, and prevalence of outcomes pertinent to the research goals (Kelley-Quon, 2018). In contrast, an *analytical survey* poses hypothesis-driven questions about relationships between factors (Kelley-Quon, 2018). Other types include *longitudinal surveys* administered multiple times over a fixed period or *correlation surveys* similar to analytical surveys that compare relationships between variables.

A crucial element of the survey design rests in the questions asked, which should be objective and comprehensible for the participants. The validity of surveys administered is measured in terms of readability and comprehension by the user; the questions posed should be unbiased and answerable; if the instrument measures what the research design is intended to measure. *A validated survey can be assumed to measure a particular outcome it was*

*designed to measure when administered to the population it was designed to evaluate* (Kelley-Quon, 2018).

The survey's primary goal is to collect information from many people based on specific characteristics and examine the data for similarities and differences to determine a general overview of the investigation (Holt, 2009, p. 234). The advantages of surveys as a quantitative measure stem from their ability to gather the same information from each participant; cover large groups of people; spread across wide locations; and be cost-effective. However, the major challenge of research conducted through surveys is poor response rates, reducing the sample's generalizability to the larger population. A 50% response rate is generally considered acceptable, 60% as good, and 70% is considered very good (Coughlan et al., 2009, p. 10). According to Umbach (2005), low response rates lead to non-response errors due to individual or item non-responses. This occurs when a low number of participants from the sample respond or when respondents do not answer one or more questions, leading to a probable non-representativeness of the population.

Researchers may use tactics to increase response rates to improve the survey's reliability, such as through incentives alongside weighting the survey for non-responses. Other challenges result from respondents not providing honest feedback to present themselves positively, in situations where they asked for help in its completion or inability to comprehend words or phrases. This can exclude certain voices and further reduce the sample's representativeness to the population (Coughlan et al., 2009). Inappropriate sampling techniques, in some cases, can lead to results that do not complement the results of more extensively distributed surveys and are less precise than those of an otherwise comparable complete enumeration resulting in sampling errors. Hence careful construction of the survey components such as scales used and performing field tests with prospective respondents to assess questions and their measures can enhance the reliability and validity of surveys as a method of data collection.

### **A. Survey Sample Selection**

Sampling in a quantitative approach refers to selecting a smaller group of participants for the study to make generalizations about the larger population based on the outcomes of results (Holt, 2009, p. 235). Unique characteristics of survey sampling include its application to finite populations, accounts for different selection and estimation methods, utilizes both equal

and unequal probabilities, and aims to use the most appropriate design to obtain and produce accurate results or estimates (Foreman, 1991, p. 3).

The case study in this thesis also presents the challenge of imbalanced data whereby samples are not evenly distributed into different classes of the population of interest. The most common situation includes one class containing a majority of data samples. In contrast, the samples in the other minority class are sporadic creating accuracy challenges for the minority samples, which are misclassified relative to the majority class with higher prediction accuracy (Gnip, 2021). To mitigate the challenges of imbalanced datasets, sampling methods employed can entail better representativeness of the population.

The sample is the basis for inferring statistical estimates of that target population of interest. These estimates provide the researcher with population counts, demographic categories, measures of relevant dimensions, reveal relationships, quantify characteristics that describe that population, and may be used to make appropriate predictions. Sampling a subset of the population permits the researcher to collect a wide range of data, utilizes a combination of methods across observation, measurements, or questions posed, and is cost-effective. If appropriate sampling techniques are carried out effectively, the results can be analyzed more carefully and subject to less frequent sampling errors. The primary survey sampling techniques employed in this thesis include the following:

- In a *simple random sampling*, the members of the population of interest are numbered, and a number of them are selected randomly without replacing them (Bowling, 2005, p. 196). In this method, each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. Essentially this is parallel to putting the names of the sample frame into a hat and drawing out a unit at random.
- *Selective oversampling* appends data to original data and extends the size of the minority class (Gnip et al., 2021). By selecting certain classes within the population, the data set seeks to balance the distribution and be more representative of the population.

#### **4.5 Quantitative Data Analysis**

The primary goal of data analysis is to quantify the data collected and present it in a comprehensible way to the reader and the goals of the research. In quantitative research, the data collected is numerical or converted into numerical form. Statistical techniques essentially

describe and analyze *variables* that are characteristics of interest to the study and measured through association with different values. Variables can be quantitative (e.g., weight) or categorical (e.g., eye color), independent (the value is not affected by any other variables), or dependent (the value is affected by other variables) (Chin & Lee, 2008). In addition, variables may be analyzed individually (univariate analysis), two variables at a time (bivariate analysis), or multiple variables together at a time (multivariate analysis) (Chin & Lee, 2008). The type of analysis is dependent on the data collected and goals of the research, whether it is to summarize results, determine correlations, seek relationships, or establish predictions of outcomes. Statistical inference of the sample relative to the population of interest can be descriptive or inferential.

*Descriptive statistics* can be defined as the numerical procedures and/or graphical techniques used to organize and describe the characteristics or factors of a given sample by providing insight into central tendency, variability, and frequency distributions (Holt, 2009, p. 236). There are three general levels of measurement (Fisher & Marshall, 2009) – 1) *Nominal* (or categorical) measures aim to delegate data into broad categories, for example, outcomes of results between men and women; 2) *Ordinal* measures describe hierarchal ordered categories and are commonly used for attributes that cannot be directly measured such as an individual's level of satisfaction; and 3) Continuous data use infinite scale measures whereby increments on the scale are of equal distance and can be divided into intervals or ration levels, some examples include weight measured in grams or volume measured in milliliters. On the other hand, *Inferential statistics* uses information from a sample to estimate the corresponding figures for a population and consequently make comparisons between samples and populations by establishing a level of confidence in each result through parametric or non-parametric tests and may seek prediction of outcomes (Holt, 2009, p. 236; Coughlan et al., 2009).

The survey component of the thesis employs a mix of quantitative and qualitative posed questions with both nominal and ordinal data measures. However, the primary form of quantitative data analysis is through the Likert scale and inferential statistical testing for selected questions.

#### **4.5.1 The Likert Scale**

The Likert scale is generally considered an ordinal measure whereby categories are assigned a numerical value ordered from a low score to a high score (numerical hierarchy)

(Fisher & Marshall, 2009). The dispersion between categories can be presented through the frequency distributions based on data gathered. The Likert scale was devised as a scientifically accepted and validated method of quantifying subjective preferential thinking, feeling, actions, etc. Traditionally, participants in a study are given statements. The scale measures one's level of agreement with the statement across several categories assigned a numerical value (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) to reveal the subject's specific attitude towards the information provided (Joshi et al., 2015).

The independence of subjects' responses and interpretation depends on scale symmetry. If the position of neutrality lies exactly in between two extremes, the subject is given independence to choose any response in a balanced and symmetric manner in either direction, also known as the symmetric scale. On the contrary, the asymmetric scale offers fewer choices on one side of neutrality than the other (Joshi et al., 2015, p. 397-398). Often, the development of the scale stems from the research goals.

The measure aims to interpret the subject's perspectives or opinions of a particular phenomenon of interest (of the research) or the 'latent' variable. *The latent variable is expressed by several manifested items in the questionnaire of the survey* (Joshi et al., 2015, p. 398). These predetermined statements or questions are mutually exclusive to address a specific dimension of the research and, consequently, part of the whole phenomenon of interest to the investigation. The combined scores of the questionnaire generate a composite score that seeks to logically interpret a precise dimension of the inquiry (Joshi et al., 2015).

The validity of the Likert scale is determined by its applicability to the research goals, comprehensibility of the questionnaire to the participant, and judgments interpreted by the researcher (Joshi et al., 2015, p. 399). Questions or statements related to topics that do not tie into contextual factors or familiarity of the target group may lead to similarities in response patterns independent of the points on the scale. In this instance, the responses may be centered towards the center (neutral) or the extremes. However, a topic relevant to contextual factors of the participant and interpreted by the user can reveal better content and improve the validity of responses.

### **A. Analysis of the Responses in Likert Scales**

The analysis of responses from Likert scale data stems from whether the data collected can generate a composite index for measuring attitude. To determine the appropriateness for a

single composite index, the researcher must consider the following questions about the investigation (Joshi et al., 2015, p. 399):

- Are the items of the questionnaire arranged in a particular sequence?
- Are the items posed closely interrelated but provide some independent information as well?
- Do elements of the questionnaire prevail some coherence or expectedness between responses whereby the response of one question is based on the previous one?
- Does each item measure a distinct dimension of the issue?

Suppose the researcher finds affirmative responses to the above questions. In that case, a composite index of the responses may be developed to measure the collective stance of the respondent towards the phenomenon under investigation and termed ‘interval’ estimates (Joshi et al., 2015, p. 400). On the other hand, if the research entails analyzing all individual responses of a singular item rather than combining items (based on the above criteria), this is called ‘ordinal’ estimates. The statistical inference techniques employed for interval and ordinal estimates of Likert scale items are summarized in Table 4.5 below.

**Table 4.5:** Data analysis procedures for Likert Scale or Likert Type Scale data (Adapted from Joshi et al., 2015; Boone & Boone, 2012).

	<b>Composite Score (Likert Scale)</b>	<b>No Composite Score (Likert Type Scale)</b>
<b>Scale</b>	Interval scale	Ordinal scale
<b>Central tendency</b>	Mean	Median (or Mode)
<b>Dispersion</b>	Standard deviation	Frequency (or range)
<b>Association</b>	Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r)	Kendall tau B or C test
<b>Other Statistics</b>	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Regression Analysis	Chi- square test

Hence, the methods adopted for analysis of Likert scale responses rest on the item response variable categorized by an ordinal or interval scale determined by the construct of the research instrument derived from the goals of the study. This thesis analyzes data on a ‘Likert type scale’ with chi-square tests performed for selected questions.

#### **4.6 Transitional Comment**

This chapter outlines the primary forms of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses techniques employed in the case study of this thesis across their conceptual basis, application, strengths, weakness, and some key considerations to improve approaches within the context of the investigation. The combinations of methods outlined through a mixed methods research design seek to enhance the depth of analysis pertinent to understanding coastal tourism dynamics while improving the validity and reliability of findings. This concludes Part I: Basic Concepts of this thesis that covers the theoretical knowledge of tourism research relevant to the case study. The next chapter is Part II: Coastal Tourism in Abu Dhabi, UAE which is the case study and introduces the setting and characteristics relevant to coastal tourism in the region.

## Chapter 5: The Setting and Research Questions

*“Wealth is not money or oil; wealth lies in people, and it is worthless if not dedicated to serving the people”.*

- HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (Chaves, 2021)

The primary setting for this research is the emirate of Abu Dhabi in the UAE. Characterized as a maritime nation, the region exemplifies a symbiotic relationship between humans and their environment, allowing traditions to manifest in the present day. This chapter introduces the region’s environmental, social, political, and economic characteristics through history to the present day. Next, this chapter introduces the tourism dynamics of Abu Dhabi with reference to the BLT, HANS, and PDS models (see Chapter 3), the major tourism sites associated with the coastal zone in the region, followed by the aims of the thesis and its research questions.

### 5.1 Background: The Middle East

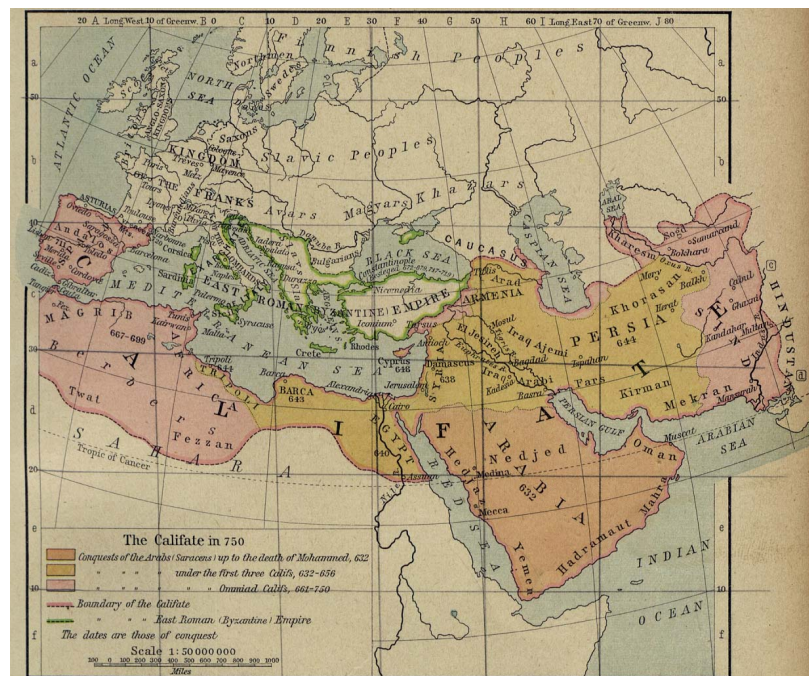
Europeans first coined the term ‘Middle East’ in the late 19th century to describe a geographic entity where the three continents that formed the Old-World meet (Asia, Africa, and Europe). Historically, the region comprises land by the eastern Mediterranean Sea, Britain’s empire in India, Persia (later Iran), the Mesopotamian provinces of the Ottoman Empire (later Iraq), the east half of Saudi Arabia, centered in the Arabian (or Persian) Gulf (Downing, 2006). The region is associated with the origin of a rich source of human civilizations such as Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, Hittite, Greek, the Levant, Persia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the birth of three great religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It was also governed by numerous empires, such as the Neo-Assyrian empires, Achaemenid, Macedonian, Iranian, Roman, and Byzantine Empires, exemplifying its geopolitical status throughout history (Downing, 2006).

The interpretation is subjective and fluid as the region was between two extremes – the Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia, and the Persian and Central Asian lands (Scharnweber, 2016). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of Arab Nationalism, the term expanded to ‘The Middle East and North Africa (MENA),’ collectively referred to as the Arab World due to the inclusion of Israel, Turkey, and Iran (Scharnweber, 2016). The emergence of the Ottoman empire gave rise to terms such as the ‘Islamic or Muslim World’ to include Muslim populations across Asia and

Africa (such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Sudan). The geographic characteristics, shared historical and cultural experiences, and religious and linguistic patterns have allowed terms such as the MENA, Arab World, and the Islamic World to be used interchangeably to describe the Middle East we know today.

The countries that comprise the Middle East can be divided into regional subgroups. The *Arabian Gulf* includes the world's major oil producers such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, and the non-Gulf states of Iran and Iraq. The *Levant* settlements brought Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine countries into the Middle East region. Other *Eurasian* countries in the Middle East include Cyprus, Turkey, and Yemen. The wider *MENA region* has allowed the inclusion of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and the disputed territory of Western Sahara. The political influence of Egypt over Sudan from 1899 to 1955 allowed Egypt close ties with the Middle East. Arab and Muslim forces in northern Sudan have also led to Sudan's closer relations with Middle Eastern countries relative to other regions of sub-Saharan Africa (Stewart, 2012, p. 27-28). In addition, scholars have also included Afghanistan and Pakistan, although geographically distant from the Middle East and heavily influenced by *Central Asian and South Asian* culture and history (Stewart, 2012, p. 29).

**Figure 5.1:** Historical Map of the Middle East and settlements at the intersection of Africa, Europe, and Asia developed by Europeans at the height of the Islamic Caliphate in 750 A.D (Adapted from *The Historical Atlas* by William R. Shepherd, 1926, as cited in *University of Texas Libraries*, 2021).

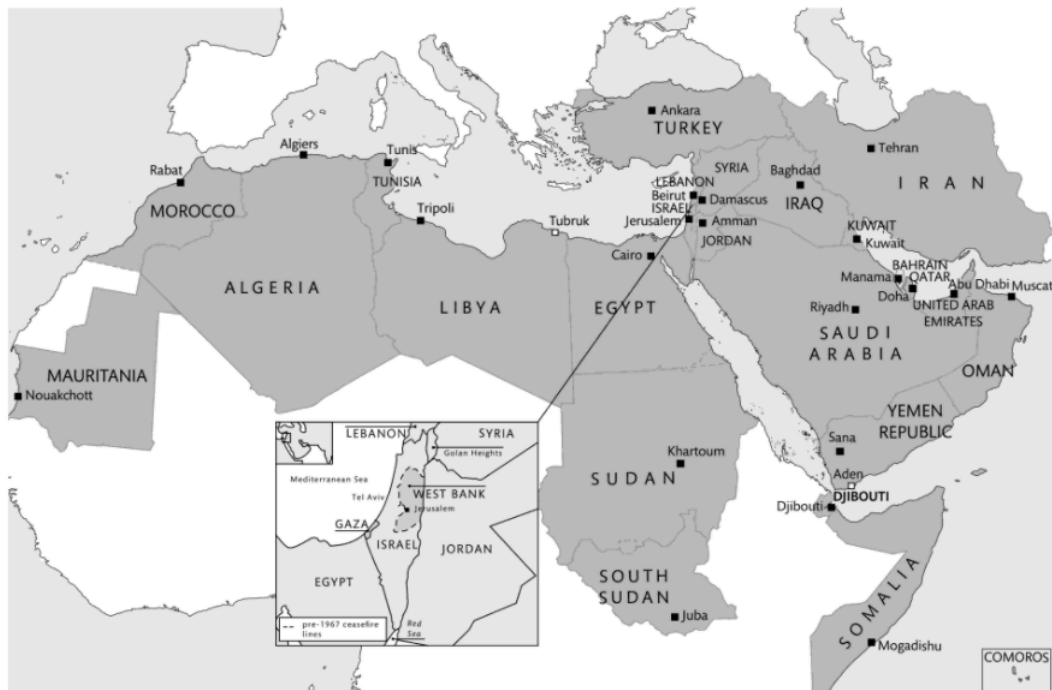


Majority of the population is of Arab descent (with considerable diversity within this group). Still, other non-Arab ethnicities include Iranians, Turks, Jews, Berbers, Kurds,

Arameans, Shabaks, Assyrians, Samaritans, etc. Literary Arabic is the official language with numerous dialects spoken across the Middle East. Other languages commonly spoken are Farsi, Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Greek, and English. The linguistic bond of Arabs transcends into religion, in which Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran. The typical unifying characteristics of this region include political structures of authoritarianism or monarchies, economic prospects due to the abundance of petroleum and oil resources, and the cultural and religious relationship between Arabs and Islam, respectively (Fawcett, 2016).

In the modern world, the Middle East remains a pivotal geopolitical point due to two factors emphasizing priorities for regional security – First was the establishment of Israel in the Arab core of the region, which is predominantly Islamic. The second was the discovery of significant petroleum reserves and oil deposits (Anderson, 2013). Despite similarities, these characteristics indicate no single criteria that define the countries in the Middle East. Rather the countries in the region have extensive connections (natural and social), both historical and current, with neighboring areas, which have contributed to the complexity and vitality of the region (Stewart, 2012, p. 25).

**Figure 5.2:** Map of the Modern Middle East (Adapted from Fawcett, 2016, p. 4).



There exist extensive written archives and oral histories chronicling the region's historical development across geography, culture, politics, religion, etc., from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. An extensive review of these sources is not necessary for the scope of this thesis. Still, some history helpfully contextualizes the modern-day situation in the Middle East and, more specifically, the UAE and its capital city Abu Dhabi, in the Arabian Peninsula, the region of interest in this thesis.

## **5.2: Geography and Environment**

The Arabian Peninsula – encompassing the UAE – is a land bridge suspended at the junction of Eurasia with Africa and southern Asia. The peninsula occupies an area of approximately 3,198,071 km<sup>2</sup>, surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea in the north, the Red Sea in the west, the Arabian (or Persian) Gulf in the east, and the Arabian Sea in the South, forming a coastline of over 9000 km (Brooke et al., 2006). The topography of the Arabian Peninsula is characterized by the separation of African and Arabian tectonic plates accompanied by volcanism in the west and the formation of the Zagros mountains in the east. This has heavily influenced the drainage system in the region, whereby not a single watercourse reaches the sea throughout the year leading to the emergence of 'Wadis,' a streambed with intermitted watercourses (Brooke et al., 2006). Freshwater sources found in the coastal zones are supplied by the underground seepage of these major wadi systems that reach the surface near the shore.

The central geographic characteristic of this region is a large plateau that reaches a maximum height of 2,500 ft and slopes downward towards the Arabian Gulf. Its topographic, geographic, and hydrographic features have distinguished this region composed of the central plateau and mobile deserts in the north, mountains in the east, and coastal lands with ecosystems such as coral reefs in the Red Sea. Regarding climatic conditions, the region is often referred to as the "dry world" due to the arid characteristics of the desert (Stewart, 2012, p. 29). The area consists of a mid-latitude climate with extremely high temperatures in the summer and relies on winter rainfall. Approximately one-third of the region is dominated by the 'Empty Quarter (Rub al-Khali), one of the largest sand deserts extending for 1000 km along the east-west coast of the peninsula, crossing borders into Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, and the UAE. Though the region is predominantly arid, other climate zones are present due to various landforms, seas, and coastal systems which act as mitigators of aridity in the region. For

example, extreme variation in annual precipitation is due to a wide range of topographic elevations in regions such as the UAE (Brooke et al., 2006).

**Figure 5.3:** Geomorphology of the Arabian Peninsula depicting mountainous regions, the sand seas, and wadis (Adapted from Alsharhan et al., 2001, p. 12).



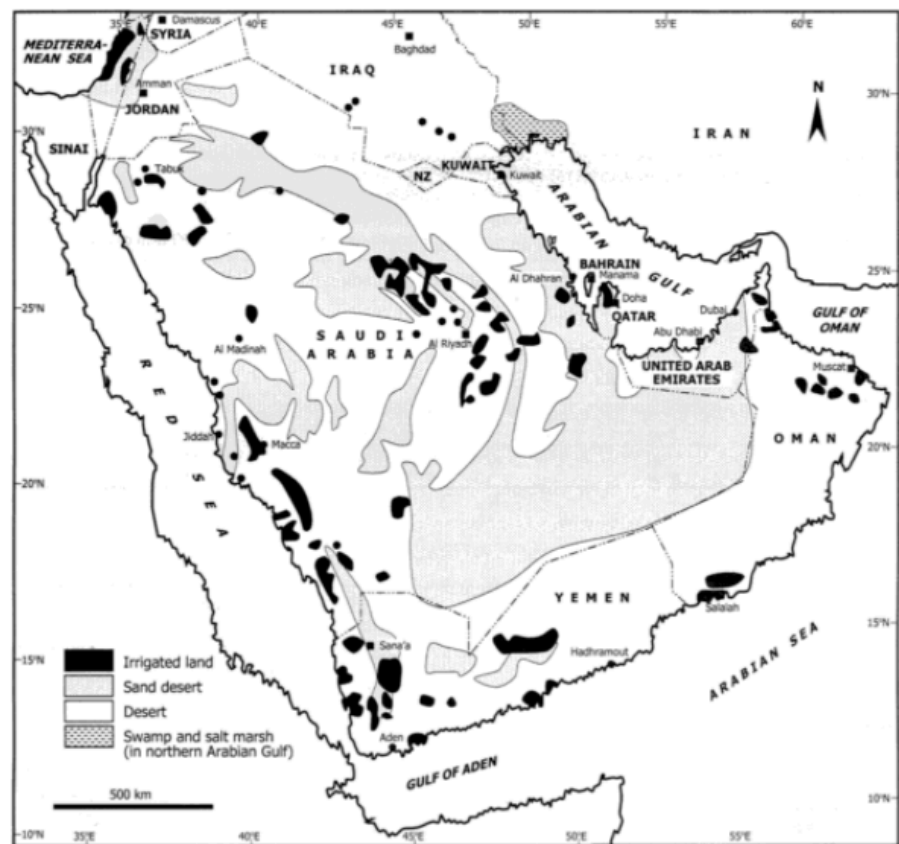
The terrestrial ecosystems are – mountains, gravel plains, sand sheets, sabkhas (coastal flats), urban ecosystems, and modern and ancient agro-ecosystems, each with unique vegetation and wildlife documented by various scholars (Jongbloed et al., 2003; Abuzinada & Joubert, 1999; Boer, 1999; Taha et al., 2004). Despite its inhospitable climate, the diversity of species is extremely high due to the formation of the Middle Eastern land bridge during the Miocene era resulting in faunal elements of Palearctic, Afrotropical, and Oriental origins

(Brooke et al., 2006). In addition, many new species evolved in Arabia, and a large portion of the fauna and flora today is endemic.

The coastal and marine ecology of the Arabian Peninsula is characterized by unique ecosystems – the arid coastal zone, coastal wetlands, mangroves and salt marshes, seagrass beds, macroalgal beds, and coral reefs. The high energy marine climate, saltwater intrusion, and increased sedimentation rates contribute to a stressful environment, leading to adaptive features of biota to tolerate extreme conditions while simultaneously exhibiting high productivity (Brooke et al., 2006). Despite the lack of freshwater sources, numerous springs characterized by oasis-type vegetation are endemic to the desert. In addition to the biodiversity associated with coastal and marine ecosystems of the region, the waters support many internationally recognized species of sea turtles, seabirds, and marine mammals (including dugongs).

Unlike other marine environments around the world, the water of the Arabian Peninsula is still in a near-pristine state. However, urbanization and anthropogenic threats are increasing rapidly. The Arabian Gulf water body comprises vast petroleum deposits, and its ports subsequently form a global shipping hub (Stewart, 2012, p. 35). Entry into the Gulf is determined by the Strait of Hormuz, an international waterway of strategic importance historically and presently. These ecosystems and their associated resources are the foundation of the region's reputation across geography, politics, economy, and culture.

**Figure 5.4:** Landscape and vegetation of the Arabian Peninsula (Adapted from Alsharhan et al., 2001, p. 17).



### 5.2.1 The Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah, Umm Al Quwain, Fujairah) situated in the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, covering an area of 83,600 km<sup>2</sup> (Alsharhan & Perry, 2008). The north and north-west of the country are bounded by the Arabian Gulf, the Musandam Peninsula at the enclave of Oman, and the Gulf of Oman; to the south is Saudi Arabia and Oman; and to the west by Qatar and Saudi Arabia (Dawson, 2003). The emirate of Abu Dhabi is the capital and situated to the east of the Arabian Peninsula, overlooking the Gulf of Oman to the east, and the Arabian Gulf in the North, linked together by the Strait of Hormuz. Abu Dhabi is the largest of the seven emirates covering an area of 67,340 km<sup>2</sup> (excluding associated natural islands) and constitutes approximately 86% of the total landmass of UAE (Alsharhan & Perry, 2008).

**Figure 5.5:** Map of Abu Dhabi, UAE, with respect to the Arabian Peninsula.



Climatic conditions in the region are like those in the Arabian Peninsula, with aridity characterized by high temperatures and low rainfall. The mountainous regions receive the most precipitation with the highest mean value of 479 mm, followed by coastal areas receiving about 80 mm in regions such as Abu Dhabi (Alsharhan & Perry, 2008). The terrestrial environment is dominated by vast stretches of sandy deserts, sand sheets, sabkhas (coastal and inland), mountains, wadis, and alluvial and interdunal plains. Other critical terrestrial systems include oases, farmlands, and urban ecosystems. The coastline of mainland UAE extends for approximately 650 km across the Arabian Gulf in the north and the Gulf of Oman to the east (Alsharhan & Perry, 2008). It covers about 1400 km, including almost 200 natural islands, channels, and indentations. Specialized ecosystems in this region include mangroves, seagrass beds, salt marshes, tidal flats, sandy and rocky beaches, coastal flats, and coral reefs. The emergence of these terrestrial, coastal, and marine systems is associated with the geographic, topographic, and hydrographic characteristics that have influenced the Arabian Peninsula.

### **5.3 National Identity**

Historical interactions between ethnicities, languages, and religions in the MENA region are crucial factors influencing leadership and its population's national and individual identity. Despite the dynamic forces of globalization, national responses have sought to retain many aspects of its historical foundations. One's ethnicity can be described as:

“A social or group identity that an individual ascribes to themselves and that is also accepted by others. Ethnic categories are often based on differences in languages, religion, and cultural practices between groups. A past shared history, such as descent from a particular ancestor or group, is a common feature of ethnic identification” (Stewart, 2012, p. 49).

In the MENA region, language, ethnicity, and religion can form both divergent and overlapping patterns challenging the notion of identity. Just as how the diversity of the MENA region translates into a rich source of cultures, ethnicities, religions, etc., coming together, the Arab identity was never tied to a single group or one 'Arabian' land in inscriptions or oral histories (Webb, 2016). Rather than a broad communal consciousness connected to place (or region), Arabian groups conceptualized their identities in more localized terms originating from

the coalition of nomadic groups to form tribal communities before the rise of Islam (Webb, 2016). A divergent interpretation of the Arab identity stems from the emergence of Islam, whereby Arabs are visible as a self-aware community. However, historical records show that the term was never used by the people it referred to. Webb, 2016 reiterates this by comparing the paradigm of Indian-ness to Arab-ness as he describes:

“Pre-Columbian people could never have called themselves ‘Indians’ (they did not live in India, after all!), nor does it seem pre-Islamic Arabians called themselves ‘Arabs’. Accordingly, the ‘Arab’ idea appears as an outsider’s invention to whitewash and/or simplify contours in Arabian history and identity” (Webb, 2016).

Instead of referring to a singular entity, the Arab identity forms the lifestyle of distinguished communities that share a regional bond through culture despite varied ethnicities. In Gulf states such as the UAE, Arab nationalism retains some residual force in the present day through the practice of *wahda* (unity), exemplifying local identity bound by *asabiyya* (solidarity) and Islam (Held & Ulrichsen, 2013, p. 53-53).

The following subcategories of identities associated with the Arab Gulf states represent one identity that has evolved at different points in time due to interactions across environmental, social, political, and economic factors.

### **5.3.1 Tribal Identity**

The leadership of Arab Gulf states (such as the UAE) and its local population (UAE nationals) are tribal in origin. As a society’s genealogical building block, many nationals hold a tribal name that forms part of their last name (For example, a tribal name such as ‘Ameri’ would be depicted as Muhammad (an individual’s first name) bin (=son of) Khalifa bin Muhammad Al ‘Ameri’). These names depict the ancestral descent of individuals, and subsequently, one’s existence is embedded within this group whose moral responsibilities are to provide support and protection (Heard-Bey, 2001). With the accumulation of numerous tribes and the expansion of their size, many of the last names of local families in the UAE today are derived from one of the several sub-divisions of the tribe (*qabilah*). These horizontal divisions are kinship groups (*ayal*) and the sub-tribes (*fakhdh*), perceived in genealogical terms. These divisions subsequently form an extension of the extended family (Heard-Bey, 2001, p. 99). The

largest tribe of Abu Dhabi and Dubai is the Baniyas tribe, and members of this group have family names such as Al Mazui, Al Qubaisi, or Al Hamili, which refer to the sub-tribes to which they belong (Heard-Bey, 2001, p. 99).

The tribes of the UAE consist of three major social groups – Bedouin (nomadic pastoralists), rural, and urban. The population was not innate to the region. It took possession of lands in the Arabian Peninsula originating from the south Syrian deserts and southern Jordan around 200 CE, and Yemen through Oman and central and northern Arabia after the rise of Islam in 630 CE. Official records revealed 44 tribes comprised of 80,000 people up to date, divided between 5 principalities whose territorial extent includes the UAE today (although this may be an underestimate) (Heard-Bey, 2001, p. 100). The arrival of new tribal groups into the region led to new relationships between members who retained a strong kinship with people in the Arabian Peninsula, a sense of belonging to the Arab (*ummah*) through a common language and the language of their religion (Heard-Bey, 2001, p. 100). This identity is not only the basis of their social and political structure but allowed the diversification of economic pursuits in efforts to adapt to the harsh environment of the deserts:

“For both settler and Bedouin communities, the tribe forms the foundation of their society. For the individual, tribal belonging reassures the comforts of home and security which is paramount for social structures associated with a strong kinship built with land and water” (Heard-Bey, 2001, p. 100)

### **5.3.2 Emirati Identity**

“The origins of Emirati national identity lie in the collective experience of modernization in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century UAE. This identity should be understood not as a fixed set of beliefs or symbols but as a constantly evolving conversation about what it means to be Emirati. Over the 1970s, the new UAE saw the emergence of a political-legal term – *al-muwatin* or “the national” – as a category of both political-territorial space and personhood. Beginning in the late 1900s, “Emirati” gradually became the most common signifier of national identity” (MacLean, 2021, p. 1-2).

Although the origins of the term ‘Emirati’ remain obscure, in 2010, the term came to identify the national population of the UAE and its culture. The Emirati identity emerged with

the rise of a new generation born after *qiyam al-ittihad*, the passing of the founding generation of the UAE and pan-Arabism in the region, and the increasing centralization of the state in Abu Dhabi, UAE (MacLean, 2021, p. 4). The onset of globalization through free trade, urbanization, and development led to the need for national integration through the Emirati identity. The interaction of citizens from different parts of the emirate (and other emirates) across various sectors eventually diluted regional dialects into a standard accent, leading to the emergence of a common Emirati in the global sphere (MacLean, 2021, p. 5).

The collective experience of modernization is a potent force in the formation of Emirati national identity in the UAE, referred to as *qiyam al-dawla* (the founding of the state) or *qiyam al-ittihad* (the founding of the federation) (MacLean, 2021, p. 3). The new state not only led to investment in national infrastructure, education, and employment, but the arrival of citizens from other Arab and non-Arab countries led to profound cultural changes and dislocations (MacLean, 2021). English emerged as the country's lingua franca, and the white kandoora for men and black abaya for women (national dress) became the standard that visually differentiated UAE nationals (MacLean, 2021, p. 3). The citizenry (*al-muwatin*) was to develop in all spheres of the nation (economically, intellectually, culturally, and politically) by creating both legal and territorial identity that seeks a more inclusive understanding of UAE nationality by retaining its tribal and subnational identities through culture (MacLean, 2021, p. 4). This interaction of tradition and modernity, as seen through Emirati nationalism, is best explained by sociologist Edward Shils:

“Tradition often possesses sufficient ambiguity and hence flexibility to allow innovations to enter without severely disruptive consequences. Then, too, patterns of traditional beliefs (and their accompanying practices) do not form such a rigorously unitary whole; some parts are more affirmative toward modernity, or at least less resistant toward innovation. Many traditional beliefs are not so much objects of zealous devotion to symbols of the past as they are the resultants of a situation without alternatives. Once alternatives become visible and available, what appeared to be an immobile tradition might well yield to a new practice” (Shils, E., 1966, p. 32, as cited in Al-Naim, 2006, p. 20)

### 5.3.3 Khaleeji Identity

The geopolitical importance of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states due to the influence of oil wealth in the politics of the Gulf led to the *Khaleeji* (male) or *Khaleejyah* (female) identity or 'Gulf' in English, a regional identity shared among the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. This identity is strongly tied to the region's strategic significance and social class (whereby the elite ruling class (UAE nationals) in the Gulf are the most relevant to oil production and policy), which measures society through material value. From a constructive knowledge perspective, regionalism is defined as:

“A product of regional awareness, a shared sense of belonging to a particular regional community...Therefore sub-regional integration is dependent on the compatibility of major values relevant to political decision-making” (Abdullah, 2016, p. 3).

The khaleeji identity tied to the state's capital (khaleeji capital) recognizes social actors and identity as drivers of political interests and, subsequently, regional security of the GCC states (Hanieh, 2010 & Abdullah, 2016, p. 3). The khaleeji capital and identity of Gulf nationals is a social relation, and it is this relation that undergoes self-expansion through internationalization within the broader capitalist economy (Hanieh, 2010, p. 37).

