

Community Understanding of Tourism Planning
and Development in the Najran Region, Saudi
Arabia

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Abstract

To diversify the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's (KSA) economy and to reduce the country's reliance on oil, the government launched *Vision 2030* in 2016. The plan places significant emphasis on tourism development as a key driver of the Saudi economy and on the involvement of local communities as a key element in planning and developing tourism. However, the literature presents a notable lack of research intended to understand tourism from the perspectives of local people in the Arab region, including the KSA.

With a focus on the Najran Region in the KSA, therefore, this study was aimed at exploring local people's attitudes towards tourism and their role in tourism planning and related decision-making. To gain insights into the community-level experiences of tourism in the region, qualitative face-to-face interviews were conducted with 31 participants of both genders and diverse age ranges representing groups traditionally associated with tourism employment (e.g. taxi drivers, hoteliers and tour guides) and groups traditionally not associated (e.g. elders, journalists, activists, environmental groups, women's groups and Bedouins). This study took into account the researcher's positionality and, through reflexivity, the potential implications of his senior position with the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage. Additional complexities included the difficulties for men to conduct research on women in a patriarchal society and the impacts of tribal connections and religious affiliations, which all produced a number of methodological considerations.

The conversations about tourism and planning reveal power struggles on many levels between generations, men and women, and clerics' traditional views and others' more

modern values. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the significance of covert matriarchal power within the family and the importance of nepotism (*Wasta*) in Arab culture. Overall, familial, patriarchal, tribal and religious issues intersect and underpin conversations about tourism development in Najran. This study holds significance as its origins coincided with the launch of the KSA's *Vision 2030*, and it is the first research to explore how hegemonic power impacts tourism development in a peripheral geographical context (Najran). This study on tourism development thus serves as a microcosm of the power complexities that fuel tensions between modernity (as represented by tourism development) and traditionalism in Saudi society.

Key words: tourism development and planning, community participation, hegemonic power, patriarchy, *Wasta*, Najran, Saudi Arabia

| Table of Contents | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Abstract | iv |
| List of Tables | iv |
| List of Figures | iv |
| List of Abbreviations | iv |
| Acknowledgements | iv |
| Declaration | iv |
| Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study | |
| 1.1 Study Context and Research Gaps | 1 |
| 1.2 Research Aim and Objectives | 8 |
| 1.3 Geographical Context of the Study | 9 |
| 1.3.1 Location, Population, Economy, Climate and Cultural and Natural Attractions | 9 |
| 1.3.2 Existing Tourism Infrastructure | 25 |
| 1.3.3 Tourism Planning in Najran | 30 |
| 1.4 Methodological Approach | 35 |
| 1.5 Positionality and its reflection on the development of tourism in the Najran region | 36 |
| 1.6 Structure of the Thesis | 41 |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review | |
| 2.1 Definitions of Key Concepts | 43 |
| 2.1.1 Community | 43 |
| 2.1.2 Community Participation | 49 |
| 2.1.3 Planning and Decision-making | 59 |
| 2.1.4 Power | 64 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 2.2 Community Participation in Tourism Planning and Decision-making | 68 |
| 2.2.1 The Emergence of Community Participation in Tourism Development | 69 |
| 2.2.2 A Chronological Account of Studies on Community Participation in Tourism Development | 70 |
| 2.2.3 Community Participation in Tourism Planning and Development | 72 |
| 2.2.4 Politics in Tourism Planning and Development | 79 |
| 2.3 Community Participation in Tourism Planning and Decision-making in Developing Countries | 83 |
| 2.4 Tourism Planning and Decision-making in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia | 89 |
| 2.4.1 Planning and Decision-making in Saudi Arabia | 89 |
| 2.4.2 Current Situation of Tourism Planning and Decision-making in Saudi Arabia | 93 |
| 2.5 Chapter Summary | 99 |
| Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods | |
| 3.1 Research Paradigms | 101 |
| 3.2 The Interpretive Paradigm of this Study | 107 |
| 3.3 Social Constructionism as a Research Strategy | 111 |
| 3.4 Research Design | 115 |
| 3.5 Research Methods | 118 |
| 3.5.1 Data Collection | 118 |
| 3.5.2 Data Analysis | 131 |
| 3.5.3 Ethical Considerations | 143 |
| 3.5.4 Trustworthiness | 145 |
| 3.5.5 Reflexivity and Positionality | 148 |
| 3.6 Chapter Summary | 156 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion | |
| 4.1 Findings | 159 |
| 4.1.1 Najrani’s understandings of Tourism | 159 |
| 4.1.2 Understandings of Community in Najran | 165 |
| 4.1.3 Understandings of Participation | 169 |
| 4.1.4 Summary of the Findings | 184 |
| 4.2 Discussion | 186 |
| 4.2.1 Strict Adherence to Tribal Rules | 186 |
| 4.2.2 Conflicts between and within Patriarchy and Matriarchy | 195 |
| 4.2.3 Multiple Interpretations of Islam (Religiosity) | 204 |
| 4.3 Significance of the Findings and the Discussion | 211 |
| Chapter 5: Conclusions | |
| 5.1 An overview of the study’s results | 219 |
| 5.2 Contributions to Knowledge | 224 |
| 5.2.1 Gramscian perspective on tourism in Najra | 224 |
| 5.2.2 Local interpretation of tourism, community and participation | 226 |
| 5.2.3 Tourism development in Arab peripheral region | 228 |
| 5.3 Going forward | 228 |
| 5.4 Management implications of the study and recommendations for further research | 232 |
| 5.5 Concluding remarks | 233 |
| Bibliography | 236 |
| Appendixes | 291 |

| List of Tables | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Table 1.1: Air traffic in some regional and local airports in the Kingdom | 26 |
| Table 2.1: Pretty's (1995) Typology of Community Participation | 58 |
| Table 2.2: Tourism Planning Traditions | 74 |
| Table 2.3: Normative Typology of Community Participation | 77 |
| Table 3.1: Interview Questions | 121 |
| Table 3.2: Participants' Information | 126 |
| Table 3.4: Advantages of Thematic Analysis | 138 |

| List of Figures | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Figure 1.1: Location of Najran Region | 10 |
| Figure 1.2: View of the Najran Valley | 13 |
| Figure 1.3: Sand Dunes in the Empty Quarter Desert | 14 |
| Figure 1.4: Arabian Oryx in the Uruq Bani Ma'arid Protected Area | 14 |
| Figure 1.5: Inscriptions at Bir Hima | 16 |
| Figure 1.6: Al-Okhdood Archaeological Site | 17 |
| Figure 1.7: An Example of Mud Houses | 18 |
| Figure 1.8: Emarah Palace | 19 |
| Figure 1.9: Al-Aan Palace | 19 |
| Figure 1.10: An Example of the Pottery Industry in Najran | 20 |
| Figure 1.11: Al-madhans as an Example of the Soap Stone Industry | 21 |
| Figure 1.12: An Example of the Wood Industry | 21 |
| Figure 1.13: Daggers | 22 |
| Figure 1.14: Silver Jewellery | 23 |
| Figure 1.15: An Example of the Leather Industry | 24 |
| Figure 1.16: Najran Airport | 25 |
| Figure 1.17: An Example of Roads in Najran | 28 |
| Figure 1.18: An Example of Hotels in Najran | 29 |
| Figure 1.19: An Example of National Parks in Najran | 29 |
| Figure 2.1: Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation | 56 |
| Figure 2.2: An Example of Different Planning Stages | 63 |
| Figure 2.3: Hierarchy of Planning and Decision-making in Saudi Arabia | 91 |
| Figure 2.4: Tourism Planning and Management in Saudi Arabia | 95 |
| Figure 3.1: Research Paradigms | 107 |
| Figure 3.2: Methodological Framework of the Study | 118 |

| List of Figures | Page |
|--|-------------|
| Figure 3.3: Examples of Coding | 135 |
| Figure 3.4: The Mural Painting | 136 |
| Figure 3.5: Emerging Themes | 137 |
| Figure 3.6: Translation during Thematic Analysis | 140 |

| List of Abbreviations |
|---|
| CM Council of Ministers |
| CEDA Council of Economic and Development Affairs |
| CBT Community-based tourism |
| CREC College Research Ethics Committee |
| DC Doctoral College |
| FDI Foreign direct investment |
| GCC Gulf Cooperation Council |
| GAS General Authority for Statistics |
| IMF International Monetary Fund |
| KSA Kingdom of Saudi Arabia |
| MEP Ministry of Economy and Planning |
| NTP National Transformation Programme |
| NTDC Najran Tourism Development Council |
| PTDS Provincial Tourism Development System |
| RG Regional governors |
| SAP Structural adjustment programmes |
| SC Shura Council |
| SCT Supreme Commission for Tourism |
| SCTA Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities |
| SCTNH Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage |
| TDC Tourism development councils |
| UNRISD United Nations Research Institute for Social Development |
| UNWTO United Nations World Tourism Organisation |
| UN United Nations |
| WB World Bank |

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DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Date

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general introduction to the study. The first section describes the study context and the research gaps, while the second section explains the research aim and objectives. The third section presents the geographical context of the study. The fourth section highlights methodological approach employed in the study, while the fifth one presents positionality. Finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined.

1.1 Study Context and Research Gaps

Over the past 20 years, the tourism industry has expanded and become one of the fastest-growing industries in the world (Liu and Chou, 2016; Gorbuntsova et al., 2019). For example, international tourist arrivals increased from 25 million in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, 1.189 billion in 2015 and 1,235 billion in 2016 (United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2017). As well, the gross tourism receipts of destinations worldwide surged from US\$2 billion in 1950 to US\$104 billion in 1980, US\$495 billion in 2000 and US\$1.220 trillion in 2016 (UNWTO, 2017). The UNWTO's long-term forecast report *Tourism Towards 2030* projects that international tourist arrivals worldwide will increase to 1.8 billion by 2030 (Cheer and Lew, 2017; UNWTO, 2017; Bakan et al., 2019). This scale of travel has ushered in economic benefits for numerous countries, along with socio-cultural, environmental and political impacts. Such benefits have included foreign currency earnings and the creation of employment opportunities.

Unsurprisingly, this tourism boom has drawn the attention of many developing countries (Bryden, 1973; Krippendorf, 1982; Sharpley and Telfer, 2002; Awang et al., 2009; Szirmai, 2012; Samimi et al., 2013; Sharpley and Telfer, 2014; Mowforth and Munt, 2015; Tovmasyan, 2016; Dwyer et al., 2020). The tourism sector is one of the fastest growing industries in the world economy, drawing investment from many entrepreneurs and governments in various countries. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is among the countries that have realised the importance of tourism as an economic sector (Ministry of Economy and Planning [MEP], 2010, 2013; Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage [SCTNH], 2013; Sherbini et al., 2016) as oil accounts for about 90% of the government's total revenues (Sultan and Haque, 2018; Jawadi and Ftiti 2019). After the oil slump in 2014, the KSA's stock market lost 10.7% and reached 16% of the public deficit in 2015. Moreover, the price of a barrel of oil has decreased in recent years (Jawadi and Ftiti, 2019). Given the expense of oil production, the country decided to reduce its production from 7.2 million barrels per day in 2016 to 6.6 million barrels per day in 2017 (Jawadi and Ftiti, 2019).

To protect the Saudi economy from reliance on oil and to ensure its stability, the government has decided to develop other non-oil economic sectors (Jawadi and Ftiti 2019). In 2016, the KSA launched *Vision 2030* under Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz, chairman of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs. *Vision 2030* sets out a plan to make government services more efficient and to diversify the Saudi economy by boosting private sector job creation and developing non-oil economic sectors (Moser, 2015; Khan, 2016). To build the institutional capacity and capabilities needed to achieve the *Vision 2030* goals, the National

Transformation Programme (NTP) 2020 was launched by 24 government bodies operating in the economic and development sectors (Council of Economic and Development Affairs [CEDA], 2016; Alkhareif et al., 2017). The NTP is the executive arm of Vision 2030, enacting programmes, projects and action plans to translate the vision into reality (Khan, 2016; Alkhareif et al., 2017; Jawadi and Ftiti 2019).

The Saudi government considers the tourism sector to be a key driver of growth under *Vision 2030*'s economic diversification strategy (Hussain, 2017; Junaid and Fakieh, 2019). The Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) forecasts that domestic tourist trips in Saudi Arabia will reach 128 million in 2020 (Mansour and Mumuni, 2019). Such trips are believed to have contributed \$70.9 billion (SAR 263.1 billion) to the country's gross domestic product in 2019. International arrivals to Saudi Arabia are predicted to increase 5.6% annually from 17.7 million in 2018 to about 25 million in 2023. Over the next decade, religious tourism is expected to remain the bedrock of the sector, which has the goal of attracting 30 million pilgrims to Saudi Arabia by 2030 (WTM, 2019). Ultimately, tourism is forecast to attract 100 million foreign and domestic visitors and to create 1 million new jobs in the tourism sector by 2030 (TIME, 2019).

To achieve the goals of *Vision 2030*, many initiatives and projects have been announced, including three giga projects. The largest one, NEOM, spreads over more than 26,500 square kilometres in three countries, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan. In the Tabuk Region on the Red Sea coast, it will operate independently from the rest of Saudi Arabia (Altahtoh, 2019; Habibi, 2019). Strategically situated on three continents, it will be a hub between Africa, Asia and Europe and a major site for trade,

innovation and knowledge (Altahtoo, 2019). The second giga project is the Red Sea Project, which is aimed at creating a large-scale, sustainable ultraluxury tourism resort in a unique location that promotes the local culture. Its site of approximately 34,000 square kilometres includes a 90-island archipelago, volcanoes, desert and mountains. Part of the Red Sea Project will be completed and available for use by 2022 (Red Sea Development Project, 2020). *Vision 2030*'s third giga project is a large multifunctional cultural and entertainment zone known as the Qiddiya Project, 'covering a 340-square-kilometer area southwest of Riyadh. Plans call for this large area to include theme parks, shopping malls, sports centres, facilities for cultural events such as music festivals and conventions, and up to 11,000 vacation homes'. One project objective is to create an appealing domestic destination for Saudi nationals (Habibi, 2019:4).

Opening the door to tourism is also among the initiatives accompanying the launch of *Vision 2030*. The Saudi government has created new tourist visas giving visitors easier access (Daye, 2019) and has relaxed Hajj and Umrah visa regulations to allow religious pilgrims to travel to all regions within the country during their 30-day visits (Toumi, 2018). Recently, Saudi women have experienced an unprecedented wave of changes. Most notably, the government has allowed women to enter sports stadiums and lifted the longstanding prohibition on women driving. The government has encouraged more public entertainment and relaxed the rules on gender segregation in public places. The authority of the religious police, who enforce strict rules of gender segregation, has been lessened (Features, 2019). As well, the ban on cinema and concerts as entertainment activities has been lifted.

In Saudi Arabia, policy planning and decision-making take place at the national level (Al-But'hie and Saleh, 2002; Al-Sulbi et al., 2010; Aina et al., 2019). Accordingly, tourism planning is done at the national level in consultation with national and regional organisations, while regional plans are implemented at the local level. Regional tourism development councils (TDC) form the tourism infrastructure. The council members are not elected but are appointed by the government (SCT, 2002; SCTA, 2013; Alqahtani and Saba, 2014; Provincial Tourism Development System [PTDS], 2015). Communities thus do not have elected but instead government-appointed representatives speaking for them. Consequently, the aspirations and objectives of local people on development issues, including tourism, are not adequately reflected.

However, local people are the incubators of tourism development, and tourism has significant impacts on them, both good and bad (Xu et al., 2019). Community participation should be an integral part of tourism planning and decision-making (Dredge, 1999; Timothy, 1999; Tosun and Timothy, 2001; Mosammam et al., 2016; Ndivo and Cantoni, 2016; Bello et al., 2016; Eshliki and Kaboudi, 2017) due to the role of communities in ensuring the success of tourism development (Dredge, 1999; Timothy, 1999; Tosun and Timothy, 2001; Mosammam et al., 2016; Ndivo and Cantoni, 2016; Bello et al., 2016; Eshliki and Kaboudi, 2017; Hsu et al., 2019). It, therefore, is important to explore local people's understandings of tourism and the issues that limit their participation in tourism planning and development, especially in light of the KSA's accelerated reforms since the launch of *Vision 2030*. There is a significant lack of research intended to understand tourism from the perspectives of

local people in the Arab region, including Saudi Arabia, even though tourism is considered to be a pillar of development.

Due to this lack of research, this study included an extensive review of tourism studies in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which have many social, cultural and political similarities with the KSA. Many studies have been produced on tourism in the GCC countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain (Anwar and Sohail, 2004; Abdul-Ghani, 2006; Henderson, 2006; Mansfeld and Winckler, 2007; 2008; Sharpley, 2008; Ryan and Stewart, 2009; Buerkert et al., 2010; Inhorn and Shrivastav, 2010; Ramanathan et al., 2010; Stephenson and Ali-Knight, 2010; Michael et al., 2011; Feighery, 2012; Khodr, 2012; Ryan et al., 2012; Morakabati et al., 2014; Stephenson, 2014; Henderson, 2015; Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou, 2015; Dutt and Ninov, 2016; Zaidan, 2016; Mohammed, 2017; Zaidan, 2017). These studies have explored various tourism-related topics, such as tourism investment, planning and marketing. Only three studies have highlighted topics related to community participation, but they have not included in-depth explorations of the reality of local communities' participation in tourism-related decisions in the Gulf states (Ramanathan et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2012; Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou, 2015).