The failure of Arabism to effectively integrate and represent the social dimensions of the region led to khaleeji which represents common culture, history, tradition, and heritage and seeks to complement existing socio-political identities – Arab, Islamic, tribal and national identities (Abdullah, 2016, p. 3-4). As the Middle East presently is unstable and threatened socially, politically, and economically; the GCC states, in contrast, have remained relatively stable and function as a coherent body and is exemplified across various facets of material and social development:

“They (the GCC) are now the “nerve center of the contemporary Arab world's culture, commerce, design, architecture, art, and academia. The Gulf states need to reflect on their particularities, strengths, and weaknesses as they find themselves occupying positions of power and influence in the Middle East that they are unaccustomed to” (Abdullah, 2016, p. 4).

The new phase of multiculturalism at the intersection of tradition and modernity has led to the complex nature of self-image through *khaleejiness* (Al-Misned, 2016, p. 35). Hence, khaleejiness explores identity and evolves as a multifaceted, ever-changing feature of reality in communities of the GCC states. The Khaleeji identity concerning policy and responses in the GCC states is a dynamic social entity strengthening intra-GCC relations at the elite and grassroots level informing regional security and relationships (Abdullah, 2016, p. 4). Although states in this region are traditionally authoritarian, identity drives domestic attitudes and regional and international policy positions to create sustainable social, political, and economic policies within a globalized yet culturally determined market society (Abdullah, 2016, p. 4).

#### **5.4 Culture**

Culture is a multi-faceted phenomenon that can manifest across knowledge, social systems, and behavior, and is ever-changing across social-cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors. It becomes tough to define what constitutes culture, especially in regions such as the Middle East and, more specifically, the Arab Gulf states, which are dynamic in response to globalized forces while trying to retain their historical foundations. Rather than attempting to define the origins of culture, this thesis will borrow the words of Goodenough and his work on cultural anthropology:

“Culture, being what people have to learn, as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge. Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things people have in their minds, their models of perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them” (Goodenough, 1957).

Despite the rapid development of Arab states such as the UAE and consequently the evolution of culture, the UAE has a long cultural and traditional history of familial and tribal bonds that stem from a strong kinship with the environment and religion. Since the focus of this thesis is the coastal zone of Abu Dhabi, UAE, this section will focus on the maritime heritage of the UAE, one of the many cultural attributes of this region.

#### **5.4.1 Maritime Heritage**

The UAE is a multidimensional region of identities defined by geographic, historical, socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. One dimension that is crucial to the culture and identity of the UAE is the fact that the country is bounded on two sides by important saltwater bodies, the Arabian Gulf, and the Gulf of Oman. With a mainland coastline that extends approximately 800 km, the UAE is considered a maritime nation. The dependence on the coast and its resources allowed socio-cultural pursuits such as tribal subsistence and technology, symbolic associations of humankind and the sea, centers of relationship building, and transformation of social groups (such as from nomads to settlers); economic pursuits of seafaring, trade, commerce, fishing, pearl diving; and political development such as settlements with leadership embedded in traditional tribal social systems, and the emergence of national identities.

Although traditions and customs associated with the coast are dynamic across all aspects of life, four main entities have strong ties to the maritime heritage in the region – the natural environment, the harvest of the sea, pearl diving, dhow (traditional boat) building, which has been integral to nation-building of the UAE.

The coastline of the UAE, including its islands, indentations, channels (khors), salt flats, (sabkha), wadis, etc., form an extensive area of coastal embayments and shallow lagoons along the Arabian Gulf coast, notably north-east and to the west of the island of Abu Dhabi (Hellyer, 1998, p. 150). The littoral habitats and ecosystems formed the foundation of coastal fishing villages. Archaeological evidence shows that salt dome islands such as Sir Bani Yas, Zirku, Sir Abu Nu'air, and Delma appear to have been used for sporadic settlements that dealt with the maritime commerce in the region. The environmental resources have been used traditionally for construction, ornamentation, health benefits, and tribal/familial rituals (Hellyer, 1998, p. 155). The interconnectedness between society and its coastal environment influenced patterns of subsistence, levels of technology reached, and economic development (Hellyer, 1998, p. 155).

The harvest of fish became a deeply embedded tradition in culture as means of not only surviving in the desert but a lifestyle that led to economic trade. Fish was not only a source of protein for the community but could be dried and used as camel fodder or as fertilizers in date gardens. The most profitable type of fish was the anchovy sold locally and abroad as dried fertilizer. Larger species such as tuna and sharks were sold to merchants and exported to China. The increase in seafaring led to relationships with India, East Africa, and China,

influencing the region's political climate and established power through trade. Traditional fishing techniques and technology include the practice of 'sayyadin' whereby methods (such as small gauge nets, fence traps (*Hadra*), and *Gargour* traps) were employed according to the resource type. These traditional techniques ensured that fish trapped were unharmed, materials used were biodegradable in the marine environment, and stock levels were resilient based on local knowledge of the environment and seasonality of species. Some of these traditional methods continue today to ensure the sustainable harvest of fisheries in the region alongside protected environments.

**Figure 5.6:** *Gargour traps were traditionally made of palm leaf stems and blades (but now of wire) are weighted to the seabed and baited with fresh fish that entice catch to enter through a one-way funnel-like opening allowing smaller species to return while trapping larger species (Adapted from Hellyer, 1998, p. 160-161).*



The expansion of tribal populations in Abu Dhabi played a critical role in the significance of resources in this area since antiquity: the *lulu* (locally called *qamashah*) or the pearl (Heard-Bey, 2001, p. 106). To collect enough pearls to support trade or subsistence required a communal effort of craftsmen, divers, vessel owners, and other members of the fishing communities (Heard-Bey, 2001):

“Pearling was never merely a trade or a means of subsistence for the population along the southern Gulf littoral. It was an entirely integrated social system which has left a rich heritage of traditions to be enjoyed by the indigenous population who are now benefitting from the security engendered by the discovery of oil after centuries of hardship” (Hellyer, 1998, p. 116).

**Figure 5.7:** Pearl divers in Abu Dhabi, UAE (Adapted from Hellyer, 1998).



Pearl fishing or *ghaus* (diving) included community members called *ghawawis*. The season occurred in the cold spring (*ghaus al-bard*) and the summer (*ghaus al-kabir*). A local pearling captain appointed by the ruler (*sheikh*) of each port set the date to sail to and from the locations whereby boats from the same port were under the authority of the same sheikh (Hellyer, 1998, p. 118). Like biodegradable materials used in fishing, pearlers used natural materials available to them from their environment to perform dives (such as nose clips made of shells, stones as anchors, palm frond baskets, etc.).

**Figure 5.8:** Traditional materials used in the dhow building (Adapted from Hellyer, 1998, p. 127-128).



The rise in the market for pearls led to the transformation of the traditional economy of the population as families moved into permanent settlements on the coast, increasing the size of emirates such as Abu Dhabi and Dubai with well-established ports in Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah (Heard-Bey, 2001, p. 106). Despite nostalgic reflection on the communal spirit, the life of divers was extremely strenuous in unpredictable and risky environments. The profits (*nukhada*) of the activity were shared among the crew by a system called *ikhluwi*. The boat owner or entrepreneur present on board usually received significant parts of the proceeds, with the rest divided among the crew (*amil* system). The specialization that prevailed within this social system ultimately led to a wage-earning system within tribal communities (Hellyer, 1998, p. 122).

The transformation of the pearling industry simultaneously led to the expansion of manufacturing and craftsmanship through boatbuilding. The traditional boats (dhows) remain a living tradition in present-day UAE, where simple resources and tools were used to fashion elegant craft. Today, the emirate of Ajman holds the largest dhow building port where boats continue to be manufactured using natural resources and re-usable materials of older boats. Dhow building experts employed technical characteristics to navigate coral reefs and

sandbanks of the shallow Gulf waters with minimal damage to the ecosystem. Stitched hulls made the vessel flexible and capable of standing shocks without altering marine attributes (Hellyer, 1998, p. 134). The use of animal carcasses to build waterproof roofs, bodies of the boat, and gear were also carried out across other traditional maritime activities to ensure no materials were wasted during any process.

In addition to the cultural importance of coastal and marine environments, water bodies found in the desert were equally significant in tribal lifestyles, such as life in oases. The emergence of wealth through economic trade led to settlements in the Al Ain area (the nearest oasis) focused on agroecosystems (date gardens) that utilized an aflaj system to bring underground water to fertile soils. The possession of the aflaj system (or falaj (singular) irrigated system) exemplified the leadership and new sedentary lifestyle of tribal populations, leading to new local politics such as property rights. The environment provided favorable conditions for trees such as figs, mangoes, oranges, pomegranates, grapes, bananas, and limes previously unheard of in the desert.

**Figure 5.9:** *Water running through the 'falaj' irrigation system of an oasis with date gardens.*



## 5.5 Political Organization

The political structure of the UAE is strongly tied to familial and tribal relations. The region's two dominant tribal groups are the Qawasim and Bani Yas. The 'Qawasim' referred to

the tribal clan on the shores of the Gulf that imposed their authority over several tribes in the area. (Heard-Bey, 2001). Since the 1850s, the Qawasim sheikhs ruled along the coast and the north of the emirate of Sharjah, with their primary source of income from the pearling industry. The Bani Yas tribe is one of the largest groups in the UAE, with both rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai from various sections of the Bani Yas. A member of the al-Nahyan (family) has traditionally been the ruler of Abu Dhabi, while the Maktoum (family) has ruled Dubai since 1833 (Aartun, 2002). In the past, the Nahyan family's income was derived from pearling in the summer and agriculture in oases in winter, while the Maktoums were involved in the fishing industry. It was this tribal confederation that formed the basis for the creation of the nation-state of the UAE (Aartun, 2002, p. 22). According to Iliya Harik's typology of Arab states' authority, the UAE is a traditional secular system:

“The chieftain principle was paramount, and the ascendancy of the ruling dynasty has been on the increase continuously to the present. Nowhere did religious power manifest itself, nor was it associated with the ruler” (Ibid. 1990:12, as cited in Aartun, 2002, p. 26)

The ruling families have become the foundation of the government through a dynastic monarchy where tribal traditions of consultation, personal values, and respect for elders are practiced through a modern bureaucratic structure (Aartun, 2002).

### **5.5.1 Political Structure of the UAE**

In 1968, the British withdrew their troops from the Arabian Gulf, ending a relationship with nine sheikhdoms in 1971. The British announcement set motion to unite individual Gulf states into one state to reduce the regional vulnerability of territorial claims, protect oil reserves, and ideological trends sweeping across the Arab world (Aartun, 2002, p. 23). The emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al Quwain, Ajman, and Fujairah joined forces on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1971, with Ras al Khaimah joining the federation in February 1972.

The constitution of the federation was established on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1971. Under the new institution, each emirate has the right to exercise its own judicial and political power (which includes civil aviation, oil, internal security, finance and investment, and economic policy) within a broader federal government that exercises jurisdiction over foreign affairs,

defense, and the armed forces, health, education, postal and telegraph services, electricity services, etc.

At the federal level, governance is composed of – The Supreme Council (comprised of rulers of the seven emirates, legislative and executive roles), the President of the UAE, and his deputy (the prime minister and vice president of the UAE), the Council of Ministers headed by the prime minister (executive body), the Federal National Council (legislative body), and the Judiciary of the Union (judicial body) (Aartun, 2002, p. 24-25).

At the local level, each emirate has its own government structure. For example, In the emirate of Abu Dhabi, the Executive Council is the central governing body headed by the ruler, deputy supreme commander of the UAE armed forces, and the crown prince of Abu Dhabi. Under this council, several departments and municipalities carry out the emirate's plans and policies (UAE Local Governments, 2020).

### **5.5.2 The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**

At the regional level, the GCC comprises the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), UAE, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain, a union of oil-producing monarchies bordering the Arabian Gulf. In 1979, the Iranian Islamic revolution and subsequent political, economic, ideological, and security challenges posed by Iran and its Shia leadership challenged the predominantly Sunni Gulf sheikhdoms and monarchies in the Middle East. To ward off the threat by the Shia dominant Iran, the Sunni dominant Gulf monarchs who shared similar interests in their political, economic, and cultural pursuits towards regional security and stability created relationships among the royal families resulting in the formation of the GCC in 1981 as a strong strategic organization in the otherwise unstable Western Asia (Pradhan, 2017).

The GCC comprises two core intergovernmental bodies, a Supreme Council (rulers of the six-member states) and a Ministerial Council (foreign ministers of the six-member states). The Secretariat based in Riyadh coordinates and oversees the implementation of GCC policies. The objectives as stated in the GCC charter are to comply with coordination, integration, and interconnection between member states in economic, social, political, and cultural affairs. Although security and foreign policy is not mentioned, this was a crucial component in the formation of the body (Young, 2013, p. 7). It also encourages strengthening relationships with people formulating similar regulations across economic pursuits, finance, trade, customs, tourism, legislation, administration through the integration of science and technology in sustainable resource management and industry development by setting up open and joint

communication and cooperation of the private sectors (Ilu, 2016). The 2014 Riyadh Agreement signed by all GCC members consolidated noninterference in each other's affairs, deepened cooperation on regional issues, and declined support to extremist groups (Al-Horr, 2019).

Long term objectives to ensure stability and security of member states and population include integration of expatriate populations, state-driven reform of the economy away from dependence on natural resources, accommodation for political participation, and the configuration of coherent and inclusive nations from citizenries marked by significant distinctions along tribal, religious, and confessional lines (Gengler, 2021).

## **5.6 Economy of the UAE**

“As descendants of the desert tribes, the people of the Emirates (especially the seafarers) were known for the virtue of patience. Where the oil industry is concerned, patience is not merely a virtue but an essential, for its lead times, are long” (Hellyer, 1998, p. 171).

The economy of the GCC states, including the UAE today, is an outcome of oil and gas wealth. Before discovering oil in the 1950s, the economy of the UAE was driven by the traditional lifestyles of the tribal communities, such as nomadic farming, date palm cultivation, fishing, pearling, and other seafaring pursuits (Economy, 2021). Today, offshore oil and gas are the latest manifestations of the UAE's maritime heritage, with the seventh-largest reserves in the world (Hellyer, 1998, p. 166-169) and contribute one-third of the nation's GDP on par with western European countries. Relative to its size, the UAE holds more oil per hectare than anywhere else globally, with Abu Dhabi the first to discover oil and acquire reserves proportion to its size (covering approximately 85% of the UAE).

However, faced with the unpredictability and non-renewability of the resource, economies in the Arabian Gulf region have sought to diversify their economy in non-oil producing sectors. Such diversification is intended to safeguard depleting oil reserves, and act as a buffer against the enormous volatility associated with oil prices (Stewart, 2012, p. 198). In the UAE, the discovery of oil has influenced the development of other sectors such as trade, repair, real estate, construction, and manufacturing. This has led to residents composed of UAE nationals and expatriate populations accounting for about 20% and 80% of its total population due to the influx of labor.

With the transformation into a labor-intensive economy exchanging skilled labor, technology, and knowledge, new projects have been developed within the oil and non-oil sectors (renewable energy, aluminum production, tourism, aviation, re-export commerce, telecommunications, international business, and advanced technologies) alongside public and private sectors, that otherwise would not have been possible to achieve (Delgado, 2016, p. 39). Emirati political scientist Abdulkhaleq Abdulla remarks on the diversification of the economy in the following statement:

“The UAE is the only country in the region that is talking about 2050. His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, already said that in 2050, the last drop of oil will be exported and the UAE will no longer be an oil-based economy. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai talked about UAE 2071 and its very clear idea about where it wants to be in the future. As a matter of fact, it is already living in the future” (Dr. Abdulla, as cited in Medlewa, 2019).

One sector receiving much attention is tourism, an integral component of the economy, with each emirate responsible for its tourism sector and showcasing its attributes. In 2021, the emirate of Dubai hosted the World Expo attracting international tourists and industry leaders from around the world, bolstering the returns from tourism-related activities in the UAE. In 2019, the travel and tourism sector contributed AED180.4 billion, equivalent to 11.6% of the total GDP (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Economy, 2022). However, tourism can be highly volatile, whereby instability in the region can lead to declines in tourism. This thesis focuses on tourism development in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, specifically the tourism associated with the region’s coastal zone.

### **5.7: Tourism in Abu Dhabi**

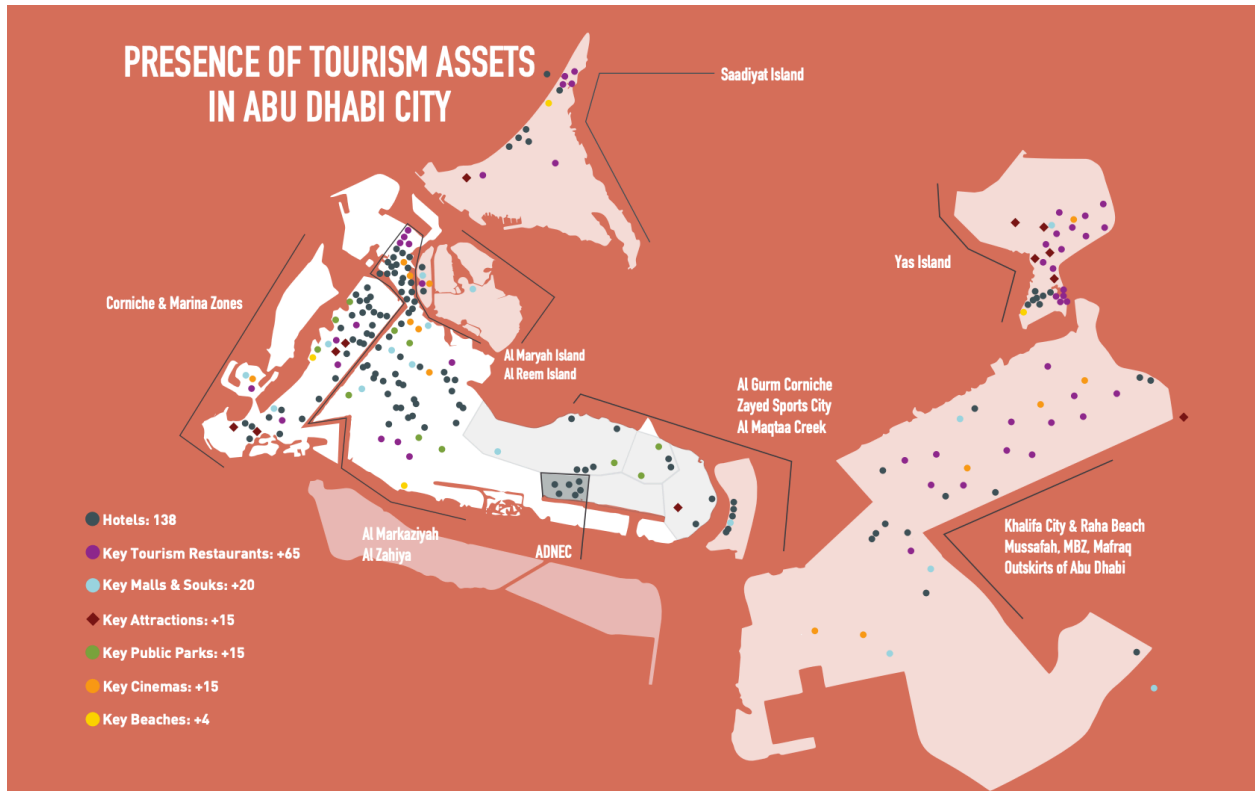
The Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 plans to develop a sustainable economic sector with tourism at the forefront. Described by Gamble (1999) as “a sleeping giant on the verge of awakening to tourism”, the emirate possesses natural and cultural attractions, modern infrastructure, local and contemporary accommodation sectors, alongside the delivery of high-quality services, destination characteristics, safety, and stability of the region which built the

foundation of the tourism sector (Sharpley, 2002, p. 222). Tourism occurs across three regions of the emirate – the capital city, Al Ain (eastern region, UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site), and Al Dhafra (western region), which hold some of the world’s most beautiful landscapes, with geographically diverse scenic attractions, and rich source of culture and history (Visit Abu Dhabi, 2021). The Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT) is the primary broker responsible for tourism development projects (alongside other brokers) with the vision to preserve and protect cultural heritage. The sector envisions the following for the emirate:

“The evolution of Abu Dhabi into a world-class destination, and committed to conserving, promoting and leveraging Abu Dhabi’s heritage, culture, and tourism assets, while also reinforcing Abu Dhabi’s position as a forward-thinking tourism destination” (Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2019).

The annual guest arrivals in Abu Dhabi show a 25% increase in 2015-2019 from 4.1 million guests to 5.1 million guests. Nationalities of domestic and international arrivals account for almost 42% from European countries, 17% from the Asian subcontinent, 13% within the MENA region itself, 11% from Asia and Southeast Asia, 7% from North America, 3% from South America, 3% from Australia, and 2% of sub-Saharan Africa, etc. (Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2019). Visitors’ experience span nature-based tourism activities, business sectors, medical industries, architecture, maritime cruises, entertainment, adventure, luxury, leisure, culture, etc. A competitive component of the tourism industry in Abu Dhabi is the coastal zone which adds symbolic, natural, and socio-economic value to tourism development in the region.

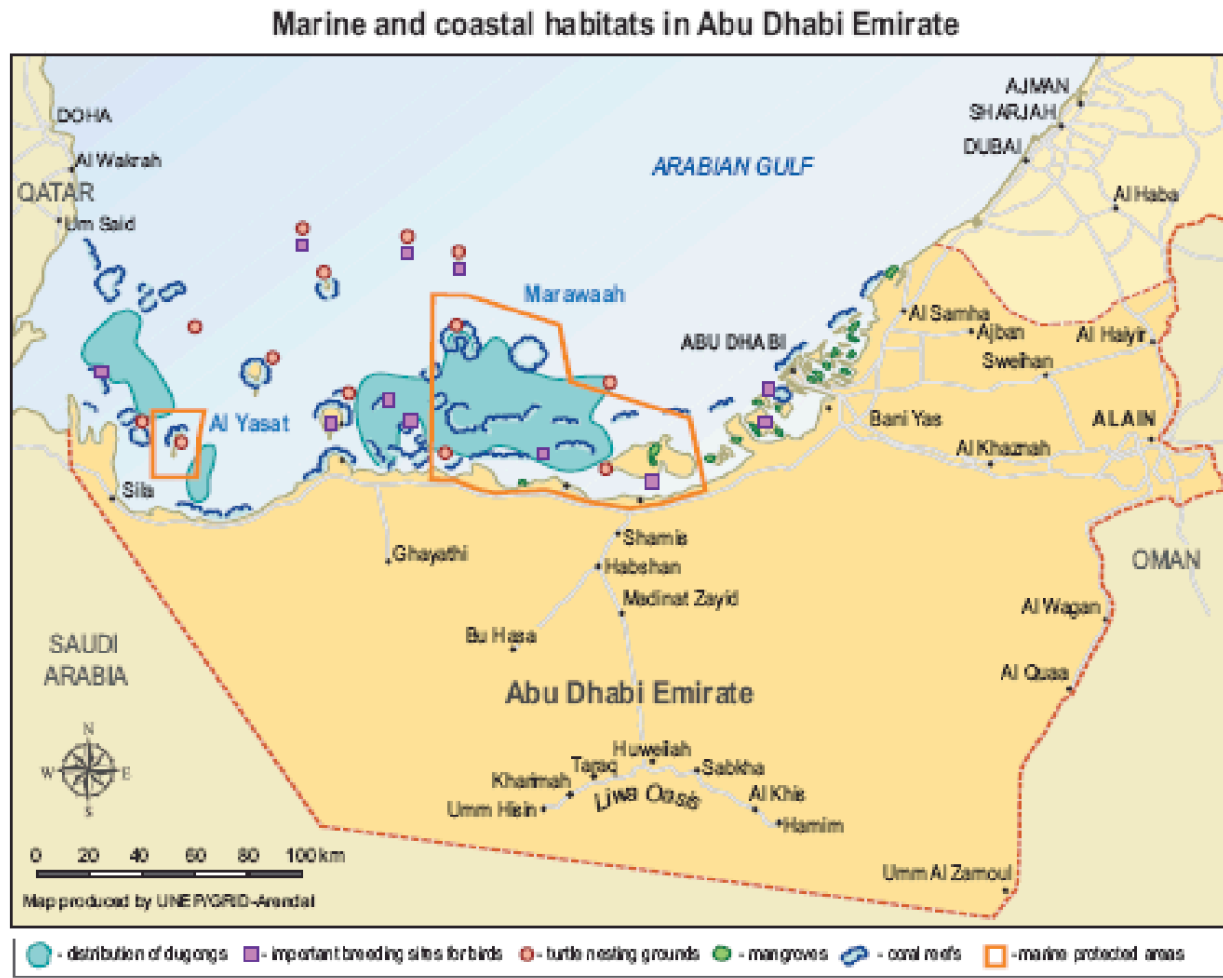
**Figure 5.10:** Tourism assets in Abu Dhabi across natural, built, and artifactual components of tourism-related services (Adapted from Department of Culture and Tourism, 2019, p. 50).



### 5.7.1 Coastal Tourism in Abu Dhabi

The rapid expansion of tourism on the coast has led to a consumer-centric form of development that not only encompasses the three s' of tourism (the sea, sun, and sand) but expanded to include activities of luxury and leisure due to the wealth of the region and its association with leading tourism competitors such as Dubai. In contrast to Dubai, Abu Dhabi is an archipelago, and water is ubiquitous throughout the city (De Man, 2020, p. 1027). Oases in Al Ain and Liwa offer tourists the opportunity to experience inland desert-based activities while introducing aspects of the heritage and natural attractions of the emirate.

**Figure 5.11:** Marine and Coastal Environments in Abu Dhabi (Adapted from Abu Dhabi Global Data Initiative, 2016, p. 15).



Approximately 200 islands constitute Abu Dhabi’s coastline offering tourism potential in those such as Delma, a historic site of the pearling industry, and Sir Bani Yas and its activities of wildlife watching and nature-based activities are some well-known sites garnering attention as tourism continues to develop in this region. Other city attractions include the heritage village off the coast of the breakwaters, beaches, and dhow building yards alongside tourism facilities that offer leisure, entertainment, and recreational services across hotels, resorts, shopping centers, theme parks, etc. (Sharpley, 2002, p. 229).

The mixture of natural, cultural, and artifactual components on the coast has led to projects on Hudayriyat and Saadiyat islands that have intertwined pristine beaches with residential and leisure areas. Originally Saadiyat was an archeological site, but urbanization and human settlements on the coast with desires for water confined exclusivity (De Man, 2020,

p. 1027). Relative to traditional maritime tourism sites, the island of Saadiyat takes on a contemporary and modern take on coastal tourism and has grown into a significant cultural center in the region, housing the Louvre, the Guggenheim, and the Zayed National Museums (De Man, 2020).

In addition to this, natural attractions because of the topographic and geographic characteristics of the Arabian Gulf are expanding within the global tourism industry, making significant contributions to the cultural, environmental, social, and economic well-being of destinations and local communities (DCT, Abu Dhabi). Nature-based tourism projects aim to conserve and protect areas of natural beauty and educate visitors on the ecological aspects of a destination while enhancing its cultural elements (Department of Culture and Tourism, 2019).

Protected areas associated with tourism in the coastal zone include - the Al Wathba Wetland Reserve, the first protected area established in Abu Dhabi and the first IUCN Green list protected area in the GCC; Ras Ghanadah, one of the most important coral reefs in Abu Dhabi; the Saadiyat Marine National Park, a protected park offering non-motorized recreational services while protecting the endangered Hawksbill turtles; Marawah Marine Biosphere Reserve is a marine protected area with seagrass beds, coral reefs, and mangrove forests, and holds the world's second-largest dugong population, 70% of UAE's migratory birds, and over 150 species of fish; Al Yasat Protected Area located in Al Dhafra is a heritage attraction that also allows visitors to take part in recreational fishing, diving, snorkeling, wildlife watching, etc. (Tabrez, 2021 & Sheikh Zayed Protected Area Network, 2021).

Initially, protected areas (specifically MPAs) were not accessible to the public in Abu Dhabi. However, the partnership of DCT with the Environmental Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD), Abu Dhabi Maritime, and Abu Dhabi Shipbuilding has improved visitation to these areas to promote the portfolio of tourism offerings in the region. HE Ali Hassan Al Shaiba, the Director of Tourism and Marketing at DCT Abu Dhabi, said:

“Our strategy involves expanding our tourism offerings in a sustainable manner that caters to the growing demand for more activities across the destination. The newly announced marine protected areas will not only support the growth and success of yacht management companies in Abu Dhabi but will also provide customers with a new and breathtaking way to explore the capital” (Marine Protected Areas in Abu Dhabi, 2021).

As we have seen in the previous chapters of this thesis, the success or failure of the coastal tourism system is heavily dependent on the stakeholders' perspectives, directly and indirectly, involved in tourism-related services and activities. This can lead to both positive and/or unintended consequences as tourism and visitation expand at an unprecedented rate in the region, calling attention to the new ways to reconsider sustainable coastal tourism development.

**Figure 5.12:** Map of Marine Protected Areas in Abu Dhabi (Adapted from DCT & EAD, 2019).



## 5.8 Tourism Dynamics in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

This section introduces the components of the tourism system (as seen in Chapter 3) relative to the coastal zone of the emirate of Abu Dhabi, UAE. This section does not analyze the

dynamics of the system between stakeholders (BLT model) and external elements (HANS and PDS models) but instead introduces the major stakeholders of the system in Abu Dhabi. This is followed by an introduction to the tourism sites of interest and attractions of Abu Dhabi.

### **5.8.1 Stakeholders**

The identification of stakeholders directly or indirectly involved within the tourism system follows the BLT model introduced in Chapter 3 of this thesis. This section introduces actors relevant to the case study of Abu Dhabi (alongside other relevant stakeholders in the region that did not directly take part in this thesis) with a brief description of their role in the community.

#### **The Brokers**

Brokers in the Abu Dhabi region are those organizations that profit from the management and implementation of tourism projects and services. In Abu Dhabi, planning and development for tourism are undertaken by governmental sectors (public sector brokers). In contrast, some private sector brokers participate in the infrastructure development, facilities, and services provided to visitors.

##### **A. Public Sector Brokers**

- *Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT)* is the primary governmental organization that regulates, supports, develops, and markets Abu Dhabi's tourism industry through various activities to promote and preserve the emirate's distinctive heritage and culture alongside economic development. The Chairman HE Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak is a member of the executive council of Abu Dhabi "overseeing the Emirate's most significant institutions across the culture, tourism, media, entertainment, and real estate sectors; and oversees the cultural development of the Emirate and its promotion as a global destination, through the active engagement of local, regional, and international audiences" (DCT, Chairman). The undersecretary HE Sabood Abdulziz Al Hosani oversees the development of cultural and tourism ecosystems in Abu Dhabi. The initiatives span tourism and cultural sectors that share common goals and include segment, product, stakeholder, marketing, and infrastructure plans (DCT, Undersecretary). The organization's mission is "to drive sustainable growth of Abu Dhabi's culture and tourism sectors by creating a diverse

ecosystem that preserves, promotes, and embodies Emirate's heritage, innovating spirit, and unparalleled hospitality" (DCT, 2020). For tourism, the body undertakes trade engagement to enhance delivery mechanisms; develops characteristics of the destination through market initiatives, coordinates with local and international partners and licensing; manages port terminals; promotes business events and planning; creates employment in industries (alongside Emiratization); etc. The cultural sector develops and manages museums; conducts educational outreach programs; and strategizes initiatives to safeguard intangible and tangible heritage (natural, built, artifactual). Together under the management team, both entities implement tourism initiatives working alongside other public and private sectors.

- *Environmental Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD)* regulates and enforces environmental laws to protect biodiversity and preserve the quality of life for a sustainable future. The agency's mission is "to protect the environment and promote sustainability, through innovative environmental management, and impact-oriented policies, licensing, and regulations, in collaboration with partners and the broader community" (EAD, 2021). The governing board is headed by HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan alongside ruler representatives of the region, who oversees objectives, approves strategic plans, and performance of activities while protecting air quality, groundwater, and biodiversity across the desert, coastal, and marine ecosystems, and protected areas (EAD, 2021). They partner with businesses and the DCT for tourism project development and management.
- *Etihad Airways* is the national airline industry of the UAE, responsible for finances; organizational development; operation, maintenance, management, technological innovation; experience, and marketing (Etihad Aviation Group, 2022). It is run by a board of directors and Group Chief Executive Officer Tony Douglas, with expertise across transportation, infrastructure, and government sectors. The industry integrates sustainability initiatives (decarbonization, waste management, conservation, and human welfare), and forms partnerships with public, private, and civil society stakeholders.
- *Other relevant stakeholders:* Aldar Properties (infrastructure), Mudon real estate development company (infrastructure), Mubadala Development company

(business, investment, infrastructure), University members (education & outreach), Global Tourism Forum (travel & tourism), etc.

- Since the UAE is an absolute monarchy, all public sector brokers are governmental organizations that ultimately fall under the leadership of the ruling family members.

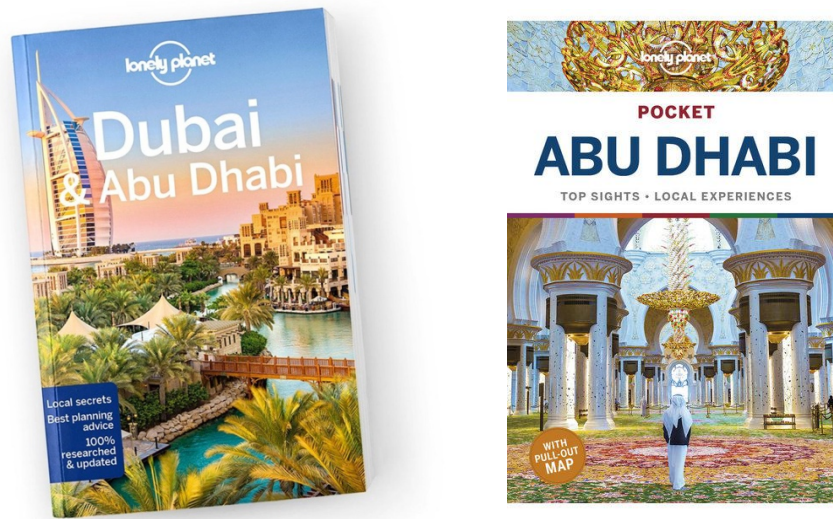
#### **B. Private Sector Brokers**

- Private sector brokers include commercial industries, businesses, and service providers for the residential community and visitors. The interests of the private sector are primarily represented and implemented by the public sector (governmental bodies). For coastal tourism, these may include restaurants, tourism facilities, activities, businesses, university members, and travel agencies that span socio-economic-cultural sectors within governmental organizations.
- This thesis uses information from travel guides to represent the interests of private brokers (Figure 5.13).

#### **C. Civil Society Brokers**

- *National Organizations:* Environmental Agency Abu Dhabi, Regulation and Supervision Bureau, Arab Monetary Fund, Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, etc. National organizations for civil society fall primarily under the public sector in the region.
- *International Organizations:* United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNEP, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), WWF, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), etc.

**Figure 5.13:** Lonely Planet travel guides as examples of private broker perspectives.



## The Locals

For this thesis, the locals of Abu Dhabi will be referred to as the 'residential' population, composed of UAE nationals (Emiratis) and expatriates (temporary residents). The expatriate population is an interesting group within the locals of the tourism system. The time of stay is variable for expats. Some have been in the UAE for 5 years and others for 30 years; the longer the time of residence of an expat, the more their behavior is associated with locals in the tourism system. In 2016, the population was at 2.908 million, of which expatriates accounted for 2.36 million while the remaining 23.4% (or 551,535 million) form the Emirati citizenry (SCAD, 2019). The population comprises 1.86 million males and approximately over a million women. The median age group of the emirate is 30 years, with an average life expectancy of 75.9 years and 79.5 years for men and women, respectively (World Population Review, 2016). The population continues to rise with the influx of expatriate workers from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Iran, Egypt, Nepal, Sri Lanka, China, Ethiopia, Somalia, United Kingdom, France, Italy, and various other countries (Arab and non-Arab countries).

The official religion is Islam and Arabic is the local language spoken by Arabs, with English being widely spoken due to the diversity of the residential community. The ruler of Abu Dhabi (and the UAE) is from the Al Nahyan family of the Bani Yas tribal clan and occupies the central authority of the region. The composition of the residential community as it is today and

the impact it has had on Abu Dhabi is best reiterated by the First Vice President of Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of Al Fahim Group of Companies, Mohammed A. J. Al Fahim:

“We couldn’t have built our own country ourselves. We didn’t have the manpower nor the resources or the know-how. We had to invite people from abroad to the extent that today we are the minority in our own country. We have never from the beginning expected or even thought that we could without the expatriate community who are helping us to develop our country and take us to the future because Sheikh Zayed from the beginning told us, we are a host country, and we have to accept foreigners as guests. We must treat all those who come and live with us as guests and respect them so. We believe in the saying of live and let live, and so we have nothing against the expatriate or people living with us, working in different jobs because they are our teachers; without them, we would not be where we are today” (Al Fahim, 2015).

### **The Tourists**

Tourists visiting Abu Dhabi can be categorized as international visitors (the MENA region and other countries) and domestic visitors (from other emirates of the UAE and member states of the GCC). According to the 2019 Tourism Annual Report (Vol. 2) by the DCT, the nationalities of visitors range from India, China, the UK, USA, Egypt, Philippines, KSA, Germany, Jordan, Pakistan, etc. International visitors are spread worldwide, with Europe at 42%, 17% from Asia, and 13% from the MENA region. 41% of visitors are of the age group between 26-39 years, with leisure (which can span across recreational, instrumental, and educational pursuits of travel, see Chapter 1) being the primary purpose of travel at approximately 58% (relative to business, transit, visiting friends and relatives (VFR), etc.). The main form of accommodation available to tourists is hotels and resorts, with approximately 168 hotels in Abu Dhabi, with revenues accounting for 5.8 billion AED (a 6.6% growth from 2018).

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on the tourism industry in the UAE in 2020. However, the high vaccination rates, safety measures for accommodation and travel, return of supply chains, accessibility of products and services, and technological innovation being implemented in Abu Dhabi have allowed tourist numbers to gradually increase,

complementary to the World Expo 2020 in Dubai (Executive Director of Tourism and Marketing for Abu Dhabi, HE Ali Hassan Al Shaiba, as cited in Wright, 2021).

### 5.8.2 Tourism Sites

This section provides a list of tourism sites associated with Abu Dhabi's coast (see Appendix I). It is important to note that categorization of tourism sites can be subjective, as seen with different perspectives of brokers, locals, and tourists (see Chapter 3). The tourism sites listed below also depict brokers' perspectives through travel guides such as 'lonely planet Abu Dhabi'. The areas and associated activities intersect the human, natural, and artifactual components of the HANS model (see Chapter 3). For this thesis, the artifactual element of destinations will be used interchangeably with 'built' environments or man-made structures that enhance services available for tourism. The sites listed below are the major tourist sites associated with the natural, human, and built environments of the coastal zone and the culture of the emirate. The tourism sites of relevance to this thesis include:

- *Hudayriyat Island*, located across the waters of Al Bateen, is the leisure and entertainment district in Abu Dhabi. Traditionally known to be a landmark for pearl divers, today, it offers tourists and residents sports facilities, dining services, nature walks, beach activities, and other recreational activities (land and water-based) (Hudayriyat Island, 2021).
- *Saadiyat Island* is a 27 square km natural island transformed into a world-class leisure, residential, business, and cultural capital (Saadiyat Island, 2021). It houses the largest concentration of cultural assets, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum, and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. The island also holds two beaches (public and private) that protect critically endangered hawksbill turtles, hotels for tourists, eco-conscious golf courses, and residential housing (Saadiyat Island, 2021). According to lonely planet, Saadiyat island is the cultural capital of the emirate, celebrating humanity's artistic achievements through the wealth of global cultural heritage (lonely planet pocket Abu Dhabi, p 85-86).
- *Sir Bani Yas Island* is the largest natural and wildlife island in the UAE, spanning over 87 square km, established by the late ruler HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, considered a modern-day Arabian Ark (Brunt, 2018). It is one of the eight islands forming the desert islands of the Al Dhafra Region in the western

region of Abu Dhabi (Sir Bani Yas Island, 2021). The island is an Arabian wildlife reserve home to almost 17,000 free-roaming animals native to the Arabian region characterized by archaeological heritage and topography unique to the Arabian Gulf. Residents and tourists visiting the area participate in activities such as wildlife safaris, guided historic and nature tours, resort accommodation, kayaking, snorkeling, scuba diving, mountain biking, hiking, horse-riding, etc. (Sir Bani Yas Island, 2021).

- *Al-Ain Oasis*, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2011, is the largest oasis in the Al Ain region. The traditional practices of plantations and farming continue today alongside facilities such as an eco-center, oasis gardens, miniature oasis, and falaj exhibition for visitors to see (Al Ain Oasis, 2021). West of the oasis lies the palace of the late ruler HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan established in 1937. It was converted to a historical museum open to the public in 2001 embodying the culture and traditions of the UAE nationals.
- *Jebel Hafit* is the highest summit of Abu Dhabi located on the border of UAE and Oman and forms part of the Hajar mountains. The site holds significant archaeological fossils important to the region's history while offering visitors breathtaking drives and views of the Arabian Gulf region. As of 2017, the mountain reserve forms part of the Sheikh Zayed Protected Areas Network to preserve, protect, and restore endangered biodiversity innate to the region.
- *Qasr Al Hosn* is the oldest landmark in the city of Abu Dhabi, a traditional governmental entity of the earlier tribal settlements in Abu Dhabi. Constructed in the 1790s, this structure overlooked the coastal trade routes, safeguarded freshwater sources, and protected the growing settlements of the island (Qasr Al Hosn, 2021; lonely planet pocket Abu Dhabi, p. 38). In 2018, the structure was transformed into a museum that embodies the development of Abu Dhabi from a maritime nation into a global metropolis through artifacts and archival materials (Qasr Al Hosn, 2021).
- *Jubail Mangrove Park*, located in Al Jubail island nestled between Saadiyat and Yas islands, is a mangrove sanctuary that holds native avian and marine species to Abu Dhabi. A boardwalk built through the park allows visitors to wander through the mangroves and perform activities such as nature walks, wildlife watching, kayaking, and photography (Jubail Mangrove Park, 2019). The park is

a self-contained educational, natural, and leisure destination to enhance the awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the essential ecological functions of mangrove habitats to the coast of Abu Dhabi (Jubail Mangrove Park, 2021).

- *Heritage village* located off the coast of the breakwaters of Abu Dhabi corniche is a traditional oasis village showcasing traditional aspects of the desert lifestyle and traditional skills and artifacts involved in trade. Visitors can shop from local craftsmen, visit a museum, and participate in workshops showcasing these skills while enjoying the picturesque view of the coastal waters of Abu Dhabi, experiencing a glimpse of Emirati life before oil revenues transformed the country (lonely planet pocket Abu Dhabi, p. 47).
- *Sheikh Zayed Protected Area Network* established by the EAD aims to protect the terrestrial and marine habitats of historical, cultural, and environmental significance to the emirate (and broadly the Arabian Gulf region). Since this thesis focuses on coastal habitats, the marine protected area network includes the Al Saadiyat Marine National Park, Al Yasat MPA, Mangrove Marine National Park, Marawah Marine Biosphere Reserve, Bul Syayeeef MPA, and Ras Ghanada Protected Area. Some MPAs are located further away from the mainland region of Abu Dhabi, requiring transportation through boats, ships, etc. This falls under the PDS system (see Chapter 3), where the gateway region is Abu Dhabi.
- *Al Wathba Wetland Reserve* is a coastal sabkha that holds natural and man-made lakes. It was one of the first areas designated for protection under Abu Dhabi regulation and is on the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas. The reserve is known for its large population of great flamingos and hosts more than 250 birds, 37 plant species, and other marine life forms (Al Wathba Wetland Reserve, 2021). Visitors can enjoy geographic characteristics such as mountains and wadis adjacent to the site and participate in self-guided walking tours.
- *Sheikh Zayed Festival* is a cultural and entertainment festival taking place from November to April. The festival embodies traditional and contemporary Emirati heritage and values by showcasing events, competitions, and sporting events while offering visitors the chance to experience different cultures (Arab and non-Arab) and shop for goods native to these cultures.

- *Qasr Al Watan* is the presidential palace of UAE located at the end of the corniche boardwalk showcasing Arab history, heritage, knowledge, craftsmanship, and governing principles of the country and its vision for the future. Constructed in 2015, the palace contains the offices of the president, vice president, and crown prince of Abu Dhabi, forming a meeting place of the highest constitutional authorities in the UAE (Keith, 2019). In 2019, the palace welcomed tourists to showcase the growth of the UAE.
- *Emirates Palace* is the epitome of Arabian hospitality located in the heart of Abu Dhabi at the Marina breakwaters of the Corniche. It is Abu Dhabi's most well-known landmark and plays a significant role in the cultural expansion of the capital (Lonely Planet Pocket Abu Dhabi, p. 50). It is the region's most luxurious hotel, housing private beaches, landscaped pools, private marinas, natural bays, spas, restaurants, etc., close to shopping centers, cultural and heritage sites, and the coast of Abu Dhabi (Emirates Palace, 2021).
- Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque is one of the largest mosques in Abu Dhabi that captures interactions between Islam and other world civilizations with the vision of welcoming cultural diversity at its foundation. The tourism site offers both locals and visitors to witness its architectural intricacies and gain an understanding of the emirate's cultural beliefs and space through an open dialogue of peace and tolerance (Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, 2021).

To analyze the case study of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi, this thesis defines the natural, human, and artificial (or built) components of the HANS model as the following:

- Natural Component is comprised of the physical environment unconstructed by the humans, biotic and abiotic factors within the environment, biodiversity, climatic conditions, etc. For example, in the case of Abu Dhabi, the natural component comprises marine habitats associated with MPAs, mangrove ecosystems, geographical characteristics of islands, etc.
- Human Component refers to the characteristics of society, such as culture, heritage, religion, traditions, tribal origins, etc., associated with the local population.
- Artificial (or Built) Component complements human and natural elements by providing man-made structures that enhance tourism services. For example, the boardwalk built

in Jubail Mangrove Park allows visitors to walk through the ecosystem, increasing accessibility to the park. Other examples include recreational equipment, hotels, and transportation sources that would enable visitors to take part in activities at these sites or supplement them.

The Venn diagram below (Figure 5.14) depicts the significant attributes each site visited is known for based on the HANS model.

**Figure 5.14:** Venn diagram depicting major characteristics (human, artifactual, and natural components (HANS)) associated with tourism sites in Abu Dhabi.



## 5.9 Thesis Aim and Research Questions

This thesis is an exploratory study to understand the dynamics of coastal tourism in the region of Abu Dhabi, UAE, using tourism models (see Chapter 3). Exploratory studies are iterative processes of investigating topics that have not been studied before to better understand the nature of the problem through research questions without an a priori hypothesis. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study aims to explore tourism characteristics that contribute to sustainability in coastal environments. As tourism is still a

relatively new field within marine and environmental affairs, it has the potential to evolve through new insights into processes and interactions that occur between brokers, locals, and tourists across social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors. This thesis tackles the following research questions through perspectives gathered from subject matter experts, the residential community, and visitors of Abu Dhabi:

*RQ1. What is it like to live in a hotspot for tourism in a region composed of different nationalities?*

*RQ2. What types of interactions and experiences do the residential community (Emiratis and Expatriates) and visitors have with coastal characteristics, specifically the natural environment and cultural elements?*

*RQ3. What is sustainability within the context of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi, and how do brokers, locals, and tourists understand it?*

*RQ4. What are the prospects and impacts of tourism development on environmental and cultural sustainability regarding coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi?*

In addition to the research topics above, this study also explores aspects of femininities in scientific research by reflecting on how my role as an ethno-conservationist and researcher impacted data collection through interactions and relationships with individuals in the tourism system. For a short note on how my personal experience and gender as a woman affected this study (see Appendix III).

## **5.10 Transitional Comment**

This chapter introduces the region of Abu Dhabi within the broader context of the Arabian Gulf and the Middle East region across characteristics of – geography and environment, Arab identity, culture, political structure, and economy. In efforts to diversify its economic ventures in the modern-day, tourism is a primary component of the economy, with urbanization expanding in coastal environments. To understand the dynamics of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi, this chapter introduces relevant stakeholders (BLT model) and the tourism sites of Abu Dhabi associated with the coastal zone, followed by the research goals of this exploratory study. The next chapter discusses my methodology in collecting data through interviews and surveys to understand the notion of sustainability pertaining to coastal tourism in the region.

## Chapter 6: Methodology

*“Stories give life to data, and data give authority to stories”.*

- Wendy Newman (Canadian School Libraries, 2017)

The growth of tourism and its emergence in coastal environments involve natural, human, and artifactual components to enhance gateway communities and economies. To better understand interactions between these components, this thesis explores the dynamics of coastal tourism sustainability in Abu Dhabi across three major topic areas – environment, protected areas, and culture. A mixed-methods approach was used to conduct this research composed of interviews, limited participant observation, secondary source information, and surveys. This chapter first introduces the procedures of conducting research with human subjects through the University of Washington’s Human Subjects Division, followed by the process of collecting qualitative and quantitative data from participants within the context of Abu Dhabi, UAE.

### 6.1 Human Subjects Division

The University of Washington’s (UW) Human Subjects Division (HSD) is the primary body of the university’s Human Research Protection Program, managing four Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) that review and oversee human subjects research (Human Subjects Division, 2021). The organization aims to protect research participants' safety, rights, and welfare, ensuring institutional compliance with federal and state regulations and University policies by guiding researchers on regulations and ethical considerations when conducting investigations (Human Subjects Division, 2021).

Since the primary source of data collected in this study is from the interaction and experiences of human participants in Abu Dhabi, UAE, an IRB approval is required to conduct research. According to the UW HSD, this study is considered human subjects research based on the following criteria:

- Research is a *systematic investigation*, including research development, testing, and/or evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to *generalizable knowledge* (Research (HSD), 2021). This study satisfies the criteria of systematic investigation, which comprises a *detailed or careful examination that has or involves a prospectively identified approach to the activity based on a system, method, or plan* and generalizable

knowledge which seeks to *expand the knowledge base of a scientific discipline or other scholarly fields* (Research (HSD), 2021).

- Human subjects are *living individuals about whom the researcher obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual or (2) identifiable private information* (Human Subjects Research, 2021). This study collected data from human subjects through direct and indirect interactions with participants in interviews and surveys administered, respectively.
- *Exempt* determination of research entails no risk or minimal risk to participants and exemption from federal policies for the protection of human subjects under categories of – educational practices; educational tests, interviews, surveys, observation of public behavior; benign behavioral interventions with adults; secondary use of identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens; public service projects; taste and food evaluation studies (Exempt Research, 2021). To ensure research conducted meets ethical guidelines of the Belmont Report, research proposals require IRB approvals and may be subject to oversight if it does not qualify as exempt (OHRP, 2021). The IRB approved this study with exempt status on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021, under the following criteria, which meet the terms of the Belmont report – beneficence, non-maleficence, informed consent, and justice.

## 6.2 Mixed Methods Data Collection

The mixed-methods approach used in this thesis includes qualitative and quantitative types of data collection. Table 6.1 summarizes this mixed methods research design's qualitative and quantitative data collection components. For an in-depth analysis of research methods, strengths, weaknesses, and considerations using each method, see Chapter 4.

**Table 6.1:** *Data collection methods used in this thesis.*

	<b>Qualitative Approach</b>	<b>Quantitative Approach</b>
<b>Data Collection</b>	Semi-structured Interviews Limited Participant Observations Secondary Source Information	Surveys

### 6.3 Data Collection

The primary forms of data collected from participants in this study are semi-structured interviews and surveys. Data collection for these components was segregated into two phases:

- Phase I of the study was conducted between March and April of 2021 as a pilot study of interviews and surveys. The interview component comprised identifying subject matter experts (SME) as participants and establishing contact with them by describing the research goals and the significance of their participation. The survey component included administering the pilot survey to a small group of people comprised of the general public and getting their feedback with the goal of refining and/or clarifying survey questions through minor wordsmithing. This served as a pilot to help implement the survey instrument rollout into phase II.
- Phase II of the study was conducted between June and August of 2021 as the final form of data collection. This included conducting interviews with subject matter experts who consented to participate in the study and rollout of the finalized survey used in this thesis. Table 6.2 summarizes the data collection workflow for interviews and surveys across the two phases of this study.

**Table 6.2:** *Workflow for Data Collection.*

Timeframe	March-April 2021 (Phase I)	May-June 2021	June-August 2021 (Phase II)
Interviews	Initiate SME identification	Finalize SME to interview	Conduct interviews
Survey	Administer pilot survey	Finalize survey questions and options to promote survey	Final survey rollout to general public

#### 6.3.1 Interview Procedure and Implementation

Semi-structured interviews comprise open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses from subjects on topics of interest. Aligning with the research goals, the interview component comprised participants who are subject matter experts with research interests in tourism, anthropology, cultural studies, marine and environmental science, and marine policy in Abu Dhabi. The interview is an opportunity to learn about experts' knowledge, experiences, and opinions on coastal tourism sustainability.

### ***Interview Participants***

Participants for interviews were identified through local contacts and internet searches and were contacted with their affiliated work emails through purposive and snowball sampling approaches. Upon receiving their consent to participate in the study, interview times were scheduled according to their availability. Due to COVID-19 regulations in Abu Dhabi, all interviews were conducted through zoom video platform. All participants consented to record interviews by both video and audio options which were used to develop transcripts of the session. Interviews ran between 20 minutes and 1 hour, with all notes and quotes recorded in a notebook with permission from the interviewee. Interview participants also had the option of skipping questions they did not wish to answer, as stated in the consent form approved by the IRB. Over the course of this research, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with subject matter experts who were primarily brokers that comprise the onsite community of the BLT model.

### ***Interview Questions***

The questions proposed for this interview fall under categories of research questions (RQ) and posed questions (PQ). RQ is intended to be scientific in terms relevant to research goals and language not commonly used by the public in Abu Dhabi. Posed questions are designed to address and answer the research questions, but in a vernacular that would be best understood by the interviewee. Since interview participants were subject matter experts, terminology and language pertaining to their research interests were not a challenge in their questions. The research questions in this study generally cover topics of – culture and natural environment, tourism management and development, and sustainability. Appendix IV provides the list of questions prepared in relation to topics of interest in this study. The interviewees were asked questions relevant to their areas of expertise. An example of how posed questions are intended to answer research questions in an interview is as follows:

*RQ: What is it like to live in a hotspot for tourism in a region composed of different nationalities? What types of interactions and experiences do the residential community (Emiratis and Expatriates) and visitors have with coastal characteristics, specifically the natural environment and cultural elements?*

PQ1: What is it like to live here today?

PQ2: What was it like before? What do you think it will be like in the future?

PQ3: Do you think tourists visit the UAE for its cultural attractions?

PQ4: Do you think environmental conservation and culture interact?

PQ5: How do expat residents contribute to the culture of the UAE?

### ***Interview Data Variables***

Data variables collected from subject matter experts include their names, educational qualification, position information, employment, contact information, and demographic characteristics such as residency status (Expatriate or Emirati), length of residency, gender, and nationality. The direct identifier in this component is the subjects' names which I had access to use in my research upon receiving their consent. If they had chosen to remain anonymous, the participant would have been cited as anonymous.

Since the study aims to capture information on perceptions, knowledge gaps, challenges, strengths, and other interactive elements pertaining to coastal tourism sustainability in Abu Dhabi, variables on all these topics arise throughout the course of data collection and analysis. In addition, there may be topics discussed which would result in other variables that are germane to the conversation or are part of the subjects' expertise (which are not listed above). These data variables will be presented in the data analysis and result section of this thesis (see Chapter 7).

### **6.3.2 Limited Participant Observation**

Limited Participant Observation (LPO) in this study was conducted by observing, documenting, and interpreting both verbal and nonverbal cues of human subjects. During interviews, the interviewee's behavior, reactions, and body language alongside quotes were recorded in a notebook for the duration of the interview. In addition, LPO was recorded by observing local, tourist, and broker interactions at tourism sites (see Chapter 5) through photographs and field notes. Table 6.3 summarizes the duration of interviews and time spent at each tourist site in hours (Hrs).

**Table 6.3:** Duration of interviews and time spent at tourism sites as a record of LPO.

<b>Subject Matter Expert</b>	<b>Time (Hrs)</b>
HE Ali Al Shaiba	Other*
Dr. Mark Jonathan Beech	1
Dr. Richard John O'Brien Perry	0.4
Mr. Winston James Cowie	0.5
Dr. Himansu Sekhar Das	0.5
Dr. Dario Pinello	Other*
Mr. Mark David Penfield	5
Ms. Fatma Ahmad Saeed Binghelaita Al Mehairi	0.5
Ms. Sumeira Issacs	Other*
Ms. Asha Alexander	0.6
<b>Tourism Sites in Abu Dhabi</b>	<b>Time (Hrs)</b>
Hudayriyat island	2
Saadiyat island	6
Sir Baniyas island	48
Al-Ain Oasis	2
Jebel Hafit	0.5
Qasr Al Hosn	2
Jubail Mangrove Park	1.5
Heritage Village	2
Sheikh Zayed Protected Area Network	1.5
Al Wathba Wetland Reserve	0.5
Sheikh Zayed Festival	6
Qasr Al Watan	4
Emirates Palace	2
Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque	3
Total time	90.5
<i>Other* - Participants' typed responses were received directly from them and/or indirectly through informants</i>	

### 6.3.3 Secondary Source Information

Six types of secondary source information were used for this research. These include articles from the newspapers in Abu Dhabi, such as *The National* and *Khaleej Times*; a documentary entitled *Our Sea Our Heritage* (2019); videos from the virtual *Abu Dhabi Cultural Summit* held in 2021; and travel guides such as *Lonely Planet*. Other secondary sources include information retrieved from international and governmental reports, governmental websites, and books.

### 6.3.4 Survey Procedure and Implementation

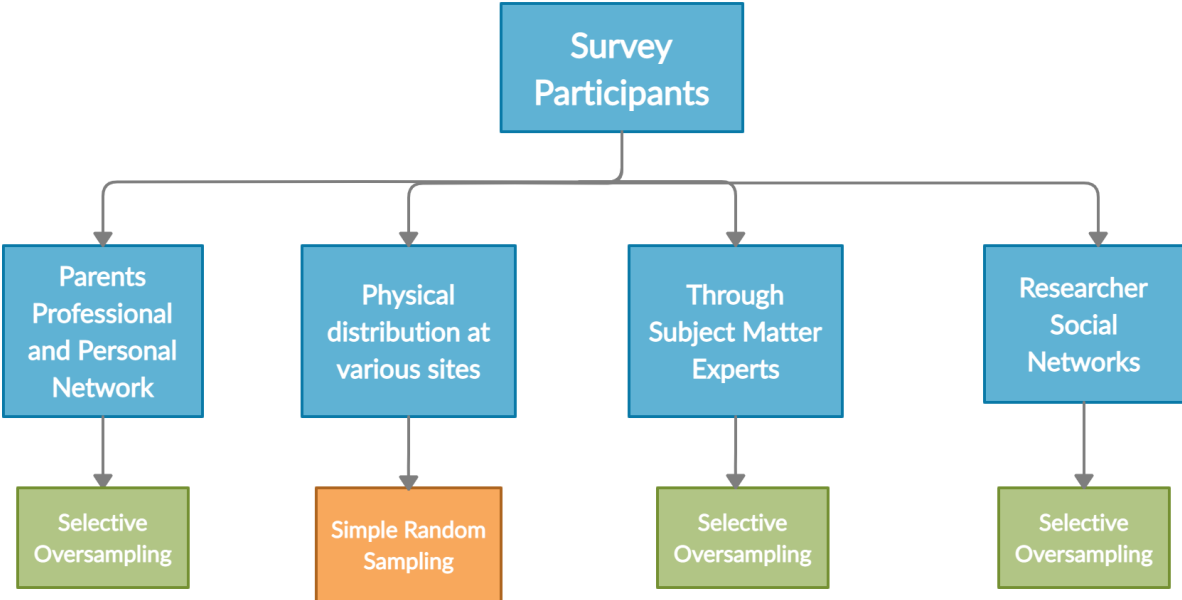
The survey component of this mixed methods research design was administered to the general public of Abu Dhabi, comprised of residents and/or tourists. This activity aims to gather

perspectives on tourism in the UAE concerning the people’s experiences with culture, environmental sustainability, and social awareness of development. The procedure involved filling out an online survey developed on the Survey Monkey platform.

**Survey Participants**

Participants for the survey were identified through four distribution channels that used simple random sampling and selective oversampling techniques to enhance characteristics that were representative of the population of Abu Dhabi. Figure 6.1 summarizes the primary distribution channels employed for survey rollout to the general public of Abu Dhabi.

*Figure 6.1: Organizational chart depicting survey distribution and sampling technique.*



The purpose of these four distribution chains was to capture responses from participants that span a wide range of demographic characteristics representative of the UAE population. In addition to primary demographic characteristics of age, sex, race, etc., the Venn diagram in figure 6.2 depicts secondary demographic characteristics captured in the survey sample.

Participants accessed the survey through hyperlinks or QR codes and were expected to take between 15 and 25 minutes to complete it. The survey consent form explicitly allows participants to opt-out of questions or from participation in the study at any time. In addition,

the consent form clearly states that the survey is open to all members of the general public in the UAE and visitors. The broad inclusion criteria would mitigate any violations of privacy a subject might perceive on receiving links asking them to participate in the study. Subjects were not asked for any sensitive information that may feel like an invasion of privacy. Hence, the survey (and interview) consent forms were created to be respectful to all participants.

**Figure 6.2** Secondary demographic characteristics of survey participants across four distribution channels.



Since the participants recruited for the survey span residents and tourists of ages 18 and over in the UAE, the survey was also translated into Arabic by professional translators and was made available in written form both in English and Arabic. This would allow the participation of old expats and Emiratis who may not be comfortable with online platforms and is a culturally appropriate research protocol. Over the course of this research, 102 survey responses were recorded.

### ***Survey Questions***

The survey was composed of both qualitative and quantitative questions across three main sections – 1) demographic characteristics of participants comprising gender, age, the emirate of residence, residency status, length of residency, and nationality; 2) questionnaire on four main topic areas – tourism impacts, cultural context, conservation and sustainability, and tourism development; and 3) image perceptions to illicit participants' feelings, preferences, opinions, and perspectives of tourism in Abu Dhabi. The IRB approved both the survey and consent forms before phase II rollout. If questions in the survey were sensitive to people and caused any stress, the participants had the choice to skip any questions at any point in time or withdraw from participating in the study at any time. The final survey, as presented on Survey Monkey, is available in Appendix IV.

### ***Survey Data***

Data variables collected from survey participants are not direct identifiers as they did not contain any information that will identify participants, such as name, telephone, email address, etc. The data collected are indirect identifiers with information regarding age, the emirate of residence, residency status, length of residency, gender, and nationality. Hence, participants will not be identifiable by these identifiers, which were retained within the collected survey responses.

## **6.4 Transitional Comment**

This chapter outlines the process of collecting qualitative and quantitative data that informed the mixed methods research design in exploring coastal tourism sustainability in Abu Dhabi. The qualitative component included interviews with subject matter experts, limited participant observation, and the use of various secondary information sources. The quantitative component was a survey administered to the general public of Abu Dhabi. The IRB approval with exempt determination, interview questions prepared, survey questions, and consent forms can be found in Appendix IV. The next chapter analyzes the data and presents the results of the analysis in relation to the research questions introduced in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 7: Data Analysis and Results

*“That all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt. For how should the faculty of knowledge be called into activity, if not by objects which affect our senses and which, on the one hand, produce representations by themselves or on the other, rouse the activity of our understanding to compare, connect, or separate them and thus to convert the raw material of our sensible impressions into knowledge of objects, which we call experience? With respect to time, therefore, no knowledge within us is antecedent to experience, but all knowledge begins with it”.*

- Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 1781

This chapter examines how the data collected from interviews and surveys were analyzed and presents the results of the analysis in relation to the aim of the thesis, which seeks to explore coastal tourism dynamics in Abu Dhabi across four research questions – RQ1 *What is it like to live in a hotspot for tourism in a region composed of different nationalities?* RQ2 *What types of interactions and experiences do the residential community and visitors have with coastal characteristics composed of natural and cultural elements?* RQ3 *What is sustainability within the context of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi, and how do brokers, locals, and tourists understand it?* RQ4 *What are the prospects and impacts of tourism development on environmental and cultural sustainability regarding coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi?* The data gathered from subject matter expert interviews were analyzed using content analysis. In contrast, the survey data administered to the general public was analyzed using descriptive statistics and tests for the significance of selected questions. The additional comments on survey questions and visualizations are available in Appendix V.

### 7.1 Interview Analysis

The subject matter experts interviewed for this thesis form the onsite community as brokers and residents in Abu Dhabi with expertise in areas of – Tourism and Marketing; Environmental Science and Management; Cultural and Anthropological Studies; Education; and Policy. The demographics of the subject matter experts interviewed are summarized in table 7.1.

**Table 7.1: Demographics of Interview Subject Matter Experts.**

<b>Subject Matter Expert</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Residency status</b>	<b>Type of Broker</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Expertise</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1. <i>HE Ali Al Shaiba</i>	Emirati	Emirati	Public sector broker	DCT	Executive Director	Tourism & Marketing	Male
2. <i>Dr. Mark Jonathan Beech</i>	British	Permanent Expat (special status)	Public sector broker	DCT	Head of Archaeology	Environmental Archeology	Male
3. <i>Dr. Richard John O'Brien Perry</i>	British	Expat	Public sector broker	EAD	Advisor	Evolution and Population Dynamics	Male
4. <i>Mr. Winston James Cowie</i>	New Zealand	Expat	Public sector broker	EAD	Marine Policy Manager	Law & Environmental Policy	Male
5. <i>Dr. Himansu Sekhar Das</i>	India	Expat	Public sector broker	EAD	Unit Head	Marine habitats & threatened species	Male
6. <i>Dr. Dario Pinello</i>	Italy	Expat	Public sector broker	EAD	Fishery Officer (FAO)	Fisheries Management	Male
7. <i>Mr. Mark David Penfield</i>	British	Expat	Private sector broker	Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas	Activity and Recreation Supervisor	Sir Baniyas Island	Male
8. <i>Ms. Fatma Ahmad Saeed Binglehaila Al Mehairi</i>	Emirati	Emirati	Public sector broker	Ethihad Airways	Sales Manager	Tourism Sales & Marketing	Female
9. <i>Ms. Sumeira Issacs</i>	Pakistan/Canada	Expat	Private sector broker	World Tourism Forum Institute	Tourism Specialist and Consultant	Tourism & Business	Female
10. <i>Ms. Asha Alexander</i>	India	Expat	Public sector broker	GEMS Education	Principal & Executive Leader Climate Change	Education, Outreach, Climate Change	Female

Upon completion of the interviews, notes and recordings for each interviewee were transcribed, compiled, and analyzed using MAXQDA 2022 software. Each interview transcript was read once first to identify and categorize codes by marking texts, keywords, and participant reactions. The second read-through of transcripts categorized codes as principal codes and subcodes with descriptions that aimed to finalize the inclusion or exclusion of associated texts. Table 7.2 summarizes the codes and subcodes identified across all

transcripts. A complete list of codes and sub-codes with their associated descriptions are provided in Appendix V (Table 7.3).

**Table 7.2:** Codes and subcodes for identification and categorization of interview transcripts.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subcode</b>
1. Subject Matter Expert Background	1.1 Personal Experience 1.2 Nationality 1.3 Residency Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expat</li> <li>▪ Permanent Expat</li> <li>▪ Emirati</li> </ul> 1.4 Length of Residency 1.5 Expertise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Educational background</li> <li>▪ Work experience</li> </ul>
2. BLT	2.1 Public Sector Brokers 2.2 Private Sector Brokers 2.3 Civil Society Brokers 2.4 Broker Motivations 2.5 Local Motivations 2.6 Tourist Motivations
3. Cultural Characteristics	3.1 Traditional Culture 3.2 Modern Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emirati Culture</li> <li>▪ Expat Population</li> </ul> 3.3 Maritime Heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maritime History</li> <li>▪ Maritime Lifestyle</li> <li>▪ Maritime Activities</li> <li>▪ Modern Maritime</li> </ul>
4. Cultural Challenges	
5. Societal Characteristics	
6. Societal Challenges	
7. Historical Significance	
8. Economy	8.1 Traditional Economy 8.2 Modern Economy
9. Political Characteristics	9.1 Policy Characteristics
10. Environmental Goals	
11. Environmental Characteristics	11.1 Ecosystem 11.2 Marine Protected Areas 11.3 Species <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional species</li> <li>▪ Exotic species</li> </ul>
12. Environmental Management	12.1 Enhancement 12.2 Restoration 12.3 Rehabilitation 12.4 MPA Management 12.5 MPA Characteristics 12.6 Fisheries Development 12.7 Fisheries Management

13. Environmental Consciousness	
14. Environmental Management Challenges	
15. Environmental Issues	
16. Tourism Management	
17. Tourism Development	
18. Tourism Activities	
19. Tourism Sites	
20. Tourism Challenges	
21. Gateway Region Characteristics	
22. Non-Tourism Management and Development	
23. Conflicting Perspectives	23.1 Knowledge gaps 23.2 Divergent BLT perspectives
24. Interactions	24.1 Cultural Interactions 24.2 Knowledge Integration 24.3 Culture and Environment 24.4 Tourism and Environment 24.5 Development and Environment 24.6 Culture/Society and Tourism 24.7 Culture and Gender
25. COVID-19 Impacts	
26. Sustainability	26.1 Sustainability Prospects 26.2 Sustainability Initiatives 26.3 Sustainability Challenges
27. Femininities in the Field	
28. Global Recognition	

The purpose of coding interview transcripts was to identify patterns, relationships, and characteristics alongside positive and negative responses to explore the theme of each research question. Once the coding process for all interview transcripts was complete, selected texts were identified and categorized across the four research questions and their associated codes and/or combination of codes in Microsoft excel.

To visualize the themes associated with each research question, pie charts were used to depict the distribution of codes alongside word clouds to highlight keywords and phrases that appear in participants' responses. This was an effective method to identify essential constructs and provides data for systematic comparisons across the research questions.