For example, Ramanathan et al. (2010) evaluated stakeholders' perceptions of tourism development in the Jebel Akhdar region of Oman, but the study was descriptive and superficial. Ryan et al. (2012) examined visitors' perceptions of Ras Al Khor, a wetland sanctuary in the upper reaches of Dubai Creek, but the researchers did not recruit local stakeholders in tourism development as study participants and instead focused mostly on overseas visitors to Dubai. Finally, Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou (2015)

explored stakeholders' views on the development of a higher education hospitality programme in Bahrain, but the study participants were experts and academics and did not consider local communities' views.

Considerable research on tourism in Saudi Arabia has been undertaken (Paul and Rimmawi, 1992; Seddon, 2000; Seddon and Khoja, 2003a; 2003b; Kester and Carvao, 2004; Sadi and Henderson, 2005; Orbaşlı and Woodward, 2008; Al-Sulbi et al., 2010; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010; Henderson, 2011; Khizindar, 2012; Brdese et al., 2013; Alqahtani and Saba, 2014; Khan and Alam, 2014; Mumuni and Mansour, 2014; Sadi, 2014; Alhowaish, 2016; Alsumairi and Tsui, 2017; Reddy, 2017). These studies have discussed various tourism-related topics, such as tourism planning and marketing, medical tourism, hospitality and outbound and inbound tourism statistics, among others. A few studies, such as those by Seddon (2000), Al-Sulbi et al. (2010), Zamani-Farahani and Henderson (2010), Khizindar (2012) and Alqahtani and Saba (2014), have highlighted topics related to the involvement of local people in tourism development. However, these studies relied on surveys that produced valuable insights but were largely superficial and descriptive and did not generate in-depth understandings of how local communities participate in tourism planning.

This review has identified several empirical and methodological gaps in the literature on tourism in the GCC countries and Saudi Arabia. First, there is a significant lack of in-depth studies on local communities' participation in tourism planning and development in the GCC and the KSA. Second, few tourism researchers are from the Gulf, which may significantly influence their interpretations of issues related to regional customs and traditions. Third, despite some qualitative studies on GCC

tourism, research reliant on surveys and statistics has remained dominant, especially in studies on Saudi Arabia. Such work fails to humanise tourism research or give a voice to local people. Finally, there is a significant absence of female participants in tourism development research. Male researchers, in particular, have mostly recruited male participants as social norms hinder women's participation. Despite the social transformations taking place in Saudi Arabia, access to women for researchers, including those in the tourism field, is still not easy, especially in tribal areas.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

To understand tourism at the grassroots level, especially as Saudi Arabia experiences unprecedented social reforms along with *Vision 2030*, this study on the case of the Najran Region in Saudi Arabia is aimed at exploring communities' understandings of tourism planning and development in the region.

The overarching research questions are as follows:

- i. What are local communities' understandings of tourism in Najran?
- ii. Is local participation important in tourism planning and development?
- iii. What kind of participation by local communities takes place in Najran?
- iv. What potential challenges may affect local communities' participation in tourism planning and development?

Research objectives:

- 1) To build understandings of the concepts of community, participation, planning and decision-making in tourism

- 2) To critically evaluate community participation in planning in the tourism development context, with a focus on the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions
- 3) To conduct an empirical analysis providing insights into the nature of community participation in tourism planning in the Najran Region and the operational, structural and cultural limitations that might hinder the involvement of local communities
- 4) To draw conclusions on community participation in tourism planning and development in the Najran Region and offer recommendations that might increase community participation in tourism development issues in the region

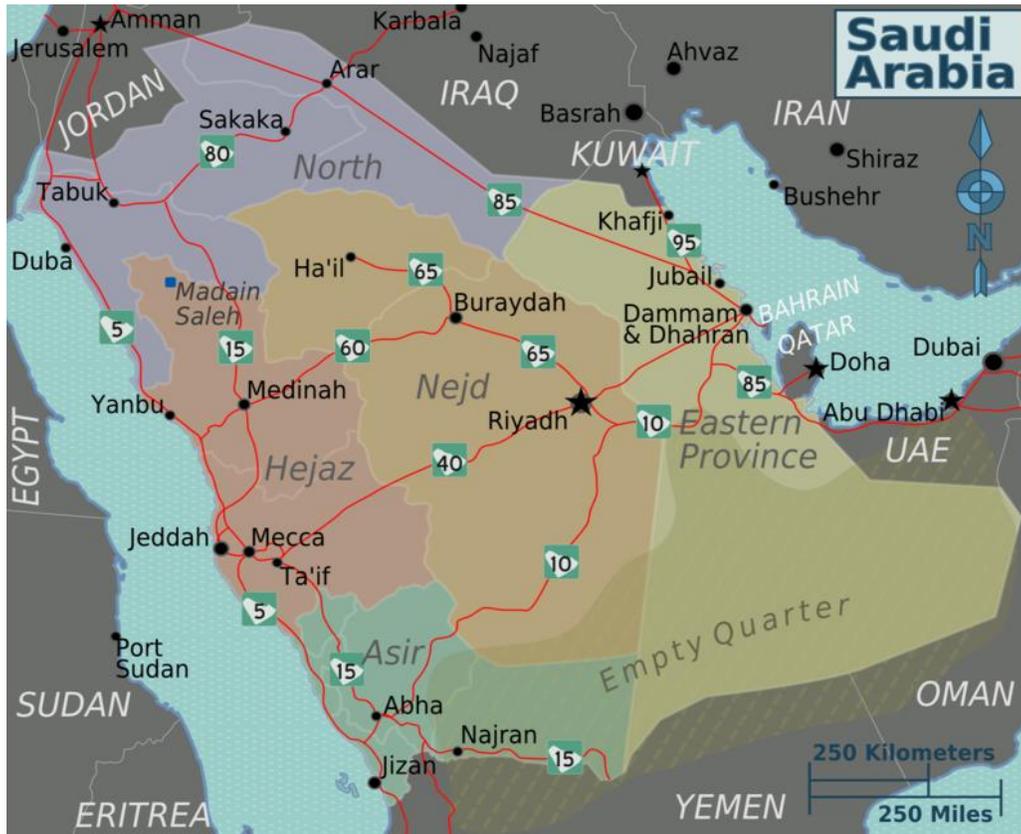
1.3 Geographical Context of the Study

1.3.1 Location, Population, Economy, Climate and Cultural and Natural Attractions

For the purposes of this project, the Najran Region was chosen as the geographical context to explore local communities' understandings of tourism planning and development. As shown in Figure 1.1, Najran is in the southern part of the KSA, between 17° and 19° 20' north latitude and 43° 40' and 52° east longitude. It is bordered by Aseer Province to the west, Riyadh Province to the northwest, Eastern Province to the northeast and the Republic of Yemen to the south. Najran has a long east–west border that extends along Yemen into Ar Rub' al Khali (the Empty Quarter desert). The region is a considerable distance from the KSA's major cities; Najran City is about 980 km from Riyadh, 930 km from Jeddah, 950 km from Mecca, 1,390 km from Madinah and 1,370 km from Dammam. Within the southern KSA, Najran City is about

280 km from Abha and 470 km from Jizan. The Najran Region occupies approximately 360,000 square kilometres, about 8% of the KSA's total area.

Figure 1.1: Location of Najran Region



Source: Wikitravel (2020)

Najran, along with Jazan, is a gateway between the KSA and Yemen, giving it a strategic location. The border between Najran and Yemen extends for about 1,300 km and has two crossings: Al Kadhra Passage and Al Wadi'ah Passage. Administratively, Najran is divided into seven counties and Najran City, which is designated as the provincial capital. These eight areas contain 26 level A centres and 34 level B centres (Llewellyn, 2010; SCTA, 2010a; SCTA, 2010b).

Najran is one of the fastest-growing regions in the KSA. In the 1993 census, it had a population of 300,994, about 1.8% of the KSA's total population. In 2000, the regional population was estimated to be 385,588, and the 2004 census counted 419,457 residents in the region. More than half of the population lives in Wadi Najran. In 2000, Saudi nationals comprised 84.1% of the population, with foreign migrant workers and their families making up the rest. Through 2000, Najran saw more in-migration from other regions than out-migration of residents to other regions, indicating that it was considered to be a desirable migration destination (SCTA, 2011). The 2010 census by the General Authority for Statistics (GAS, 2010) estimated the regional population to be 507,106. The population was an estimated 595,705 in 2016 (GAS, 2016), and it is projected to be nearly 1.1 million by 2028 (SCTA, 2011). Like most of the KSA, Najran has a youthful population, with those younger than 35 years old accounting for more than 70% of the total population in the Najran Region.

Most Najran residents have ancestry from the Yams, one of the most ancient tribes in the Arabian Peninsula whose customs and traditions persist today (Splendid Arabia, 2005). Despite the communication revolution, external education and development experienced by the KSA, Saudi culture, including in Najran, is greatly influenced by Arab and Islamic cultures. Society in general is deeply religious, conservative, traditional and family oriented (Abu-Gaueh, 1995; Hussein, 2019; Thursfield et al., 2019). Najran has a unique, complex culture with high homogeneity based on tribal and Islamic affiliations. Consequently, it is difficult to distinguish between Islamic principles and Arab customs (Al Alhareth et al., 2015).

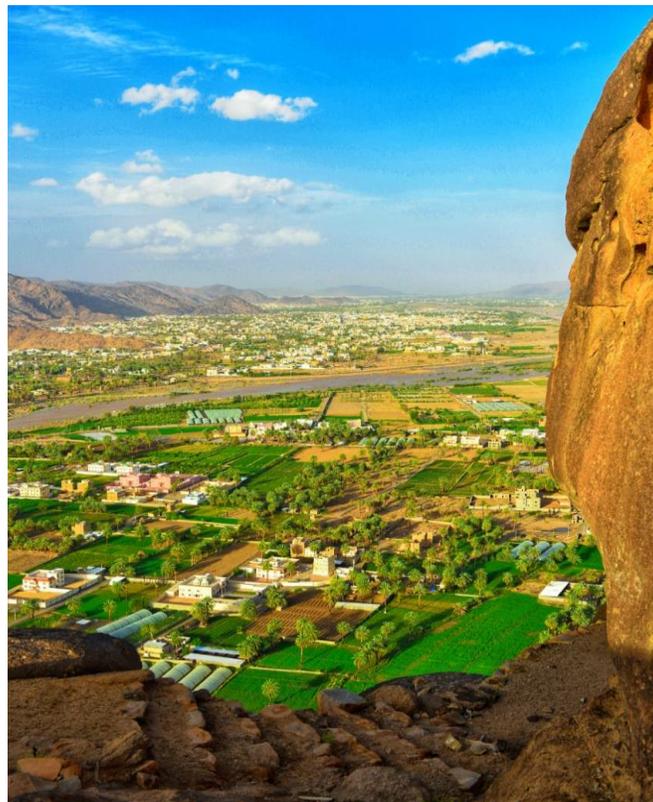
The region's economy is based on the agriculture, industry, trade, services and government sectors, including the border security forces. Agriculture is moderately developed by the KSA's standards and produces of some 0.2% of the wheat, 2.9% of the vegetables, 1.1% of the fodder, 6% of the fruits and 1.8% of the dates in the country. Fruits are Najran's most developed agricultural crops, and the region is well known for its oranges and other citrus fruits. The Najran Horticulture Development Research Centre, supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and the United Nations' (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization, carries out intensive research on citrus and other fruits and provides farmers with suitable plant material (cultivars). Livestock production includes chickens, eggs, goats, sheep, cows, dairy products, camels and honey (SCTA, 2011; Hussein, 2019).

Najran's topography has significant impacts on its climate, which varies with the three types of terrain: highlands, plains and deserts. The Sarawat Mountains constitute a huge natural barrier to clouds from the Red Sea, thus reducing their usefulness. In general, the regional climate tends to be moderate. In the highlands, rains fall, especially in the early summer, and the climate is moderate and cool, with average temperatures of 14.6 °C in December and 30.9 °C in July. In north-western Najran, the climate tends to be cool in the summer, with temperatures falling to 16 °C in South Badr province. The climate is hot in eastern Najran, reaching 40 °C in Sharoura province in July. Temperatures gradually decrease in western Najran (SCTA, 2011; Hussein, 2019).

Najran Region has a remarkably rich, diverse and unique natural and cultural heritage. The natural heritage features a range of features, landscapes, wildlife and habitats spanning mountains and deserts (SCT, 2005). Egal (2016) called Najran a land between

two worlds. On one hand, Najran, like the neighbouring Asir Region, contains the green Sarawat Mountains, where monsoons bring rain twice a year, but on the other hand, southwestern Najran hosts one of the world's most arid deserts, the Rub al-Khali (the Empty Quarter Desert). The Najran Wadi (valley) is created from the confluence of many tributaries running through the Sarawat Mountains and finishing their course in the first sands of the immense Rub' Al-Khali. The path of the wadi marks the natural link between the green and arid worlds of Najran (SCTA, 2011; Egal, 2016; Hussein, 2019).

Figure 1.2: *View of the Najran Valley*



Source: *Al Duwais (2020)*

The Rub' Al-Khali, the most mythical desert in the world, is part of Najran's natural heritage. In central and eastern Najran, it is the largest contiguous sand desert in the

world, with dunes as high as 250 meters. Its hyper-arid climate is among the harshest in the world, with an annual rainfall of less than 3 centimetres, summer temperatures higher than 50 °C and sub-zero temperatures on winter nights (Egal, 2016).

Figure 1.3: *Sand Dunes in the Empty Quarter Desert*



Source: *Egal (2016)*

In the Empty Quarter in southern Najran, Uruq Bani Ma'arid is one of Saudi Arabia's most attractive protected areas. Along the western edge of Ar-Rub' al-Khali, it has greater biological diversity than the rest of the Empty Quarter, with vegetated wadis, gravel plains and inter-dune corridors. It is the last place that the Arabian Oryx leucoryx has been reliably observed in the wild (Llewellyn, 2010; SWC, 2011; SCTA, 2010).

Figure 1.4: *Arabian Oryx in the Uruq Bani Ma'arid Protected Area*



Source: *Egal (2016)*

Historically, Najran is also a land of ancient civilisations. Indeed, the region developed during the first millennium BCE as brilliant civilisations rose around it. It lies in the northern part of what the Romans called Arabia Felix, referring to the ancient kingdoms of Yemen, such as Sheeba (Saba'), Hadramawut, Qataban, Aksum and Himyar. The Romans came to the southern Arabian Peninsula at least twice. A military expedition in 25–24 BCE was not successful enough to maintain control of the area. In the 2nd century CE, they settled in the Farasan Islands in the Red Sea to protect their maritime trade routes with India. In the 5th century CE, after taking all of Yemen, the kingdom of Himyar launched several military expeditions through Najran to conquer the Arabian Peninsula as far as present-day Iraq. The Kinda tribe from Najran and its legendary King Hujr bin A'mr were even given the role of governing Central Arabia (Egal, 2016).

Egal added that the Jebel Qarah, less than 100 km north of Najran City, retains traces of these events today with inscriptions carved in Sabean script, most famously at Bir Hima. Najran is also a land of ancient trade routes. Ancient Najran City and the Jebel Qarah were prominent stopovers for caravans carrying frankincense, myrrh, Indian spices and other valuable commodities from the kingdoms of Yemen.

Figure 1.5: *Inscriptions at Bir Hima*



Source: *Egal (2016)*

From Najran City, the caravans headed 100 km north to Jebel Kawkab, a sandstone massif that was the crossroads between the western and eastern roads across the Arabian Peninsula. It is believed that travellers from Najran took around 65 days to reach the Levant (present-day Palestine). Najran's location, strategic importance and wealth made it coveted. Today, it links modern Saudi Arabia to the brilliant ancient kingdoms of southern Arabia that the Romans used to call Arabia Felix (Egal, 2016).

Among the palaces, farms, popular markets and numerous heritage villages scattered throughout the Najran Valley, Al-Okhdood village is among the most prominent cultural heritage sites. This archaeological and historical site draws tourists and occupies 5 square kilometres southwest of Najran. The historic monumental village, dating to more 2,000 years ago, tells the story of a people who were mentioned in the Quran. The fragile bones and thick ash give witness to the massive religious massacre

that took place there, and the remnants of ancient paintings feature various inscriptions such as human hands, horse and snakes carved on rocks (Al Arabiya, 2020).

Figure 1.6: *Al-Okhdood Archaeological Site*



Source: *SCTA (2011)*

Najran’s traditional clay houses are among the most beautiful in the world. Made from local materials, these dwellings maintain a harmony with their environment yet express a certain style of imagination not found elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula. The rectangular houses are built of light tan clay and reach as high as nine stories, becoming narrower as they ascend. The tops of these fascinating structures have openings that permit light to enter but are narrow enough to provide protection from attack. The thick clay walls make these homes as strong as small fortresses. Some are more than 300

years old. Their multi-coloured facades are often decorated with paintings and sculptures, adding to their charm (Vincent, 2008; SCTA, 2011, 2013; SCTNH, 2017).

Figure 1.7: *An Example of Mud Houses*



Source: *Egal (2016)*

Among the most prominent urban heritage sites in Najran are the Emarah Palace and the Al-Aan Palace. Emarah Palace, in the centre of Najran City, was built on the site of an ancient well in 1944 (1363 H), a few years after the region joined the Saudi Kingdom. The first purpose of the palace was to host not only the new governor and his companions but also the telegraph post and the police. It is certainly the most sizeable historical building in the region, with 625 square meters and 65 rooms. It is open to public and contains a museum telling the story of the palace (Egal, 2016).

Figure 1.8: *Emarah Palace*



Source: *SCTA (2011)*

Al-Aan Palace, also known as Se'dan Palace, was built in 1688 (1100 H) by Ismail Al-Makrami. It comprises four storeys, a court and several secondary buildings. Its strategic location on a peak on the northern side of the Najran Wadi dominates the oasis and offers a stunning view of the valley and the surrounding mountains (Arab News, 2019; Hussein, 2019).

Figure 1.9: *Al-Aan Palace*



Source: *Arab News (2019)*

Crafts and traditional industries are considered to be among Najran's cultural attractions. The most prominent are as follows.

Pottery industry

The manufacturing of many pottery vessels remains popular in Najran today. The most famous of these vessels include: 1) *twine*: a saucepan for cooking; 2) *tanoor*: a baking oven; 3) *zir*: a container for cooling and keeping water; 4) *greaser*: a serving bowl; and 5) *jomna*: a pot for making coffee (Najran Municipality, 2020).

Figure 1.10: An Example of the Pottery Industry in Najran



Source: Al Barari Network and Forum (2010)

Soap stone industry

Al-madhans are among the most important artefacts made of soap stone. The people of Najran still widely use it in various forms, sizes, uses and motifs (Najran Municipality, 2020).

Figure 1.11: *Al-madhans as an Example of the Soap Stone Industry*



Source: Sabq Electronic Newspaper (2018)

Wood industry

Many wood products are still used in Najran, including mugs, measuring tools, newspapers, boxes and beds, among others. Many are decorated with engineered motifs, inscriptions and metal parts (Najran Municipality, 2020).

Figure 1.12: *An Example of the Wood Industry*



Source: Ajel (2019)

Daggers industry

The dagger industry is among the most prominent traditional sectors in Najran as daggers receive significant attention as an important part of the region's traditional costume. The dagger is made of iron, with a handle from animal horns and decorated with silver or golden pieces. The sheath is made from wood covered with leather or silver plates, sometimes a combination of the two. Al-Ghamdafi fixes a leather belt. The Najran market remains specialised in the manufacture, maintenance, sale and purchase of daggers (Najran Municipality, 2020).

Figure 1.13: *Daggers*



Source: *Alweeam Electronic Newspaper (2019)*

Jewellery industry

Silver is the main material in the jewellery that makes up the vast majority of women's adornments in Najran. Necklaces take many forms with numerous threads woven in different shapes according to the taste of the maker. They are sometimes gilded with gold and adorned with precious stones, with matching jewellery on the head. Two rings hang from the ears, stretchers and bracelets surround the wrist, rings cover the fingers, belts encircle the waist, and anklets ring during movement (Najran Municipality, 2020).

Figure 1.14: *Silver Jewellery*



Source: *SCTA (2011)*

Leather industry

The leather industry in Najran is distinguished by the techniques practiced by its inhabitants since ancient times. Leather from cows, camels, sheep and goats is used after tanning and processing. The most prominent leather products still made today include the *gutter*, a beautifully decorated infant carrier placed on the shoulder and manufactured in various methods. The *almubit* leather belt has two straps going to the shoulders. The large *fellowship* container is used to store special items, and the *al-masb* pod contains food and has a leather shoulder strap. The *assam*, a small leather case, has an opening closed with a leather belt, and the *grab*, a smaller wrist pod, keeps coffee (Najran Municipality, 2020).

Figure 1.15: An Example of the Leather Industry



Source: SCTA (2011)

1.3.2 Existing Tourism Infrastructure

Air access

According to the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA, 2015), the Najran region has two airports, the main airport near the city of Najran and a secondary airport at Sharurah, both under the same administration.

Figure 1.16: *Najran Airport*



Source: Akbaar24 (2020)

The Najran airport recorded 1,755 flights in 2015, down significantly from 6,007 in 2014. The Sharurah airport recorded 1,835 flights in 2015, up from 1,458 the year before. Saudi Airlines operates flights between Najran and six other places in the KSA, while flights to and from Sharurah go through Najran, except for a few direct flights with Jeddah and Abha. As seen below, Table 1.1 shows the air traffic and the number of passengers between a number of the Kingdom's regional and local airports in comparison to Najran Airport for the years 2014 and 2015 (GACA, 2015).

Table 1.1: Air traffic in some regional and local airports in the Kingdom

| Airport | Flights | | Passengers | | |
|---|----------|--------|------------|-----------|---------|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2014 | 2015 | |
| Abha (Aseer region) | 22,221 | 27,095 | 2,646,000 | 3,115,000 | |
| Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz (Qassim region) | 10,122 | 13,670 | 1,110,000 | 1,444,000 | |
| King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz (Jazan region) | 11,888 | 13,505 | 1,574,000 | 1,736,000 | |
| Al-Baha (Al-Baha region) | 3,012 | 3,205 | 348,000 | 378,000 | |
| Wadi Al-Dawasir (Wadi Al-Dawasir governorate) | 1,989 | 1,885 | 109,000 | 111,000 | |
| Najran (Najran region) | Najran | 6,007 | 1,755 | 606,472 | 211,848 |
| | Sharurah | 1,458 | 1,835 | 128,003 | 178,329 |

Source: GACA (2015)

The mentioned airports recorded a significant increase in the number of flights and the number of travellers in 2015. For example, in 2015, the number of travellers increased about 15% in comparison to 2014, and the number of flights increased by 10%.

However, in 2015, the airport near the city of Najran experienced a 65% decrease in the number of passengers in comparison to 2014, and the number of flights decreased by 71%. This was because many flights were diverted to other regional and local airports near the Najran region, such as Abha and Wadi Al-Dawasir airports, especially with the start of the war in Yemen. The Sharurah airport experienced an increase in the number of travellers in 2015 by about 39% in comparison to 2014, and the number of flights increased by 26%. Notably, some of the passengers coming to the Najran region, whether for tourism or other reasons, prefer flights that arrive at the Abha or Wadi Al-Dawasir airports because they are closer to the tourist sites that are located far from the city of Najran. The same also applies to the Najrani residents who live in areas close to Abha, which is in the Aseer region, and those that live in Wadi Al-Dawasir, which is in the Riyadh region (SCT, 2005).

Road access and internal network

Road access to Najran from Riyadh and other north-eastern Saudi cities is via Highway 10 and the Highway 177 connection to Najran City. Road access from Mecca, Jeddah and Madinah is via Highway 15 through Al Bahah and Abha. The road distances between those cities are 1,000 km or longer.

Figure 1.17: *An Example of Roads in Najran*



Source: *Najran Municipality (2020)*

Tourist accommodations

The Najran region has at least 34 hotels offering varying degrees of quality, with a total of 1,690 rooms. Najran also has at least 168 furnished housing units spread throughout many neighbourhoods, with a total of 5,235 rooms (Hussein, 2019; MAS, 2019). Despite a shortage of official statistics on Najran, from personal knowledge living and working in the region, Najran experienced a rapid population increase in the last decade; thus, the number of tourism accommodations has also increased significantly. Furthermore, in recent years, a number of international hotels have been built in Najran, most notably the Gloria Inn Hotel and the Park Inn Hotel, which is one of the branches of the Radisson Blu series (NTB, 2019).

The region has more than 20 travel and tourism agencies and 15 car rental companies, in addition to taxis and limousines. Many high-end international restaurants are spread throughout the region, and entertainment centres include modern central markets,

public markets and parks, amusement parks and popular celebration centres. Popular shows such as zamil, razfa, equestrianism and drumming, among other activities, contribute to the pleasure of tourists and visitors (Hussein, 2019; MAS, 2019).

Figure 1.18: *An Example of Hotels in Najran*



Source: *Booking.com* (2020)

Figure 1.19: *An Example of National Parks in Najran*



Source: *Trfihi park* (2020)

1.3.3 Tourism Planning in Najran

The Tourism Development Strategy for the Najran Region was prepared within the framework of the national General Strategy for Tourism Development of the KSA. Issued in 2005 and updated in 2011, it covers a 20-year period with a five-year action plan for the first stage of development. The Supreme Commission for Tourism (SCT, 2005) indicated that the Najran region will have a viable tourism sector based on its rich cultural heritage and desert tourism, including its gateway function to Ar Rub' al Khali, attracting the domestic, expatriate, regional and international tourist markets. To achieve the goals of the tourism development effort, a number of tourism products have been proposed by the tourism development strategy for Najran, the most notable of which are ecotourism, cultural heritage tourism and agritourism.

Taking these in turn, Najran with its outstanding natural heritage can provide excellent possibilities for the ecotourism and adventure tourism markets by developing the desert safari, sports (such as *Ta'tees* (dune driving) and parasailing), recreation activities in the Empty Quarter desert as well as the 'Uruq Bani Mu'arid protected area, in order to generate economic benefits without resulting in environmental damage (SCT, 2005; SCTA, 2010a). These proposed activities provide a desert experience for Saudi youths and individuals, some Arab tourists, the specialist and educational domestic market and, in the medium- and long-term, the expatriate and international markets (SCTA, 2010a). Furthermore, ecotourism can be developed and promoted as a tool of sustainable tourism to benefit the environment and achieve economic opportunity for both the government and local communities (SCT, 2005; SCTA, 2011).

Cultural heritage tourism is another important niche product that has been identified by the region's tourism plans (SCT (2005). This includes historic routes associated with sacred spices and frankincense, which can provide a major opportunity to link a number of sites in the region with other natural and cultural attractions to enrich the tourist and visitor experience (Hussein, 2019). Traditional markets are also important sources of cultural heritage in the region, which attracts local, regional and international tourism markets (SCTA, 2001). These markets are rich in heritage and popular possessions that distinguish Najran from other parts of the Kingdom. These include skilled artisans producing work in pottery, soap stone and wood. Other unique products include daggers, jewellery and leather (SCT, 2005; SCTA, 2011). There is a great opportunity to develop these markets as a cultural product and connect them to other attractions in the old centre (Aba al Saud) of the city of Najran to attract tourists from inside and outside Saudi Arabia, as well as to preserve them so they do not disappear. Furthermore, Najran's distinctive architecture is a key attraction for tourism, as it uses adobe material and high-rise design. These traditional buildings can still be seen in many towns and villages, with some buildings well maintained (or restored) and estimated to be several hundred years old. The unique character of these buildings represents an important attraction for tourists, especially people looking for accommodation experiences in heritage inns (SCT, 2005; Hussein, 2019).

Agritourism is the final element in the government's tourism strategy for Najran, and it has also been identified by SCT (2005), SCTA (2011) and Hussein (2019) as one of the significant tourism products in the region. There is some potential to develop agritourism, which would involve visits to farms, especially date and citrus farms,

which have good access to the local road network. These farms have attractive settings and could be developed with tourist accommodations, either as a wing or apartment in the existing farmhouse. A more practical solution would be the development of separate guest houses located away from the main house. Guests could experience farm activities and use the farms as a base for touring the area. Some of the guest houses could be used as *Isterahas* (resorts) by city dwellers, renting them on a permanent basis and using them for holidays (SCTA, 2011). Day visits could also be made to tour the farms and learn about agricultural operations. Farm tourism experiences could be combined with visits to the Najran Horticulture Development Research Centre (2005).

To achieve the goals of the tourism development plan for the region, an institutional arm had to be established that would transform those plans into a tangible reality; thus, the strategy recommendations included establishing a tourism branch in Najran and a tourism development council. Accordingly, the Najran Tourism Branch (NTB) was founded in 2006 with the aim of managing tourism in Najran and building partnerships with relevant government and private agencies. In 2010, the Najran Tourism Development Council (NTDC) was created under the chairmanship of the regional governors (RG). The NTDC derives its strength from the position and power of the RG as its president, and it includes the most prominent government and private organisations bodies whose members influence tourism development issues. The NTB operates as the executive arm of the NTDC within the Provincial Tourism Development System (PTDS, 2015).

In addition, the NTDC members are appointed by the SCTNH president in consultation with the Najran RG. The council members include seven persons from the public sector

and seven from the private sector but no representatives of local communities (PTDS, 2015). Arguably, tourism planning in Najran is centralised and may not adequately reflect the goals and aspirations of local communities.

Investigating communities' understandings of tourism planning and development in the case of the Najran Region, therefore, is useful for several reasons. First, this study originated at the same time as the launch of the KSA's Vision 2030. Second, this study opens a window onto an under-researched context by exploring communities' understandings of tourism and involvement in tourism planning in Saudi Arabia, particularly the Najran Region, which is considered to be one of the country's most conservative areas. Consequently, the research's emic perspective provides a unique focus on communities' understandings of Saudi tourism planning and development.

Safety and political stability are among the most important issues that influence travel decisions to any tourism destination (Wan, 2003; Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Edgell et al., 2014; Abdelrahman, 2018). In this regard, the ongoing war in Yemen may have a negative impact on Najran's tourism image due to the region's proximity to the Yemeni border, especially with regard to international tourists. According to Hui and Wan (2003) and Abdelrahman (2018), tourists' perceptions of safety and security play a significant role in the travel decision to any tourism destination, and safety issues are consistently ranked as one of the top global concerns facing the tourism sector (Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Edgell et al., 2014; Kuilis-Bosimin and Chan, 2018). Adeloje and Brown (2018:218) claimed that 'tourists' willingness to visit a destination reduces if safety and security are compromised by political instability (including war, tensions,

terrorism).’ In other words, potential tourists, may not want to visit Najran if it is perceived as being unsafe.

According to Emirate of Najran Province (ENP, 2020), the area is as safe as the rest of Kingdom’s regions. Najran, for instance, has a border with Yemen, but there are vast deserts and high mountains between the two countries, and the border is heavily policed by armed troops from both countries, with little possibility of travel between the two. Additionally, the war is mainly concentrated in the Yemeni capital, far from the country’s borders with the Najran region. Moreover, the distance between the main tourist attractions, especially those that attract international tourism, and the borders with Yemen varies; some of them are more than 200 km apart (SCT 2002; SCTA, 2010, 2011).

Importantly, media narratives may have an adverse effect in shaping people’s risk perception (Kuilis-Bosimin and Chan, 2018). In line with this, Adeloye and Brown (2018:225) argued that ‘the media’s use of emotional appeals, vivid images, or victims’ stories has made it the key source of information upon which most people rely.’ Consequently, ensuring the safety of a tourist destination and making it secure to receive visitors and tourists is a responsibility of the decision-makers and tour operators in the destination (Kuilis-Bosimin and Chan, 2018). In this regard, the tourism ministry, tourism operators and other government security agencies in Najran conduct a periodic assessment of the security situation with the aim of preserving the safety of visitors and tourists from the potential dangers that may threaten their lives during their stay in the Kingdom, including Najran (ENP, 2020). However, it is not only the Saudi

government that is monitoring safety levels; foreign countries also make their own independent travel advice recommendations.

1.4 Methodological Approach

This study is based on the notion that the social world cannot be understood in isolation from its natural context. Accordingly, the interpretive paradigm was adopted to allow the researcher to be in the field to speak with local communities relevant to tourism development in the Najran Region. In line with interpretivism, social constructionism was chosen as the research strategy for several reasons. First, due to the socially constructed nature of tourism, perspectives on it have been influenced by historical, cultural, religious and social contexts. Second, social constructionism permitted developing shared understandings between the researcher (as part of Najran culture) and the study participants through common meanings expressed in language.

A qualitative methodology was adopted to deeply explore and bring to the surface possibly hidden meanings surrounding tourism participation issues. Qualitative face-to-face interviews were conducted with 31 local community members in the Najran Region. The participants represented both genders, diverse age ranges, groups traditionally associated with tourism employment (e.g. taxi drivers, hoteliers and tour guides) and groups traditionally not associated (e.g. elders, journalists, activists, environmental groups, women's groups and Bedouins). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the interviews with the study participants in Najran. The advantages of thematic analysis included flexibility, the ability to highlight similarities and differences across the data set, the provision for social interpretations

of data and the non-linear, recursive approach that permitted the analysis to develop over time. More details can be found in the methodology chapter three.

1.5 Positionality and its reflection on the development of tourism in the Najran region

Tourism has become one of the most important export sectors in many developing countries (Samimi et al., 2017); however, it has both positive and negative impacts. According to Tosun (2002), Alrwajfah et al. (2019), Eyassu et al. (2019), Saner et al. (2019) and Khan et al. (2020), the positive impacts include new business opportunities and improvement of various local services and the transportation system, as well as more leisure and entertainment opportunities. In developing nations, the tourism sector is also able to accommodate large numbers of skilled and unskilled workers. Moreover, Samimi et al. (2017) stated that tourism can lead to advancements in the fields of education and healthcare. It also supports the gross domestic product (GDP) with foreign currencies, generates tax revenues and spreads peace, tolerance and cultural exchanges between societies (Archer et al., 2005; Haddad et al., 2019; Singh and Narayan, 2020). Furthermore, tourism can protect the environment or wildlife in terms of promoting sustainable natural tourism attractions (Zhuang et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020). Arguably, the industry plays a significant role in enhancing the economies, social life, infrastructure, culture and environment of the tourist destinations.

Notwithstanding the potential positive impacts of tourism, a number of criticisms have been voiced about the negative implications of this industry. The main thrust of these critiques has revolved around the fact that, in many developed and developing nations, the development of the tourism sector is often undertaken without sufficient planning

(Hall, 2008) or, at best, in a very centralised manner (Tosun and Jenkins, 1998; Adu-Ampong, 2017). According to Sharpley and Telfer (2002) and Haddad et al. (2019), this can lead to negative consequences and harmful influences, not only impacting the destination environment but also the cultural, social and traditional values of a community. Negative impacts may include more traffic, increased demand on public services and increased cost of living (Choi and Murray, 2010; Alrwajfah et al., 2019). Archer et al. (2005) and Alshuqaiqi and Omar (2019) stated that tourism invades privacy, contributes to inflation and higher land prices, and is impacted by seasonality. It can also cause the same forms of pollution as any other industries, such as air emissions, littering and visual pollution (Agarwal et al., 2019).