## 7.2 Survey Analysis

The survey in this thesis was administered to the general public of Abu Dhabi, composed of the residential community (Emiratis and Expats) and/or tourists available in both English and Arabic. The questions in the survey were posed questions (see Chapter 6) intended to answer the overarching research questions but using lay language that was

comprehensible to the participant. In addition, a glossary of terms was provided to participants before they began their responses to questions.

Section I of the survey comprised demographic characteristics of participants from English and Arabic surveys which were combined and visualized through bar graphs and pie charts in Microsoft Excel. English and Arabic survey responses for section II of the questionnaire were first observed separately for patterns or trends in responses. Upon the first round of analysis, questions with distinct response patterns were left separate, while the responses for remaining questions that did not show any significant trends were compiled together and visualized through bar graphs in Microsoft excel. Questions in section II and section III allowed participants to provide additional comments to some questions posed in the questionnaire and record perspectives of images presented, respectively, which were visualized through word clouds available in Appendix V.

A chi-square statistic was employed to test the significance of responses between English and Arabic survey responses for selected questions. The chi-square test compares the survey respondents' observed responses to questions with expected responses to assess the statistical significance of a given hypothesis. To perform a chi-square test, first, the total sum of responses for each category for both English and Arabic survey responses was calculated (column total), followed by the total sum of responses across all categories for English and Arabic survey responses (row total):

**Figure 7.1:** Sample calculation table for chi-square tests performed by the researcher on Microsoft excel.

<b>Chi-Square Calculations</b>						
<b>Q9 Observed</b>						
<b>Cultural activities, sites, events</b>	<b>Not Important</b>	<b>Slightly Important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>English Survey Participants</i>	0	1	6	31	25	<b>63</b>
<i>Arabic Survey Participants</i>	0	0	0	3	18	<b>21</b>
<b>Total</b>	0	1	6	34	43	<b>84</b>
<b>Q9 Expected</b>						
	<b>Not Important</b>	<b>Slightly Important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	
<i>English Survey Participants</i>	0	0.75	4.5	25.5	32.25	63
<i>Arabic Survey Participants</i>	0	0.25	1.5	8.5	10.75	21
<b>Total</b>	0	1	6	34	43	<b>84</b>

The expected value for each category was calculated using the equation:

$$\frac{(\text{Row total} \times \text{Column total})}{\text{Overall total}}$$

The p-value was calculated in Microsoft Excel using the 'CHISQ.TEST' function and selecting the range of observed and expected values for the category of interest. The greater

the level of deviation between observed and expected responses, the greater the chi-square statistic will be. The deviation level indicates how well the results fit with the original hypothesis and, consequently, if the hypothesis is accepted or rejected in favor of the alternative.

### **7.3 Interview Results**

Since the interviews comprised subject matter experts with expertise in particular research fields relevant to coastal tourism development and management in Abu Dhabi, texts identified and categorized in response to each research question were not uniform across all participants. The following section will present results using the analysis techniques described above proposed by Kvale (1996) and Draper (2001) (For more information, see Chapter 4). The patterns, relationships, and characteristics identified seek to build the themes associated with each question by analyzing interview transcripts, notes, and participant observations.

#### *RQ1: What is it like to live in a hotspot for tourism in a region composed of different nationalities?*

The first research question examines brokers' experiences and perspectives of tourism through its development and management in Abu Dhabi alongside their understanding of how the community perceives its impacts. 6 out of 10 participants provided textual evidence relative to RQ1 with predominantly positive reactions. Figure 7.2 provides the distribution of codes evident in interviewees' responses with 13 codes associated with RQ1 from 78 quotes. The most prominent codes recorded were that of interactive components, cultural characteristics, tourism development, tourism management, and broker motivations, reiterated by the selected quotes that follow.

**Figure 7.2:** Pie chart showing the distribution of codes from 78 recorded responses among 6 out of 10 brokers. The pie chart was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

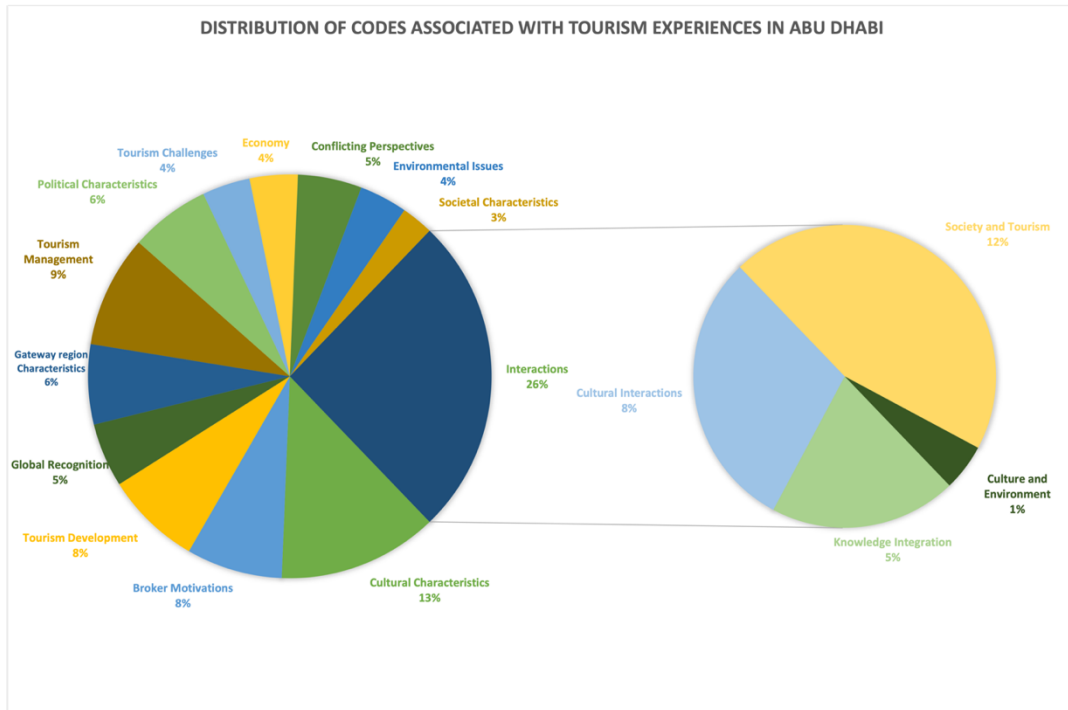


Figure 7.3 examines these responses through a word cloud identifying keywords, phrases, positive and negative responses from all possible textual evidence identified for RQ1.



From figure 7.3, the common words used to depict the tourism experience in Abu Dhabi are culture, people, heritage, world, environment, different, important, etc.

**Figure 7.3:** Word cloud showing 6 out of 10 interviewees’ experiences with tourism dynamics in Abu Dhabi. The word cloud was generated using the Bjorn Word Cloud extension in Microsoft word by the researcher.

The dynamics of these interactive components appeared fairly frequently among interviewees, as stated by one respondent, an expert in cultural studies and environmental archaeology who describes Abu Dhabi as:

“A dynamic society with different cultures, you have the traditional culture which is a complex one depending on where you are talking about. You have the Bedouin culture, the culture of people moving around in the desert; environmental characteristics such as camels, falconry; coastal areas, and characteristics such as fishing and marine subsistence. In addition, you have the culture of people living in inland oases such as Liwa and Al Ain, and Jebel Hafeet which is Abu Dhabi’s only mountain. So really, in terms of Abu Dhabi, the culture is a complex set of interactions between desert people, coastal people, and today urban people of expats and Emiratis alongside these interesting environments” (Broker 2, Expertise: Archaeology, Pos. 16; Codes 3, 24.3).

The Executive Director of the Department of Culture and Tourism emphasizes the significance of these interactions in building the foundation of tourism development and management, whereby an important aspect of Abu Dhabi’s worldview is the ability to interact and live with people from different parts of the world:

“One of the most important aspects of Abu Dhabi’s worldview is its focus on diversity, tolerance, and cross-cultural dialogue; simultaneously promoting and preserving our own treasured culture and heritage but also welcoming a diverse array of voices and nationalities into our collective experience” (Broker 1, Expertise: Tourism and Marketing, Pos. 2; Codes 3, 5).

These form the foundational elements of tourism in the region with a broad-ranging approach to appreciating cultural connections, which have translated into projects discerned in places such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi – the region’s first universal museum, or the diverse offerings at Manarat Al Saadiyat – which not only celebrates local artistic endeavor but also welcomes the world’s best and brightest talents to share their work (Broker 1, Pos. 2; Codes 3, 17). He continued by explaining the impact of these interactions:

“Due to the very nature of life in Abu Dhabi, it is rewarding to discover that – in essence – we are all the same. Abu Dhabi prides itself on welcoming the world to its shores – and the emirate is ‘richer’ for the multitude of nationalities that visit or call it home” (Broker 1, Pos. 2; *Codes 24.1, 24.6*).

The strong ties to culture evident in society ultimately have allowed tourism brokers in Abu Dhabi to leverage and integrate cultural heritage across tourism projects as an asset to be enjoyed and used by everybody. This has led to the development of characteristics associated with the coast and Abu Dhabi as a gateway region. For example:

“You have the cultural district on Saadiyat Island, but then on Yas Island, we have the kind of fun places to go to you know, the Ferrari world, the Warner Brothers theme parks, the Yas water park....so you have the cultural activities, you have fun family activities, not just the retail therapy that some people I think previously stereotyped here; there are marvelous landscapes to visit and view you know by going to Liwa, the sand dunes, the fabulous hotels, and Al Ain with the UNESCO World Heritage site so, then you experience everything, from the environment all the way to traditional cultural activities such as maritime heritage to modern cultural and urban interactions” (Broker 2, Pos. 20; *Code 21*).

In addition to the development and management of tourism projects, some brokers emphasized the positive influences of tourism through cultural practices in the region:

“I think the most significant aspects I have seen in these 20 years is that they are respectful people, it is a culture of respect, it is a culture of hospitality and inclusion because lots of nationalities live here, so they are open to new ideas and innovation” (Broker 10, Expertise: Education & Outreach, Climate Change, Pos. 24; *Codes 3, 5*).

These features further complement regional identity in targeting global visitors allowing not only travelers to get new experiences and increase cultural awareness but for host communities to have more influence on tourism development (Broker 8, Expertise: Tourism

sales, travel, & marketing, Pos. 31; Broker 9, Tourism sales and Business, Pos. 55-58; *Codes 24.1, 24.2, 24.6*).

Some respondents touched on the negative aspects of tourism growth in the region, specifically in the coded categories of tourism challenges and environmental issues resulting from conflicting perspectives between brokers. With respect to tourism, one respondent stated:

“Overtourism was the buzzword in tourism discussions in 2019, before the virus struck. The very success of international tourism, with five times the number of trips in 2019 compared to the year 1980, had made a mockery of the idea of hospitality and has in many places run a juggernaut over local nature, local culture, diversity, and serendipity, negatively impacting stakeholder involved” (Broker 9, Pos. 56; *Codes 20, 23*).

The challenges presented in tourism development and its management translate into environmental issues whereby the influx of expats and visitors in the region puts pressure on sensitive environments by increasing pollution levels, resource use, waste, etc. (Broker 3, Expertise: Ecologist, Pos 42; Broker 10, Pos. 59; *Code 15*).

Despite this, the interactions between society and tourism have had a profound impact on communities despite the impacts of the pandemic whereby:

“The industry remains vital for the development of economies and communities across the globe. In Abu Dhabi, the tourism industry has provided thousands of Emiratis and expats with valuable job opportunities as well as the chance to enhance the destination’s appeal through their hard work and commitment. The benefits go beyond that – the industry has helped create unique and dynamic experiences for locals and residents, enhancing their lifestyles and well-being. As demand for further tourist activities increases, our role is to harness Abu Dhabi’s natural diversity to elevate tourism and provide residents and visitors with unrivaled experiences while offering Emiratis more opportunities to represent Abu Dhabi and its unique culture” (Broker 1, Pos. 10-11; *Codes 8.2, 24.6*).

This has further enhanced gateway region characteristics in garnering global recognition of the region as a tourism destination:

“The UAE whilst being you know sort of modest small country punches; I would say way above its weight, and I think it is really recognized for that and I think it causes surprise to some of the outside world. I mean you only have to think about the recent Mars orbiter the HOPE mission, you have to think about the first Emirati spacemen, and things like this so it puts UAE on the map, and of course in the height of COVID last year we started having different events and people were amazed how you managed to hold the WWE fighting in Yas island where they made a total bubble and COVID tested everyone and were the first people to host these kinds of events really in this region because it's the kind of creativity and adaptability embodied by the region itself” (Broker 2, Pos. 36; Code 28).

*RQ2: What types of interactions and experiences do the residential community (Emiratis and Expatriates) and visitors have with coastal characteristics, specifically the natural environment and cultural elements?*

The second research question explores the range of activities and sites associated with coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi. 6 out of 10 participants provided textual evidence relative to RQ2. Figure 7.4 provides the distribution of codes evident in interviewees' responses with 10 codes associated with RQ2 from 50 quotes. The most prominent codes recorded were that of interactive components, tourism activities, broker motivations, tourism management, and environmental management, reiterated by the selected quotes that follow.



With respect to the environmental characteristics, the most common habitats residents and tourists seek include coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds crucial for regional species such as dugongs, hawksbill turtles, and local species such as hamour, etc. Critical habitats are protected legally under habitat development guidelines by EAD and offer nature-based tourism activities through the Marawah Protected Area and Al Watbah Wetland reserves. As a primary broker in charge of environmental management in the region, they work closely with the Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT) to ensure the management of tourism activities relative to conservation efforts. This has led to the development of a network of marine protected areas under the Sheikh Zayed Protected Area Network to ensure environmental protection alongside development (Broker 2, Expertise: Archaeology & Broker 4, Expertise: Environmental policy, *Codes 12, 16*).

Despite an extensive network of protected areas generating promise for nature-based tourism activities, not all these areas are accessible to the public; whereby some of these areas are sensitive environmental areas that do not allow for mass public visiting and require the permission of the EAD or the DCT to visit archaeological sites. Furthermore, the lack of public transport to these islands and military control concerning bordering countries of the Arabian Gulf restricts the nature of activities on the coast (Broker 2, Pos. 31; *Codes 20*).

One environmental site most associated with nature-based tourism activities is Sir Baniyas Island which also encloses marine environments associated with the network of protected areas. The activities offered on the island include nature and conservation tours for visitors through wildlife safari drives whereby visitors learn much about environmental and archeological features of species and landscapes in the region; enjoy nature walks across geographical features such as wadis; partake in nature photography; horseback riding; cycling; scuba diving; snorkeling; cycling; kayaking, and other non-motorized water activities in its coastal and marine environments (Broker 7, Expertise: Tourism activities/recreation, *Codes 12, 24.4*).

The marine protected area accessible to the public closer to the city of Abu Dhabi includes the Bull Saif MPA adjacent to Hudayriyat island, one of the newer destinations in the region. In addition to coastal management efforts on the island, the island offers residents and tourists novel experiences across the natural, cultural, and historical significance of the coast:

“On Hudayriyat island, we have an important archaeological which was recently opened as a heritage trail with a series of historic shell middens where people

used to collect pearl oyster shells...by working alongside other developer brokers such as DMT and Modon, the island is set up as a sort of leisure island with a cycling track more popular with locals; a car park with food trucks where you get local and international cuisines, Arabic coffee, Karak chai...they have also opened playgrounds, skateparks whereby they have created a leisure destination that combines beaches with water-based sports activities, spaces to rent bikes, heritage walks which informs visitors of the traditional culture of Abu Dhabi, alongside modern art sculptures of regional species for viewing pleasure and encourage birds to come and nest. It is an interesting project that combines environmental characteristics, heritage, leisure, and tourism” (Broker 2, Pos. 31; *Codes 2.5, 2.6, 18, 24.3, 24.6*).

With the emphasis on heritage and conservation preservation, the region offers “a diversity of terrain, cultures, traditions, coastlines, natural islands, deserts, oases, mountains, and vibrant cities for people to explore” (Broker 1, Pos 5.; *Codes 3, 11, 24.3*). Brokers emphasized traditional activities historically significant to the region:

“Abu Dhabi has some real authentic marine activities. Every year they have the dhow races in which they sail traditional Arabian dhows starting from Delma Island to Mirfa port in the western region and this is a big annual event many boats take part in, usually 60 or 70 and it keeps the tradition of sailing and maritime heritage embedded here. I always recommend tourists who come here to go to the fish market and see the different array of seafood here. Marine resources have also been an integral part of the coastal urban society and it is good to show people and of course the importance of pearling prior to oil. These aspects are also well preserved in museums that often have exhibitions for residents and tourists to visit” (Broker 2, Pos. 20; *Codes 2, 3, 24.6*).

Among traditional activities, the Al Ain Oasis in the western region provides visitors with knowledge of the historical and cultural significance of the area and activities such as the traditional falaj system used in plantations and allows visitors to walk through trails and gardens.

Some modern tourist activities include the fusion of the past and present through:

“Cultural activities available on Saadiyat Island with museums such as the Louvre, new developments such as the Guggenheim and Zayed National Museums; the Al Hosn Cultural site showcasing a historic landmark alongside contemporary Emirati artistic creativity; religious sites such as the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, visiting the Qasr Al Watan Presidential Palace; and leisure activities such as in Jebel Hafeet desert park where tourists can stay and take part in a posh glamping kind of experience” (Broker 1, Pos. 16 & Broker 2, Pos. 44; Codes 3, 18, 24.6).

These activities within diverse landscapes in the region cater to the various touristic demands –

“From wanting a relaxing beach holiday in the sun, to adventure travelers looking for an adrenaline fix, to eco-tourists looking for unique nature experience, while welcoming more and more cultural tourists drawn by its world-class attractions” (Broker 1, Pos. 18; Codes 24.6).

*RQ3: What is sustainability within the context of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi, and how do brokers, locals, and tourists understand it?*

The third research question aims to explore how various brokers understand the concept of sustainability in relation to coastal tourism. Since the respondents span research expertise across cultural studies, environmental science, tourism, policy, etc.; this allowed the study to interpret the brokers’ views of sustainability across cultural, environmental, social, economic, and political factors. 9 out of 10 participants provided textual evidence in relation to RQ3. All quotes identified were first categorized under the main code 26 and subsequent subcodes. Within this code, the text was analyzed to see if they fall within other categories of codes in table 7.2. Figure 7.6 provides the distribution of codes evident in interviewees’ responses with 11 codes associated with RQ3 from 65 quotes. The most prominent codes recorded were interactive components between the environment, tourism, development, and culture; environmental management; cultural characteristics; tourism management; and political characteristics, reiterated by the selected quotes that follow.

**Figure 7.6:** Pie chart showing the distribution of codes from 65 recorded responses among 9 out of 10 brokers. The pie chart was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

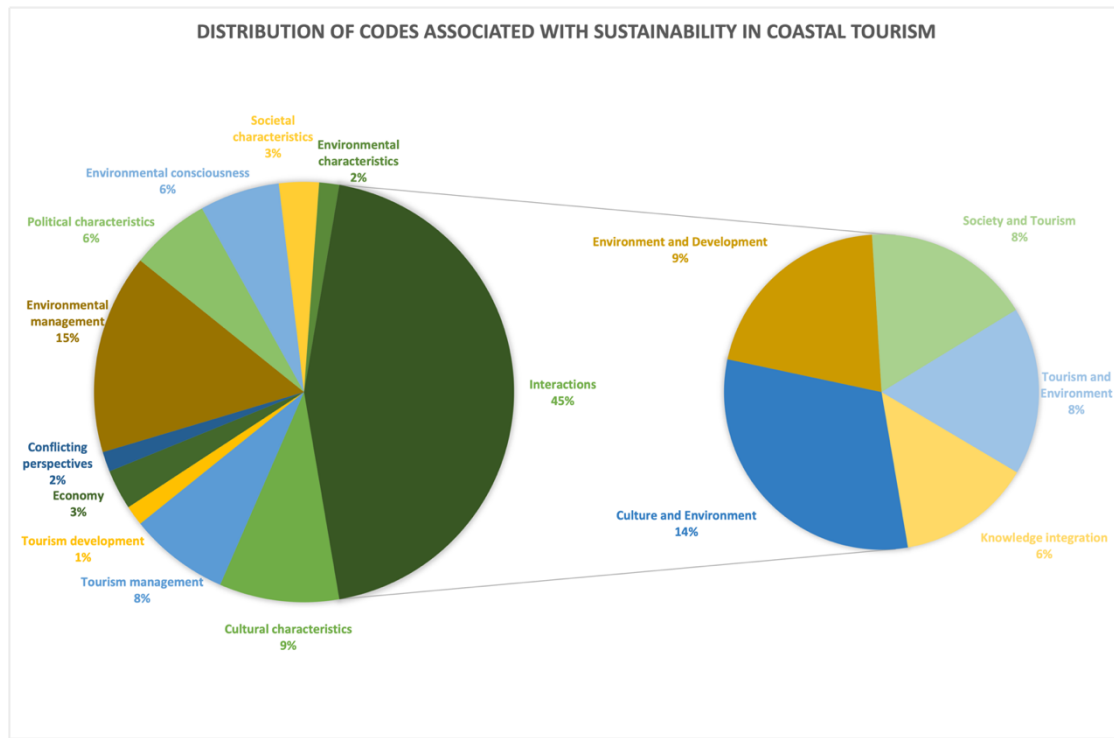


Figure 7.7 examines these responses through a word cloud identifying keywords and phrases associated with coastal tourism sustainability from all possible textual evidence identified for RQ3. From figure 7.7, the common words brokers used to depict sustainability on the coast of Abu Dhabi are Aliastidama (*Arabic word for 'sustainability'*), people, tourism, development, culture, climate, and species.



United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and now Secretary-General of the World Tourism Forum Institute (WTFI), teaches us:

“Tourism cannot simply go back to how it was before but will have to leap forward to a new and better ‘Normal’. Mitigating Climate Change and providing more opportunities for the majority of the global population, not living in Europe or North America, to have a career and sustainable future, is the task of tourism in the coming decades” (Broker 9, Pos. 54; *Codes 5, 16, 17, 24.6, 26*).

He continues to explain this shift through investments to support “Meaningful tourism”:

“Meaningful Tourism refers to a new concept for the post-pandemic development of global tourism. It is a new paradigm aiming at advancing the existing concepts of sustainable and responsible tourism. It changes the predominantly supply-side and often negative perspective of sustainable and responsible tourism towards a demand-side and more balanced perspective, promoting tourism that is meaningful for all stakeholders involved” (Broker 9, Pos. 57; *Codes 24.4, 24.6, 26*).

This has led to the implementation of sustainability sectors within broker organizations such as Etihad Airways, DCT, EAD, WTFI, and other infrastructure management brokers to integrate sustainable practices throughout development and management across socio-cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors. For example, project and infrastructure development in Abu Dhabi seek to employ “Aliastidama” in their building codes to indicate how sustainable a new project is. Airlines and travel sectors are seeing the development of sustainability departments to implement ‘eco-responsible’ initiatives throughout the tourism process, from the moment one decides to travel to the activities they take part in at the destination. For example, the sales manager for Etihad Airways, reiterates this:

“I think it all starts with being responsible; for example, when you book a ticket, I think you need to start thinking about what’s the footprint going to be? How much will it be in terms of the whole trip and your personal carbon footprint? We’re not only talking about travel, but we are also talking about when you stay

in a hotel, when you take an uber to go sightseeing, how much are you consuming, and from there, instigate the ability to calculate how you can compensate for your trip and create a better and conscious mindset” (Broker 8, Pos. 49; *Codes 13, 24.6, 26*).

From an environmental perspective, sustainability translates into two categories – the first is ecological management and conservation to ensure enhancement, restoration, and rehabilitation of ecosystems and the species encompassed in them; the second factor is environmental consciousness as the precursor to implementing sustainable practices in society. The EAD, as the primary organization for environmental initiatives in the region, plays the role of the referee between nature and society to come up with a balance that works not just for the environment but also for industries such as oil, gas, shipping, etc. in the marine environment (Broker 4, Pos. 17; *Codes 12, 24.5, 26*):

“If there is a proposed development, the starting point of that development is if it is protected, if that development is a critical national project, then we look at the redesign of the project, relocation of that habitat or ecosystem type, rehabilitation, and finally compensation; but ultimately you have to look at how to support the species or ecosystem in the future, and that’s where climate change adaptation planning comes in” (Broker 4, *Codes 12, 24.5, 26*).

With the promotion of environmental awareness through initiatives such as marine protected areas and nature-based tourism services, brokers are motivated in instilling conscious attitudes in residents and visitors through ‘environmental responsible tourism’:

“Environmentally responsible tourism will look to reduce one’s footprint through initiatives such as recycling, waste management, energy reduction....so you try to make it as green as possible. I think awareness is extremely important. We run many programs in schools in particular here on those issues. For residents, it starts within their own households. For tourists, I think there is a certain amount that can work benefits in terms of appreciation of what you are looking at and, in the process, trying to avoid damaging the environment when you’re out there” (Broker 3, Pos. 57; *Codes 13, 24.3, 24.6*).

Brokers also pointed out the importance of political will and leadership in integrating sustainability and awareness across society, as one respondent stated:

“I think it’s environmental awareness that encompasses a strong bond between the government and the local community and is really imperative and can help catapult the implementation aspects of the work that is being done to inform more sustainable actions of the population” (Broker 4, Pos. 91; Codes 13, 24.3).

The political characteristics of the region further translate into sustainable societal practices whereby respondents also mentioned the pivotal role of the late ruler, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and his vision in informing the role of sustainability:

“Now in my 7 years here, I have spoken to a lot of people that either know Sheikh Zayed or have met with him or you know listened to his teachings and they all said things similar along the lines that he preferred to give people jobs than let machines do everything and it is an interesting point of view as well because it is less polluting to have a greater workforce of people than just machinery and also you are giving jobs to a lot of families as well, so it was a unique point of view that he had” (Broker 7, Pos. 36; Codes 9, 24.3, 26).

*RQ4: What are some impacts and prospects of tourism development on environmental and cultural sustainability regarding coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi?*

The fourth research question explores the challenges and successes of coastal tourism development concerning the sustainability of cultural and environmental attributes of the region.

**Sustainability Challenges**

Eight out of 10 respondents provided textual evidence on the challenges of tourism development in relation to RQ4. All quotes identified were first categorized under code 26.3; the text was then analyzed to see if they fall within other categories of codes in table 7.2. Figure 7.8 provides the distribution of codes evident in interviewees’ responses with 10 codes

associated with RQ4 from 70 quotes. The most prominent codes associated with impacts of tourism development include interactive components between society, tourism, and development, which result in environmental issues, tourism challenges, societal challenges, conflicting perspectives, and cultural challenges, reiterated by the selected quotes.

**Figure 7.8:** Pie chart showing the distribution of codes from 70 recorded responses among 8 out of 10 brokers. The pie chart was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

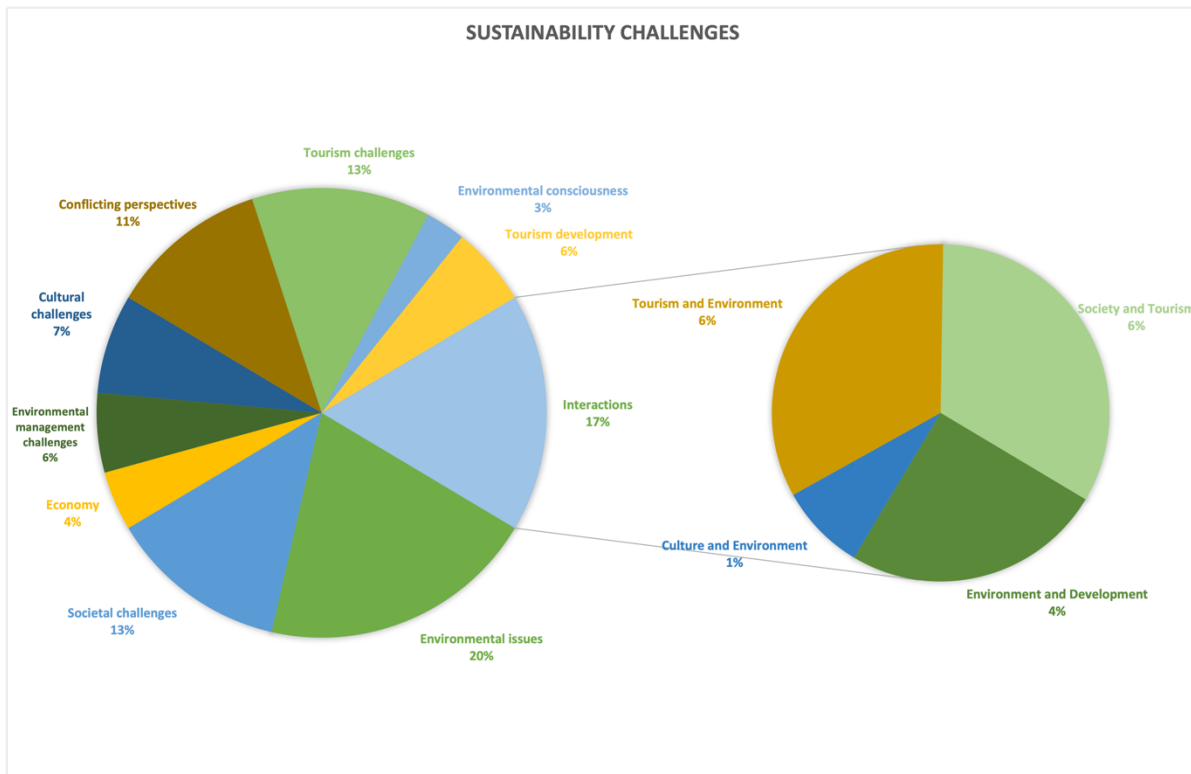


Figure 7.9 examines these responses through a word cloud identifying keywords and phrases associated with challenges of coastal tourism development from all possible textual evidence identified for RQ4. From figure 7.9, the common words used to depict sustainability challenges are lifestyle, climate change, ignorance, faux-heritage, infrastructure, green-slant, waste, etc., which broadly fall under coded categories of tourism challenges, societal/cultural challenges, and environmental issues.



developers are partly ignorant and don't know the value of what is in front of them...we don't want things to be too cliché, to copy other things; we try to discourage this sort of faux-heritage here where developers think we need just to build a shopping mall, incorporate some form of Arab architecture, and then call it local. I think even the local people are sort of fed up with a certain type of fake heritage architecture, and I think they should have more modern innovative yet creative designs that can tailor to both the past and present" (Broker 2, Pos. 39-41; *Codes 4, 17, 20, 23.2, 26.3*).

As the lifestyle of society changes with development, the idea of sustainability is dependent on the livelihood of people, resources, and the ability to inform communities; hence in a place like the UAE, the government and brokers would need to find a compelling hook to get visitors and locals interested (Broker 9, Pos. 38; *Codes 20, 24.6, 26.3*). These societal challenges as a result of lifestyle characteristics were brought to light by other respondents as well:

"In the case of the UAE, change has been very rapid from what it used to be to where it is now because of the influx of expats, discovery of oil, and it has had several implications; they were simple people living a simple life, and that is embedded in its heritage, but they are not the same today, their lifestyles have changed, their intake of food has changed, their environment has changed beyond description" (Broker 10; *Codes 4, 6, 24.5, 26.3*).

Other divergent viewpoints were observed between brokers responsible for environmental management and tourism development and activities to meet local, and visitor needs as one broker states his experience managing projects at Sir Baniyas Island:

"So, all our environments here depend on size, location, water sources, plantations; and anything introduced is definitely going to have an impact, so everything is tied together. You bring in a hotel, it is going to have a massive impact, you bring in a jetty for a cruise line, it is going to have an impact; but you can regulate the impact and put guides in place, yes you have the freedom to do these activities, but under supervision, and some people do not

understand why these rules exist in the first place” (Broker 7, Pos. 44; *Codes 23.2, 24.4, 26.3*).

In the case of Sir Baniyas Island, there is a fine line between tourism, conservation, and the wildlife sector:

“How wild do you want it, do you want lions, ok let’s get rid of walking, biking, let’s get rifles, you would need to take more serious approaches or you build cages and infrastructure and turn it into a zoo, and we don’t want that, so you have to be very selective...we still have responsibility for the people that visit, we want to make sure people enjoy their stay, but everyone needs to understand that it is a wild sector, we have control measures but not like a zoo” (Broker 7, *Codes 23.2, 24.4, 26.3*).

Infrastructure and resources were two of the most evident factors leading to environmental challenges across habitats and management as one respondent states:

“If you want to bring people to experience the environment here, you have to provide the infrastructure, you have to make people comfortable going into the environment. The climate here is not conducive, so if you want to encourage tourists to come, you need to provide the facilities.... but ecosystems are fragile and on the cusp of what they can endure, and any added pressure is detrimental to it. If you encourage people to go to a place but are not putting it back into managing the environment, protecting it, or sustaining the local population by working with the environment, its tourism with a green slant but is not really environmentally responsible” (Broker 7, Pos. 48-49; *Codes 14, 16, 20, 24.5, 26.3*).

Other environmental issues reiterated by brokers were increased production of waste such as litter and plastic, pollution, and increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, ultimately leading to the physical loss of habitats, impacting the quality of habitats, loss of species, disturbances in the abundance and distribution of species, and deteriorating the quality and status of habitats (Broker 5. Expertise: Environmental management and biologist, Pos. 61; *Codes 15, 26.3*).

With respect to the interaction between culture and environment, one respondent talked about changes in aspects of maritime activities and, consequently heritage of Emirati fishermen as a result of the increased population, development, and demands:

“Although the old traditional methods are more sustainable and some still in place for sustainable fisheries practice, the problem is that fishermen today don’t like to use traditional methods because it needs more maintenance and demands of the population cannot be met.... the battle is between cheap modern expediency or sustainable traditional methods. Unfortunately, fishing stocks in the Gulf have declined massively, which has led to the urgent need for marine protected areas....Today fish farming and aquaculture have become a lot more important to supply the market with fresh local delicacies, which are an important source of protein and culture as a maritime nation, in addition to local and visitor demands; we need to be proactive, working across various disciplines, and making sure rules and regulations in place are being followed” (Broker 2, Pos. 27; Codes 14, 24.3, 26.3).

### Sustainability Prospects

Eight out of 10 respondents provided textual evidence of the successes of coastal tourism development in relation to RQ4. All quotes identified were first categorized under codes 26.1 and 26.2; the text was then analyzed to see if they fall within other codes in table 7.2. Figure 7.10 provides the distribution of codes evident in interviewees’ responses with 11 codes associated with RQ4 from 112 quotes. The most prominent codes associated with sustainability prospects for tourism development include interactive components between knowledge, society, tourism, environment, and development which result in enhancing aspects of environmental management and goals, cultural characteristics, tourism development and management, and characteristics of Abu Dhabi as a gateway region reiterated by the selected quotes that follow.