Wall and Mathieson (2006) and Kim et al. (2013) considered the commercialisation of culture by selling local and traditional folklore, songs and dances as another negative outcome of tourism. This has negative repercussions on identity and authenticity, ultimately contributing to distorting the reputation and image of the host community (Wall and Mathieson, 2006; Kim et al., 2013). The use of child labour is another critical negative influence identified by Edralin (2002) and Haddad et al. (2019); often times children are working in poor conditions within tourism destinations and many are dropping out of school. This corresponds with the outcomes of Shoup (1985) and Mustafa and Tayeh (2011), who found that large numbers of Bedouin children in Petra in Jordan are leaving school to work and earn money.

Arguably, the positive and negative impacts of tourism development on local destinations have been extensively researched (Jafaar et al., 2013; Pratheep, 2017; Pramanik and Ingkadijaya, 2018; Haddad et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020). There is no

absolute consensus on what constitutes the dimensions of tourism's impact on an area (Long et al, 1990; Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996; Shariff, 2020); however, several factors have been identified, including the number of tourists arriving at the tourism destination, the type of relationship that is formed between the local people and tourists, the prevailing cultural and social norms and values in these destinations, and so on (Smith and Krannich, 1998; Alhasanat and Hyasat, 2011; Afthanorhan et al., 2017; Haddad et al., 2019).

At the destination level, there are several types of tourism development policies, for example, boosterism, the economic approach and the community-oriented approach (Getz, 1984). According to Donaire et al. (2019), boosterism is one of the tourism typologies being adopted by governments to promote tourism growth and regional economic diversification and create employment opportunities. However, this approach does not take into consideration the host community's involvement in the tourism planning and decision-making process associated with tourism development at the destination (Wanigasekera, 2019). The economic or industry-oriented approach is another tourism development typology. This approach mainly focuses on the economic impacts of tourism as a key element of economic growth in the tourism destination (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2019). However, in this approach limited attention is given to the environmental and social impacts caused by the tourism industry (Page and Connell, 2020). In terms of the development policy for tourism in Najran, The Tourism Development Strategy has identified that industry as an important sector for creating jobs, generating revenue and stimulating other economic activities, etc. Therefore, it can be said that the tourism development policy in Najran tends more towards

implementing boosterism and the economic approach with less emphasis placed on the role the local community plays in tourism development and the tourism experience (see SCT 2002, 2011; MEP, 2010, 2013; PTDS, 2015). For a more detailed discussion, the tourism planning typologies are further expanded later in the literature review.

As a Najrani who was born, grew up and spent most of my life in the Najran region, and having been a government employee in the area of tourism for more than two decades, it is important to discuss my positionality and its reflection on the development of tourism in the region. For example, after finishing high school, I studied for five years at King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah, receiving an environmental science degree. I then returned to Najran and, after a while, I travelled to the United States (US) to study English in 1999. Returning from the US in late 1999, I worked with the Department of Environmental Health at King Khalid Hospital in Najran through 2000. In 2001, I was appointed to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTNH) as a tourism planning specialist. In 2002, I married and then lived with my family in Riyadh, where I worked. From 2006 to 2009, I served as general manager of the Najran branch of the SCTNH. In late 2009, I returned to Riyadh following a career promotion; after approximately four months, I was appointed general manager of the SCTNH's Eastern Region branch. In 2010, I received a scholarship from the SCTNH to study for an MSc in Tourism and International Development at the University of Brighton in the United Kingdom (UK), where I spent about two years studying while living with my family (my wife and three sons). I returned to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in late 2011 and was appointed general manager of the SCTNH's Al Baha Region branch in 2012. I then led the Red Sea

Tourism Development Strategy in Jeddah until 2013. From late 2013 to August 2015, I led the SCTNH's Empowerment Programme, and I began my doctoral studies in October 2015.

Based on the information presented above, it can be said that I have two perspectives on the development of tourism. The first is a professional point of view as an employee in the SCTH. Being an employee in the Ministry, for example, makes me look at the industry from the pro-tourism perspective; in this way, I believe in the positive aspects of tourism, with less focus on the negative implications that may result from the development of tourism in Najran. On a personal level, I cannot say that all tourism is good and that it may be the right form for development in the Najran region. For example, the commercialisation of the Najrani culture is one of the negative implications that Najran may suffer from increased tourism (see Wall and Mathieson, 2006; Kim et al., 2013), especially when the economic aspect is given priority over community-based planning (see SCT, 2002, 2011). However, I believe that Najran needs tourism in order to preserve the cultural identity of the region, which includes archaeological sites, historical and heritage sites and handicrafts. This can also help stop urban sprawl into the green areas and environmental sites in the Najran Valley, farms and other natural parks. The slow disappearance of the cultural and environmental identity of Najran, especially represented by mud houses and farms, will be a great loss and one that future generations will more likely be required to pay the bill.

Importantly, the influence of my work in the government on the research project cannot be denied due to the power relations between myself and the study's participants. For

instance, my role within the Tourism Ministry led some participants to think that the interviews were tests of their knowledge of tourism, resulting in questions about whether their answers were 'right' or 'wrong.' Moreover, my position as a government employee and a member of the SCTNH's top management has made some of the other participants more cautious in providing answers they think could offend someone with the role of tourism management in Najran. I carefully and clearly explained that the Ministry of Tourism sponsored the project, but the data gathered would not be included in official reports or strategies. I also emphasised that I was, first and foremost, a student at the University of Brighton completing the project as part of my PhD research. It is worth mentioning that my work experience acquired over the past two decades, along with the experience I gained during my PhD study in the UK, has developed my skills on how to build relationships with various tourism development stakeholders in the region, including the participants in my research. My reflexivity and positionality are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this document is as follows. Chapter One provides a general introduction to the study, particularly the research context, gaps, aim, objectives, methodological approach and significance. Chapter Two reviews and critiques the literature on related concepts, such as community, community participation, planning and decision-making in tourism development. The arguments, barriers and strategies for promoting community participation in tourism planning are analysed. Chapter Three explains the justification for the qualitative research methodology with two phases of data collection. The research strategy, including the research design and data

collection methods, is clearly described. Reflexivity and positionality are discussed to situate the researcher's experiences and connections in the research.

Chapter Four presents the interview findings and the discussion. First, the findings section gives a clear, holistic view of the data collected and the participants' responses to the research questions. Direct quotations from the interviews are used throughout this section to support the arguments. At the end of the findings section, the main points are summarised to create a bridge to the following discussion section, which puts the key points into wider debates. The discussion goes beyond description and basic interpretation to analyse and interpret the findings in grand narratives, contrast them to the literature and offer the wider theoretical implications of their meanings. Chapter Five provides an overview of the study's results and discussing its contributions to knowledge. It, also, highlights going forward, management implications of the study, and concludes with the recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is aimed at exploring local communities' understandings of tourism planning and development in Saudi Arabia. To achieve this goal, community involvement in tourism development is critically discussed in five sections. First, to guide the discussion, the key concepts of community, participation, planning, decision-making and power are defined. Second, community participation in tourism planning and decision-making is investigated. Third, community participation in tourism planning and decision-making in developing countries is discussed. Fourth, the current situation of tourism planning and decision-making in Saudi Arabia is highlighted. Finally, the contents of this chapter are summarised.

2.1 Definitions of Key Concepts

The key terms of community, participation, planning, decision-making and power need to be understood to guide the discussion on communities' understandings of tourism planning and development in the Najran Region. The following section discusses the understandings of the concept of community.

2.1.1 Community

Research on community participation in tourism requires a definition of the concept of community, but scholars have argued that the term is difficult to define (see Hillery, 1955; Tonnies and Loomis, 1957; McMillan and Chavis, 1986). Selznick (1994:357) claimed that 'many writers (and readers) are troubled by the fact that the idea of community is so elusive', a notion Cohen (1985) supported. However, the present goal

is not to reach a consensus on the definition of community but to build an understanding of the term to guide this study. Accordingly, the following literature review is presented.

Blackshaw (2010) defined community in several ways. First, he argued that the word means all the people who live in a particular area or place where face-to-face relationships dominate. Second, community is a group of people or a part of society alike in some ways. Third, community may include friendships created and maintained among groups different from each other. Similarly, Lyon and Driskell (2011) defined community as a group of individuals within a society who live in a single, defined area and share similar basic norms, interests and values. As well, Ellis and Abdi (2017) saw community as a group of individuals who share similar social identities and have a common feeling of belonging. In line with these definitions, Murphy (2013) proposed that community is an informally organised social entity whose major characteristic is a similar identity. It also shares the sense of being in the same geographical location.

Several points from these definitions warrant discussion. First, they emphasise an aggregation of individuals and a territorial unit as a geographical element. Second, these definitions drive attention to similarities within groups. Third, they imply that community is part of society rather than society itself. Communities may be smaller than society, and in fact, society is composed of various communities. Fourth, these definitions conceive of community as a network of social relationships among people, which can include friendships and various transactions facilitated by technology such as email and other means of communication without sharing an identical geographical

unit. Fifth, these definitions describe community in terms of identity and common belonging. However, they are not enough to understand the concept of community.

Mitchell (1979:31) explained the concept as follows:

Originally the term community denoted a collectivity of people who occupied a geographical area; people who were together engaged in economic and political activities and who essentially constituted a self-governing social unit with some common values and experiencing feelings of belonging to one another. Examples are a city, a town, a village or parish.

Mitchell's statement expands community to include a significant goal that people may want to achieve when enabled by the greater mobility in modern industrial societies and the dissemination of mass media communication. Industrial concerns are not limited to local areas but spread over many countries. Community may be 'regarded as denoting a community of interests'. As Mitchell (1979:31) summarised, 'in modern sociology it remains the case that the term "community" is used in a general and deliberately vague way'. Mitchell explained that community has various geographic, demographic, economic and political dimensions and views itself as an autonomous social unit enhanced by common values and feelings of belonging. However, Mitchell's definition of community has a relatively wide scope, so it may need more explanation.

Poplin (1979:8) considered community to be a unified social and geographical organisation, or 'the places where people maintain their homes, earn their livings, rear their children, and carry on most of their life activities'. Supporting this view, Long and Hutchins (2003) called community a group of up to several thousand households whose occupants share common experiences and bonds derived from living in the same

place. Similarly, MacQueen et al. (2001:1929) saw community ‘as a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings’. In short, community is described as people living within the same territorial area who carry out social activities and interactions together and share one or more common ties and shared values. These contributions highlight many important dimensions of community (social, economic and geographic aspects), but the understanding of the term remains inadequate.

To gain further understanding, Arensberg and Kimball (1965) approached community from a multidimensional perspective. They saw community as a geographical unit in which social interactions emerge from members’ common ties. Arensberg and Kimball distinguished community from society, which consists of various communities. This differentiation is important as society and community are often confused with one another. Parallel to Arensberg and Kimball, Wong (2010) considered community to be an aggregation of individuals connected or related to each other in some way. He suggested that the geographical dimension is the most obvious yardstick of community membership, but insistence on this criterion as an essential condition for any aggregation of individuals to constitute community excludes recognition of many communities.

Contrary to Wong’s point, political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson (1991:6) argued in his book *Imagined Communities* that what people think of as nations are imagined communities ‘because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds

of each lives the image of their communion'. Kanno and Norton (2003) used an example to clarify the idea of imagined communities introduced by Anderson. Kanno and Norton (2003) proposed that when a young Japanese man studying fashion design in Tokyo begins to learn English, he may imagine himself as one of the most successful fashion designers in New York. He sees himself as a recognised member of an international fashion community and views the English language as an essential tool to gain this future affiliation. In this way, people can feel a sense of community with other people they have not yet met but hope to meet one day.

In line with the points raised by Anderson (1991) and Kanno and Norton (2003), anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1985:15) argued in his book *The Symbolic Construction of Community* that community is symbolically constructed. He described community as

That entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediate than the abstraction we call 'society'. It is the arena in which people acquire their most fundamental and most substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home. ... At the risk of substituting one indefinable category for another, we could say it is where one acquires 'culture'. (Cohen 1985:15)

Cohen showed that community is symbolically constructed and maintained through manipulation of its symbols in the minds of members. Both Cohen and Anderson moved further away from geographical unity by focusing on the power of mental constructs and imagination to constitute community. In other words, community is socially constructed.

Similarly to the notions of Cohen and Anderson, community can be described as a group of people inside and outside the boundaries of states who share common interests

and ideas. Take, for example, online virtual communities (Rothaermel and Sugiyama, 2001), defined by Katsoni (2014:108) as ‘a group of people who may or may not meet one another face-to-face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks’. Such community members work, learn and innovate together, especially in initiatives that have positive impacts on their community. In contrast, community can be built around negative aspects that harm societies, such as extremist ideologies. Terrorism is a form of extremism whose followers embrace the same beliefs and ideologies (Merari, 1993). From these contributions, it becomes clear that the concept of community transcends borders and nationalities. Indeed, corporations, trade unions, factories, mosques and churches are considered to be communities (Minar and Greer, 1969; Smith, 2004). Use of the multiple senses of community might be unavoidable, but it may create difficulties for those seeking to study the concept as a distant form of social and geographical organisation.

These contributions do not seem to provide enough evidence to erase the ambiguity, difficulties and elusiveness in this definition as the term is experienced differently by people from diverse backgrounds (Prager, 2010; Swedberg and Agevall, 2016). The goal of this study is not to develop a definition of community, as mentioned, but to build an understanding to guide this research exploring local communities’ understandings of tourism and issues limiting their involvement in tourism planning and development in the Najran Region. The following definition is appropriate for this project aim: community is a particular group of people or a segment of society (Blackshaw, 2010; Lyon and Driskell, 2011) who occupy the same geographical

location (Murphy, 2013) where they ‘maintain their homes, earn their livings, rear their children, and carry on most of their life activities’ (Poplin, 1979:8); engage in common socio-economic, cultural and political activities (Mitchell, 1979); share similar social identities; and have a common feeling of belonging (Ellis and Abdi, 2017).

While this section attempts to develop a working definition of community to guide this study, the next section focuses on the understanding of community participation in general.

2.1.2 Community Participation

Communities’ participation in the governance of affairs affecting their lives dates to the beginning of human societies (Hollnsteiner, 1977). Midgley et al. (1986:13) stated that ‘the idea of participation is an ancient one, finding expression in the cultural traditions and practices of small preliterate societies and the writings of ancient sages and philosophers’. Thus, the idea of community participation is ancient, not new. During the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, communities took part in some initiatives in matters affecting their lives. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, doctors in Ghana trained young men from villages affected by river blindness to provide treatment. In another example, during the 1930s and 1940s, the Chinese Communist Party stressed the importance of the broad participation of society in disease prevention. China lacked adequate health conditions and suffered from widespread poverty, rampant disease, medicine shortages and poor sanitation. Consequently, the party launched policies aimed at increasing health standards by encouraging everyone in society to play organised roles in healthcare (Midgley et al., 1986). Participation thus is an old term that reflects the important role of local societies in matters affecting their lives.

During the 1950s and 1960s, community involvement was considered to be and promoted as an element of development (De Kadt, 1982; Cummings, 1997). That period also witnessed the emergence of the concepts of modern development in international development paradigms that arose after World War II (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Four major development paradigms emerged: modernisation, dependency, neoliberalism and alternative development. Modernisation theory dominated in the 1950s and 1960s. It put economic progress at the forefront of development to drive the transition from traditional societies to modern societies, setting the West as a 'benchmark' (Hicks and Streeten, 1979; Willis, 2011). In the 1960s, dependency theory gained prominence as a counter-paradigm to modernisation theory criticised for its Western-centric nature (Sharpley and Telfer, 2014). The dependency model holds that the reasons for underdevelopment can only be found outside, not inside, nations as less developed countries are embedded in the capitalist system (Frank, 1966; Desal and Potter, 2014). So (1990), though, criticised this model for promoting the dependence of periphery regions on metropolitan areas that exploit their resources without identifying concrete development plans to make them independent.

In the 1970s and 1980s, neoliberalism theory promoting a form of *laissez-faire* economics emerged (Cahill, 2014). This theory rejects strong state intervention, promotes free, competitive markets and the privatisation of state organisations and pushes all countries towards globalisation (Willis, 2011; Sharpley and Telfer, 2014; Dredge and Jamal, 2015). However, Harvey (2005) claimed that shifting responsibility for regulating the economy from the government to the market contributes to power

inequalities, which create more investment opportunities for the West (Harvey, 2005). Collectively, the mainstream development strategies identified have been criticised by Sharpley and Telfer (2014) and Monni and Pallottino (2015) as centred on economic growth. The critique of the Eurocentric paradigm and the top-down diffusion of growth gave rise to an alternative development theory with a more people-centred focus (Willis, 2011; Monni and Pallottino, 2015). This approach gained importance in the 1980s, particularly in the work of Robert Chambers (2014:168), who promoted ‘putting the last first’. Furthermore, Chambers’ work introduced the concept of community participation to development theory by considering people to be a hub of development. Consequently, the 1980s and 1990s are considered to be the period when the concept of participation as a fundamental element of sustainable development flourished.

Although the historical antecedents and emergence of community participation have been discussed, the meaning of the concept has not yet been clarified. Stiefel and Wolfe (1994:17) noted a lack of consensus on the concept of community participation:

Studies demonstrate the wide differences in rationalities between the social actors engaged in encounters: politician, technocrats and bureaucrats, military and police officers, national and local elites, employers, ideologists, religious leaders, academic figures in different disciplines, students, national and local leaders of popular organisations, the rank and file of these organisations, and the unorganised masses of the excluded. These actors often seem to be following scripts in separate, incompatible dramas, indifferent to or contemptuous of one another. (Stiefel and Wolf, 1994:17)

Indeed, community participation can take many forms. The ideas of Paul (1987), Oakley (1991), Nikkhah and Redzuan (2009) and Kanthong and Jotikasthira (2013) align with Stiefel and Wolfe’s work. They state that the term ‘participation’ has taken

different forms and meanings, creating confusion and controversies among bureaucrats, politicians and academicians.

In line with these statements, the notion of participation has been used in multiple domains, such as public policy and planning (Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Harder et al., 2013), health and social care (Piškur et al., 2014), sustainable development and management (Chen et al., 2107), conservation (Lockwood and Michael, 2000), agricultural research projects (Neef and Neubert, 2011), fisheries management (Pita et al., 2010), tourism (Amati, 2013) and education (Harder et al., 2013). The notion has also been used to refer to citizen participation, community participation, public participation, popular participation and people participation (Soen, 1981). This variety may lead to different interpretations of the concept of participation, depending on the aims of users and the nature of each domain in which it is used. This study uses the terms community participation, citizen participation, public participation and popular participation interchangeably.

The term ‘participation’, according to Santhanam (1993), originates from the Latin word *participare*, which means ‘taking part’. In line with Santhanam, Crocker (2007) defined participation as taking part in the decision-making process and other activities. Similarly, Richardson (1983:8) stated that ‘to participate means to take part, to become involved, and there is still little more to it than that’. In social policy, ‘participation refers to the ways in which ordinary citizens can or do take part in the formulation or implementation of social policy decisions’ (Richardson, 1983:8). However, these definitions provide only a broad sense of the concept of participation, and the mechanisms of participation in decision-making remain unclear.

From a democratic perspective, Dowse and Hugh (1986) described participation as a political activity, civic duty and individual right, considered to be an indicator of political well-being and the *sine qua non* of democracy. In line with this idea, Kauffman and Poulin (1994) referred to community participation as opportunities for community members to take part in decision-making in the institutions, programmes and environments that affect them. Kauffman and Poulin (1994) asserted that participation leads to a greater sense of empowerment and ownership of the plans and activities resulting from the participatory process. However, community involvement that does not include the power to influence decision-making processes may have no meaning or benefit for people. It may only help bureaucrats and elites exploit participants by acquiring information without giving any benefit to the providers of information. As mentioned, the concept of participation remains broad and needs further investigation.

Bernstein (1996, cited in Rubin et al., 2001:426) stressed that participation is a practice that must have outcomes and is more than merely a discussion; it is ‘the right to participate in procedures whereby order is constructed, maintained and changed’. Bernstein’s idea accords with those of Daldeniz and Hampton (2013) and Chen et al. (2107), who conceived of participation as the redistribution of power to allow a group of people to take an active role in making decisions that influence them, whether positively or negatively. Accordingly, Patrick et al. (2016) argued that participation can be defined as a process whose development people have some control. Similarly, Stiefel and Wolfe (1994) defined participation not as inserting ‘the people’ into development but as the process of developing the capacity of local people and the powerless to negotiate new terms with the powerful, including the state. Although the

concept of community participation extends beyond voting and passive participation, the mechanisms of delegating authority and responsibilities among various stakeholders are not clear. Indeed, there is a need to build a better understanding of participation.

The definition of community participation has been approached from multi-dimensional perspectives. For instance, the UN has issued several statements contributing to the concept of participation in the development process. In 1929, for example, UN Economic and Social Council Resolution 1929 (LVIII) described the concept of participation in development:

Participation requires the voluntary and democratic involvement of people in (a) contributing to the development effort, (b) sharing equitably in the benefits derived therefrom, and (c) decision-making in respect of setting goals, formulating policies, and planning and implementing economic and social development programmes. (cited in Tosun, 2005:336)

In 1955, the UN defined community development, which was then the widely accepted expression for community participation, as a process designed to create appropriate social and economic conditions for active participation by the whole community (Abbott, 2013). In 1969, the Declaration of Social Progress and Development in General Assembly Resolution 2542 (XXIV) stressed that all humans, without distinction, have the right to live in freedom and dignity, to enjoy the fruits of social progress and development and to actively participate in achieving common development goals (McDougal et al., 1975). The declaration also stressed the need to adopt measures to ensure effective community participation in national plans and programmes for economic and social development.

In 1979, the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) declared that the main objective of participation (Moser, 1989:82) is 'to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given situations, on the part of groups and movement of those hitherto excluded from such control'. In 2000, the UN General Assembly made factors such as human rights, democracy, gender equality, participation and sharing of responsibility part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) aimed at enabling people to have both a voice and choices in shaping their futures (UN, 2000). However, the MDGs have been criticised as overambitious and unrealistic (Clemens and Moss, 2005).

Several points can be taken from the UN's contributions to community participation. First, the UN seems to have accepted community participation as a development strategy. Second, the UN has identified community participation in the development process as synonymous with community development. Third, the UN has stressed that all human beings, without distinction, have the right to live in freedom and dignity and to actively participate in preparing national strategies that shape their futures. Despite the important role of the UN's contributions in developing understandings of the concept of community participation, they have not clearly identified the ways in which power is distributed and local people's level of participation in the development process.

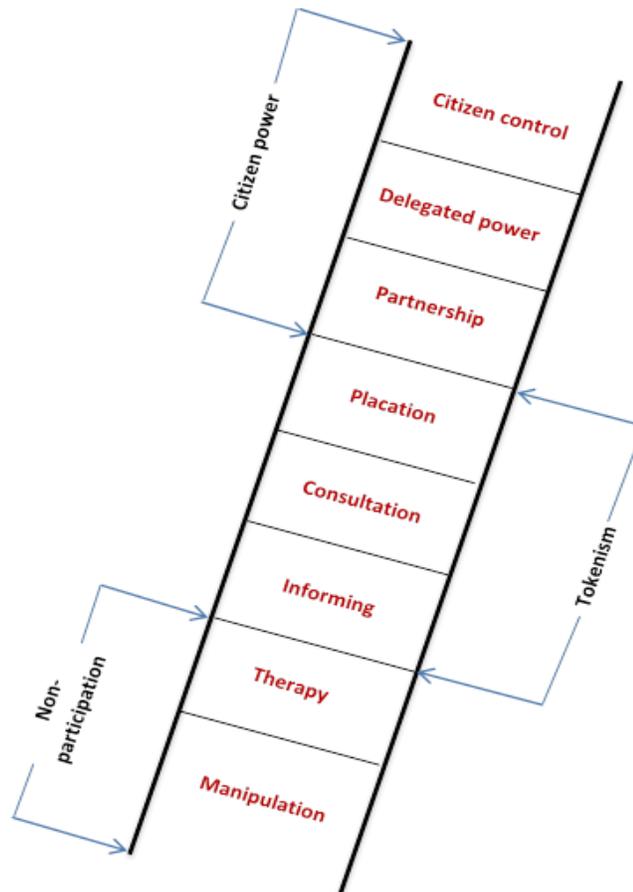
Moving on from the UN's view on participation, Arnstein (1969:216) issued a significant definition of community participation as

the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens to be deliberately included in the future. It is how they can induce significant social reform, enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent

society. The degree of power distribution is the most important point in this definition of participation. (Arnstein, 1969:216)

Arnstein (Figure 2.1) addressed the degree of power distribution through different levels of citizen participation and was perhaps the first to propose a model of the different levels of public participation in policy and planning processes in the US (Hunton-Clarke, 2003). Since then, most research typologies have their roots in the classification degrees of citizen participation developed by Arnstein (Neef and Neubert, 2011).

Figure 2.1: Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation



Source: Adapted from Arnstein (1969), Green and Hunton-Clarke (2003) and Wong et al. (2010)

Arnstein (1969) used a ladder as a metaphor to illustrate eight levels and three categories of community participation. First, the non-participation category encompassing the bottom rungs of the ladder includes manipulation and therapy. At this level, people are unable to participate in planning and development programmes but enable those who hold power to ‘educate’ and ‘cure’ the participants. Second, the tokenism category on the middle rungs of the ladder includes informing, consultation and placation. At this level, citizens may indeed hear and be heard, but they lack the power to ensure that their views are considered by powerful stakeholders and decision-makers. Placation is simply higher-level tokenism as the ground rules allow those with less power to give advice while the power holders retain the final say. Third, the citizen power category on the top rungs of the ladder includes partnership, delegated power and citizen control. At this level, the influence of decision-making is increasing. For example, partnership enables people to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with those in power. On the topmost rungs, delegated authority and citizen control give citizens the majority of decision-making seats and full managerial power.

Pretty (1995) made another significant contribution to understanding community participation as a critical component in the success of development projects:

It has been associated with increased mobilisation of stakeholder ownership of policies and projects; greater efficiency, understanding and social cohesion; more cost-effective services; greater transparency and accountability; increased empowering of the poor and disadvantaged; and strengthened capacity of people to learn and act. (Pretty 1995:1251)

Pretty developed a similar typology to Arnstein (1969) with a focus on development programmes and projects (see Table 2.1).

| Table 2.1: Pretty's (1995) Typology of Community Participation | |
|---|---|
| Typology | Characteristics |
| 1. Manipulative participation | People have no power and are represented by other people who are unelected and have no power either. |
| 2. Passive participation | On this level, project management, for example, tells people what has been decided and has happened without listening to their responses. |
| 3. Participation by consultation | People are consulted without any commitment from project management or other external agencies to accommodate their opinions. They do not have any role in decision-making. |
| 4. Participation for material incentives | People participate by contributing resources, for example, labour, in return for food, cash and other material incentives. |
| 5. Functional participation | People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement may be interactive and involve shared decision-making but tends to arise only after external agents have already made major decisions. At worst, local people may still be co-opted to serve external goals. |
| 6. Interactive participation | People participate in conducting joint analysis, developing action plans and forming and strengthening local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not only a means to achieve project goals. As groups take control of local decisions and determine how to use available resources, they gain a stake in maintaining structures and practices. |
| 7. Self-mobilisation | People participate by taking initiative to change systems independent of external institutions. They control how resources are used. Self-mobilisation can spread if governments and non-government organisations provide an enabling, supportive framework. Such self-initiated mobilisation may or may not challenge the distributions of wealth and power. |
| Source: <i>Pretty (1995)</i> | |

Pretty's (1995) typology describes seven levels of community participation. Each level allows varying degrees of external and local agency, involvement and control and reflects the power relationships among them (Tosun, 2006).

Some points can be derived from both approaches. Arnstein's and Pretty's typologies both may be useful tools to identify the spectrum of community participation from more common passive forms to more authentic and interactive forms. In other words, these typologies reflect almost all possible forms of community participation in

decision-making and planning and development processes. These approaches also formulate a framework of the structure of power among different stakeholders. In short, unlike many other attempts to pin down the elusive nature of community participation, Arnstein and Pretty succeeded in establishing an analytical, comprehensive, and realistic definitional approach to the concept. Nevertheless, some researchers such as Tosun (1999) and Bello et al. (2016a) have criticised these approaches as developed and designed in the Western world for use as conceptual and practical tools for effective community participation in planning and development programmes in those countries. Despite such criticism, these models remain highly influential typologies used in recent studies. Consequently, these models were applied in this study to explore Najran people's understandings of tourism and their role in tourism development decisions.

In addition to community and participation, planning and decision-making are also important concepts in this study and provide entry points to explore people's understandings of tourism and roles in making decisions related to their futures.

2.1.3 Planning and Decision-making

Planning is complex and ambiguous (Weigand et al., 2014). Waterston (1974:8, cited in Tosun and Jenkins, 1998) considered planning to be 'not much more than applied common sense', whereas Elliott (1958:55) contended that 'it is a complex clustering of problems to be explored, not defined'. Moreover, Kornai and Boskin (1979:92) viewed planning as 'a separate language with its own vocabulary and grammar'. In line with these statements, scholars such as Hall (1999, 2000), Gunn and Var (2002), and Friedmann (2003) have argued that there is no consensus on the concept of planning as it draws its theory from different fields, including public policy, urban studies, business

and management, economics and environmental studies. From these contributions, it is clear that the concept of planning is complex and elusive, and its meaning differs across the areas in which it is used. As mentioned, the goal here is not to develop a definition of planning and decision-making but to build an understanding to guide the study.

The modern concept of planning can be traced to Comte and Saint Simon (Friedmann, 1987). Planning was linked ‘with the notion of man perpetually shaping this world, including the guidance of his own development’ (Faludi, 1973:42). Before the 1980s, the dominant technical rational philosophy asserted ‘that planners have absolute control if they have all the fact and information about a phenomenon’ (Korah et al., 2017). Since the 1980s, planning has flourished and moved from this technical-rational notion to communitive rational planning (Allmendinger, 2017). Stevenson et al. (2008) and Dredge and Jamal (2015) noted that planning theory has evolved since the 1980s and shifted from public administration to community management. This move has encouraged local communities ‘to become actively involved in changing conditions that affect the quality of their lives’, especially in democratic societies (Malek and Costa, 2015:281). These contributions have highlighted the significant shift in planning theory from modernist notions and government bureaucracy to post-modernist notions and the expansion of community participation.

Planning is a contested term and has many definitions and interpretations depending on the field in which it is used. For instance, planning is the design of a desirable future (Ackoff, 1979; Tosun and Timothy, 2001; Simão and Partidário, 2012; Giezen et al., 2015), ‘the making of an orderly sequence of action that will lead to the achievement

of a stated goal or goals' (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011:3) and the cyclical process of anticipating, guiding and controlling the future of evolving systems (McLoughlin, 1969). For Friedmann (1987), planning is an activity that joins knowledge to action in the course of social transformation. For Yiftachel (1998:399), planning can also 'control, contain, oppress and marginalise elements which could destabilise prevailing capitalist, national and male-dominated orders'. Planning 'is not just about dreaming; it is also about shaping practices, now and in the future, which might bring more desirable worlds into being' (Hillier and Healey, 2010). Indeed, planning can be understood as a process in which planners write persuasive stories about the future that other people construct and interpret in diverse ways (Throgmorton, 1992). Planning, therefore, is indeed about the future that can be imagined, anticipated, controlled and constructed through interactions and dialogues. However, the problem with these definitions is not that they are not true and are too abstract for implementation.

Planning has also been seen as socially constructed. Abbott (2012) defined it as 'a social process of managing uncertainty concerned with increasing knowledge of present and future actions and links to expected and desired future outcomes'. In this view, planning is a communitive rational (co-developed) process influenced by the social and environmental contexts. Porter et al. (2017:642) supported Abbott and defined planning as social activity:

Indigenous people making decisions about their place (whether in the built or natural environment) using their knowledge (and other knowledges), values and principles to define and progress their present and future social, cultural, environmental and economic aspirations.

Planning thus can be considered to be a social product, influenced by social experiences, values and norms.

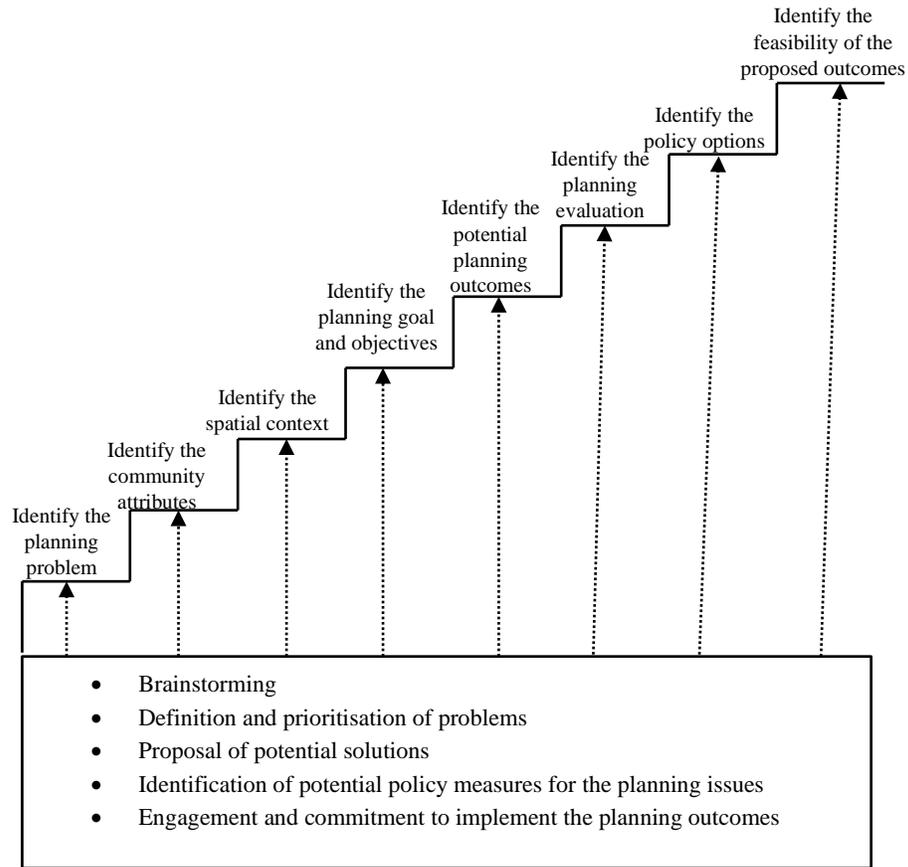
Planning also has spatial and physical dimensions. For instance, Dredge (1999:774) defined planning as

the process of establishing a strategic vision for an area which reflects a community's goals and aspirations and implementing this through the identification of preferred patterns of land use and appropriate styles of development.

Similarly, Waddell (2002), Dvir et al. (2003) and Van et al. (2013) described urban planning as involving social, economic, and environmental issues. Likewise, Todes et al. (2009:423) argued that planning is 'relat[ed] to development facilitation, spatial form and structure, need and desirability, amenity and character, and land use planning'. This approach to planning is technical and physical and mostly depends on scientific methods. However, Talen (2000) argued that planners using this approach often use a managerial discourse and consequently ignore the communitarian views.

Planning can be viewed, according to Stratigea et al. (2015), as a process that allows stakeholders to take part in the decision-making process. Such planning consists of an orderly sequence of stages to build appropriate decision-making. Figure 2.2 illustrates an example of the planning stages.