**Figure 7.10:** Pie chart showing the distribution of codes from 112 recorded responses among 8 out of 10 brokers. The pie chart was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

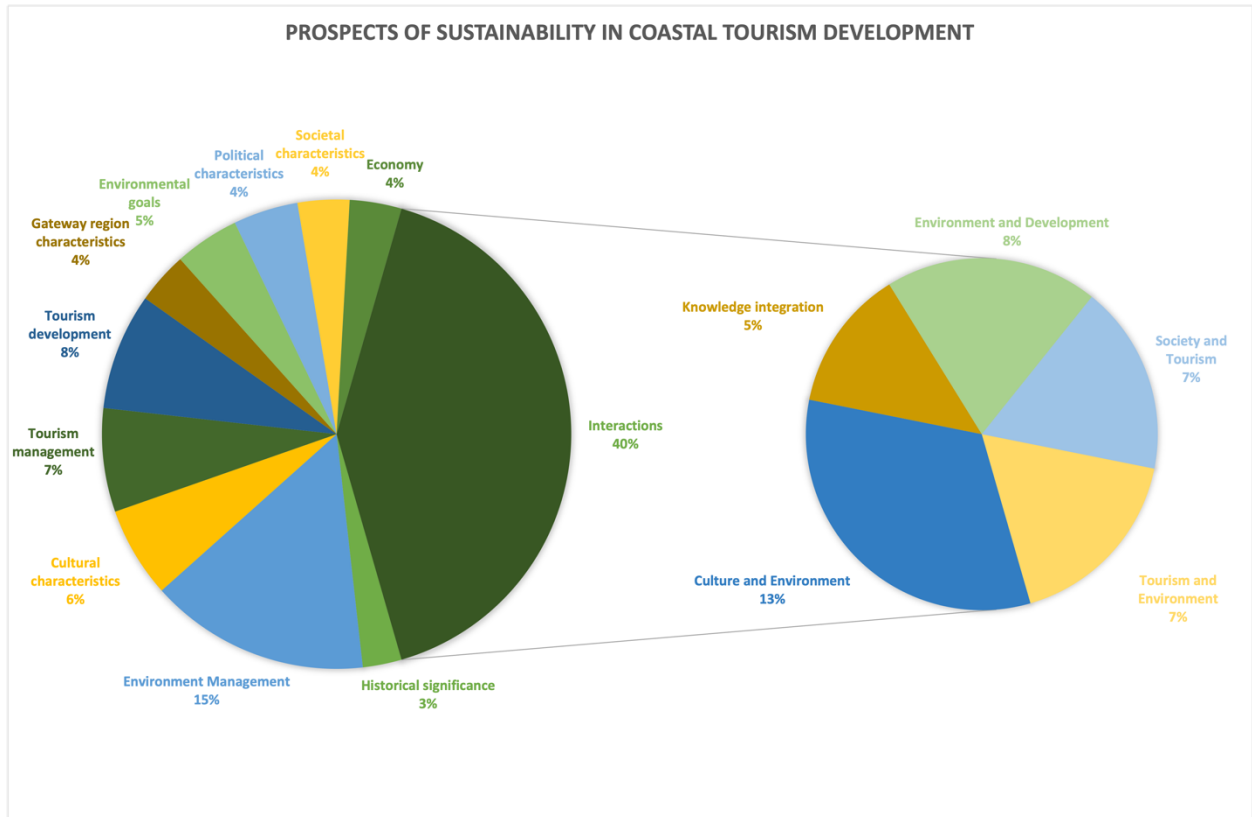


Figure 7.11 examines these responses through a word cloud identifying keywords and phrases associated with coastal tourism activities from all possible textual evidence identified for RQ4. From figure 7.11, the common words used to depict sustainability prospects are through heritage, maritime activities, coastal characteristics such as islands, protected areas, habitats, agency initiatives, etc., which broadly fall under coded categories of environmental management, cultural characteristics of the region, and tourism management and development.



environment of the whole coast of Abu Dhabi....we have the Abu Dhabi Historic Environment Record, so we are proactive in mapping cultural heritage to promote certain sites through platforms such as the visit Abu Dhabi website and a new platform called cultureall with access to archaeological sites, arts, festivals, videos, etc. which are diverse in the region which is why they came up with 'culture all' to promote culture and Abu Dhabi as a destination with a rich source of information" (Broker 2, Pos. 29-30; *Codes 16, 24.2, 24.3, 26.2*).

Other interactions between culture and environment have also informed environmental management prospects. For example, one respondent's expertise in fisheries mentioned the continued use of traditional and artisanal practices for sustainable management of fisheries (Broker 6. Expertise: Fisheries Management; *Codes 3, 12, 24.3*):

"So, what we can learn from the past is that fishing methods were more sustainable and less damaging to fisheries. For example, when you use these cage traps made from palm fronds, if you accidentally lose it, it gradually decays and the fish can escape; on the other hand, with metal traps, you are not really controlling the traps, and the fish can get trapped inside. A few years ago, the EAD introduced a special door on the metal fish traps that had a fiber on it which decays so the door would open if it was lost and the fish can escape and is less damaging than metal cage traps used in many parts of the world" (Broker 2, Pos. 26; *Codes 3, 12, 26.1, 26.2*).

With respect to environmental management, respondents indicated that all known and presumed ecosystem services in the region are given importance to conservation whereby:

"For corals, we have a coral nursery at Sir Baniyas Island, where we are looking at introducing 1 million coral fragments that will also support coral growth in deeper habitat areas....Mangroves again, we have 3 million mangroves in Abu Dhabi at the moment, and we are looking to increase that number up to 10 million in the next 5 years whereby for key habitats we have sound protection legally working hard to support them to adapt to a very hostile

environment....we are also looking to increase our marine protected areas from 13.9% to 21% by 2025” (Broker 4, Pos. 64-66; *Codes 12, 26.1, 26.2*).

In addition to the close relationship between culture and environment, tourism brokers indicated the development of quality-based tourism projects harnessing the natural characteristics of the region. A primary example of this is Sir Baniyas Island, developed through the vision of the late ruler who was looking into how he could feed a nation in the desert, lower imports by focusing on efforts of greening the desert (Broker 7, Pos. 3; *Codes 9, 24.4, 26.1, 26.2*). In terms of species and habitat conservation, the island focuses on protection, enhancement, and rehabilitation:

“Over here we give them an area, look after them to the point of view of these animals were coming from zoos, and then as we start a breeding program, give them a larger space, started moving away from them, let them look for natural vegetation, get them used to the ecosystem, and subsequently relocate them to their natural habitats in the Arabian peninsula...in terms of environmental characteristics we look to support ecosystems, we currently are looking into biorocks as a novel technology to create artificial coral reefs, to accelerate coral growth with increased resistance to climate change, coral bleaching, and increased storm activities” (Broker 7, *Codes 12, 26.1, 26.2*).

Respondents also mentioned sustainable efforts through services offered to visitors on the island whereby hotels are taking greener approaches concerning waste management, energy consumption, production, etc. through investment into technological modifications to minimize environmental impacts:

“The Anantara hotel has to meet standards of all other Anantara hotels now there is actually a new thing coming in with ‘bio-bottles’ where we are still in the testing phase to find out if we can actually do it because these bottles last 2 months...hotels are also looking to use natural waste utilities as well, so the wastewater does come from the hotels and other infrastructure with treatment areas, sewage networks that connect to our composting pit....we use animal manure, dead trees, wastewater, in these pits which are ultimately used to

grow the grasslands you see here and allows us to drop all chemical fertilizers....Plantations are also taking place on the island where we are working to grow citrus fruits by developing nano clay technologies and hydroponics....we are also working with private sector partners in farming on the island with animals such as sheep, cows, chickens, to take on a more dynamic and sustainable approach towards food in the island for hotels....Each year is about lowering costs, setting up infrastructure, innovations in conservation and sustainability especially in an environment such as the UAE since it is perfect for novel research on climate change and its impacts” (Broker 7, *Codes 10, 12, 16, 17, 24.4, 26.1, 26.2*).

These expansions have not only provided the region with the opportunity to uplift its profile as a global tourism destination, but brokers specified benefits to the community in enhancing the economy to become more sustainable and less dependent on the oil and gas sector (Broker 1, *Codes 8, 24.6, 26.1, 26.2*).

Brokers also viewed prospects to encompass aspects of community outreach in instilling sustainable citizenry practices whereby coastal management is space-specific. That means incorporating multiple demographics and languages given the diversity of the region to enhance societal characteristics (Broker 4, *Codes 24.1, 24.2, 24.3, 26.2*). Some initiatives brokers indicated include:

“Climate literacy is something we are working to integrate into education systems by collaborating with schools worldwide. It aims to bring students from different countries into climate conservation and give them agency and encourage more sustainable lifestyles (Broker 10, *Codes 5, 10, 26.2*). Film and visual material are absolutely key for behavioral change, and now citizen science through apps engaging people in the environment and the threats facing it is a key one. You know you have your Ocean Conservancy plastic apps making stakeholder engagement more community-based” (Broker 4, Pos. 76; *Codes 5, 10, 26.2*).

Other efforts include knowledge integration as sustainability here is viewed across multiple disciplines spanning political, social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors:

“When we look into development and policies for regulation, we have to have evidence from multiple disciplines, and there is something called the PESTL analysis – political, environmental, social, technological, and legal. You have to analyze all those things in forming the three pillars of sustainable development, otherwise, it won’t get across effectively and create an impact” (Broker 4, Pos. 83; Codes 24.2, 26.1, 26.2).

## 7.4 Survey Results

The following section provides results from the survey administered to the general public of Abu Dhabi, comprising residents (who can be both brokers and locals forming the onsite community) and tourists, to gain their perspectives on the impacts of tourism, culture, conservation, and sustainability, and tourism development in relation to the proposed research aims. The English survey had 86 responses with a 62% completion rate, while the Arabic survey had 22 responses with a 95% completion rate.

### 7.4.1 Demographics of Survey Participants (Questions 1 – 8)

The demographic characteristics of participants from the English and Arabic surveys were combined and visualized in Microsoft excel. The total number of survey responses was 102, of which 53 were male and 49 were female (Figure 7.12).

**Figure 7.12:** Pie chart showing the distribution of gender across survey responses. The pie chart was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

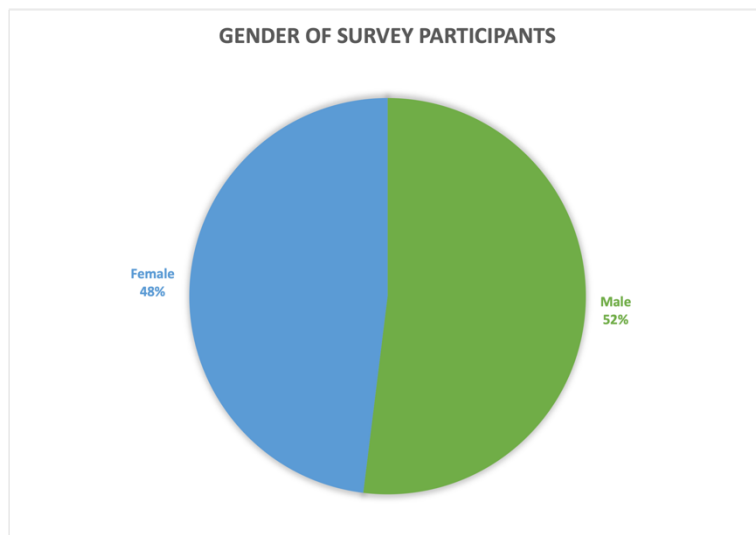


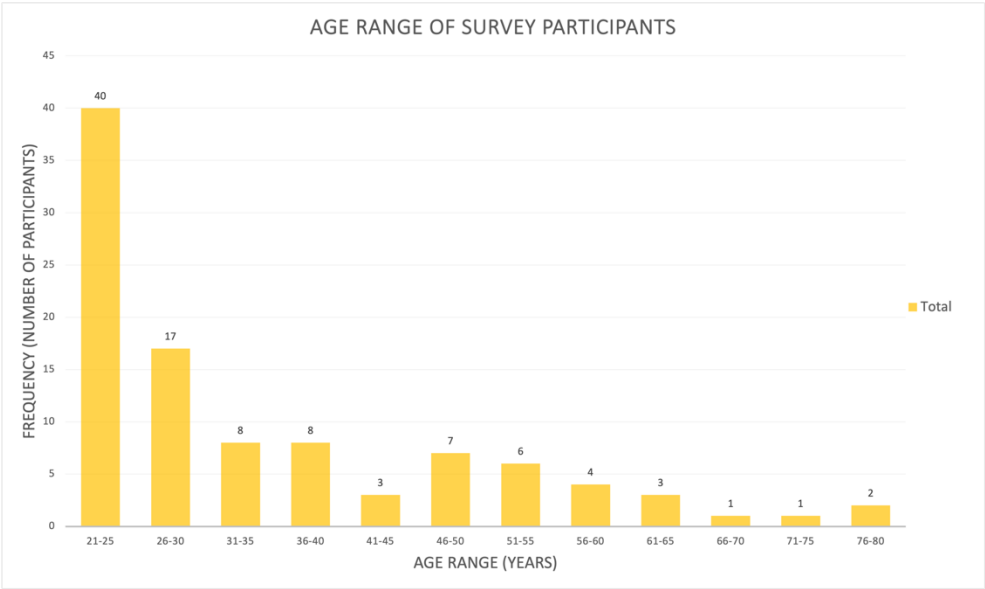
Figure 7.13 depicts the nationalities of participants, which span regions of UAE, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Jordan, Palestine, Algeria, India, Pakistan, Germany, Austria, Malaysia, Canada, USA, Romania, UK, South Africa, Norway, Australia, and Sri Lanka.

**Figure 7.13:** Graphic indicating the domestic and international nationalities of survey participants. The map was created by the researcher with mapcharts software.

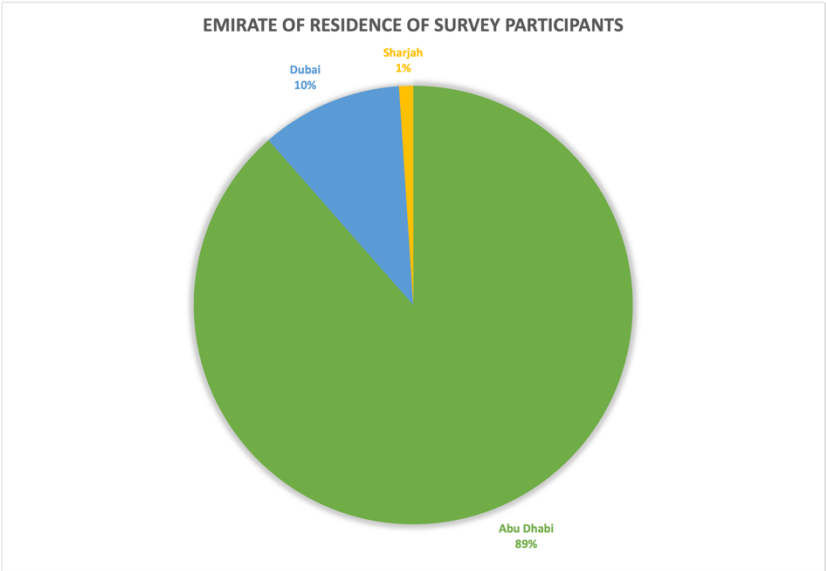


The ages of participants were tallied and span a range from 21 years to 80 years from 100 recorded responses. The bar graph in figure 7.14 summarizes the age of participants in groups of 5.

**Figure 7.14:** Bar graph showing age range of survey participants. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.



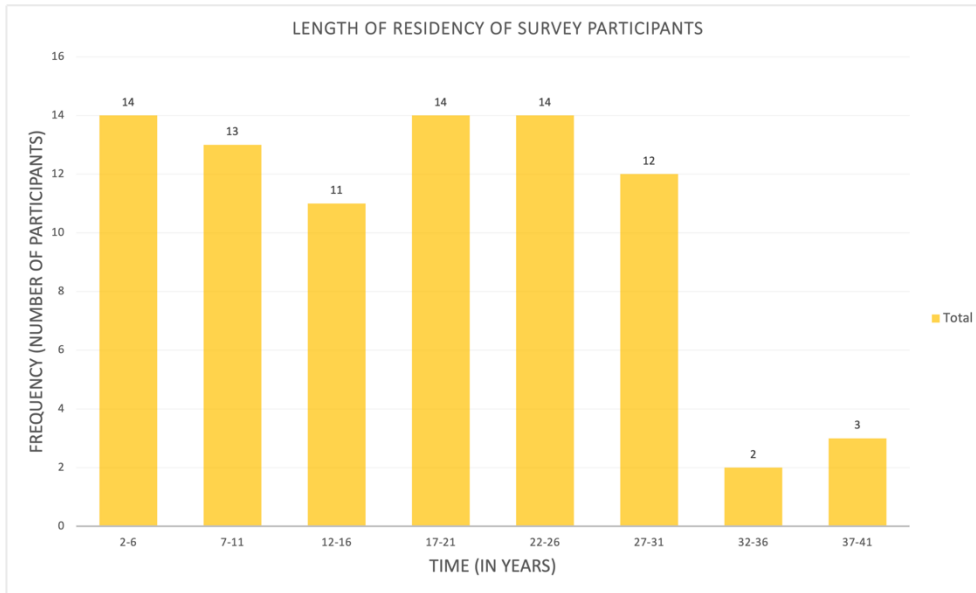
Most participants were residents, with 96 responses indicating emirate of residence, while the remaining are assumed to be tourists visiting the region (Figure 7.15).



**Figure 7.15:** Pie chart showing the distribution of participants as residents across the UAE. The pie chart was generated by the researcher on Microsoft excel.

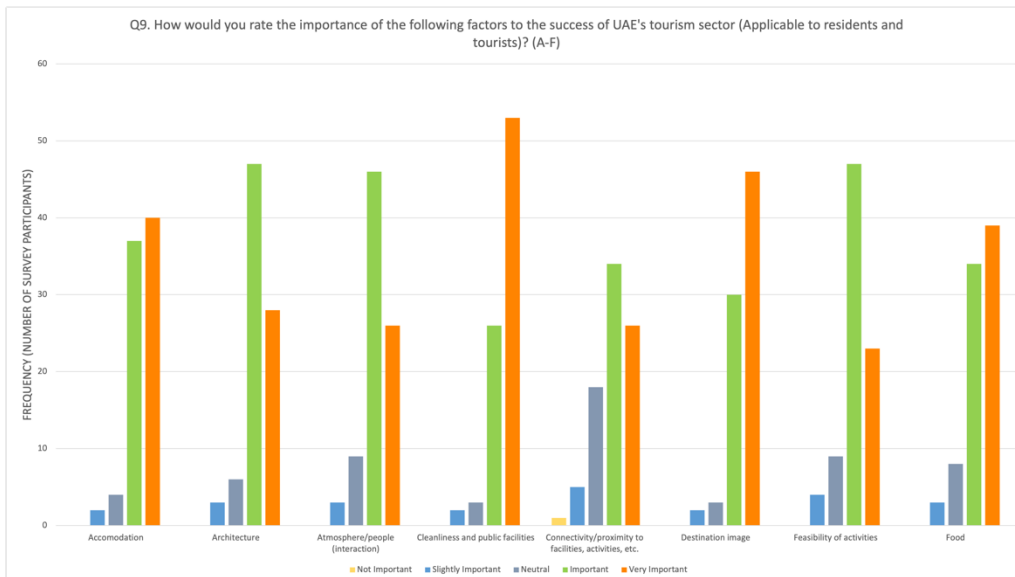
Those participants who were residents also recorded their length of residency, which ranged from 2 years to 41 years, from a total of 83 recorded responses (Figure 7.16).

**Figure 7.16:** Bar graph showing the length of residency of survey participants. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.



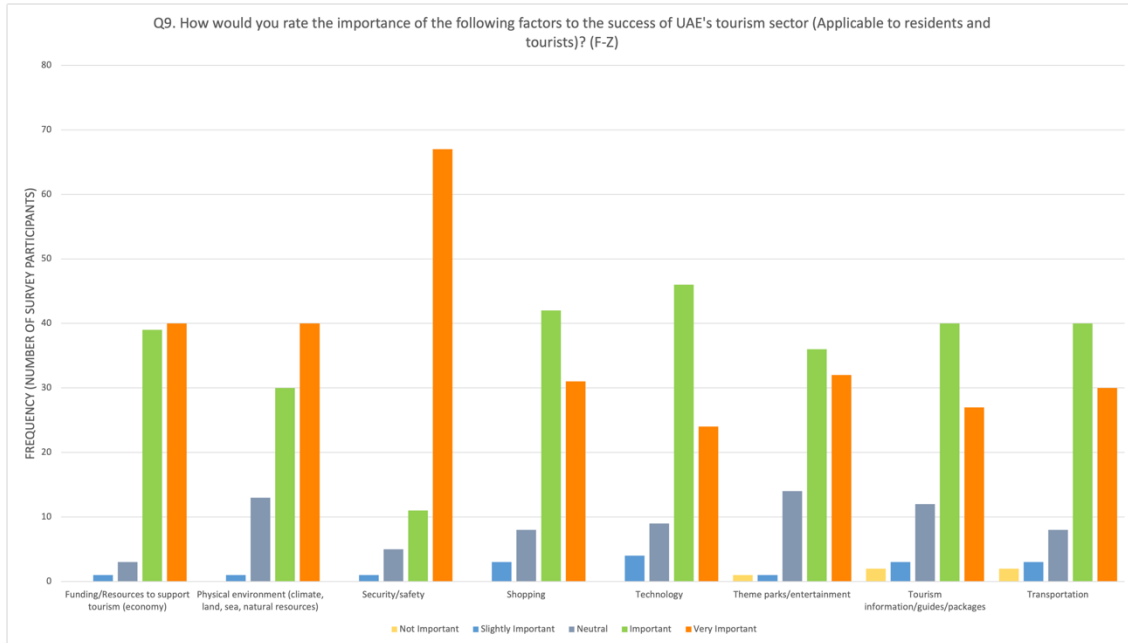
#### 7.4.2 Survey Questionnaire Results (Questions 9 – 24)

**Questions 9 and 10 (relevant to RQ1 and RQ2):** Breaking down the questionnaire results, questions 9 through 10 explored the respondent’s perspectives on tourism and its impacts in the UAE. Question 9 assessed the significance of factors pertinent to the success of tourism in the UAE with an average of 84 recorded responses (Figure 7.17-7.18). 86% of respondents (n=72) considered selected factors to be important or very important for the success of tourism in the UAE.



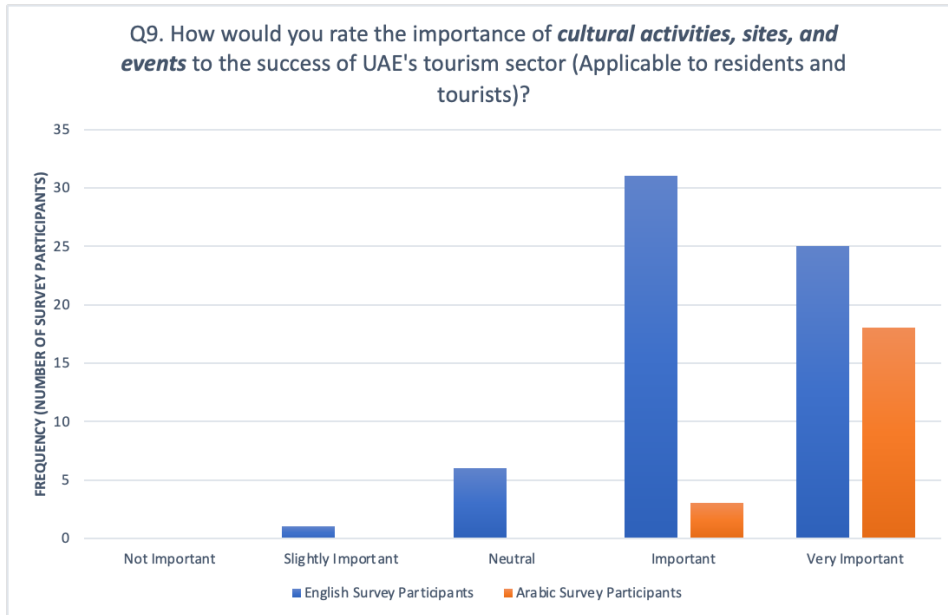
**Figure 7.17:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses for Q9 (A-F). The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

**Figure 7.18:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses for Q9 (F-Z). The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

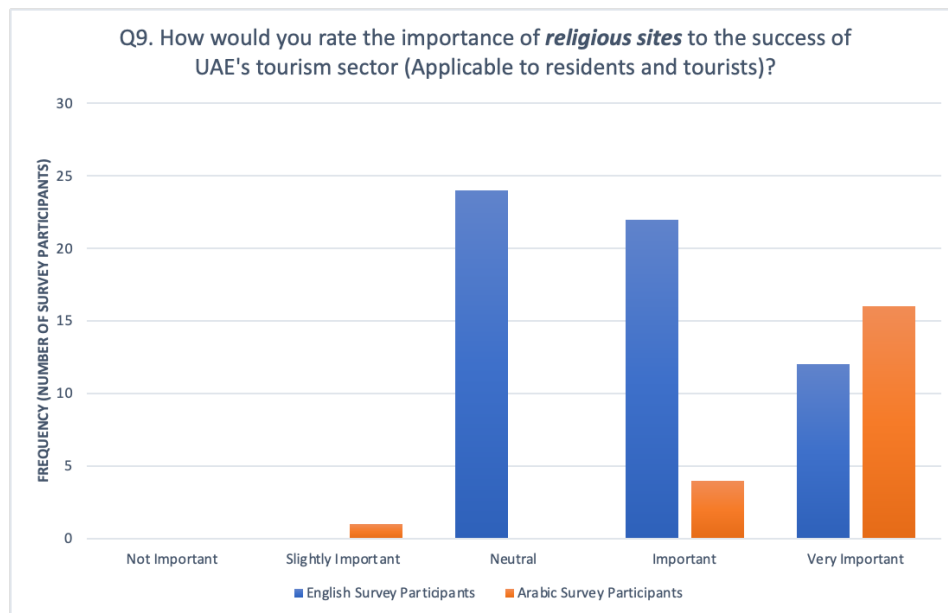


Two factors pertinent to tourism in the UAE – 1) cultural activities, sites, and events and 2) religious sites showed statistically significant differences in responses recorded between English and Arabic survey participants, with a greater number of Arabic respondents considering these factors to be ‘very important’. 30% of English survey respondents (n=18 of 60 recorded responses) considered cultural and religious sites very important for tourism relative to 81% of Arabic survey respondents (n=17 of 21 recorded responses). Figure 7.19 and Figure 7.20 depict these responses in a bar graph comparing results between English and Arabic participants.

A chi-square test between the observed and expected responses for the category of ‘very important’ for cultural activities, sites, and events resulted in a p-value of 0.0106. Similarly, a chi-square test between observed and expected responses for the category of ‘very important’ for religious sites resulted in a p-value of 0.0002. Since both p-values are less than the significance level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis in both cases in favor of the alternative hypotheses.

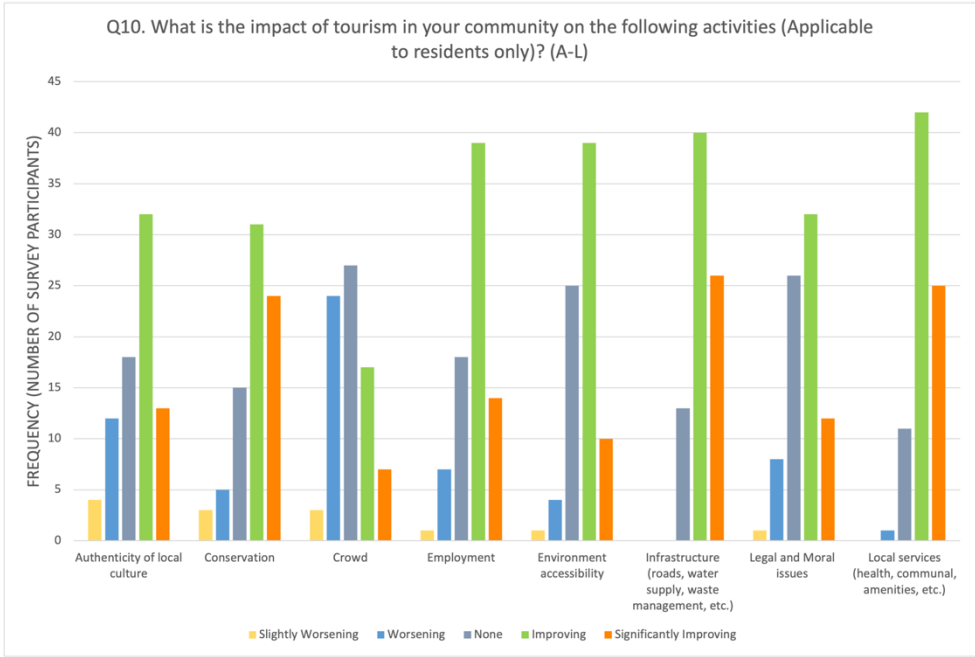


**Figure 7.19:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses between English and Arabic participants for Q9 pertaining to cultural activities, sites, events. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

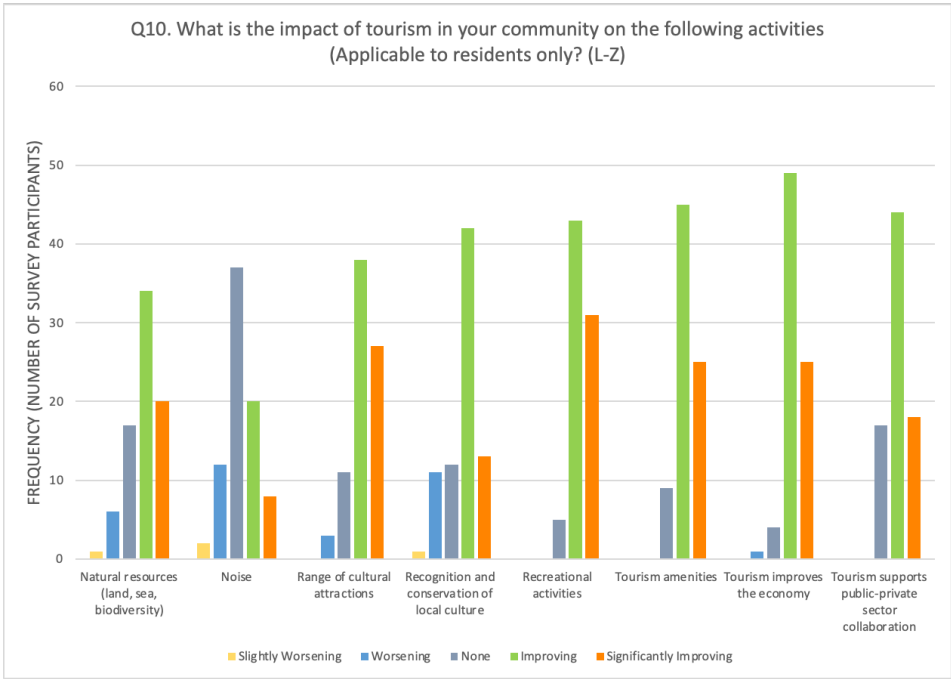


**Figure 7.20:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses between English and Arabic participants for Q9 pertaining to religious sites. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 10 assessed residents' perspectives on the impact of tourism in their community across economic, socio-cultural, and environmental factors with an average of 79 recorded responses (Figure 7.21-7.22). 70% of respondents (n=55) considered the impact of tourism in their community to be 'improving' or 'significantly improving' while the remaining respondents chose to be neutral.



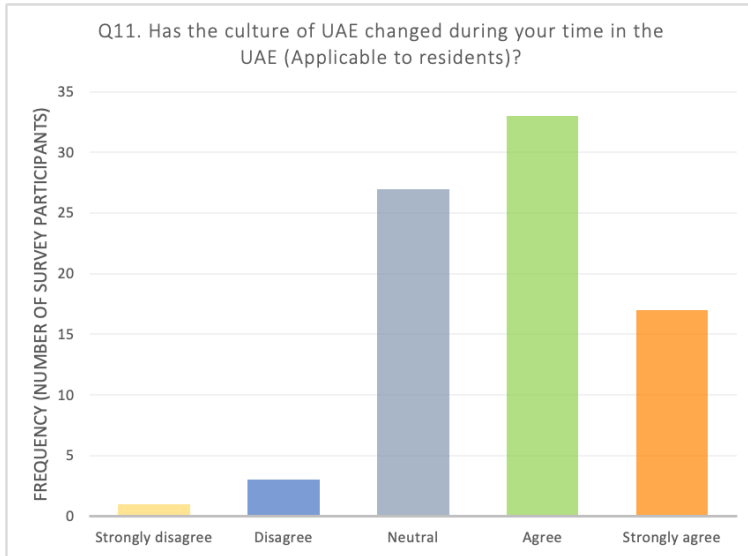
**Figure 7.21:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses for Q10 (A-L). The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.



**Figure 7.22:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses for Q10 (L-Z). The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

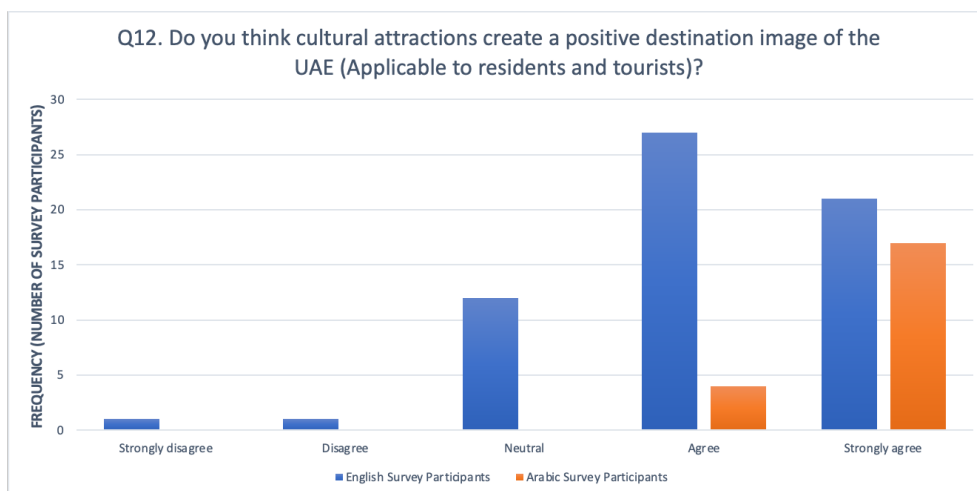
**Questions 11-14 (Relevant to RQ1 and RQ2):** Questions 11 to 14 explored respondents’ perspectives on the cultural context of the UAE as it pertains to coastal tourism. Question 11 assessed individuals’ perceptions of the progression of culture over time in the

UAE with 81 recorded responses. 62% (n=50) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the culture of the UAE has changed, while 33% (n=27) chose to remain neutral (Figure 7.23).



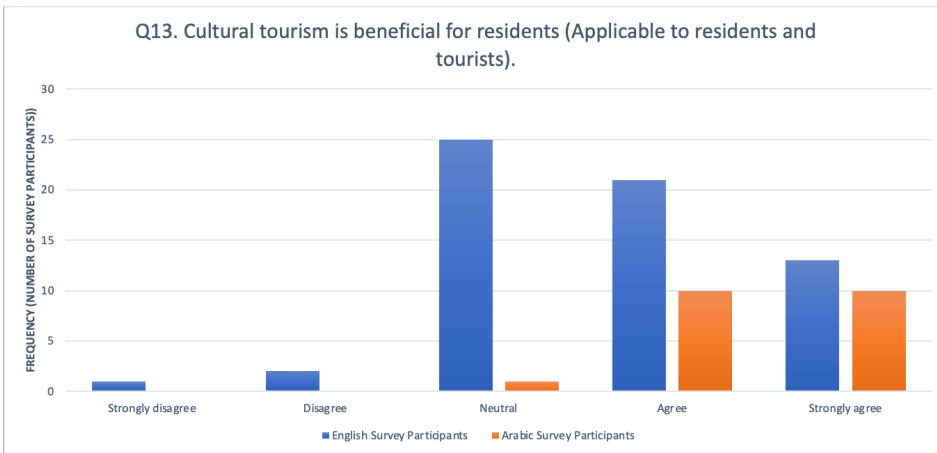
**Figure 7.23:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses for Q11. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Questions 12-14 showed statistically significant differences in responses between English and Arabic survey participants. Question 12 assessed respondents' perspectives on cultural attractions in creating a positive tourism destination image of the UAE (Figure 7.24). From a total of 62 responses, 34% of English survey respondents (n=21) 'strongly agree' with the statement relative to 81% of Arabic survey respondents (n=17) from a total of 21 recorded responses. A chi-square test revealed a p-value of 0.0058, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative.



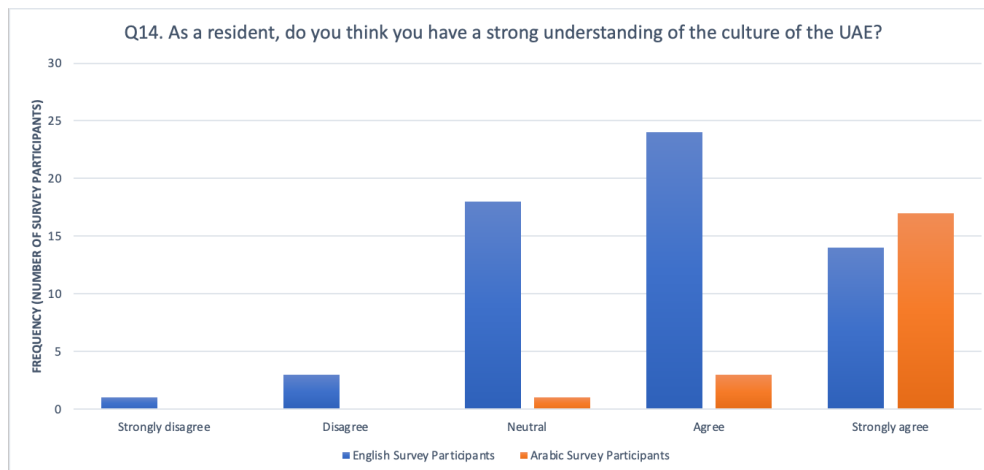
**Figure 7.24:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses between English and Arabic participants for Q12. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 13 assessed whether respondents believe cultural tourism is beneficial (Figure 7.25). From a total of 62 responses, 21% of English survey respondents (n=13) ‘strongly agree’ with the statement relative to 48% of Arabic survey respondents (n=10) from a total of 21 recorded responses. A chi-square test revealed a p-value of 0.0449, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative.



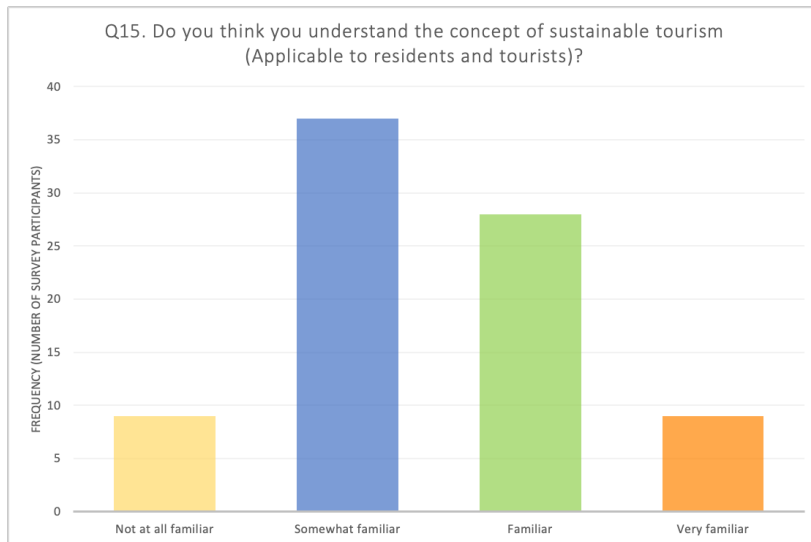
**Figure 7.25:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses between English and Arabic participants for Q13. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 14 assessed residents’ understanding of the culture of the UAE (Figure 7.26). From a total of 60 responses, 23% of English survey respondents (n=14) ‘strongly agree’ with the statement relative to 81% of Arabic survey respondents (n=17) from a total of 21 recorded responses. A chi-square test revealed a p-value of 0.0002, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative.



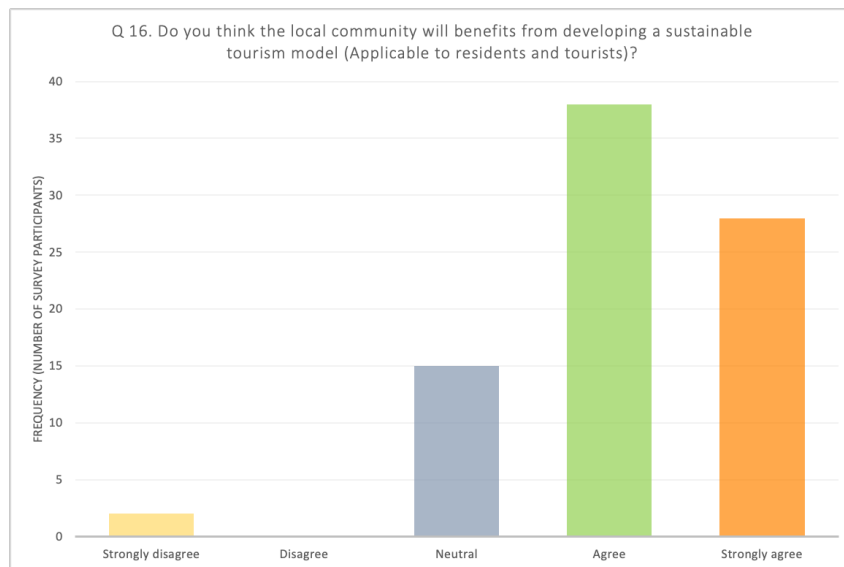
**Figure 7.26:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses between English and Arabic participants for Q14. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

**Question 15-24 (Relevant to RQ3 and RQ4):** Questions 15 to 24 explored perspectives on conservation and sustainability pertaining to coastal tourism in the UAE through cultural and natural characteristics. Question 15 assessed participants' understanding of sustainability in relation to tourism with 83 recorded responses, of which 44% (n=37) were 'somewhat familiar' with the concept of sustainable tourism (Figure 7.27).



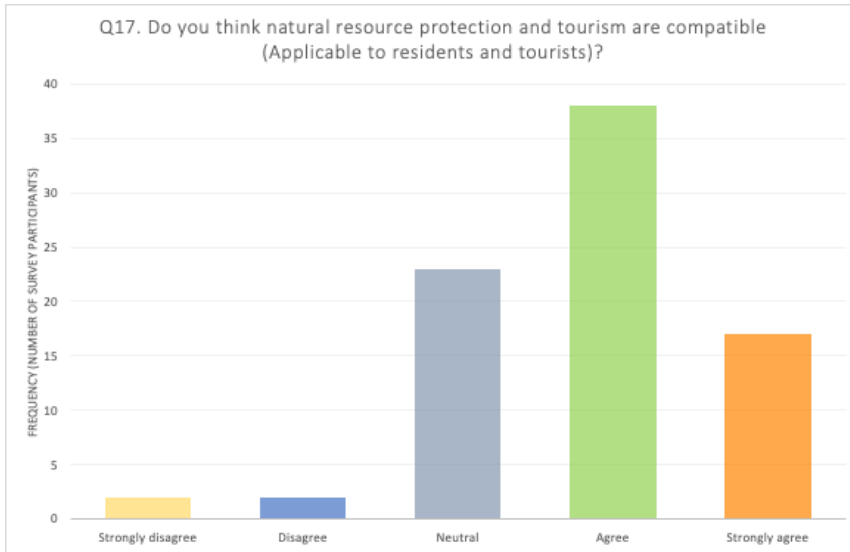
**Figure 7.27:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses to Q15. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 16 assessed if participants believe there to be benefits associated with incorporating sustainability in tourism. From 83 responses, 79% (n=66) either chose 'agree' or 'strongly agree' as their response (Figure 7.28).



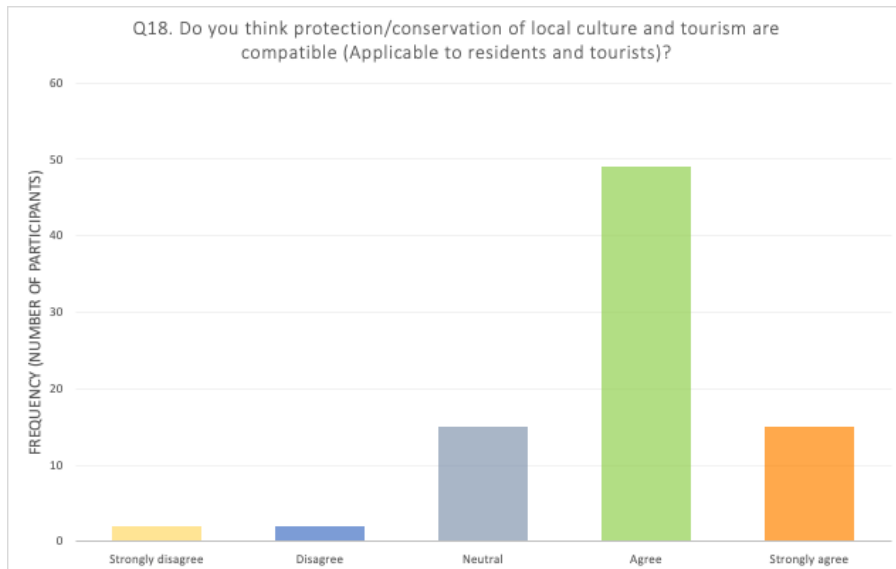
**Figure 7.28:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses to Q16. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 17 explored participants' perspectives on the compatibility between tourism and conservation through the protection of natural resources. From 82 recorded responses, 67% (n=55) chose either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' as their response (Figure 7.29).



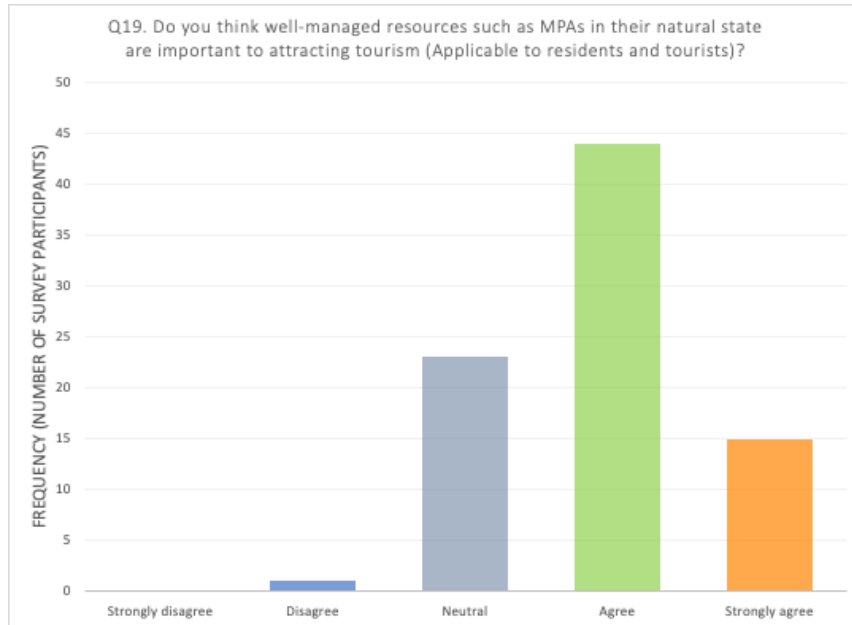
**Figure 7.29:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses to Q17. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 18 explored participants' perspectives on the compatibility between tourism and the conservation of culture. From 83 recorded responses, 77% (n=64) chose either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' as their response (Figure 7.30).



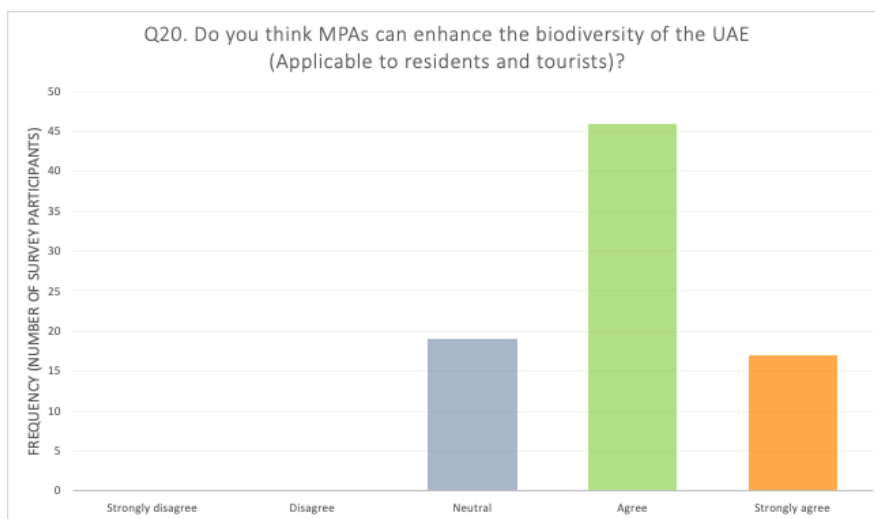
**Figure 7.30:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses to Q18. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 19 assessed if participants understood the concept of marine protected areas and their value for tourism. From 83 recorded responses, 71% (n=59) chose either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' as their response (Figure 7.31).



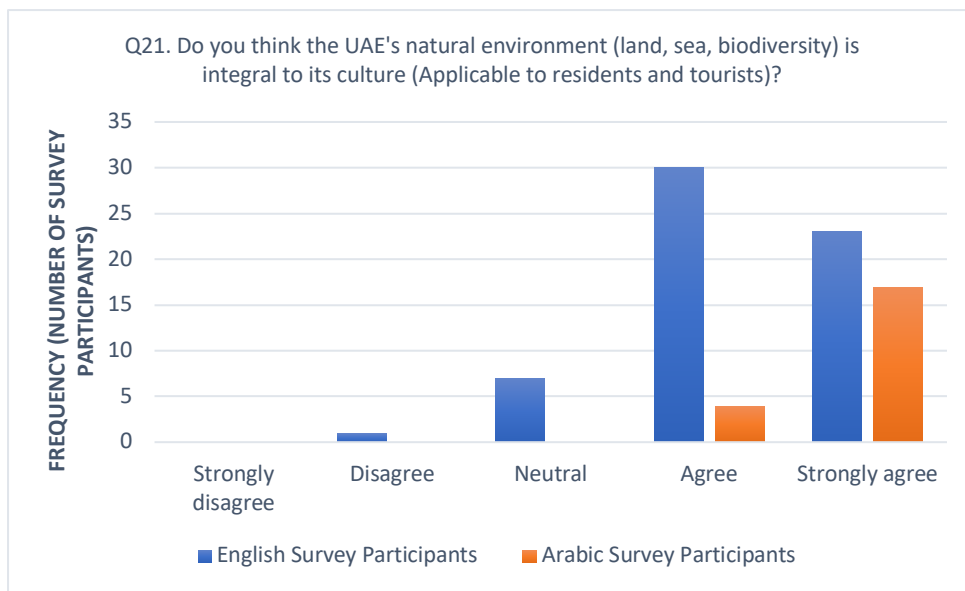
**Figure 7.31:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses to Q19. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 20 assessed if participants believe marine protected areas can enhance the environmental characteristics of the UAE. From 82 recorded responses, 77% (n=63) chose either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' as their response (Figure 7.32).



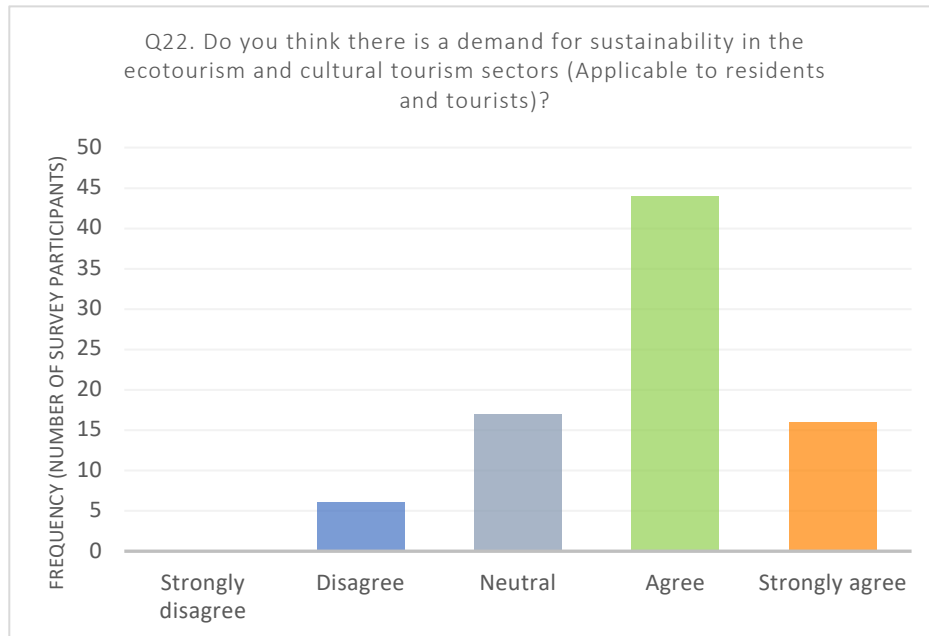
**Figure 7.32:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses to Q19. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Questions 21 showed statistically significant differences in responses recorded between English and Arabic survey participants, and hence responses were left separate between the two groups. Question 21 assessed whether respondents believe the natural environment informs the culture of the UAE (Figure 7.33). From a total of 61 responses, 38% of English survey respondents (n=23) ‘strongly agree’ with the statement relative to 81% of Arabic survey respondents (n=17) from a total of 21 recorded responses. A chi-square test revealed a p-value of 0.0144, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative.



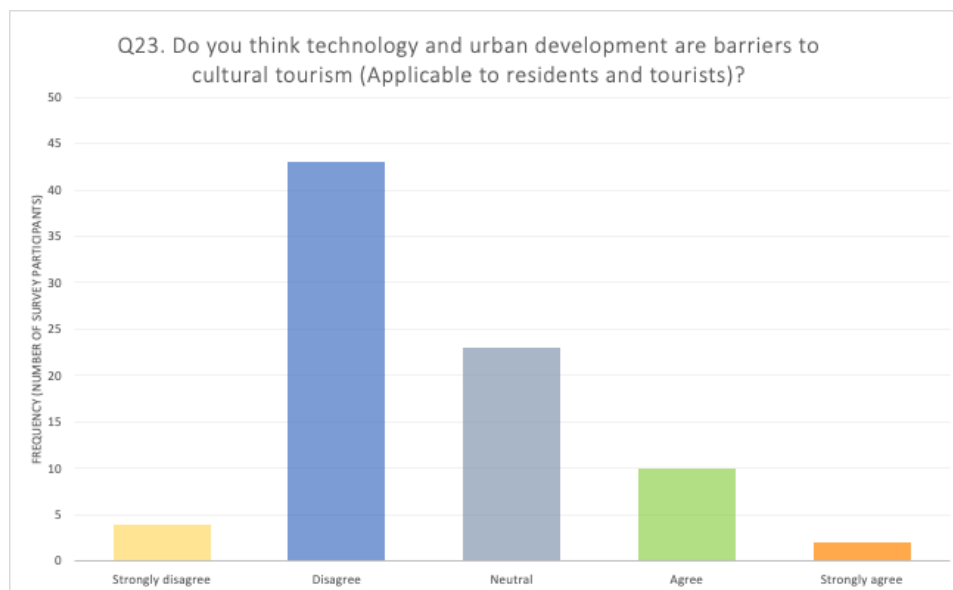
**Figure 7.33:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses between English and Arabic participants for Q21. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 22 assessed if participants think there is a demand for sustainability in nature-based and cultural tourism sectors. From 83 recorded responses, 72% (n=60) chose either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ as their response (Figure 7.34).



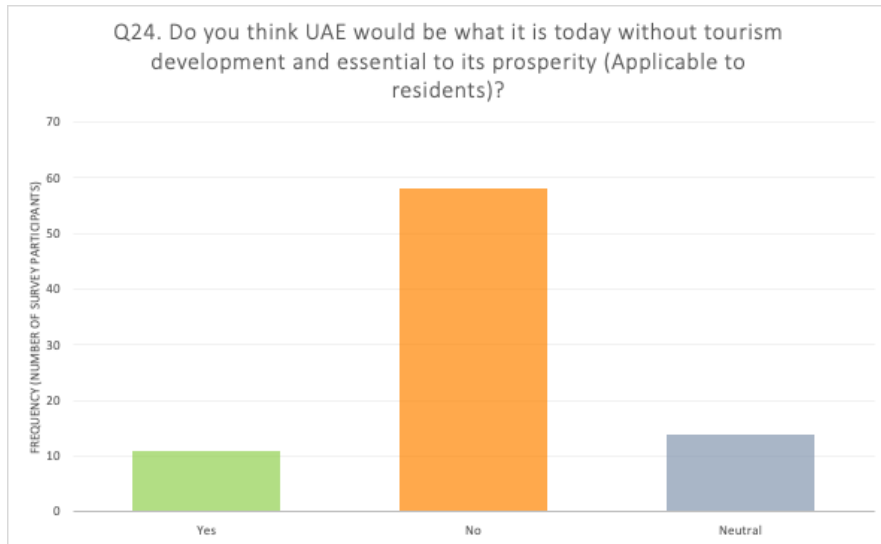
**Figure 7.34:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses to Q22. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 23 assessed the compatibility between technology and development with culture in relation to tourism. From a total of 82 recorded responses, 52% (n=43) disagreed with the statement while 28% (n=23) chose to remain neutral (Figure 7.35).



**Figure 7.35:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses to Q23. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

Question 24 explored respondents' perspectives on tourism development and its economic importance in the UAE. From 83 responses, 70% (n=58) agree that tourism is essential to UAE's development (Figure 7.36).



**Figure 7.36:** Bar graph showing the distribution of responses to Q24. The bar graph was generated by the researcher in Microsoft excel.

#### 7.4.3 Survey Image Perceptions (Questions 25 -29)

Questions 25 to 29 of the survey provided participants with images related to tourism activities, sites, culture, and environmental characteristics of Abu Dhabi to elicit cognitive, behavioral, and affective attitudes and reactions. The comments provided by participants were analyzed through a word cloud presented for each image. Each image explored the respondents' feelings/emotions about the picture, what activities they associated with the picture, attributed they liked or disliked, and what the pictures made them think of.





**Figure 7.41:** Image 3 presented to participants in section III of the survey.



**Figure 7.42:** Word cloud showing survey responses to image 3 (Q27). The word cloud was generated using the Bjorn Word Cloud extension in Microsoft word by the researcher.



Figure 7.42 depicts survey participants' responses to image 3 (Figure 7.41) presented through a word cloud identifying keywords and phrases. With respect to feelings, positive reactions were associated with power, pride, and the surreal nature of the development of iconic attractions. Most participants said they would like to go there and experience activities related to leisure and luxury, whether connecting with people, infrastructure, cuisines, cultures, etc., both locally and internationally. Participants appreciated the extravagant architectural designs, hospitality, and ambiance, and associated it with paradise on the coast. As a result, participants were reminded of the wide range of tourism activities and sites to visit and experience in the UAE. Negative connotations of the image were associated with words such as artificial, pollution, affordability, class, and excessiveness of urban development.





## **7.5 Transitional Comment**

This chapter outlines the process of analyzing the data collected from interviews and surveys and presents the results of the analysis in relation to the research aims of the study. Interview data were analyzed through coding for themes relative to the research questions. At the same time, the survey results were visualized and tested for significance for selected questions between English and Arabic survey participants. According to brokers, the coastal characteristics of tourism in Abu Dhabi were strongly associated with both cultural and natural elements resulting in prospects for sustainability in tourism. However, brokers were also aware of the challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the demand for sustainability alongside tourism development. Locals and tourists showed strong demand for cultural and nature-based tourism attractions and services with a growing demand for sustainability in the tourism industry. However, this requires generating more awareness and consciousness within the community on themes of sustainable development in coastal tourism dynamics. The next chapter discusses the significance of the results presented and provides recommendations for integrating sustainability into coastal tourism characteristics of the region.

## Chapter 8: Discussion and Recommendations

*"We cherish our environment because it is an integral part of our country, our history, and our heritage. On land and in the sea, our forefathers lived and survived in this environment. They were able to do so only because they recognized the need to conserve it, to take from it only what they needed to live, and to preserve it for succeeding generations".*

- Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan

The sustainability of coastal tourism comprises various interactive elements that aim to support the preservation of natural characteristics through tourism-related activities and sustain the socio-cultural landscapes of the destination. The concept of sustainability in tourism development proposed by numerous scholars acknowledges the social and economic significance coupled with political and environmental factors to shift tourism toward sustainable development that integrates not only economic benefits but also socio-cultural and ecological values. This thesis aimed to determine the sustainable characteristics of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi using tourism models (see Chapter 3) to understand perspectives, processes, and interactions between brokers, locals, and tourists across social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors. This thesis tackled the following research questions through interviews with subject matter experts and surveys administered to residents and tourists in Abu Dhabi:

*RQ1: What is it like to live in a hotspot for tourism in a region composed of different nationalities?*

*RQ2: What types of interactions and experiences do the residential community (Emiratis and Expatriates) and visitors have with coastal characteristics, specifically the natural environment and cultural elements?*

*RQ3: What is sustainability within the context of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi, and how do brokers, locals, and tourists understand it?*

*RQ4: What are the prospects and impacts of tourism development on environmental and cultural sustainability regarding coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi?*

This chapter will break down the results of the analysis (see Chapter 7) and its significance in relation to each of the research questions addressed in this exploratory study. It will also recommend relevant considerations and strategies regarding the management and

development of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi and how this fits into the broader field of conservation and sustainability in the field of tourism.

## **8.1 Results Breakdown**

*RQ1: What is it like to live in a hotspot for tourism in a region composed of different nationalities?*

The majority of interviewees had positive reactions to the operation of tourism in Abu Dhabi, with the strength of the industry situated in cultural interactions between members of the residential community and visitors creating a collective tourism experience and destination image that has garnered global attention for its recognition of identity and diversity. Although the aim of the primary tourism brokers (DCT) is to preserve and protect Emirati culture and heritage, emphasis on aspects of cross-cultural dialogue, respect, tolerance, etc., has allowed tourism to cater to the needs of the expatriate population and international visitors.

From the perspectives of tourism brokers, this has translated into opportunities for knowledge integration from different cultures and relationships between broker organizations in efforts to generate benefits for the tourism sector and residential population. Although Emiratis form the dominant identity that characterizes the region, they are not the majoritarian group; expats have also contributed to tourism through employment in tourism sectors, governmental, and non-governmental organizations (e.g., Emirates Natural History Group, Tribulus, etc.), which further enhance the destination's appeal through the unique fusion of traditional, modern, Arab, and non-Arab experiences across tourism sites and services.

Similarly, locals and tourists had positive attitudes toward the impacts of tourism in Abu Dhabi. The relationship between the destination and residents can be thought of as a mutually beneficial one that has allowed Abu Dhabi to attract a global audience and enhance tourism through the development of gateway region characteristics. Despite the presence of different nationalities, expats depicted a strong understanding of the native culture of the UAE, and these experiences have created an added value to the region as a tourism destination immersed in a richness of cultures while integrating the shared values of brokers, locals, and tourists.

In addition to the emphasis on universality and diversity of the population, the respect and understanding for Emirati identity have shown a strong demand for culture as the focus of tourism projects. Although both residential groups showed demand for cultural tourism

experiences, Arab residents showed a stronger relationship to cultural identity tied to the region, enabling characteristics for the coexistence of communities.

Overall, the results indicate that the people (Emirati and non-Emirati) who reside in Abu Dhabi tend to embody the culture of the place, which further creates unique experiences for visitors.

*RQ2: What types of interactions and experiences do the residential community (Emiratis and Expatriates) and visitors have with coastal characteristics, specifically the natural environment and cultural elements?*

Coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi is an outcome of a relationship between the environmental and cultural characteristics of the region. Not only are various tourism sites situated alongside the coast, but brokers emphasized their motives to integrate various aspects of heritage alongside nature-based tourism activities in the region. From the perspective of brokers, the development of coastal tourism activities manifests through broker interactions (such as those with DCT, EAD, ADNOC, and other project managers and developers) in the region to maximize professionalism and service to visitors while ensuring projects implemented enhance the historic, cultural, and natural characteristics of the region.

From the perspective of residents and visitors, cultural attractions translate into societal practices of the local population that have evolved into a primary motive for visiting the region through sites such as the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Qasr Al Hosn, Qasr Al Watan, Saadiyat Island, etc. as a result of tourism development. These not only preserve Arab identity but seeks to celebrate cultural connections embedded in the demographics of its population. On the other hand, brokers' efforts to integrate aspects of heritage have generated the demand for nature-based tourism activities on the coast that span visitors' interests (leisure, adventure, education, etc.) in sites such as Emirates Palace, Hudayriyat Island, protected area networks, etc. Together, these experiences have generated the recognition of habitats unique to Abu Dhabi while simultaneously emphasizing customs and traditions strongly tied to the region as a maritime nation.

*RQ3: What is sustainability within the context of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi, and how do brokers, locals, and tourists understand it?*

The concept of sustainability in coastal tourism is a dynamic interaction between aspects of culture, environment, society, tourism, and development resulting from socio-

cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors. According to brokers, cultural sustainability entails activities and services to preserve, conserve, and maintain cultural beliefs, practices, and heritage generationally. In a region such as Abu Dhabi, where culture is strongly tied to society, the sustainability of culture ensures societal practices that account for the inclusion, adaptability, and awareness of people and their interactions with the environment by mitigating impacts and ensuring societal well-being. Political characteristics also play a critical role in integrating sustainability by acting as vehicles that drive informed decision-making. Despite the top-down approach, brokers emphasized its benefits whereby this form of ‘forced integration’ allows for better capabilities to manage and plan for development by consulting relevant stakeholders.

The interaction of people with their environment further entails environmental sustainability on the coast that broadly falls into two categories – the first being management of ecological systems and resources, and the second being environmental responsibility and values instilled in populations as the precursor to supporting health and well-being of environments and entities encompassed in them for future generations.

Although residents and tourists were only ‘somewhat familiar’ with the concept of sustainability, they were cognizant of the scope of its benefits through initiatives implemented for resource management economically, culturally, and ecologically. According to the general public, sustainability was commonly associated with “stability, security, efficiency, and opportunity” through mitigation of risks and continuity within environments, culture, society, and economy.

Overall, the results indicate that a key component identified in coastal tourism is sustainability across socio-cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors in order to create ‘meaningful’ experiences through both the supply and demand of tourism services for all stakeholders involved.

*RQ4: What are some impacts and prospects of tourism development on environmental and cultural sustainability regarding coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi?*

#### Sustainability Challenges in Coastal Tourism

The challenges of integrating sustainable practices in coastal tourism were commonly associated with differing perspectives on development associated with brokers leading to challenges in the management of tourism and environmental characteristics of the region. Although tourism development creates opportunities for new forms of employment,

consequently reducing dependency on traditional gas and oil sectors, the globalization of tourism can undermine economic sustainability when profits do not support communities and the environment. This is exacerbated by the influx of tourists, demands for tourism services, and changes in societal lifestyles. Without accounting for all facets of sustainability, irresponsible development and management of tourism can threaten the biological viability and quality of environments leading to multidimensional impacts resulting from mass tourism.

In a region such as Abu Dhabi, where culture and societal values are strongly tied to place, the sustainability of socio-cultural systems is also linked to behavior, relationships, lifestyles, expressions, and community structures. The globalization of the region and populations can affect the people of host communities directly or indirectly associated with tourism impacting personal and social relations, language, religious practices, customs, traditions, morals, etc.

While it is encouraging that there is a growing need for 'greening' the tourism industry as individuals become more environmentally conscious of landscapes, some brokers regard this to be a 'passing' motive that resembles 'environmentally responsible' tourism. The uncontrolled expansion of tourism on the coast can increase impacts on local physical, biological, and cultural characteristics of sensitive areas, indicative of the complexity of interactions between coastal tourism components.

### Sustainability Prospects of Coastal Tourism

Despite the challenges of incorporating sustainability in tourism, the dynamic nature of coastal tourism components in Abu Dhabi has led to sustainability prospects in aspects of environmental management, cultural preservation, development, etc. The interactive processes between coastal components have created opportunities by adding value to local heritage, culture, and natural resources through sustainable management and development of tourism services and providing new incentives to protect, conserve, and raise social awareness among residents and tourists through participatory, interactive, interpretative, and enlightening experiences.

A significant factor of coastal tourism is the interaction between society and the environment through broker relationships and local interests that account for political, economic, environmental, and socio-cultural facets of sustainable development. Furthermore, the emphasis on the integration of heritage within environments tied to the region of Abu Dhabi embraces natural, historic, and cultural elements shaping regional and national identity.

Sustainable coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi thrives due to the space-specificity of management components whereby coastal tourism incorporates multiple demographics and disciplines given the region's diversity.

Overall, the results indicate that the sustainability of coastal tourism is contingent on the interaction of factors such as the quality of the environment (natural and man-made), cultural creativity, regional identity, political will, societal well-being, infrastructure development, technological advancements, outreach, etc., amidst processes of globalization and modernization.

## **8.2 Limitations of the Thesis**

This thesis followed a mixed methods research design composed of qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis to explore the dynamic nature of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi. This section discusses some of the foreseen and unforeseen limitations of the study. Despite these barriers, the results of the study are the first of its kind conducted in this region, consequently beneficial in expanding research conducted in the field of coastal and marine tourism and, more broadly, within marine and environmental affairs.

### 8.2.1 Data Collection

The primary forms of data collection used in this thesis were qualitative approaches through semi-structured interviews, limited participant observation, secondary source information, and quantitative methods through surveys. Although protocols were followed to collect relevant information that explores the aims of the study, all methodologies have blind spots and may further be influenced by regional, institutional, professional, and personal demands.

Since the data for this thesis was collected during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted online, which limits the researcher from appropriately observing indirect cues such as reactions, body language, behavior, etc. Some participants provided typed responses themselves, further limiting observations conducted by the researcher. Due to time constraints and the inability to visit participants, the sample size was fairly small, with only 10 semi-structured interviews and 8.5 hours of unobtrusive observation for interviews. Furthermore, using purposive and snowball sampling techniques can skew the data. Although different contacts were used to make connections with interviewees who also represented a

wide range of occupations in relation to coastal tourism, these participants may not be the true representation of the tourism system and cover only a small portion of the on-site community.