Figure 2.2: An Example of Different Planning Stages



Source: Adapted from Stratigea et al. (2015)

Stratigea et al. (2015) described planning as a set of systematically interrelated decisions. In line with this point, Hall (2000) and Veal (2017) saw planning as a type of decision-making and policy-making. Similarly, planning has been understood as anticipatory decision-making (Plass and Kaltenecker, 2007). Supporting these ideas, Dredge and Jamal (2015) argued that planning and decision-making are inextricably interrelated. Many researchers such as McLaverty (2002), Edgell et al. (2008), McKenzie et al. (2014) and Eshliki and Kaboudi (2017) have used the terms ‘planning’ and ‘decision-making’ interchangeably. This study, therefore, treats planning and decision-making as one concept and uses the terms interchangeably.

2.1.4 Power

Power is another important concept in this study. The literature contains numerous interpretations of power, such as domination (Clegg, 2013), resistance (Foucault, 1982), false consciousness or coercion (Haugaard, 2003), knowledge (Foucault, 1989), authority, manipulation (Weber, 1947), a reinforcing social order derived from the duality of structure (Giddens, 1984) and social struggles constrained by habitus and field (Bourdieu, 1984). However, power is a complex, elusive concept and can be interpreted in different ways depending on the field in which it is used (Miller, 2000; Kantola, 2009; Beritelli and Laesser, 2011; Johansen and Chandler, 2015; Simons and de Groot, 2015; Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2016; Barker and Quennerstedt, 2017). To build an understanding of power, Max Weber, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci's interpretation of power are discussed.

Weber (1978:53) defined power as 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests'. Accordingly, Weber categorised power as either authoritative or coercive. Authoritative power is perceived as legitimate, and consequently, it is effective as those subordinated to this power consent to be so (see Mann, 2012). In contrast, coercive power 'alter[s] the behaviour of the subordinate by force', causing another to do something against their wishes (see Krott et al., 2014:4).

Authoritative power is not coercive, and Weber (1947:328) introduced three 'pure types of legitimate authority' with different bases:

- 1) Rational grounds: a belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under those rules to issue commands (legal authority)
- 2) Traditional grounds: an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority)
- 3) Charismatic grounds: devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person and the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority)

The notion of power discussed by Weber thus is hierarchical in nature. He examined government and politics for their impacts on individuals and larger social systems (Kantola, 2009).

From another perspective, Habermas (1984) exposed two different versions of power: strategic or instrumental reason and communicative reason. Strategic action, according to Schaefer et al. (2013), can be understood as

Purposive-rational action oriented towards other persons from a utilitarian point of view, for example, calculative manipulation of others. In other words, an actor who acts strategically is primarily trying to achieve his own ends.

Here, instrumental rationality is perceived as unsociable and morally undesirable due to its exercise of domination and exploitation without taking into account humanitarian factors. In contrast, communicative reason was defined by Habermas (1990:93) as consensus without force:

A contested norm cannot meet with the consensus of the participants in practical discourse unless all affected can *freely* accept the

consequences and the side effects that the *general* observance of a controversial norm can have for the satisfaction of the interests of each individual. (Habermas 1990:93)

In contrast to instrumental action, communicative rationality is perceived as morally desirable actions. Here, Habermas differentiated between legitimate and illegitimate power. Illegitimate power is connected to force and entails the problem of coercion. Legitimate power, in contrast, is connected to reason, is separated from force and avoids the problem of coercion. In sum, Habermas' understanding of power works from the perspective of sovereignty or law.

Foucault (1978:93) claimed that power is everywhere and comes from everywhere:

Not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at the very point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. (Foucault 1978:93)

Consequently, power exists and is manifested in all social relationships. Foucault (1978:99) thus conceptualised power as a network of relationships:

We must not look for who has the power ... and who is deprived of it; nor for who has the right to know and who is forced to remain ignorant. We must seek, rather, the pattern of the modifications which the relationships of force imply by the very nature of their process. (Foucault 1978:99)

In this context, Foucault saw power as a 'complex strategical situation' consisting of dynamic, unstable relations (see Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2016) visible only when put into action (Barker and Quennerstedt, 2017:342). Foucault's perspective can be summed up in two fundamental points. First, he explained power at the community level. Second, he saw power as a fluid force rather than a set inventory of formal laws and rules.

Gramsci (1971, cited in Molden, 2016:127) defined power as follows:

The ability to impose the particular interests of the ruling group (class) as universal values, while the ruled accept the social distribution of power and the political system as quasi-natural. ... This means, power is established not only by means of coercion, but also by the cultural consensus between ruling and ruled. (Gramsci, 1971, cited in Molden, 2016:127)

Gramsci thus illustrated a hegemony in which the ruling class establishes and maintains control of subordinate groups. This differs from the orthodox, realist usage favouring the direct exercise of 'power over' in the Weberian sense (Gill and Law, 1989).

Avdikos (2011:78) defined hegemony as

An 'organizing principle' that is diffused by the process of socialization into every area of daily life. To the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalized by the population it becomes part of what is generally called 'common sense', so that the philosophy, culture and morality of the ruling elite comes to appear as the natural order of things. (Avdikos, 2011:78)

Gramsci saw hegemonic power as gained through complex processes of consent and coercion associated with a set of religious, political, cultural and ideological practices.

Gramsci rejected the idea that power is a possession that can be held (Holub, 1992), and instead, he stated that power never stays stable as others try to build counter-hegemonic forces (Gramsci, 1971; Pringle, 2005).

Some conclusions may be drawn from this discussion. First, it may be stated that experts have defined, explained and approached the terms 'community', 'participation', 'decision-making' and 'power' to suit their own studies and fulfil predetermined specific goals. This may be one reason for the emergence of divergent ideas and approaches to defining these concepts. Second, these multi-dimensional concepts cannot be presented in any single form. Third, their meanings vary

considerably across countries and even within the same country. Consequently, the social and political dimensions need to be understood within the context of a specific country and its political and socio-economic systems. Ultimately, reaching a consensus on definitions of the concepts of community, participation, planning, decision-making and power is not the aim of this research. Instead, the study is intended to build an understanding of these terms to facilitate a discussion on communities' understandings of tourism planning and development in the Najran Region.

During the post-World War II period, tourism demand rapidly increased.

The post-war tourism boom has lured many government and local communities into the business with little forethought concerning a viable tourism product, the social and environmental consequences of development, or the spillover effects in surrounding areas. Instead, the approach to tourism development was essentially myopic, both in terms of its economic objective and planning scale. (Murphy, 1985:155)

Consequently, in most areas of the world, the tourism sector was developed as an unplanned activity, and the planning approach to the sector was entirely myopic. Community participation in tourism planning and development thus has become a prerequisite for the success and sustainability of the tourism industry (Bello et al., 2016b). More details on community participation in tourism planning and development are discussed in the next section.

2.2 Community Participation in Tourism Planning and Development

This section has four main parts. First, the emergence of the notion of community participation in tourism development is traced. Second, a chronological account of studies on community participation in tourism development is given. Third, community

participation in tourism planning and development is reviewed. Finally, tourism planning and development policies are discussed.

2.2.1 The Emergence of Community Participation in Tourism Development

Community participation in the tourism context, as explained by Midgley (1986), has emerged as a viable development approach as a direct consequence of the UN's participatory development programmes, especially in developing countries due to poor management, limited knowledge and high poverty and unemployment rates (Mosammam et al., 2016). Tourism has a long history of being delivered as a panacea for the problems in developing countries (Sharpley and Telfer, 2014). Even the World Bank's (WB) and International Monetary Fund's (IMF) structural adjustment programmes (SAP) used tourism as a main engine of economic growth in developing countries (Bryden, 1973; Krippendorf, 1982; Awang et al., 2009; Szirmai, 2012; Samimi et al., 2013; Mowforth and Munt, 2015; Tovmasyan, 2016). However, as Tosun (2005:340) argued, 'these international organisations isolated a vast majority of the people from their affairs and almost put them out of the economic and political system of these countries'. By encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI), they made space for international companies and investors, and local businesses became unable to compete, limiting opportunities for participation by local groups (Scheyvens, 2002; Tosun, 2005).

It was soon realised that spearheading development with economic growth based on foreign exchange earnings might not be the most sustainable path forward. Moreover, the negative implications of tourism development started to become apparent: influences on the essentials of local culture, destruction of environmental resources and

exclusion of local communities from involvement in development (Inskeep, 1991; Scheyvens, 2002; Bimonte and Punzo, 2016). Since the 1980s, alternative models of tourism with a number of themes and perspectives have emerged and had long-term positive impacts on the environment and local communities directly and indirectly involved in tourism development (Mosammam et al., 2016). New terms such as small-scale, locally owned development, community participation and cultural and environmental sustainability have surfaced (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002:59). Consequently, community participation became a fundamental approach to tourism planning and development. The next section reviews scholarship on issues of community involvement in tourism development.

2.2.2 A Chronological Account of Studies on Community Participation in Tourism Development

Murphy (1983; 1985) stands as a pioneering scholar on community involvement in tourism development. However, before the publication of Murphy's *Tourism: A Community Approach*, the authors of *Tourism: The Good, Bad and Ugly* stated that 'the people who must live with planning decisions should be involved in their formulation' (Rosenow and Pulsipher, 1979:81). Murphy (1985:165) argued that the tourism industry 'uses the community as a resource, sells it as a product, and in the process, affects the lives of everyone'. He asserted that emphasis and focus should be placed on community participation to rectify planning issues in tourism development. Haywood (1988) claimed that for desirable guest–host relationships, a participatory approach to tourism planning is of the utmost importance. Keogh (1990:450) noted that numerous tourism studies on host communities have called for 'increased public

participation and, in particular, a more community-oriented approach to tourism planning’.

Inskip (1991) approached community participation in tourism development from implementation and humanitarian perspectives. He pointed out that local people must have a voice in shaping their futures, and he called for maximum involvement of local communities to maximise the socio-economic benefits of tourism for them (Inskip, 1991). Pearce (1994) argued that community involvement provides techniques for limiting negative social consequences. Ryan and Montgomery (1994:368) suggested that communities need only be educated about the benefits of tourism, and ‘their involvement in good visitor management techniques will actually solve the problem’. Brohman (1996) advocated community participation in tourism development to achieve more equal distribution of benefits and to discourage undemocratic, top-down decision-making. Community participation also provides opportunities for local people to use their own resources and determine locally appropriate methods of tourism development.

Timothy (1999:373) pointed out that tourism relies on the goodwill and cooperation of local communities as ‘they are part of its product. Where development and planning do not fit in with local aspirations and capacities, resistance and hostility can ... destroy the industry’s potential altogether’. Tosun (2000) stated that community involvement has become a fundamental principle of tourism planning and development. Ngubane and Diab (2005) argued that engaging local communities in tourism planning stems from the understanding that tourism is an amalgam of a number of different activities. Moreover, local communities’ engagement in tourism planning forms one pathway to

make the industry sustainable (Ngubane and Diab, 2005). More recently, Li and Hunter (2015) claimed that community involvement can make the distribution of costs and benefits more equitable and transform the process of self-development and knowledge sharing. Additionally, Ndivo and Cantoni (2016) stated that local community participation is central to efforts to utilise tourism as a tool for sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

This brief chronological account of studies on the participatory tourism development approach allows drawing several conclusions. First, scholars have come to no consensus on the words used to conceptualise participatory approaches as tourism development strategies. For example, the same development strategy has been described with various words and phrases, such as community participation, public participation, host community, community involvement and community oriented. Second, a broad definition of community participation might not be useful as forms of participation can change according to various factors in tourist destinations. Third, the statements discussed leave room to pose interesting and perhaps difficult questions about the practicality of the approach: Who in the local area should participate and should not participate? Is every form of participation effective in every circumstance? Who decides the form of participation? Community involvement in tourism planning and development is discussed further in the next section.

2.2.3 Community Participation in Tourism Planning and Development

Historically, research on tourism planning has focused on either spatial/physical requirements or economic considerations. Consequently, most studies on tourism planning have had serious shortcomings (Murphy, 1983). According to Getz (1984),

tourism planning was not done systematically until the 1960s. Instead, *ad hoc* planning for tourism development was undertaken in a number of tourist destinations. Consequently, Keogh (1990) argued that a changed approach to tourism development and planning is needed, a view supported by numerous tourism impact and resident attitude studies conducted with destination residents.

In this context, Tosun and Jenkins (1998:102) stated that the approach to tourism development has evolved over time through five main stages, which were not necessarily separate and distinctive: (1) unplanned tourism development; (2) partly supply-oriented tourism planning; (3) entirely supply-oriented tourism planning; (4) market- or demand-oriented tourism development planning; and (5) the contemporary tourism development approach. Sharpley (2008) illustrated these stages and summarised these approaches to tourism planning (see Table 2.2).

| Table 2.2: Tourism Planning Traditions | | |
|---|---|---|
| Planning Tradition | Planning Focus | |
| Boosterism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional campaigns • Growth strategy • Demand-led approach ('the more the better') | |
| Physical/spatial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical planning of facilities • Carrying capacity • Supply-led approach | |
| Economic approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism as an industry • Job and revenue creation • Stimulation of other economic activities | |
| Community based | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct involvement of the community in tourism planning • Prevention and reduction of host-guest conflicts • Greater tourism benefits for the community | |
| Sustainable planning | Integrative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of political, economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts |
| | Coordinated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism as an element of the overall economy • Tourism as an element of the overall destination development plan |
| | Cooperative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism as a system • Tourism planning processes |
| | Strategic systems approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term planning • Public-private partnerships • Continuous monitoring • Destination visioning • Cooperative research |
| Source: <i>Sharpley (2008:16)</i> | | |

Table 2.2 shows that tourism planning has undergone a significant evolution as planning paradigms have shifted from myopic, rigid forms to more comprehensive, responsive, flexible, systematic, participatory approaches. Community participation in planning thus has become an important element in development, including tourism.

Participation by the local community, according to Chili and Ngxongo (2017:1), is very important in the tourism industry as ‘its members can be considered to be one of the tourism products and their inputs in the decision-making processes of tourism development should be a focal point in tourism development’. The evolution of tourism planning is intended to make tourism a sustainable agent of social, cultural and economic development. Mak et al. (2017) claimed that the community approach to tourism planning and development is a prerequisite for sustainability. The concept of community participation in tourism development thus has become a central issue in the debate on sustainability. Inskeep (1994:8) also contended that:

An important aspect of sustainable development is emphasising community-based tourism. This approach to tourism focuses on community involvement in the planning and development process, and developing the types of tourism, which generate benefits to local communities. It applies techniques to ensure that most of the benefits of tourism development accrue to local residents and not to outsiders. Maximising benefits to local residents typically results in tourism being better accepted by them and their actively supporting conservation of local resources. (Inskeep, 1994:8)

In line with Inskeep, Bello et al. (2016b) stated that the more local communities benefit from tourism development, the more likely they are to be motivated to preserve cultural and natural heritage and support tourism in their destinations. Additionally, the involvement of local people in tourism development and planning significantly strengthens the democratisation process in destinations as the gap between local destinations and bureaucratic decision-makers narrows during the planning process (Timothy and Tosun, 2003; Jones, 2007).

Furthermore, community participation in tourism planning and development is regarded as a vital progressive exercise as it offers inclusion opportunities for diverse

stakeholders and accords with people's rights to participate in decisions that affect their futures (Marzuki and Hay, 2013; Malek and Costa, 2015). Local communities are considered to be an ingredient in successful tourism planning. For instance, a UNWTO (1980) study found that 43.5% of 1,619 assorted tourism plans were never implemented as they lacked the participation of local destinations. Murphy (1983:188) asserted that a lack of sufficient consultation and planning at the local level 'has certainly contributed to the delay and demise of many projects and policies proposed by central planning agencies'. Such research, however, has remained descriptive and has not been able to generate an appropriate understanding of the concept of community involvement in tourism planning and decision-making.

Tosun (2006:494) defined community participation as

A categorical term that allows participation of people, citizens, or a host community in their affairs at different levels (local, regional or national) and various forms (manipulative, coercive, induced, passive, spontaneous, etc.) under site-specific conditions.

Tosun developed a typology of community participation for tourism based on Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation and Pretty's (1995) typology of community participation (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Normative Typology of Community Participation

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|----|-----------------|-----------------------------|--|--|
| 7. | Self-mobilisation | ← | 8. | Citizen control | Degrees of citizen power | → | <u>Spontaneous Participation</u> Bottom-up, active participation, direct participation, participation in decision-making, authentic participation, self-planning |
| 6. | Interactive participation | | 7. | Delegated power | | | |
| | | | 6. | Partnership | | | |
| 5. | Functional participation | ← | 5. | Placation | Degrees of citizen tokenism | → | <u>Induced Participation</u> Top-down, passive, formal, mostly indirect, feedback, degree of tokenism, manipulation, pseudo-participation, participation in implementation and sharing benefits, and choice between proposed alternatives |
| 4. | Participation for material incentives | | 4. | Consultation | | | |
| 3. | Participation by consultation | | 3. | Informing | | | |
| 2. | Passive participation | ← | 2. | Therapy | Non-participation | → | <u>Coercive Participation</u> Top-down, passive, mostly indirect, formal, paternalism, non-participation, participation in implementation, benefits not necessarily shared, choice between proposed limited alternatives or no choice, and high degree of tokenism and manipulation |
| 1. | Manipulative participation | | 1. | Manipulation | | | |
| Pretty's (1995) typology of community participation | | Arnstein's (1969) typology of community participation | | | | Tosun's (1999) typology of community participation | |
| Source: <i>Tosun (2006:494)</i> | | | | | | | |

Tosun (2006) classified community participation into three main types with some subcategories. First, coercive participation corresponds with non-participation in Arnstein's ladder and with passive and manipulative participation in Pretty's typology. In this type of community participation, host communities cannot participate in tourism development programmes but can enable those who hold power to educate local communities to avert potential and actual threats to future tourism development. Local destinations have no power to influence decision-making on tourism development issues, while powerful stakeholders have the final say. Second, induced participation corresponds to the degrees of citizen tokenism in Arnstein's ladder, and functional participation matches with participation by consultation and participation for material incentives in Pretty's typology. In this type of community participation, local communities may hear and be heard. They have a voice in the tourism development process, but they do not have the power to make sure that power-holders consider their perspectives. This type of community participation is the most common mode found in less developed countries where local communities only endorse and do not influence tourism development decisions. This type of participation is top-down, passive and indirect and ultimately seems to denote a level of tokenism. Third, spontaneous participation corresponds to degrees of citizen power in Arnstein's ladder and to self-mobilisation and interactive participation in Pretty's typology. This type of community participation provides local communities with full managerial responsibility and authority for tourism development.