While some secondary source information was used in this research, the information collected may not be particularly pertinent to the features of this thesis due to the research being relatively new in the region of interest. This may result in missing data that could have contributed more to the validity of the project. In addition, the sources collected need to be carefully assessed which can be time-consuming for the researcher. Furthermore, regional and security concerns may limit the access and availability of data, further impeding the holistic understanding and analysis of the topic.

Concerning surveys administered to the general public, since only one of the four distribution samples was truly random while others were carried out through personal contacts, the sample may not be truly representative of the population comprised of Emiratis and expatriates. In addition, the length of the survey may further hinder participant responses due to time and personal constraints, consequently impacting the depth of responses and response rates for some questions over others. Hence, to reach a broader spectrum of nationalities and encourage participation, the questions in the survey were made as brief and precise as possible and made available in English and Arabic, which is also culturally appropriate in the region of interest.

### 8.2.2 Data Analysis

In relation to qualitative data, the analysis is heavily reliant on the researcher's skills to elicit information from the respondent while maintaining objectivity. This includes limiting personal biases and presumptions of the research that may compromise the quality of data. These can be mitigated by the researcher's ability to be open to new perspectives and create an environment that allows the interviewee to hold power to share their most authentic responses.

Another limitation of qualitative research is the quantity of data collected, which is voluminous and can be time-consuming to analyze, interpret, and present. In this thesis, the primary form of analysis was through codebooks developed from the researcher's perspective of categorization and interpretation of the text relative to the context of the study. This may compromise the factors that define the inclusion or exclusion of texts with particular codes. Under normal circumstances, qualitative research calls for working with other researchers to agree on what to include in their codebook, whereby codebooks are developed and refined as

the research goes along. This is a time-consuming process that requires the training of coders to mark the text and consequently check for inter-coder agreement (Draper, 2001, p. 781). Due to time and financial constraints, the codebooks used in this thesis were developed by a single researcher.

Furthermore, since interviews were not conducted in person, the quality of participant observations was restricted. Thus, to mitigate these issues, interviews were also recorded on zoom and analyzed multiple times to make informed judgments on the visual cues and reactions of the respondents.

Regarding the analysis of quantitative data collected through surveys, the primary form of analysis was through the Likert scale. The use of Likert scales can be a limiting factor when inquiring about perspectives on attitudes and behaviors. For example, many people may avoid selecting the extreme measures (such as 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree') and prefer choosing measures in the middle or neutral responses, which mask the intensity of real attitudes and behaviors of the participants (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018, p. 159-160). Furthermore, the scale is considered unidimensional in that it gives respondents only 5-7 options of choice with the assumption that the space between each choice is equidistant. To mitigate these factors, the survey allowed for participants to provide 'additional comments' for specific questions with a separate section that sought to elicit participants' cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions to topics pertinent to the research.

### **8.3 Recommendations**

Based on the results reported in Chapter 7 and the breakdown of results in section 8.1, the following section will provide recommendations and strategies to consider in the management and development of a sustainable coastal tourism system in Abu Dhabi.

*Recommendation 1: Integrate awareness for marine citizenship through investments in outreach programs and building relationships between community members and relevant stakeholders.*

- Education (formal and/or informal) as a tool that gives people the agency to collaborate with organizations, industries, and communities in promoting sustainable behaviors.
  - Account for global collaboration efforts through schools, such as Ambassador programs that seek to bring students from different countries into conversations,

provide them opportunities to become leaders, and create platforms to communicate with global audiences.

- Frame conservation initiatives with personal incentives that allow people to understand, reflect, and respond to them.
- Offer workshops and training programs that make scientific research and results more accessible and comprehensible to community members.
- In addition to government authorities, scientists, industries, educators, etc., create opportunities for the local people to be included in efforts to create collaborative and diverse bodies that induce collective behavioral changes.
- Expand on methods and tools to engage people in sustainability conservations (e.g. documentaries, film, visual materials, surveys, etc.).
- Accessibility should also account for regional characteristics, demographics, languages, and experiences.

*Recommendation 2: Integrate social, economic, political, technological, and environmental factors in developing sustainability models for the strategic management of resources.*

- Account for the diversity of modeling approaches - nature and scale of economic, social, and ecological processes; variety of tools/platforms/languages; and the diversity of contexts in and purpose for which models are used.
- Improve adaptability relative to the range of uncertainties and alternative scenarios, which is crucial in meeting the evolving needs of socio-ecological systems (Thébaud et al., 2014).
- Consider similarities or commonalities between approaches to aid in long-term acceptance by community members and further enhance support for informed decision-making (Thébaud et al., 2014).
- Evaluate the effectiveness of policies and approaches by regularly monitoring, conducting assessments, and comparing the consequences of selected conservation and management measures.
- Allow for multi-criteria evaluations from multiple disciplines and objectives in the management of resource systems (Thébaud et al., 2014).
- Models should also provide the ability to assess the distributional impacts of management strategies and produce scenarios that influence the extent to which

management efforts are supported that behoove individuals locally, regionally, and nationally to be more prudent of resources.

- Encourage stakeholder engagement throughout the process of developing models for sustainable resource management while improving tools to support decision-making.

*Recommendation 3: Support cultural heritage by emphasizing cultural education, programs, and resources to build local ecosystems and individuals while reaching diverse audiences.*

- Develop and integrate cultural plans into sustainability and conservation initiatives to account for cultural assets, strengthen local economies, and enable social cohesion by acknowledging the past as a gateway to the future.
- Value native and unique collective cultures by supporting their existence in physical spaces, policies, and through investments.
- Recognize and support cultural authenticity by bridging and sharing those cultures through diverse knowledge systems.
- Repurpose knowledge to sustain historic and regional identity alongside development across different sectors (e.g. environmental management)
- Include creativity and adaptability alongside community visions of respect, tolerance, and cross-cultural dialogue.

#### **8.4 Transitional Comment**

This chapter interprets the results reported in Chapter 7 for each research question and provides key recommendations for improving the sustainability of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi. The chapter also outlines some limitations to the study conducted and how this was mitigated to improve the quality of the data collected. Despite some challenges, the results of the study are the first conducted in this region and offer valuable insights for future research in the field of coastal and marine tourism globally.

The next chapter concludes this thesis by summarizing key ideas and findings while discussing its scope within the broader field of marine and environmental affairs.

## Conclusion and Looking Forward

*“Every individual has to perform their duty. Man is mortal, but his work is not. Therefore, work is greater than wealth.... No matter how many buildings, foundations, schools, and hospitals we build or how many bridges we raise, all these are material entities. The real spirit behind progress is the human spirit, the able man with his intellect and capabilities”.*

- Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (Gulf news, 2019)

Tourism today has become a ubiquitous force for the development of communities, economies, and destination characteristics globally. Within this realm, the coastal zone and its resources have become highly valuable, consequently leading to the influx of populations and coastal tourism development. This thesis explored the dynamics of the coastal tourism system operating within Abu Dhabi, UAE, by looking at four main research questions:

*RQ1: What is it like to live in a hotspot for tourism in a region composed of different nationalities?*

*RQ2: What types of interactions and experiences do residential communities (Emiratis and Expatriates) and visitors have with coastal characteristics, specifically the natural environment and cultural elements?*

*RQ3: What is sustainability within the context of coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi, and how do brokers, locals, and tourists understand it?*

*RQ4: What are some prospects and impacts of tourism development on environmental and cultural sustainability regarding coastal tourism in Abu Dhabi?*

The research questions above served as a guide to better understand the factors contributing to coastal tourism in the region. By applying foundational concepts relative to the field of coastal tourism and a mixed methods research design (Part I: Chapters 1-4), the study used Abu Dhabi as a case study to explore these research questions from the perspectives of brokers, locals, and tourists to develop a holistic view of tourism and its development at the intersect of environmental characteristics, culture, and sustainability (Part II: Chapters 5-8).

The methodological approach used was successful in answering the questions above (see Chapter 8), and key recommendations included the following:

1. *Integrate awareness for marine citizenship through investments in outreach and relationships between community members and relevant stakeholders.*

2. *Integrate social, economic, political, technological, and environmental factors in developing sustainability models for the strategic management of resources.*
3. *Support cultural heritage by emphasizing cultural education, programs, and resources to build local ecosystems and individuals while reaching diverse audiences.*

Based on the findings, coastal tourism in the region is a combination of cultural and natural resources tied to the region's maritime heritage and the identity of the native population of Emiratis. These foundational components have also served as a gateway for welcoming expatriate populations of different nationalities into the region driving globally recognized tourism projects that not only serve to preserve local culture but also integrate universal values due to the diversity of the region that further enhance the historical significance of the region.

In addition to cultural tourism experiences for visitors in the coastal zone, the majority of the broker interviews emphasized the significance of the region as a maritime nation, which has led to the development of nature-based tourism activities that satisfy diverse tourist motivations across different forms of leisure. Furthermore, the importance of coastal characteristics such as ecosystems and habitats native to the region has led to the development of a network of protected areas, with some offering visitors a unique experience of Abu Dhabi's natural landscape and biodiversity that improve conservation initiatives and its core values of environmental awareness.

A key characteristic of coastal tourism identified in this research is integrating heritage and culture alongside nature-based tourism activities, as seen in projects such as Sir Baniyas Island, Hudayriyat Island, Mangrove parks, etc. This is a result of close interactions between brokers and strong ties to maritime heritage that seek to develop the economy through tourism in a manner that induces the least harm to environmental characteristics. Hence, sustainability is strongly tied to cultural identity and management across socio-cultural, environmental, political, and economic facets.

By using culture as a gateway to explore ecosystems and wildlife in the region, the demand for sustainable tourism initiatives was also supported by perspectives gathered from locals and tourists. In addition to the preservation and celebration of culture through museums, festivals, and time-honored traditions in the region, the culture associated with the coast has been fundamental in informing sustainable practices for environmental management through the maritime heritage and local knowledge of communities that have allowed the recognition and acceptance of values guiding the interactions between people and the environment.

Hence, coastal tourism is sustainable only when planned, not only using scientific evidence but also through stakeholder communication that seeks effective use of human resources, capital, and political will alongside a strong stewardship for resources and their management. Despite these positive characteristics, the lack of public awareness can hinder the implementation of sustainable practices in the region's management and development of coastal tourism.

Moving forward, it is not only helpful to plan for environmentally responsible tourism projects, but it is equally important to educate the public on these concepts and develop strategies for active and continuous participation that will further benefit tourism and other forms of sustainable development in the region.

While the approach used in this study was appropriate and successful for the questions asked, no single research can inform the complexity of coastal tourism studies. This study can further be complemented by socio-economic evaluations, comparative studies relative to alternative forms of tourism, urban management and planning, or research into gateway commercial centers and associated interactions with protected areas (marine/terrestrial). Furthermore, this opens pathways for applying various methodologies in other coastal tourist destinations to compare experiences, aid in developing critical contextual characteristics often ignored in scientific studies, enhance components of conceptual models, and improve the feasibility of strategies implemented tailored across local, national, and global scales.

As the field of tourism within marine and environmental affairs continues to grow as more people engage with it, the potential for research like this thesis can help inform policies and conservation efforts by integrating diverse knowledge systems and disciplines across local, regional, national, and international scales. By recognizing opportunities for research growth in relatively new fields such as these, the hope is to influence coming generations to look beyond the 'one size fits all' model of a globalized world and develop the willingness to be open-minded to new innovative ideas for making equitable and actionable decisions. This not only acts as a potent force in driving international environmental movements but further serves to enlighten the human experience and perspectives of development in the future.

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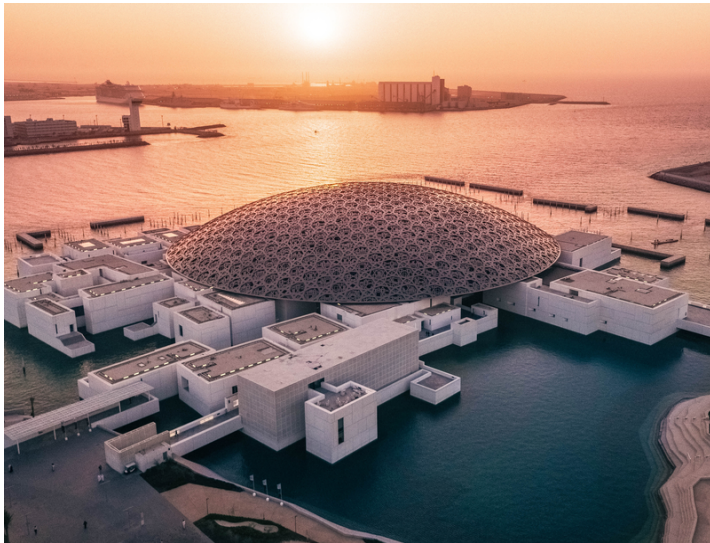








**Figure 5.18:** Hudayriyat Island (Adapted from DCT Media Hub, 2022).



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## Appendix II: A Guide to Interviewing Across Cultures

“Presently she smiled, pressed her hand to her chest, and said: “Tsetchwe.” It was her name. “Elizabeth,” I said, pointing to myself. “Nisabe,” she answered... Then, having surely suspected that I was a woman, she put her hand on my breast gravely, and, finding out that I was, she touched her own breast. Many Bushmen do this; to them all Europeans look alike. “Tasu si” (women), she said. Then after a moment’s pause Tsetchwe began to teach me” (Spradley, 1979, p. 3-4; as cited in Draper, 2001, p. 654).

The above quote by Spradley, 1979, describes an interaction traditionally unheard of in this particular social circle yet highlights the significance of cross-cultural considerations in establishing human-to-human relation with the respondent alongside the desire to understand before explaining. This thesis defines culture as:

“Culture, being what people have to learn, as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge. Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in their mind, their models of perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them” (Goodenough, 1957; see Chapter 5)

Participants in the study occupy different cultural backgrounds because of geography, demography, experiences, etc. Culture is subject to variation through knowledge, social systems, behavior and consequently changes with social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors. Acknowledging cultural differences during the interview process can help improve interactions between the interviewer and interviewee by building “communicative competence, intercultural communication, and intercultural competence” (Su, 2008, p. 379). Parallel to the dynamic and flexible nature of the interview process, Robinson, 1988 echoes the view of culture as a process:

“Cultural understanding is an ongoing, dynamic process in which learners continually synthesize cultural inputs with their own past and present

experience in order to create meaning. As such, cultural understanding involves a synthesis between the learner's home culture, the target cultural input and the learner as an individual" (Robinson, 1988, p. 11-12; as cited in Su, 2008, p. 380).

Despite various studies introducing interview methodologies across social-cultural perspectives, this section seeks to introduce some consideration while conducting interviews with individuals from different ethnographic and cultural backgrounds. Although ethnographic interviewing has developed into its own research discipline, it offers insights into framing and interpreting qualitative data across cultural contexts. According to Spradley, 1979, ethnography is "*the work of describing a culture from the native point of view*". Through this perspective, the thesis interview aims to mitigate personal bias in information gathered from participants by understanding perspectives, customs, languages, values, behaviors, and meanings within the context of that culture, in this case, Abu Dhabi, UAE (Maton, 1993, p. 748). Hence, this enhances the qualitative data collected by acknowledging how the subject define their perspectives and categorize the world they live in.

Cultural competency during the research design can be done by first acknowledging the role of the interviewer and interviewee during the process. Since the thesis interview included subject matter experts, the relationship between the researcher and participants is best described as the following:

"The investigator is willing and often eager to let the interviewee (expert) teach the interviewer (learner) what the problem, the question, the situation is – to the limits of the course of the interviewer's ability to perceive relationships to his/her basic problem whatever these may be" (Dexter, 2006, p. 3).

The semi-structured interview further supports this by simultaneously stressing the interviewee's definition of the situation and structures the account of the situation by allowing the interviewee to introduce notions they regard as relevant (Dexter, 2006, p. 18). In addition, the questions prepared offer descriptive responses that cover experiences, activities, and interactions alongside structural focus through the organization and exploration of knowledge as it pertains to the topic of interest, the individual, and its causes. The final product is results

that provide technical justifications of the study and elicit affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes in the data collected.

This thesis employs numerous cross-cultural considerations to enhance interpersonal interactions during the interview. During encounters with individuals from different regions of the world, it is crucial to understand the language and culture of the respondents. Although language was not a barrier during the interview of subject matter experts in this thesis, cultural competency calls attention to the interviewee's feelings, experiences, or tone, while listening for underlying cultural meaning. These meanings can arise through the respondent's use of phrases and terms complementary to language, which is more than just a means to communicate. Hence, a large part of listening for meaning is noting and adapting to a frame of reference different from one's own (Dexter, 2006, p. 29).

A significant component that frames the investigation of this thesis is the socio-political setting. This involves recognizing the socio-political context of the environment and individuals across race, class, gender, and other socially constructed categories. Consequently, this can lead to power differentials between the interviewer and interviewee. Although the UAE nationals are in the minority relative to expats, their identity and status in the region give them greater power. Usually, power is held within the interviewer within an interview setting. Acknowledging these characteristics and prioritizing the interviewee's voice can help reduce power differentials between the inquirer and respondent (Clark, 2000, p. 8). Eliciting information from these encounters and their contextual interactions can help build a collaborative approach and understand perspectives where no one is privileged over the other.

It is also essential to recognize that complete immersion into society is not always possible when considering gender roles. Denzin (1989) tells us:

“Gender filters knowledge; that is the sex of the interviewer, and that of the respondent do make a difference, as the interview takes place within the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones” (Denzin, 1989a, p. 116; as cited in Draper, 2001, p. 658).

Gendered roles in interviews traditionally manifest through the lack of entry or trust heightened by the sex of the interviewer. On the other end of the spectrum, the sex of the respondent can lead to ignorance of their concerns or curtail any attempts to digress and elaborate, ultimately

impacting interpersonal relationships, revelations of personal feelings, and emotions (Draper, 2001, p. 658). Culture can provide the interviewer and respondent with a common access point by interviewing in a manner that recognizes cultural humility. By shifting the focus from gender to developing a closer relationship and trust between the interviewer and respondent, the process aims to mitigate status differences from social hierarchies.

Sociologist Rosanna Hertz (1997) emphasizes the importance of self-reflexivity throughout the research process; that is, “*to have an ongoing conversation about the experience while simultaneously living in the moment*”. This is an effective method of reducing biases by making them explicit in dictating questions towards the respondent. Doing so can heighten the quality of research by understanding differences in ideologies, cultures, politics, etc. (Draper, 2001, p. 659). Self-reflexivity can offer insight into the ethical considerations of the interview itself and the cultural setting it takes place in. Friedman tells us:

“*inter alia*, that the social psychologist needs to *discover the stimulus*; he cannot simply assume; and the stimulus may not be at all what he intends it to be or thinks it is” (Dexter, 2006, p. 118).

The statement above emphasizes the ethical considerations of the interviewer through cultural competency and respect for the respondent and their surroundings. Since the objects of inquiry are human beings, researchers must pay attention to avoid harm to them despite cultural differences. Traditionally, this takes form through informed consent, right to privacy, and protection from harm carried out throughout this thesis and in gaining the IRB approval. It is crucial to acknowledge the interpersonal interactions and cultural differences during the veracity of the final product. This requires the ability of the researcher to draw the fine line between objectivity and perspectives across social, political, and cultural contexts during the study while developing mutual understanding:

“We need to exercise common sense and responsibility, and would like to add, to our subjects first, to the study next, and to ourselves last” (Punch, 1986; as cited in Draper, 2001, p. 663).

By applying these considerations to the interview method in this thesis, the interview process is culturally respected and flexible to situations. A shared understanding creates

access to previously unencountered societies. Furthermore, ensuring the identity of the interviewer and interviewee can heighten experiential truth, authenticity, and social awareness, which serves to reduce power differential by strengthening collaboration of relationships and making the process comfortable and welcoming for the participant.

“The person exists in a state of dynamic mutual interdependence with other persons and his personality – what he says, realizes, and perceives is a function of this relationship” (Dexter, 2006, p. 118).

### Supplementary Presentation

The following section is additional information from a presentation originally created for SMEA 512: Interviewing Methods for Environmental Topics led by Dr. Marc L. Miller in Spring 2021, on strategies for interviewing across cultures.



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## What is an Interview?

An interview is defined as a **strategic** interaction in which the interviewers interact with and observe those interviewed to elicit **knowledge, behaviors, feelings, preferences, and other information** pertinent to developing a **cultural and social understanding**

01

## BACKGROUND

- Perspectives on Culture
- The 'Ethnographic Perspective'



## What constitutes as "culture"?

*"Culture, being what people have to learn, as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge. Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in their mind, their models of perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them"* (Goodenough, 1957, as cited in Grant & Miller, 2004, p. 4)

- **Culture as Knowledge:** "What people learn and know in order to behave practically and appropriately (or knowingly impractically and inappropriately) in society" (Grant & Miller, 2004, p. 4)
- **Culture as a Social System:** "Culture consists of the organized (systemized/patterned) distinctions, standards, and rules concerning reality and human choices that people to varying degrees share" (Grant & Miller, 2004, p. 4)
- **Culture as a Behavior:** "Culture as a set of guidelines (explicit/implicit) which individuals inherit as members of a particular society, and which tells them how to view the world and how to behave in relation to other people" (Sensky, 1996, p. 563)
- Every culture is characterized by boundaries which distinguish those within the culture from those outside it
- **Culture undergoes change** - social-cultural, economic, political, environmental



## The Ethnographic Perspective

*"Ethnography is the work of describing a culture from the native point of view" (Spradley, 1979, as cited in p. 6)*

### PURPOSE

To describe how natives of culture define and categorize the world which we live in

### OBJECTIVES

To understand perspectives, customs, languages, values, behaviors, and meanings within the context of culture (Maton, 1993, p. 748)

## Ethnographic Considerations



### SUBJECTIVE CULTURE

Native's subjective view of social reality including assumptions about causality, core values, and meanings attributed to events (Manton, 1993, p. 748)

### PERSONAL ATTITUDE

To understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any prior categorization that may limit field of inquiry (Thornton & Garrett, 1995 p. 68)

### RESEARCH

In depth and open ended interviews, direct observation, analysis of written documents

## 02

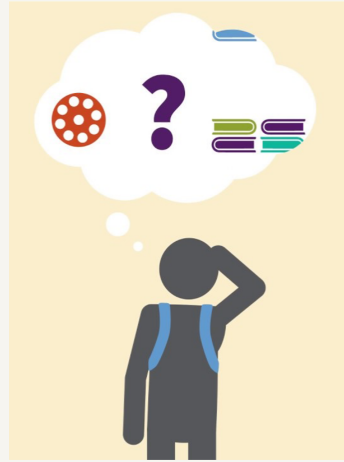
## RESEARCH DESIGN

- The Research Question
- The Role of the Interviewer and Interviewee
- Asking the Right Questions in the Right Way



## The Research Question

- Identifies the topic of interest, an area of concern, a condition to be improved, the population in question posed in the form of a problem statement or question
- The research is inductive
- Open curiosity and Observation
- “The usual emphasis of objectivity is mitigated in favor of gaining a complete understanding of the topic and its components” (Rodwell, 1987, as cited in Thornton & Garrett, 1995, p. 69)



## The Role of the Interviewer and Interviewee

- “The investigator is willing and often eager to let the interviewee (expert) teach the interviewer (learner) what the problem, the question, situation is - to the limits of course of the interviewer’s ability to perceive relationships to his/her basic problem whatever these may be” (Dexter, 1970, p. 3)
- It is an interview with “any” interviewee who is given special, non standardized treatment by (Dexter, 1970, p. 18):
  1. Stressing the interviewee’s definition of the situation
  2. The interviewee structures the account of the situation
  3. Let the interviewee introduce their notions of what they regard as relevant

## Asking the Right Questions in the Right Way

- **Descriptive Questions** - broad and general allowing the interviewee to describe their experiences, activities, and interactions
  - Words or issues repeated represent categories of knowledge
- **Structural Questions** - explore responses to descriptive questions through the organization of knowledge
  - *Strict Inclusion*: to gather information on the categories a person is using to organize information
  - *Means-end*: to gather information on behaviors
  - *Rationale*: to gather information on causes or reasons for the behavior
- **Final Product**: affective, behavioral, cognitive outcomes
- Avoid leading question that orient one to a particular direction



## Acknowledging the power and sociopolitical context

- Prioritization of the interviewee's voice reduces power differentials between the inquirer and respondent (Clark, 2000, p. 8)
- Acknowledge that the interview itself takes place in a sociopolitical context of unequal power distribution based on race, class, gender, and other socially constructed categories
- Eliciting and documenting silenced and subjugated voices reflects its epistemological emphasis on collaborative approach to understanding in which no one's perspective are privileged
- **Example:** Acknowledging the power differences between expats and UAE nationals/Sheikhs within the setting may increase cultural competency in eliciting responses (Elite Interviewing)



## Femininities in the field

- Realization of the patriarchal world view
- Complete immersion is not always possible
- Use cultural humility as an access point while keeping your identity intact - self selected identity (Dexter, 1970)
- Facilitates understanding that is potentially unavailable to male researchers
- "Hence being the outsider is not a liability because achieving status as an outsider trusted with insider knowledge may provide the ethnographer with a different perspective and different data than that potentially offered through insider status" (Bucerius, 2013, p. 699)



## Dialogical Understanding

- Theoretical preconceptions are abstained in order to hear the subject's story openly, without attempting to make sense of the story on the basis of interviewer's assumptions (Clark, 2000 p. 9)
- At the end look at how inductively driven understandings fit with relevant theoretical materials
- "Use of conversation" - mutual nature of knowing
- **Goal** – to create a mutually comprehensible dialogue and a ground for further conversation
- "The gap or clash between various kinds of meanings is what ultimately provides an ideal space for mutual learning and exploration of meanings" (Clark, 2000, p. 9)
- Focusing on similarities to gain the trust of the participants and subsequently aiding in managing differences

## Object and Walking Probes

- **Object Probes:** Artifacts, photographs, things etc.
- **Walking Probes:** places, location (natural/built)
- To stimulate data on specific topics with minimal influence from the interviewee (structure)
- Recollection of past and current events (memories, experiences, relationships)
- Mundane or Monumental



04

## DATA ANALYSIS CONSIDERATIONS Adapting to Challenges

*The ethnographer is uniquely able to generate theoretical ideas concerning processes “grounded” in the realities of the local culture*

## Framing

- Degree of control between the interviewer and interviewee over the selection, organization, pacing, timing of knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogic relationship (Walford, 2007, p. 149)
- Interviewee > interviewer (power)
- Knowledge transmission
- **Solution:** Ethnographers instead attempt to elicit “untranslated” speech and meaning by repeatedly encouraging interviewees to tell their stories “in their own words” and use strategies such as re-stating and incorporating key phrases and terms (Clark, 2000, p. 8)



## Classification

- Separation
- Generating data
- When information is generated through a collection code, it is characterized by strongly bounded knowledge elicitation methods and situations with little linkage between them whereby interviews are strictly separated from other forms of data generation
- **Solution:** An integrated method generating data emphasizes the interdependence of various forms of knowledge transmission (Walford, 2007, p. 148)

## Translation Competency

- To elicit beliefs and meanings in one culture and translating these into a form understood in another (Sensky, 1996, p. S63)
- The skilled ethnographic interviewer learns the informant's vocabulary and idioms and uses these to elicit beliefs and meanings

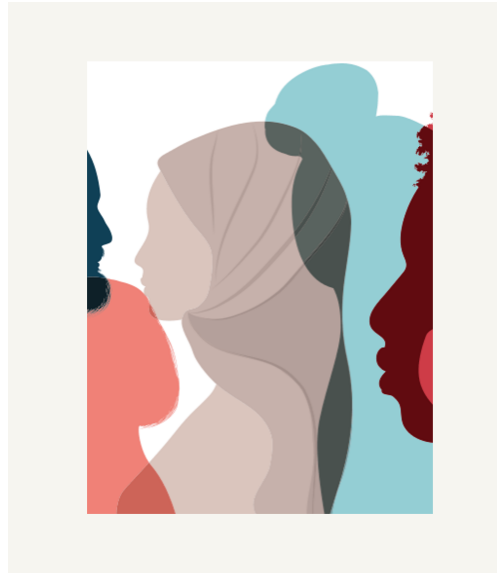


## Self-Reflexivity

- To critically reflect upon the experience and position, methods used, and how interviewers adapt research practice
- “Vigilant and ongoing reflexivity is considered foundational to a recognition of the ways in which the autobiographies, cultures, and historical contexts of inquirers determine what they see and do not see” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1989, as cited in Clark, 2000, p. 9)
- Ethnographers can practice reflexivity through the writing of reflexive journals, field notes, and memos
- Make biases explicit and acknowledging how biases dictate questions and category construction

## Cultural Adaptation

- Identify areas of conflict
- Modification and adapt to the interviewee
- Degree of adaptation
- Intellectual and emotional accessibility
- Ethnographic understanding = establishing rapport
- Challenge - close rapport/objectivity
- Solution: Critical ethnography
- “Research should alternate between emphasis upon studying and testing responses to a narrowly-defined set of stimuli, with optimum effort to make that in actual fact the respondent is responding to the defined stimulus and nothing else and emphasis upon discovering what stimuli are perceived, evoked, dominant to respondents in a given situation” (Dexter, 1970 p. 120)



## Ethical Considerations



### CONFIDENTIALITY

“One threat to experts in being interviewed is that the remarks they make may be used against them in a damaging fashion” (Dexter, 1970, p. 81)

### CONSENT

Mutual Agreement and Understanding

### SINCERITY

Cultural Competency and Respect  
“Friedman tells us inter alia, that the social psychologist needs to discover the stimulus, he cannot simply assume it, and the stimulus may not be at all what he intends it to be or thinks it is” (Dexter, 1970, p. 118)



05

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Benefits of Ethnographic Analysis

## Benefits of Ethnographic Research



### THE MODERN TEMPER (Jaber et al., 2002)

- Shared Understanding
- Interpersonal
- Accessibility



### INDIVIDUALIZING DISCOURSE (Jaber et al., 2002)

- Reflection of the individual self
- Transformation



### ROMANTIC IMPULSE (Jaber et al., 2002)

- Experiential truth
- Authenticity
- Social Understanding
- Collaboration



### INTERRELATIONSHIPS

“The person exists in a state of dynamic mutual interdependence with other persons and his personality – what he says, realizes, and perceives is function of this relationship” (Dexter, 1970, p. 118)

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### **Appendix III: Autoethnographic Note**

*“The woman is half of the society; any country which pursues development should not leave her in poverty or illiteracy”.*

- Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (Mubadala, 2022)

This Appendix details my reflection and experiences conducting this research, specifically the role of gender, inspired by Porter and Schanzel’s book, *Femininities in the Field: Tourism and Transdisciplinary research*. The section below is an informal, first-person autoethnographic note of my experiences.

#### Identity

Although I was born in India, I came to the UAE at merely 40 days old, and this has come to shape my identity as a product of two cultures – my ancestry and my environment. These experiences came with considerable privilege, albeit completely unrecognized by me until recently. Consequently, my identity shaped by the duality of strong belonging to both my ancestral Indian heritage and experiences with Middle Eastern culture was also through the lens of this unacknowledged privilege.

I have had no barriers to education, access, opportunity, or resources, and for me, that has translated to a lived experience that included international private schooling, certifying as an advanced open water diver and traveling to dive sites around the world, volunteering for conservation-related projects from high school onwards, and the capacity to come to the US for my undergraduate and master’s degree programs.

#### Professionalism and Personal Growth

While my passion for environmental conservation stems from my early teenage years when I first began diving and observed the connection between urbanization and the deterioration of ecosystems, it was only when I started my Master’s program at the University of Washington’s School of Marine and Environmental Affairs (SMEA) did I build a more holistic picture. Here, I was introduced to the human dimension of conservation – and with it the barriers, lack of privilege, and opportunities for those without the power to have their voices heard.

Through courses and interactions with my colleagues in SMEA, I became more aware of concepts of equity, stewardship, social and environmental justice, etc. This was a stark

realization for me, made even more severe when I realized that the institutional structures of gatekeeping that keep so many out had empowered me through ideologies of caste and class.

The maxim “what has been seen cannot be unseen” springs to mind here. Upon much reflection, I realized I cannot change my past, nor do I wish to. Still, it has taught me how access to opportunities is causally associated with the capability to lead a good life. It is in this space that I now wish to empower others personally and professionally as I navigate my passion for marine conservation.

### Role of Women

Upon coming across Femininities in the Field and reflecting on my experiences in SMEA, I began to realize that although I have strong ties to culture, I only recently even started understanding my identity as a woman and, more specifically, as a woman of color, which in the past I never acknowledged due to my privilege. I resonate now with the words my mother and aunt always told me – “to embrace my potential, be independent, and always be kind to everyone in word and deed and treat others the way I would like to be treated”. I now realize that I was taught to value compassion and equity above all else, and I bring that to every space I am a part of.

Reflecting on this, I realized there was also a social expectation placed on me and all women embedded in the patriarchal society that surrounds us. Although I have not experienced obstacles growing up as a woman in the UAE, I have begun to realize differences in gender roles stemming from society, culture, and even religious expectations. This led me to want to document my research experience conducting this thesis as a woman ‘ethno-conservationist’ of Indian descent conducting this study in a region I strongly identify with. Although I was unable to interact personally with community members due to COVID-19 regulations in Abu Dhabi, I knew this would still bring about some valuable insights to the space women occupy across different regions.

### Research Experience

My initial challenges during this thesis were sending out emails to subject matter experts but unable to receive confirmations during the first rollout. In some cases, I would receive a confirmation only upon sending out 4 to 6 reminders to potential interviewees. Through my father’s professional networks, I began to receive more concrete responses from likely subject matter experts. I thought this would be worth noting to see if my age or gender

influenced this or if there were external commitments such as the point of time in which these emails were sent out.

Upon confirming my interview participants, I had the opportunity to conduct 10 interviews through zoom and did not feel my gender to be an influential factor upon speaking with the subjects. Although the setting in which the interview took place was that of a professional and formal one through zoom; I felt that the online platform allowed for a space with no distractions for myself as the researcher and the participant who expressed not only interest in the research but also my personality alongside broader goals in the marine and environmental affairs.

The interview I was most nervous about was with an Emirati woman, as this would have been my first professional interaction with someone from the native community of the UAE. However, this was one of my best interview experiences where the subject themselves also pointed out her experiences as a woman working in the male-dominated aviation industry. She was lively and friendly, which allowed me to open up about my own experiences as a woman in STEM following my passions in marine conservation. She emphasized how the UAE is recognizing the efforts of women in various sectors by enhancing exposure, experiences, and providing opportunities because of the vision of the later ruler, HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Although religious and cultural ties dominate patriarchal views, the country appears to be making efforts to widen the spectrum as the expatriate population increases in the region.

My experiences with both Emirati and non-Emirati men for this research did not present any obstacles due to my gender. However, the interaction was more formal and conservative as a sign of respect for the customs traditionally practiced in society. By conducting myself in a culturally appropriate manner, men were also keen to learn of my personal background and professional goals at the end of the interview session, which allowed me to connect better with these individuals and gain both professional and cultural insights in conversations because of the way I conducted myself during the process.