In short, Tosun's (2006) normative typology reflects almost all possible forms of community participation in planning and tourism development and addresses the

degree of power distribution throughout the different levels of community participation. Tosun's typology is a useful tool to identify the spectrum of community participation in tourism development from the more common, passive forms to the more authentic, interactive forms. In sum, Tosun's (2006) contribution is unlike many other attempts to pin down the elusive nature of community participation in tourism planning and development. It successfully establishes an analytical, comprehensive, realistic understanding of the nature of community participation in tourism. Nevertheless, some researchers such as Bello et al. (2016a) and Mak et al. (2017) have issued the criticism that community participation approaches have been developed and designed in the Western world to be used as conceptual and practical tools for effective community participation in planning and development programmes in those countries. In this study, these models provide a useful framework to understand tourism issues in Najran and the extent of local people's involvement in tourism.

2.2.4 Politics in Tourism Planning and Development

This section aims to discuss the relationships between politics and tourism development. Bowen et al. (2016:1) defined tourism development as 'a political process whereby decisions are made in order to implement policies and achieve goals'. When clarifying that statement, the political aspects of tourism can take on multiple dimensions. For instance, the economic dimension is a major political aspect of tourism, which is widely recognised as a major revenue source for various nations (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002; King, 1993; Altinay and Bowen, 2006; Butcher, 2008; Sharpley and Telfer, 2014). As a policy-making and legislative authority, government,

therefore, plays an active role in establishing policies that promote tourism to improve the national economy (Hall, 1994; Scheyvens, 2011; Isaac et al., 2016).

Building a national identity is another dimension of tourism development. The government's role is not limited to economic development but extends to building the nation's image and identity at the global and local levels (Konecnik and Go, 2008). For instance, Slovenia used tourism development to unite domestic stakeholders' development efforts, as well as to externally market itself as a tourist destination. It thus is increasingly apparent that tourism policies are developed to advance not only the tourism sector but also the government's political ideologies. The politics of tourism, therefore, is considered to be part of the government's role in drawing up policies and general orientations on development issues.

However, the political aspects of tourism development go beyond formal government processes. For instance, Hall (1994) defined tourism as a highly political phenomenon that extends beyond the formal government structures to include the power relationships among different stakeholders. Likewise, Farmaki et al. (2015) stated that tourism politics involve struggles over power and resource distribution among various interests at the local, regional and national levels. Consequently, the power relationships among stakeholders are considered to be one of the fundamental political elements of tourism. Power, on one hand, governs the interactions among stakeholders that influence the formulation of tourism policy (Altinay and Bowen, 2006). On the other hand, according to Henderson (2003), power determines who tourism stakeholders are, how resources are distributed among them, who benefits and who does not benefit. Power thus is a product of stakeholders' interactions and clearly is a

key element in understanding how wealth is distributed and how decisions are made in the context of the tourism sector.

For instance, tourism development is a complex global phenomenon with social, political, cultural and environmental dimensions (Isaac et al., 2016). It also consists of multiple players with different views, opinions and economic powers and capacities (Gunn and Var, 2002; Altinay and Bowen, 2006; Butcher, 2008; Sharpley and Telfer, 2014). These differences among tourism stakeholders create unequal opportunities among them. Bowen et al. (2016:4) thus asserted:

The power allocation between the various stakeholder groups has the consequence that those with less power and influence have to accept less than they would like to.

Furthermore, these variations among stakeholders, including communities, reinforce a hierarchy based on differences in access to valuable resources (Gezon, 2014). The power relationships among tourism stakeholders thus determine who wins and who loses. For instance, local gender norms have largely excluded women from tourism work in the region surrounding the World Heritage Site of Göreme in central Turkey, while men have become tourism entrepreneurs and gained tourism employment (Tucker, 2007). These arguments show how power imbalances have resulted in unequal outcomes among stakeholders. However, collaboration among stakeholders in tourism development can overcome power imbalances by involving all stakeholders in a process that meets their needs (Reed, 1997). In line with these arguments, power can be distributed differently among local communities and other stakeholders in tourism development.

For instance, Jordan (2013) presented two traditional notions of the distribution of power between local communities in tourism. First, the elitist power structure is highly centralised, and power is most often held by those in government and those with important social status and access to financial and other resources. This structure is compatible with authoritarian systems that give ultimate power to the state and elites (Held, 1995; Leftwich, 2015). Second, the pluralist power structure is diffuse and lets power reside with many rather than few people. This structure is consistent with non-authoritarian systems that largely place power in the hands of the people based on the principle of popular sovereignty (Veenendaal, 2014; Heywood, 2015a; Maeckelbergh, 2016).

These ideas are significant as they highlight the main approaches to the distribution of power among stakeholders, especially within local communities. In addition, they identify some political systems consistent with these structures or approaches. Political systems and government philosophies are considered to be among the main factors shaping the decision-making process and the distribution of power among tourism stakeholders (see Hall, 1994; Altinay and Bowen, 2006).

Religious and cultural identities are other factors affecting decision-making among stakeholders and local communities in tourism development. For example, men perform decision-making within Jordanian families in Bedouin communities that work in the tourism field as Islam heavily influences Jordanian culture (Al Haija, 2011). These cultural and religious identities give men the final say in the family. In sum, although the concept of power is complex and elusive, this section provides

an important platform for exploring the mechanisms of power distribution in tourism development in the Najran Region.

Community participation is rarely found in developing countries due to various constraints (Li, 2006). According to Su and Wall (2014), developing countries

Usually take a top-down, passive, and indirect community participation approach in tourism development, where decisions are made for the communities, not by them, and participation occurs in implementation and sharing of benefits rather than in decision-making about what will be done.

Details on community involvement in tourism planning, decision-making and development in developing countries are presented in the next section.

2.3 Community Participation in Tourism Planning and Decision-making in Developing Countries

Developing countries might need community participation more than developed countries as democratic participation is less visible in them (Tosun and Jenkins, 1998).

Tourism has become a development priority in public policy in developing countries as it has considerable economic impacts on those countries (Mowforth and Munt, 2015). According to Jenkins (1980:27), tourism in developed countries can be regarded as ‘a mainly social activity with economic consequences; in developing countries it is largely an economic activity with social consequences’. However, as governments in developing countries give paramount importance to tourism in public policy, the exclusion of local people from this major economic sector may economically, socially and politically alienate communities in destinations where tourism has become a key income source and a dominant social activity (see Haywood, 1988; Li and Hunter,

2015; Mowforth and Munt, 2015; Manaf et al., 2016; Mosammam et al., 2016; Tovmasyan, 2016; Bello et al., 2017).

In developing countries, community participation initiatives in tourism have followed a number of approaches. For instance, community-based tourism (CBT) is regarded as a bottom-up approach to community development (Zapata et al., 2011) and is used to describe innovative tourism development within local communities (Reggers et al., 2016). An example of the CBT approach is a small-scale tourism project in a community of mostly Salvadoran exiles in Costa Rica described by Mowforth and Munt (2015). Despite the external assistance in this case, the idea for the project arose from within the community itself, which controls all the tourist activities. One advantage of this project is that its revenues go directly to the service providers in the community without intermediators and agents taking a cut. The project can be classified as spontaneous participation in Tosun's (2006) normative typology, citizen power on Arnstein's (1969) ladder and self-mobilisation and interactive participation in Pretty's (1995) typology.

However, some have argued that CBT can still be tokenistic (Tosun, 1999, 2005; Press, 2009) as 'the community is co-opted into supporting tourism through an illusion of power sharing, but they are not empowered to reject tourism as a development option' (Blackstock, 2005:41). For instance, in the case of Mayan communities in Central America, tourism initiatives were ineffective at achieving sustainable community development, but sustainable forestry and organic farming turned out to be viable alternatives (Smith and Duffy, 2003). The problem is that tourism is often profit oriented and tricks people into participating (Blackstock, 2005). Arguably, the case of

Mayan communities resembles Tosun's (2006) normative typology, citizen tokenism on Arnstein's (1969) ladder and functional participation, participation by consultation and participation for material incentives in Pretty's (1995) typology. In other words, citizens gain a voice but do not have sufficient power to participate in planning and decision-making and change the current situation.

A large-scale example discussed by Mowforth et al. (2008) is the Mundo Maya project, which covers five Mexican states, Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize and Honduras. Publicity material describes Mundo Maya as a ground-breaking tourism and regional development initiative that seeks to improve local communities' standards of living. The project was funded by the European Commission to promote cultural tourism, eco-tourism and coastal tourism in all five countries. However, full decision-making powers over all Mundo Maya affairs lies with each country's senior public sector tourism officials. The local communities, including the private sector, have been marginalised from participating in decision-making in the project. This case can be classified as coercive participation in Tosun's (2006) typology, non-participation on Arnstein's (1969) ladder, and passive and manipulative participation in Pretty's (1995) typology. The Mundo Maya project, therefore, has adopted a top-down approach, conducting planning and decision-making on the international and national levels. Ultimately, developing countries encounter a number of challenges to community participation in tourism-related decisions.

The challenges in developing countries have been classified by Haywood (1988), Tosun (2000, 2005), Li and Hunter (2015), Mosammam et al. (2016) and Bello et al. (2017) as operational, structural and cultural limitations. First, operational barriers,

according to Tosun (2000), include the centralisation of planning activities and a lack of coordination and information. Stone and Stone (2011) stated that the centralisation of operations within a tourism administration may make it difficult for local communities to convey their feedback and ideas on tourism development to decision-makers. A lack of collaboration and coordination occurs due to fragmentation in the tourism industry (Stone and Stone, 2011). A lack of coordination may prevent opportunities for local communities to be involved in the tourism development process, causing a participatory strategy to fail or to be ineffective. Regarding a lack of information, Keogh (1990) and Li and Hunter (2015) argued that growing knowledge gaps between centralised authorities and local communities in tourist destinations may make it difficult for communities to participate in tourism development as, without valid information, local people's participation may prove to be ineffective or meaningless.

Second, structural barriers, according to Tosun (2000), include constraints such as the attitudes of professionals, a lack of expertise, domination by the elites and the lack of an appropriate legal system. These barriers affect community participation in tourism development. According to the UN (1981) and Stone and Stone (2011), one barrier is the behaviours and attitudes of tourism professionals and experts, who usually prefer not to negotiate with locals and claim that planning and development efforts are value-free, politically neutral exercises. Similarly, Wolfe (1982) argued that the tension between technocrats (professionals) and participation by local communities stems from technocrats' confidence that their professional qualifications will enable them to find the right answers to development problems. A lack of expertise is another limitation of

community participation in developing countries. Inskip (1988) argued that tourism planning has become a specialised area that has developed its own specific models, techniques and principles while drawing on general planning methodology. Although community participation seems to be desirable, only a few developing countries (e.g. Turkey, Malaysia and India) have accumulated qualified human capital in tourism by sending students to study in developed countries, while other nations (e.g. Sri Lanka and Egypt) have shared from the experiences of international donor agencies and international consultants. A lack of expertise remains a significant barrier to community participation in tourism in developing countries (Tosun, 2000; Bello et al., 2016a).

Another drawback of community participation in tourism is elites' domination of industry decisions. Saufi et al. (2014) pointed out that many important decisions occur outside communities' scrutiny due to low democratic experience, semi-democratic experiences or no prospects for freedom comparable to that available in the West (Tosun, 2000; Mosammam et al., 2016; Bello et al., 2017). It can be asserted that if communities in tourist destinations are not empowered in a real sense, involvement may be restricted to elites in the communities. In other words, as maintained by Saufi et al. (2014), elites might use domination of participatory decision-making to enhance their own status. Furthermore, the lack of an appropriate legal system in developing countries is a major barrier to community participation in tourism development. In many developing countries, the legal structure does not encourage local communities to participate in local affairs but instead places distance between the grassroots level and government officials, and its operation is difficult to understand from a non-expert

perspective (Aref, 2011). Unless the law provides for communities' participatory rights, local communities in tourist destinations may face risks of corruption and manipulation.

Third, cultural barriers also limit community participation in the developing world, according to Dogra and Gupta (2012) and Mustapha et al. (2013). These researchers claimed that cultural limitations may be an extension of the prevailing social, economic and political structures that shape the cultural features of developing countries. Cultural barriers include apathy, social norms, religious adherence, the limited capacity of those living in poverty and low levels of awareness in communities. For instance, people living in poverty in these nations have limited capacity to handle development effectively (UN, 1981; Aref, 2001). Tosun (2005:338) stated that 'apathy among the poor in developing countries stops them from effectively demanding that the institutions which serve them accommodate their needs'. Consequently, 'their plight worsens and their capacity for effective action is further weakened' (Miller and Rein, 1975:7).

The social and religious dimensions are considered to present some of the main cultural challenges that may hinder local people's participation in tourism. In many developing countries, customs, traditions and religion shape daily life (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010; Stephenson, 2014). For example, among Jordanian families in Bedouin communities that work in the tourism field, men make decisions as Islam heavily influences Jordanian culture (Al Haija, 2011). Gender is considered to be one of the main issues in developing countries due to cultural and religious challenges.

Several conclusions can be derived from this discussion on the barriers to community participation in the tourism development process. First, the barriers considered may not represent all the possible obstacles to participatory tourism development. Second, some barriers may be seen as common development problems in developing countries but might not all be present in a given destination at one time. Third, these barriers might not only be specific to participatory tourism development strategies but might also be valid for participatory development approaches in general. Fourth, cultural barriers may be considered to be internal factors that local communities can control, whereas operational and structural barriers are external and are beyond their jurisdiction. Fifth, power is a key factor shaping the relationships among the different stakeholders participating in tourism planning, decision-making and development.

The study context of Saudi Arabia is a developing country, so it is important to highlight the current situation of tourism planning and decision-making in the KSA.

2.4 Tourism Planning and Decision-making in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

This section aims to highlight Saudi Arabia's general planning and decision-making mechanisms and those particular to tourism development.

2.4.1 Planning and Decision-making in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has a monarchical governance system headed by the king who holds power and governs the country according to Islamic law under the national constitution (Alhargan, 2012; Khyrallah, 2012; Haykel et al., 2015; Aldossry and Varul, 2016). Planning and decision-making in Saudi Arabia can be described as occurring on three main levels (Figure 2.3). Level 1 consists of the high-ranking decision-making centres:

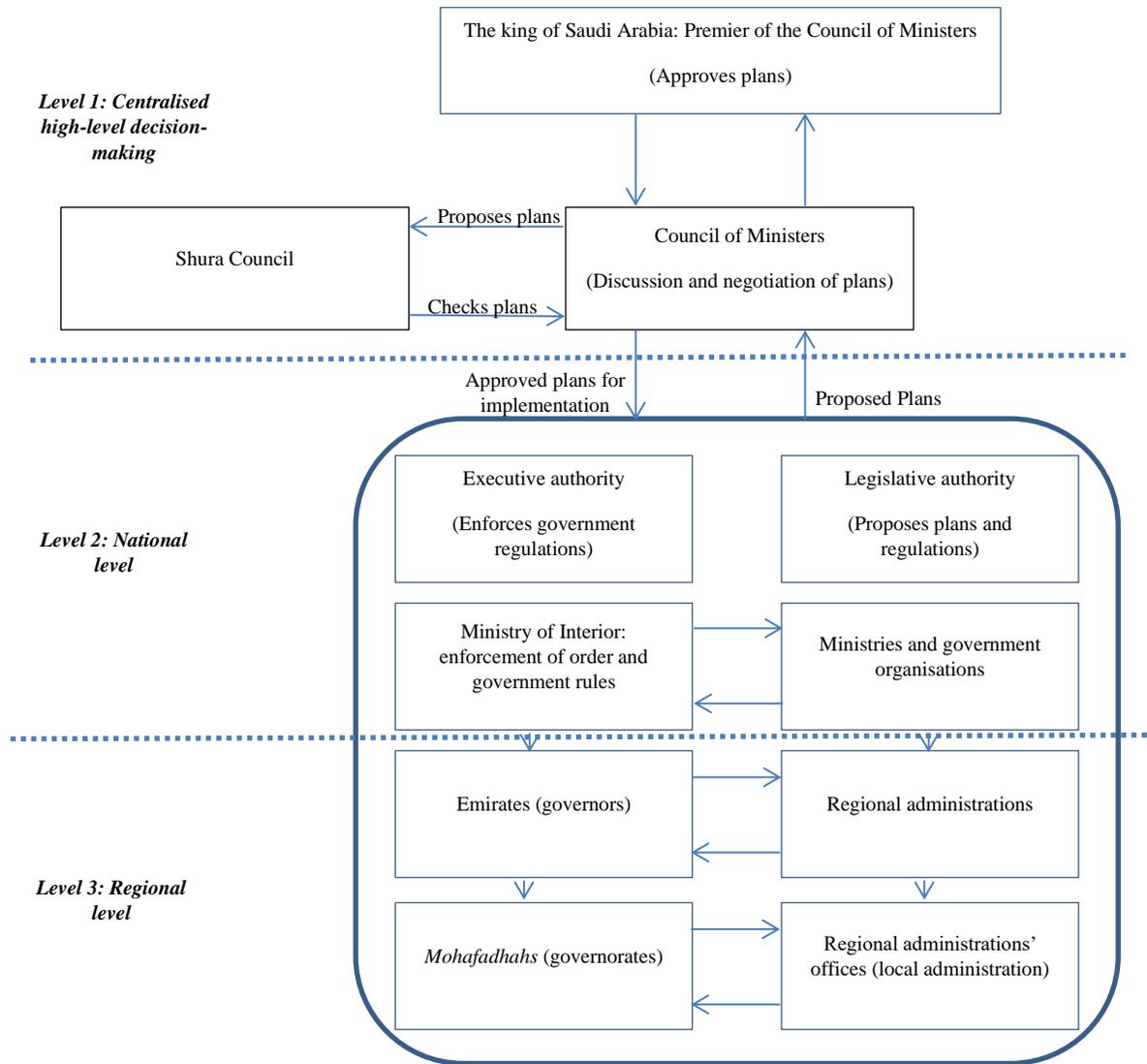
the king, who also acts as the head of the Council of Ministers (CM) and the consultative or Shura Council (SC). On this level of the centralised decision-making system, policies and regulations are drawn up, and proposals prepared by government organisations are approved or rejected. Such plans must be consistent with the country's policies and the instructions of Islamic law. In this procedure, the CM either directly refers government plans to the king for approval or first submits them to the SC for review and then to the king for approval and implementation (Al-But'hie and Saleh, 2002; Al-Sulbi et al., 2010).