Despite these positive interactions, I acknowledge that women have always had to battle for the status and position they share with men today in the UAE and regions across the world and might continue to fight in efforts to pave the way for coming generations. However, my interactions showed me that changes in the region are being implemented to the best of their abilities as most of the participants received the goals of my research well and were very encouraging in wanting me to continue pursuing conservation goals in the region. Further, they were also keen on wanting to keep in touch and read my work.

## Final Remarks

By the end of the study, I strongly envision myself as an ethno-conservationist. My skills as a researcher got stronger throughout the study, and I learned valuable insights for my own personal growth alongside respect for communities and cultures as an ethnographic researcher. Conducting this research in a place I call my 'home' made this experience particularly fun and comfortable as I did not experience barriers to the language or cultural differences.

My academic and lived experiences this far have grounded me in the foundational skills of evidence-based science, interdisciplinary research, and equity. They have also highlighted the importance of local culture, values, and embracing cultural humility. I am excited about the journey ahead as I explore this critical relationship between human dimensions of conservation and ecological success in future research projects across different socio-cultural contexts. With that being said, I think it is also important to acknowledge all the women who came before me that made it possible for me to do this work.

## **Appendix IV: Interview Questions, Survey Questionnaire, and Consent Forms**

### **IV.1 Interview Questions**

#### Opening Information:

Hello, I am Harshitha Sai Viswanathan, a graduate student at the University of Washington's School of Marine and Environmental Affairs. I am reaching out to you as part of my work on tourism development for my Master's Thesis, which is a requirement for the completion of my degree. Since I have lived in Abu Dhabi all my life, the primary focus of my research is to better understand factors that may impact tourism development in the UAE. My research focuses on tourism development in the UAE with respect to culture and sustainability of the natural environment, and your perspectives on this topic as a subject matter expert are of great value to my work. I am interested in a holistic view of tourism and tourism development that intersect various sectors and topic areas such as:

- What is it like to live in a hotspot for tourism in a community comprised of different nationalities and experiences?
- What types of connections do locals, expats, and tourists have with the UAE culture and its natural attributes? How, and in what manner has tourism development has affected that connection?
- And finally, is there a role for the maritime heritage of the UAE to be repurposed and play a part in informing environmental sustainability now and in the future?

I will start with some background questions followed by questions on your knowledge, experiences, and thoughts on 3 different topic areas – Culture and Natural Environment, Tourism Development and Management, Marine Protected Areas, and Management. While these are broad topics to broach, and I realize that in some cases, not all questions may be of equal interest or priority in your work. But any input you have is much appreciated.

#### Background Questions:

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you lived in the UAE?
3. What is your educational background?
4. What do you/did you do for work?
5. How did you get into this line of work?
6. What was your purpose for moving to the UAE and how has your experience been? (For expats)
7. What has been your experience working in this industry specifically as a woman in this field in the UAE?

#### Culture and Natural Environment

8. In your opinion, what are some important features/aspects of the culture of the UAE?
9. Do you think the natural environment (terrestrial/marine environments, biodiversity, etc.) of UAE constitutes part of its culture? Why do you think so?
10. Do you think tourists visit the UAE for its cultural attractions and do you think maritime heritage is a cultural attraction? Why do you think so?
11. In your opinion, what are some important features of the coastal heritage and environmental management of the UAE?
12. What in your opinion is the progression of culture and maritime heritage from historical times to the current day and with where we are with maritime heritage today, do you think culture and maritime heritage inform community and environmental sustainability (specifically marine environments) today, and in what ways?
13. Can marine conservation support and sustain cultural security and cultural resilience? In what ways? And do you or your agency/department do any of this work?

14. What role do you think expats play in the cultural context of the UAE?
15. In your opinion, how has the UAE balanced cultural and heritage conservation alongside urbanization, increased workforce diversity, and the emergence of new cultural values?
16. Do you see the overall community as being resilient (capacity to recover quickly and face challenges)? In what ways?
17. Do you think there are sub-communities that may not be as resilient – and why? What do you think it will look like in the future?

#### Tourism Development and Management

18. In your opinion, why do you think tourists visit the UAE and what do they want to see?
19. How important is destination image for the tourism industry in UAE and in your opinion, does it include the culture and natural environment of the UAE? If so, in what ways?
20. Has tourism benefitted the community of UAE? (Distinguish between Expats and UAE nationals)? And how?
21. In your opinion, how has tourism progressed in the UAE? What do you think it will look like in the future?
22. Have you noticed differences in how the traditional culture is perceived with the development of tourism? (Is there a new normal? And what does that look like?)
23. With international travel becoming more accessible, do you think this has played a role in the types of tourism projects being developed in the UAE? Do you think this is a disadvantage or advantage for society? Why?
24. Do you think the globalization of tourism can be compatible with sustainability? Why or why not?
25. In your opinion, what are some implications of the globalization of the tourism industry in the UAE? Do you think this is an advantage or disadvantage for society? Why do you think so?
26. What challenges have you encountered in your tourism industry work and how have you/ your department dealt with them?
27. What in your opinion is the most pressing sustainability issue facing the travel industry today? What challenges have you encountered in your past work with the tourism industry and how have you/ your department dealt with them?
28. What are some challenges and opportunities for ecotourism and cultural tourism in the UAE? What factors do you think are important when developing “environmentally sustainable/responsible tourism”, what challenges must one overcome in its development, and in what ways in your opinion can we overcome these challenges?
29. Do you think sustainability is important to tourism development; if so, do you currently incorporate any sustainable practices in tourism management? Do you have plans to add any more such concepts in your future management practices?
30. In your opinion, what are some things that tourists should do to be more environmentally aware when traveling? Do you think this is important if so, why?
31. Do you think there are added economic benefits to adding the concept of conservation/sustainability to the tourism industry in the UAE? Why do you think so?
32. How do you think sustainable tourism fits in today with UAE’s vision 2021?
33. As tourist interests change over time, how does your tourism work incorporate those perspectives to appeal to current and future tourist interests?
34. Do you think a shared culture on environmental awareness is important in developing sustainable tourism in the UAE? Why do you think so?

#### Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and Environmental Management

35. How are Marine Protected Areas designated and managed in the UAE?
36. Are Marine Protected Areas associated with ecotourism activities in the UAE? If so, what activities can tourists part take in?
37. Do you think conservation of culture and the natural environment are important for tourism? Why do you think so?

#### A. Fisheries Questions

38. How are different types of fishing industries and their techniques managed in Marine Protected Areas in the UAE?
39. What are the impacts of recreational fishing on marine ecosystems in the UAE? How have no-take zones produced benefits to surrounding fisheries in the area?
40. How can partial fishing closures be used to maximize the benefits of Marine Protected Area networks?
41. How are aquaculture techniques managed in the UAE and under what circumstances can they produce benefits for marine conservation?

#### B. Climate Change Questions

42. To what extent can no take or highly protected Marine Protected Areas provide resilience or a buffer against ecosystem disruption caused by climate change?
43. What measures can best prevent the extinction and extirpation of geographically constrained species and populations in the face of climate change?
44. What are the possible ecological impacts of technological mitigation strategies (such as coastal defenses) developed to allow urbanization of the coast to adapt to climate change?
45. How will human pressures on the coast shift and change as climate change impacts Marine Protected Areas and additional areas surrounding them?

#### C. Tourism Impacts Questions

46. How can the benefits of tourism to marine ecosystems be maximized while minimizing negative impacts?

#### D. Ecosystem Questions

47. How can key large-scale ecological processes be identified, protected, and restored through Marine Protected Areas?
48. What restoration methods are currently being employed within Marine Protected Areas?
49. How can conservation strategies be implemented to maintain connectivity across taxa, habitats, and scales to ensure resilient marine communities?
50. How can the provision of ecosystem services (known/unknown, quantitative/qualitative) be incorporated into marine conservation planning and management and how do we determine how much of each ecosystem service to protect?
51. How does your agency identify species at risk of extinction in marine ecosystems and how are conservation techniques specifically applied?

#### E. Marine Citizenship

52. How can your agency encourage context-specific behavioral changes to increase the conservation of the marine environment and what behaviors are important to change?
53. What are the best methods and tools available to engage citizens in marine conservation?
54. What are the most critical messages, concepts, and skills that should be communicated to, and developed with, citizens to improve societal understanding of marine conservation problems?
55. What are the best ways to frame marine conservation messages in light of different values and perceptions of the marine environment held by different audiences?
56. In what ways has the agency incorporated the local community in achieving conservation goals?

#### F. Policy

57. How can effective policymaking, and evaluation of marine systems be proactively advanced to address the implications of shifting historical baselines?
58. What are the most effective ways of establishing, adaptively managing, and assessing the ecological, social, and economic benefits of Marine Protected Area networks?
59. How should evidence from multiple disciplines be used most effectively to underpin marine conservation policymaking?

G. Societal and Cultural Considerations

- 60. How have humankind’s various worldviews shaped perceptions, relationships, and narratives related to the marine environment and how do these influence marine conservation?
- 61. How can marine conservation support and sustain cultural security? In what ways?
- 62. How has your agency managed and incorporated the marine cultural heritage of the UAE alongside biological conservation? How can this inform environmental sustainability and community resilience today?
- 63. What can be learned about the conservation of the environment from the culture of the UAE?
- 64. Do you think Marine Protected Area management has a direct impact on culture? In what ways? Do you think a shared culture on environmental awareness is important in ecotourism in the UAE? Why do you think so?

**IV.2 Survey Questionnaire**

This survey is intended for residents and/or tourists of the United Arab Emirates, and consists of three parts

- 1. Information on the characteristics of participants who may volunteer to be part of the research
- 2. Questionnaire to explore their perspectives on culture, environmental sustainability, social awareness, and tourism development
- 3. Images (examples) that will be administered to participants to gain perspectives on affect, preference, behavior, and immediate response to the image

***I. Characteristics of subjects***

Gender: 

Male	
Female	

Age:

Emirate of Residence:

Residency Status (if applicable): 

Emirati	
Expat	

Length of Residency (if applicable):

Nationality:

***II. Questionnaire***

Please select the best answer for each question below, unless instructed otherwise (next page).

- Questions 1-2: Perspectives on tourism and its impacts in the UAE
- Questions 3-6: Perspectives on cultural context of the UAE as it pertains to tourism
- Questions 7-16: Perspectives on conservation and sustainability as it pertains to cultural and ecotourism in the UAE
- Questions 17-18: Perspectives on tourism development in the UAE

<b>Perspectives on Tourism Management</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>How would you rate the importance of the following factors to the success of UAE's tourism sector? (Applicable to Residents and Tourists) 1=Not Important, 2=Slightly Important, 3=Moderately Important, 4=Important, 5=Very Important</b>					
	Funding/resources to support tourism (Economy)					
	Cultural activities, sites, and events					
	Destination image					
	Physical environment (climate, land, sea, natural resources)					
	Technology					
	Architecture					
	Theme parks/entertainment					
	Religious sites					
	Food					
	Shopping					
	Accommodation					
	Cleanliness and public facilities					
	Transportation					
	Connectivity/proximity to facilities, activities, etc.					
	Security/safety					
	Tourism information/guides/packages					
	Atmosphere/people (interaction)					
	Feasibility of activities					
<b>2.</b>	<b>What is the impact of tourism in your municipality/community on the following activities? (Applicable to residents) 1=Significantly Worsening, 2=Worsening, 3=None, 4=Improving, 5=Significantly Improving</b>					
	<b>Economic Impacts</b>					
	Infrastructure (roads, water supply, waste management etc.)					
	Employment					
	Tourism improves the economy					
	Tourism support public-private sector collaboration					
	Tourism Amenities					
	Recreational Activities					
	<b>Social and Cultural Impacts</b>					
	Legal and Moral issues					
	Authenticity of local culture					
	Recognition and Conservation local culture					
	Local services (health, communal, amenities etc.)					
	Range of cultural attractions					
	<b>Environmental Impacts</b>					
	Natural resources (land, sea, biodiversity)					
	Noise					
	Crowd					
	Accessibility					
	Conservation					
<b>3.</b>	<b>Has the culture of UAE changed during your time in the UAE? (Applicable to Residents)1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree</b>					
	<b>Additional comments: Why do you agree/disagree?</b>					

4.	<b>Do you think cultural attractions create a positive destination image of the UAE? (Applicable to Residents and Tourists)</b> 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
	<b>Additional Comments: Why do you agree/disagree?</b>					
5.	<b>Cultural tourism is beneficial for residents. (Applicable to Residents and Tourists)</b> 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
6.	<b>As a resident, do you think you have a strong understanding of the culture of the UAE? (Applicable to Residents)</b> 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
	<b>Additional Comments: Why do you agree/disagree?</b>					
7.	<b>Do you think you understand the concept of sustainable tourism? (Applicable to Residents and Tourists)</b> 1=Unfamiliar, 2=Somewhat Familiar, 3=Familiar, 4=Very Familiar					
8.	<b>Do you think the local community will benefit from developing a sustainable tourism model? (Applicable to Residents and Tourists)</b> 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
	<b>Additional Comments: Why do you agree/disagree?</b>					
9.	<b>Do you think natural resource protection and tourism are compatible? (Applicable to Residents and Tourists)</b> 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
10.	<b>Do you think protection/conservation of local culture and tourism are compatible? (Applicable to Residents and Tourists)</b> 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
11.	<b>Do you think well-managed resources such as MPAs in their natural state are important to attracting tourism? (Applicable to Residents and Tourists)</b> 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					

12.	<b>Do you think MPAs can enhance the biodiversity of the UAE?</b> (Applicable to Residents and Tourists) 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
13.	<b>Do you think that UAE's natural environment (land, sea, biodiversity) is integral to its culture?</b> (Applicable to Residents and Tourists) 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
14.	<b>Do you think there is a demand for sustainability in the ecotourism and cultural tourism sectors?</b> (Applicable to Residents and Tourists) 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
15.	<b>If you disagree with #14, do you think a demand for sustainable tourism can be brought about? (Applicable to Residents and Tourists)</b> 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
	<b>Additional Comments: Why do you agree/disagree?</b>					
16.	<b>Do you think technology and urban development are barriers to cultural tourism?</b> (Applicable to Residents and Tourists) 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree					
17.	<b>Do you think UAE would be what it is today without tourism development and essential to its prosperity? (Applicable to Residents)</b> 1=Yes, 2=No, 3=Neutral					
	<b>Additional Comments: Why/Why not?</b>					
18.	<b>Are you familiar with the UAE Vision 2021? Are you satisfied with Dubai's plan to become a global center and destination?</b> (Applicable to Residents and Tourists) 1=Yes, 2=No, 3=Neutral					
	<b>Additional Comments: Why/Why not?</b>					

**III. Image Perceptions** (This section consists of examples of images I would like to show participants of the survey, the finalized survey may contain fewer images than the ones presented here)

Below are both research questions (RQ) and posed questions (PQ). Research questions are intended to be scientific with terms and language not commonly used by people in the communities I will be working in. Posed questions are intended to address and answer the research questions, but in a vernacular, that would be best understood by the participant and will be the questions that are actually asked.

*RQ: [Tourism Development, Tourist Gaze, Cognition, and Behavior] What characteristics of tourism constitute the tourist's gaze? How does the gaze change with tourism development?*

PQ1: How do you feel about this picture?

PQ2: Would you like to go there? What would you do there?

PQ3: What do you like about the picture?

Look at the following sample of photographs, type up one-word or one phrase as a response that best describes what is being photographed in your opinion, and answer the following questions.

1.



**One-word or one phrase response:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What feelings/emotions do you have about what is being photographed in the picture? How do you feel about the people and/or things in this picture?**

**Would you like to go there? What would you do there?**

**What particular features or aspects of this picture do you like or dislike?**

**What does this picture make you think of?**

2.



**One-word or one phrase response:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What feelings/emotions do you have about what is being photographed in the picture? How do you feel about the people and/or things in this picture?**

**Would you like to go there? What would you do there?**

*What particular features or aspects of this picture do you like or dislike?*

*What does this picture make you think of?*

3.



*One-word or one phrase response:* \_\_\_\_\_

*What feelings/emotions do you have about what is being photographed in the picture? How do you feel about the people and/or things in this picture?*

*Would you like to go there? What would you do there?*

*What particular features or aspects of this picture do you like or dislike?*

**What does this picture make you think of?**

4.



**One word or one phrase response:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What feelings/emotions do you have about what is being photographed in the picture? How do you feel about the people and/or things in this picture?**

**Would you like to go there? What would you do there?**

**What particular features or aspects of this picture do you like or dislike?**

**What does this picture make you think of?**

5.



**One word or one phrase response:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What feelings/emotions do you have about what is being photographed in the picture? How do you feel about the people and/or things in this picture?**

**Would you like to go there? What would you do there?**

**What particular features or aspects of this picture do you like or dislike?**

***What does this picture make you think of?***

### **IV.3 Interview Consent Form**

**University of Washington  
Subject Matter Experts Interviews  
Consent Form**

University of Washington School of Marine and Environmental Affairs Thesis Researcher:  
Harshitha Sai Viswanathan (858-242-9268)

University of Washington School of Marine and Environmental Affairs Thesis Chair:  
Dr. Marc L. Miller

I request your participation in a research study I am conducting about perspectives on sustainable tourism development in the UAE. This form gives you information to help you decide whether or not you want to participate. Being in the study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, and you are free to withdraw at any time. If you have any questions, concerns, or clarifications about this study, please email [hsv2@uw.edu](mailto:hsv2@uw.edu). Your participation is valuable to my research study and will provide a better understanding of the factors that aid the development of a sustainable tourism model.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a valuable resource that aid in replenishing and managing fish stocks in the global context of fisheries management and food security, promote sustainable coastal and ecotourism activities, minimize conflict among resource users and stakeholders, and can achieve long term-sustainability of nature and associated cultural values. A sustainable and effective coastal tourism industry requires both prudent management of environmental resources and robust participation of the local community. This project aims to explore the role of United Arab Emirates (UAE) culture in developing a sustainable ecotourism industry and enhancing historic heritage of the region (such as in the arts, literature, architecture, indigenous and societal lifestyles) alongside tourism development. In order to achieve this, I would like to interview members in the tourism and environmental agencies of the UAE, and survey residents and tourists of the UAE about their perspective on tourism development as it pertains to maritime culture, sustainability, and social awareness.

#### **INTERVIEW PROCEDURE**

The interview will last for approximately forty-five to an hour. If you agree, the interview will be recorded with an audio recorder. If conducted through an online platform such as zoom, the interview will be recorded through the online platform or an audio recorder. If you would prefer not to be recorded, then I will take notes by hand instead. You can choose to skip any question that you would prefer not to answer. This interview is intended to be semi-structured and open-ended with no right or wrong answers. I hope to use this time to hear from you about your thoughts, opinions, and knowledge.

#### **RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT**

Questions in these interviews may be sensitive to some people and could cause discomfort. If this is the case, you can choose to skip any questions you would like at any time. Direct quotes from you may be used in future publications or presentations. If you would prefer to not use your name, the quote or idea could be cited as anonymous instead.

#### **BENEFITS OF THE STUDY**

The responses given in these interviews will be directly used in the completion of my Master's Thesis in the University of Washington's School of Marine and Environmental Affairs in the next year. Subject matter experts who choose to participate in this study will be able to give valuable input that will help the study's goal to explore cultural

values of the UAE that impact ecotourism (MPAs), address cultural implications of mobilizing resources for tourism development, and enhance conservation and sustainability awareness.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH INFORMATION**

My records will have your name linked with your interview responses. If you would prefer, I can remove your name from my data, so it is not linked to your responses and direct quotes will be cited as anonymous. Data will be stored in a secure drive and will remain confidential and protected in a personal computer. The laptop will not be used by anyone other than the one conducting the research, will be password protected, and updated with antivirus software on a regular basis. Government or university staff sometimes reviews studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records will be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

### **USE OF INFORMATION**

The information that I obtain from you for this study might be used for future publications and/or presentations. I may remove anything that might identify you from the information. If I do so, that information may then be used for future research studies or given to another investigator without getting additional permission from you. It is also possible that in the future I may want to use or share study information that might identify you. If I do, a review board will decide whether or not I need to get additional permission from you.

### **RESEARCH RELATED INJURY**

If you think you have been harmed from participating in this research, contact Harshitha Sai Viswanathan by email at [hsv2@uw.edu](mailto:hsv2@uw.edu) or by phone at +1858-252-9268 (US contact information) or +971551253500 (UAE contact information).

### **Subject's statement**

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, or if I have been harmed by participating in this study, I can contact the researcher listed on the first page of this consent form. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact the Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098 or email [hsdinfo@uw.edu](mailto:hsdinfo@uw.edu). I will receive a copy of this consent form.

## **IV.4 Survey Consent Form and Glossary of Terms**

### **University of Washington Residents and Tourists Survey Consent Form**

University of Washington School of Marine and Environmental Affairs Thesis Researcher:

Harshitha Sai Viswanathan (858-242-9268)

University of Washington School of Marine and Environmental Affairs Thesis Chair:

Dr. Marc L. Miller

I am requesting you to be in a research study. This form gives you information to help you decide whether or not you want to participate. Being in the study is voluntary. Please read this carefully. You may ask any questions about the study. Then you may decide whether or not you want to participate. You may refuse to participate, and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a valuable resource that aid in replenishing and managing fish stocks in the global context of fisheries management and food security, promote sustainable coastal and ecotourism activities, minimize conflict among resource users and stakeholders, and can achieve long term-sustainability of nature and associated cultural values. A sustainable and effective coastal tourism industry requires both prudent management of environmental resources and robust participation of the local community. This project aims to explore the role of United Arab Emirates (UAE) culture in developing a sustainable ecotourism industry and enhancing historic heritage

of the region (such as in the arts, literature, architecture, indigenous and societal lifestyles) alongside tourism development. In order to achieve this, I would like to interview members in the tourism and environmental agencies of the UAE, and survey residents and tourists of the UAE about their perspective on tourism development as it pertains to maritime culture, sustainability, and social awareness.

### **SURVEY STUDY PROCEDURE**

The purpose of this activity is to survey residents (expats and UAE nationals) and tourists about their perspectives on tourism development in the UAE relating to the region's culture, environmental sustainability, and social awareness which will be used to further develop interview questions for members in the UAE tourism industry. I hope to recruit at least 50 participants or more distributed approximately evenly across factors such as age, length of residency, residency status, and nationality for the sample size. The procedure involves filling an online survey comprised of 9 pages on the Survey Monkey platform that will take approximately 15 minutes. The survey will consist of three sections – 1) demographic characteristics, 2) Questionnaire on 4 topic areas (*tourism impacts, cultural tourism, conservation and sustainability, tourism development*), and 3) Image perceptions. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this survey, you may withdraw at any time.

**Survey Translation:** Since I plan to recruit a wide range of participants to administer this survey (locals, residents and tourists of all ages residing in the UAE), once the IRB approval has been obtained for the survey as written in English, I plan to have it translated into Arabic by professional translators in the UAE. This will allow participation of older locals in the survey and is a culturally appropriate research protocol. If a communication barrier arises with respect to interpretation of the survey in Arabic, the survey response will be rescheduled in the presence of a translator to answer any questions that may arise.

### **RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT**

Questions in this survey may be sensitive to some people and could cause stress. If this is the case, you can choose to skip any questions you would like at any time. Direct quotes from you may be used in future publications or presentations and cited as anonymous.

### **BENEFITS OF THE STUDY**

The responses given in these surveys will be directly used in the completion of my master's thesis in the University of Washington's School of Marine and Environmental Affairs in the next year. Community members who choose to participate this study will be able to give valuable input that will help the study's goal to explore cultural values of the UAE that impact ecotourism (MPAs), address cultural implications of mobilizing resources for tourism development, and enhance conservation and sustainability awareness.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH INFORMATION**

Data will be stored in a secure drive and will remain confidential and protected in a personal computer. The laptop will not be used by anyone other than the one conducting the research, will be password protected, and updated with antivirus software on a regular basis. To help maintain your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you by name. Government or university staff sometimes reviews studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

### **USE OF INFORMATION**

The information that I obtain from you for this study might be used for future publications and/or presentations. If I do so, that information may then be used for future research studies or given to another investigator without getting additional permission from you. The survey does not contain any information that will personally identify you by name.

### **RESEARCH RELATED INJURY**

If you think you have been harmed from being in this research, contact Harshitha Sai Viswanathan by email at [hsv2@uw.edu](mailto:hsv2@uw.edu) or by phone at +1858-252-9268 (US contact information) or +971551253500 (UAE contact information).

### Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, or if I have been harmed by participating in this study, I can contact the researcher listed on the first page of this consent form. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact the Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098 or email [hsdinfo@uw.edu](mailto:hsdinfo@uw.edu). I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Agree	
Disagree	

### Glossary of Terms

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Conservation	<i>A careful preservation and protection of something.</i>
Culture	<i>The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.</i>
Development	<i>The process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced.</i>
Ecotourism	<i>The practice of touring natural habitats in a manner meant to minimize ecological impact.</i>
Emirati	<i>A citizen or inhabitant of the United Arab Emirates.</i>
Expat	<i>A person who lives outside their native country.</i>
Local	<b>Adjective:</b> <i>Belonging or relating to a particular area or neighborhood, typically exclusively so.</i> <b>Noun:</b> <i>An inhabitant of a particular area or neighborhood.</i>
Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	<i>A clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated, and managed through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (IUCN, 2008).</i>
Private Sector	<i>The part of an economy which is not controlled or owned by the government.</i>
Public Sector	<i>The part of an economy which is controlled or owned by the government.</i>
Resident	<i>A person who lives somewhere permanently or on a long-term basis.</i>
Tourism	<i>Tourism is defined as a system in which tourists travel in the pursuit of contrast (radical/modest/business/recreational/educational) to interact with people, place, things and then return home.</i>

Tourist	<i>A person who is traveling or visiting a place for a temporary period of time.</i>
Sustainable	<i>Method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged.</i>

## **IV.5 IRB Exempt Determination**



### **DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS**

February 18, 2021

Dear Harshitha Viswanathan:

On 2/18/2021, the University of Washington Human Subjects Division (HSD) reviewed the following application:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	The Role of Cultural Tourism and Maritime Heritage of the United Arab Emirates in the Conservation and Sustainability of Marine Protected Areas.
Investigator:	Harshitha Viswanathan
IRB ID:	STUDY00012625
Funding:	None

#### **Exempt Status**

**HSD determined that your proposed activity is human subjects research that qualifies for exempt status (Category 2).**

- COVID NOTE: Researchers must comply with current infection control requirements and complete a self-assessment that activities fit within allowable research as described on the [HSD website](#).
- This determination is valid for the duration of your research.
- This means that your research is exempt from the federal human subjects regulations, including the requirement for IRB approval and continuing review.
- **Depending on the nature of your study, you may need to obtain other approvals or permissions to conduct your research. For example, you might need to apply for access to data or specimens (e.g., to obtain UW student data). Or, you might need to obtain permission from facilities managers to approach possible subjects or conduct research procedures in the facilities (e.g., Seattle School District; the Harborview Emergency Department).**
- HSD does not make determinations on behalf of other institutions. If other institutions are involved in the research, they may need to make their own determination or they may decide to be guided by our determination.

If you consider changes to the activities in the future and know that the changes will require IRB review (or you are not certain), you may request a review or new determination by submitting a Modification to this application. For information about what changes require a Modification, refer to the [GUIDANCE: Exempt Research](#).

Thank you for your commitment to ethical and responsible research. We wish you great success!

4333 Brooklyn Ave. NE, Box 359470 Seattle, WA 98195-9470  
main 206.543.0098 fax 206.543.9218 hsdinfo@u.washington.edu [www.washington.edu/research/hsd](http://www.washington.edu/research/hsd)  
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## Appendix V: Additional Information for Data Analysis and Results

**Table 7.3:** Codes and Subcodes with descriptions generated by the researcher.

Codes	Subcodes	Description
SME Background		Characteristics of participants such as nationality, residency status, length of residency, educational background, employment, and subject expertise. The data comprise both direct and indirect identifiers of the participants.
	Personal Experience	Events that leave an impression or shape characteristics of the individual such as their interests, opinions, perspectives, feelings, etc.
	Nationality	Identification of participants belonging to a particular nation.
	Residency Status	<b>Expat:</b> Somebody who leaves their country of origin and settles abroad for an extended period.  <b>Permanent Expat:</b> Individual living and/or working in a country other than his/her country of citizenship permanently.  <b>Emirati:</b> The native population of UAE.
	Length of residency	Time spent living in Abu Dhabi.
	Expertise	Expert knowledge or skill in a particular field <b>Educational background:</b> Background on schooling received tailored towards subject matter's expertise in the particular field.  <b>Work Experience:</b> Information on professional histories such as previous employment, responsibilities, skills learned, and accomplishments.
BLT		The human interactions within the socio-ecological tourism system. It describes the sociological component of the tourism system which differentiates individuals into three specific categories: brokers, locals, and tourists.
	Public Sector Brokers	Governmental entities that manage, develop, and regulate the tourism industry. Examples of public sector brokers are policymakers, managers, scientists, and authoritative agents.
	Private Sector Brokers	Organizations and individuals that supply tourist services and form a significant part of the industry. Examples of private-sector brokers include tour guides, retail entrepreneurs, and other service providers.

	Civil Society Brokers	Organizations and individuals operating in non-governmental, non-profit, and environmental organizations addressing tourism issues and agendas.
	Broker Motivations	The broker's and/or organizations' intention or objective; composed of personal and professional perspectives, interests, opinions, etc.
	Local Motivations	Resident population's intention or objectives; composed of personal and professional perspectives, interests, opinions, etc.
	Tourist Motivations	The reasons that drive a tourist to make decisions regarding their travels playing a fundamental part in the mechanics of tourism.
Cultural Characteristics		Culture as an organization of things, people, behavior, or emotions that inform models of perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting one's lifestyle.
	Traditional Culture	Historical local tribal customs, beliefs, or methods that inform one's lifestyle in Abu Dhabi.
	Modern Culture	Modern culture is the set of norms, expectations, experiences and shared meaning that evolved amongst the people of Abu Dhabi since nation hood (1971) and currently comprised of Emiratis and Expats today.  <b>Emirati Culture:</b> The culture of native UAE population as a result of discovery of oil and formation of the nationhood.  <b>Expatriate Population:</b> Expatriate contribution to UAE culture, economy, environment, etc.
	Maritime Heritage	<b>Maritime History:</b> Historical significance of human interactions and activities at sea. <b>Maritime Lifestyle:</b> Day to day activities of tribal populations in Abu Dhabi associated with coastal and marine environments.  <b>Maritime Activities:</b> Resources and activities used and practiced in relation to marine and coastal environments.  <b>Modern Maritime:</b> Maritime traditions, customs, beliefs, and activities (lifestyle) in the present day.
Cultural Challenges		Challenges resulting from cultural characteristics of society.

Societal Characteristics		Lifestyle, perspectives, opinions, interests that encompass day to day activities of residents of Abu Dhabi.
Societal Challenges		Consequences of societal characteristics.
Historical Significance		Important social, cultural, environmental events of the past.
Economy		Activities contributing to the wealth of the region.
	Traditional Economy	Economic activities of the past that informed the traditional identity and culture of Abu Dhabi.
	Modern Economy	Current economic activities and practices in Abu Dhabi since the discovery of oil and nationhood.
Political Characteristics		Primary governmental leadership in the region and their influence through laws, regulations, and policies.
	Policy Characteristics	Measures and features that determine the success of policies implemented in Abu Dhabi.
Environmental Goals		The objectives of management and development strategies being implemented in a region and/or environment of interest for purposes of environmental conservation, restoration, enhancement, etc.
Environmental Characteristics		Geographic attributes and living organisms that form the landscape of Abu Dhabi.
	Ecosystem Characteristics	A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment and the effects of interactions.
	MPA	Identification of MPAs in Abu Dhabi.
	Species	<b>Regional Species:</b> Living organisms occurring native in a certain region (Arabian Peninsula) which are capable of coexisting in a target community.  <b>Exotic Species:</b> Species of plants and animals that are not native to the region.
Environmental Management		The management of the interaction and impact of human activities on the natural environment through conservation, restoration, enhancement, etc.
	Enhancement	The process of improving environmental characteristics of a region.
	Restoration	The process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem (quality and/or quantity) that includes

		plants, animals, and/or microorganisms that have been degraded, damaged, or destroyed.
	Rehabilitation	To restore living organisms to their former living conditions with their environment.
	MPA Management	Management strategies implemented in MPAs of Abu Dhabi.
	MPA Characteristics	Significance of MPAs in Abu Dhabi attributing to their success.
	Fisheries Development	Process of change implemented to improve fisheries management.
	Fisheries Management	The processes and strategies followed and/or implemented through enforced regulations to prevent overfishing and help recover overfished stocks.
Environmental Consciousness		Community awareness of environmental concerns regarding protection and improvement of the health of the environment; concern for the well-being of the environment through attitudes, intentions, behaviors, etc.
Environmental Management Challenges		Challenges to current environmental management strategies being implemented across conservation, restoration, rehabilitation, enhancement, etc.
Environmental Issues		Problems with environmental systems developed as a result of human interference or mistreatment.
Tourism Management		Strategies and plans for management of tourism sites and services being in Abu Dhabi.
Tourism Development		The process of developing strategies and plans to increase/develop/encourage tourism in a particular destination.
Tourism Activities		The actions, behaviors, services, etc. the contribute to people's tourism related ventures and meets their needs for purpose of travel.
Tourism Sites		A place of interest that tourists visit typically for its natural or cultural value, historical significance, natural or built beauty, offering activities and knowledge of interest to the visitor.
Tourism Challenges		Challenges and consequences of the development and management of tourism services and activities.
Gateway Region Characteristics		It comprises populated commercial centers for tourism and non-tourism-related activities. Gateway regions and the communities that encompass these regions showcase the life of the local society that

		ranges indigenous, aboriginal, residential, traditional, immigrant, and visitor lifestyles through political, social, ethnic, and cultural factors in both urban and rural settings.
Non-Tourism related Management and Development		Management and development plans in non-tourism related sectors and projects.
Conflicting Perspectives		Differences in personal and professional opinions found in society that can refer to situations, events, and personalities.
	Knowledge Gaps	Lack of information which hinders complete understanding in relation to topic of interest.
	Divergent BLT perspectives	Differences in personal and professional opinions amongst brokers, locals, and tourists.
Interactions		A mutual connection between two or more things.
	Cultural Interactions (Community)	Significance of interactions between Emirati and expatriate populations in Abu Dhabi.
	Knowledge Integration	Synthesizing the understanding of a given subject from different perspectives.
	Culture and Environment	Interactions between culture that is human society attributes and the natural environment of a region.
	Tourism and Environment	Interactions between management and development of tourism with environmental characteristics and its management.
	Environment and Development	Interactions between societal development and environmental characteristics and its management.
	Culture and Gender	The influence of cultural characteristics on gendered roles and opportunities in society.
	Culture/Society and Tourism	The influence of tourism on societal and cultural characteristics or vice versa.
COVID 19 Impacts		Effect of the pandemic on socio-economic-ecological features of Abu Dhabi.
Sustainability		The avoidance of the depletion of resources (tangible and intangible) to meet one's needs while not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs across environment, social, cultural, economic, and political factors.
	Sustainability Prospects	Scope of sustainable development and management across political, social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors.







**Figure 7.50:** Word cloud depicting participants' comments to Q16 of the survey questionnaire. The word cloud was generated using the Bjorn Word Cloud extension in Microsoft word by the researcher.