On level 2, the national ministries and government agencies prepare plans and policies to achieve the objectives of these bodies without conflicting with the country's general policies. The ministries and government agencies also coordinate with the Ministry of Interior (MI) as an executive authority to ensure that these plans support Saudi national security. While preparing national plans and policies, these agencies also take feedback from representatives of regional government bodies before submitting them to the CM for discussion and approval (Al-But'hie and Saleh, 2002; Al-Sulbi et al., 2010; Aina et al., 2019).

Level 3 refers to the regional implementation of national plans and policies. Each region in the country is headed by a member of the royal family called a governor or an *emir* (prince). Each region is divided into a number of governorates that control the local affairs within their administrative scope. The *emir* lives in the regional capital and acts as chief administrator of the whole region, overseeing all its affairs and controlling all government departments. The *emir* has wide powers and is responsible for the overall development of the region. He heads the Provincial Council (PC), which

consists of some citizens and representatives of regional ministries (Al-Sulbi et al., 2010).

Figure 2.3: *Hierarchy of Planning and Decision-making in Saudi Arabia*



Source: Adapted from But'hie and Saleh (2002)

Saudi Arabia's hierarchy of planning and decision-making has been criticised for its centralised decision-making. For example, Niblock (1982), Olsen (1994), Kapiszewski

(2006) and Himma et al. (2008) claimed that Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy, and its decision-making process is highly centralised. These arguments point to the weak representation of the private sector and the public in planning and decision-making, despite their significant roles in implementing government plans on the ground. Planning and decision-making are often limited to ministries and other government agencies, most of which have representation on the CM. Nevertheless, over the past two decades, the KSA has witnessed many political reforms. For example, in the mid-1990s, the Shura Council was established to serve as an advisory board for the government and to represent Saudi citizens, discussing all issues that concern them. Council members are chosen from among the country's regions and important constituent groups, such as the religious establishment, government bureaucracy and business community. Council members usually are highly educated and experienced (Kapiszewski, 2006).

In another political reform, the National Dialogue Centre (NDC) was established in the early 2000s as a new forum for carefully selected intellectuals, activists and professionals to openly debate pressing social, religious and cultural issues (Kapiszewski, 2006). In addition, the Municipal Council serves as a political platform intended to distribute power and to broaden citizen participation in monitoring and evaluating the municipal services provided to citizens. Half of the council members are elected, and half are appointed by the government (Kapiszewski, 2006).

However, these political reforms have been criticised. For instance, Al-Rasheed (2009) argued that the Shura Council and the NDC only include elites chosen by the government. Moreover, although half of the Municipal Council members are elected,

it has no power to influence budget allocation or land development. In other words, its members are engaged in an illusion of power sharing. Despite recent criticism of Saudi Arabia's transition to decentralisation, the establishment of the SC, NDC and MC is considered to be an important step to expanding participation in decision-making in the country's development issues since the 1970s and 1980s. Ultimately, moving from a top-down to a bottom-up distribution of power is a requirement for successful development to ensure sustainability and equal distribution of resources at the local level in the KSA.

After this discussion on the Saudi decision-making mechanisms, the next section investigates planning and decision-making in the Saudi tourism field.

2.4.2 Current Situation of Tourism Planning and Decision-making in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, as part of the contemporary world, faces many socially and economically challenges. The Saudi government, among its responsibilities, has considered planning to be an important strategy to overcome these obstacles. Accordingly, the KSA has issued five-year development plans with short- and long-term mechanisms and work plans to tackle these challenges. These five-year development plans have addressed many challenges such as economic diversification, population growth and achievement of a balance in development among all the regions by pushing development beyond the main cities.

Furthermore, the KSA has established visions for solving such problems through mechanisms and proposals to find non-oil economic alternatives in sectors such as tourism. According to the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP, 2010; 2013), the

KSA has prepared nine five-year plans, each with specific aims and objectives for long-term national development. A review of the seventh plan (2000–2004), eighth plan (2005–2010) and ninth plan (2010–2014) indicates that tourism is recognised as an executive aim expected to contribute to solving the nation’s economic challenges (MEP, 2010, 2013). As a service sector, tourism can contribute to identifying, building and maintaining essential infrastructure and balancing development throughout the country, especially in regions suffering from insufficient economic opportunities.

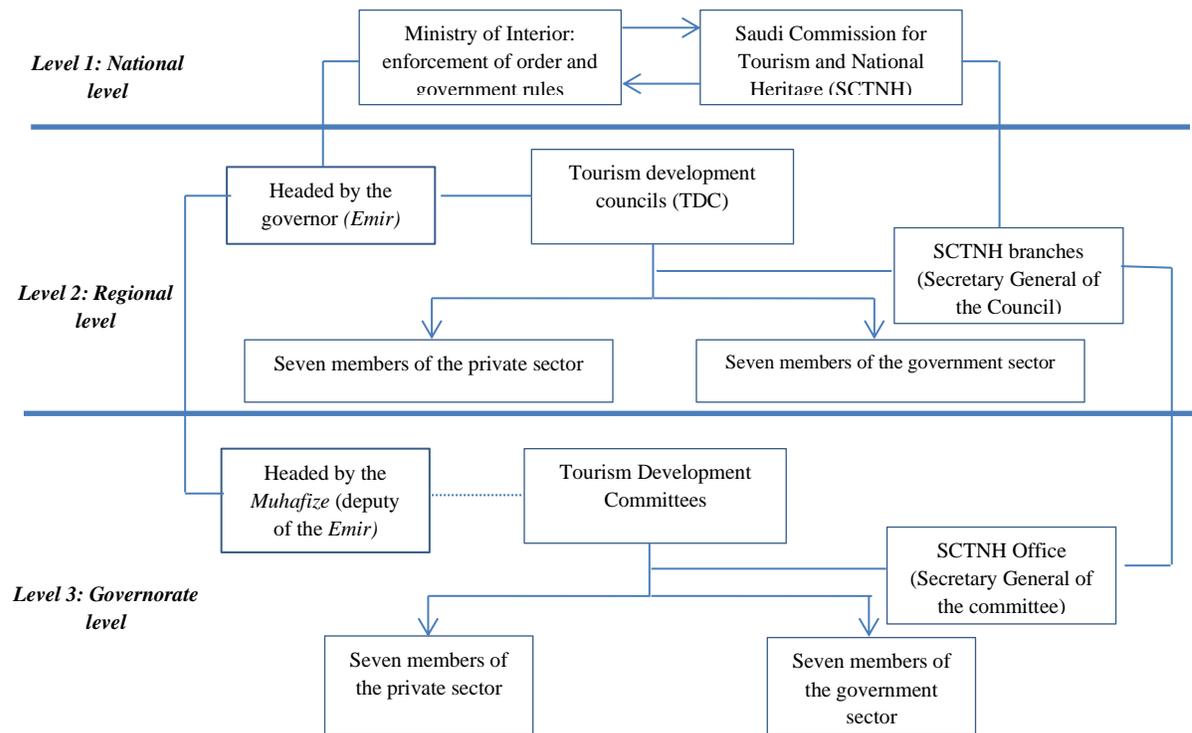
While the KSA has acknowledged the importance of the tourism industry to solve the challenges identified in its five-year development plans, tourism will not simply happen. It requires a national authority responsible for planning and developing the sector. Accordingly, the SCTNH was established to regulate and facilitate the Saudi tourism sector in partnership with the public and private sectors. According to the SCTNH (2016a, 2016b), this organisation has undergone the following development:

- The Saudi CM issued Resolution No. 9, dated 16/04/2000, to establish the SCT, stressing that the tourism sector was one of the country’s most productive areas. The aim was to encourage Saudi citizens to travel within the country and to increase investment opportunities and human resource development, thereby generating new job opportunities for Saudi nationals.
- Later, given the importance of the monuments and museums in this historically important country, Royal Order No. 2/a, dated 30/04/2003, was issued to integrate antiquities and museums into the SCT and to make it the body responsible for the areas of both antiquities and tourism.

- Cabinet Decision No. 78, dated 24/3/2008, changed the SCT's name to the SCTA to better reflect the scope of its mandate.
- Due to the KSA's adoption of the civilisational dimension initiative on Monday, 28 June 2015, the Cabinet approved the amendment of the name of the SCTA to the SCTNH.

The SCTNH is among the government bodies that follow the system of preparing plans and policies shown in Figure 2.3. Figure 2.4 illustrates the current management of tourism development in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 2.4: Tourism Planning and Management in Saudi



Source: Adapted from SCTA (2013); PTDS (2015)

According to the PTDS (2015), tourism has the following operational system:

- The SCTNH is the policy-maker at the national level.
- Tourism development councils (TDC) lead the regional tourism development systems in the region.
- The SCTNH branches act as executive arms of the TDC.
- Tourism development committees (TDC) operate in the regions' governorates.

The TDC members are appointed by the SCTNH president in consultation with the RG. The TDC's strength comes from the RG's position and powers as its president. The TCC consist of seven persons from the public sector and seven from the private sector but no representatives from local communities. The tourism development committees follow the same system on the governorate level. The SCTNH branches are government entities under the SCTNH in Riyadh (PTDS, 2015).

However, Saudi Arabia's PTDS demonstrates the centrality of tourism development in the country. Policies are set at the national level in consultation with national and regional organisations and limited input from local communities, and implementation is done through regional plans at the local level. This in line with the arguments of Tosun and Timothy (2001), Seddon and Khoja (2003b), Alqahtani and Saba (2014) and Alhowaish (2016) that many developing countries, including Saudi Arabia, have shortcomings in tourism development and planning, such as over-centralisation of policy-making and lack of a community approach. Consequently, the centralised authority might be an obstacle to more effective governance of tourism development in Saudi Arabia. In this context, the distribution of control and power over tourism

planning could increase the efficiency of service delivery and bring decision-making closer to the public (Yüksel et al., 2005).

Along with the nature of national tourism governance, Saudi religion and cultural identities are considered to be among the factors influencing political decision mechanisms, particularly in tourism development. The source of Saudi Arabia's power, Gallarotti and Al-Filali (2012) argued, is not its oil revenues but its cultural importance. Saudi culture, as Alanazi and Rodrigues (2003) and Budhwar et al. (2010) proposed, strictly adheres to Islamic teachings, which govern social behaviour and provide a strong cultural fabric for the whole nation. Likewise, Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) stated that Saudi culture is a unique blend of Islam and Arab traditions, which shapes the mentality and behaviour of those in the KSA. All Saudis are Muslims and consider religion to be the most important element of their identity (Moaddel, 2006). In addition, Islam pervades all aspects of life in Saudi Arabia (Idris, 2007).

Some authors such as Aldossry and Varul (2016) have argued that Islam provides the dominant frame for social life in Saudi Arabia while criticising adherence to the cultural traditions that dominate Saudi social life. In line with those arguments, Sidani and Showail (2013:935) emphasised that the two main forces that have historically impacted Saudi Arabia are religion and Bedouin traditions:

The society is a status society giving importance to certain societal members depending on age, tribal affiliation, and connections. This is reflected in the dimension of power distance, or the acceptability of being treated differently based on status or power. Tribal values emphasise concentric circles of obligations attaching most importance to the family and the clan. (Sidani and Showail, 2013:935)

Furthermore, the dominant role of gender in Saudi society, according to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993), is considered to be a drawback of cultural traditions and tribal values. Budhwar et al. (2010) claimed that the factors that influence and shape patriarchal attitudes towards women stem from interpretations of Islamic texts on women's social position and the region's socio-cultural framework.

Based on this discussion, Saudi Arabia and religion are indivisible, and Saudi society conforms to the principles of Islamic law and takes them as the foundations of public and private life, directly and indirectly affecting tourism development (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010; Jafari and Scott, 2014). For example, Saudi religion and culture are interwoven, and Islamic law may govern much of what in tourism and leisure is considered to be acceptable (*halal*; Deng et al., 1994). Moreover, religious declarations or *fatwas* (advisory opinions) have significant influence on tourist projects and plans that might be contrary to Islamic law (Jafari and Scott, 2014).

Furthermore, traditional and religious ideologies create gender differences in Saudi Arabia as a state whose constitution adopts Islamic law. These gender differences influence women's decisions to participate in tourism development when they could instead work in women-dominated fields, such as female education, nursing and medical care (Budhwar et al., 2010; Jafari and Scott, 2014). In addition, the KSA's tourism development strategies, according to Khizindar (2012) and SCTNH (2016b), are based on a vision consistent with Islamic teachings and social customs and traditions. They, therefore, emphasise sex segregation in tourism as a Saudi social value. However, the KSA may lose the opportunity to reduce unemployment among women, who are acknowledged to be key participants in the tourism labour market.

2.5 Chapter Summary

From the discussion on the concepts of community, participation, planning and decision-making, power emerges as an important platform and framework for guiding this study. Although not aimed at reaching a consensus on these concepts, this section is intended to build an understanding to guide the discussion on communities' understandings of tourism planning and development. The discussion on the participatory approach in tourism development makes clear the significant roles of local communities in the success and sustainability of tourism activities and projects.

Reviewing the relationship between politics and tourism development in Saudi Arabia makes it clear that the Saudi hierarchy of tourism management increases the centralisation of tourism decision-making. This is evident in the preparation of plans at the national level, which may fail to consider stakeholders' objectives and requirements. This top-down approach might lead to an inability to implement plans at the local level as local communities, although part of the tourism product, are excluded from participating in Saudi tourism planning and decision-making.

Religious and cultural identities are other factors influencing the Saudi planning and decision-making process. Saudi Arabia and religion are indivisible, and the values of Saudi society are intermingled with Islamic teachings. For example, religious discourses have the potential to influence tourism development issues that might not align with Islamic law. Moreover, Saudi social values and customs giving men power over women exclude women from participating in tourism decision-making. This situation might result in an unequal distribution of power among stakeholders, including local communities in tourism development in Saudi Arabia. Ultimately,

although the literature presents a wide range of insights into aspects of community participation in tourism planning and development, there is a lack of studies on this topic in Saudi Arabia, justifying in-depth research to investigate local communities' understandings of tourism planning and development in Saudi Arabia.

To explore the situation in Saudi Arabia through the case of the Najran Region, especially in light of the social transformations accompanying *Vision 2030*, the following research questions inspired by the literature review are proposed:

- i. What are local communities' understandings of tourism in Najran?
- ii. Is local participation important in tourism planning and development?
- iii. What kind of participation by local communities takes place in Najran?
- iv. What potential challenges may affect local communities' participation in tourism planning and development?

Despite criticisms that Arnstein (1969), Pretty (1995) and Tosun (2006) developed and designed their typologies of participation in the Western world for use as conceptual and practical tools for effective community participation in these countries' planning and development programmes, these models remain highly influential typologies and have been used in recent studies. These typologies, therefore, are considered to be keys to investigating communities' understandings of tourism in the country. In addition, Gramsci's hegemony is essential for this study to uncover the complexities of power within Saudi society.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The study is intended to answer the following questions: What are local communities' understandings of tourism in Najran? Is local participation important in tourism planning and development? What kind of participation by local communities takes place in Najran? What potential challenges may affect local communities' participation in tourism planning and development? Accordingly, this chapter is structured as follows. First, it outlines the main debates on relevant research paradigms to highlight how knowledge is produced. Second, the rationale for applying the interpretive paradigm in this study is discussed. Third, social constructionism is explained and justified as a research strategy adopted for the study. Fourth, the study's research design is explained in the context of the overall shift towards a qualitative approach in tourism research. Finally, the data collection and analysis methods used in this study are described, including the ethical considerations, reflexivity and positionality. Finally, the chapter contents are summarised.

3.1 Research Paradigms

Choosing a workable paradigm is central to any research inquiry. A paradigm can be defined as researchers' view of the world or the belief system that guides their study of phenomena (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A paradigm constitutes a way of looking at the world, interpreting what is seen and deciding which observations are sufficiently real, valid and important to warrant documentation by researchers (Rubin and Rubin, 2011).

Patton (1990) stated that a paradigm is an important theoretical construct that illuminates fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality based on the ontological, epistemological and methodological positions related to the research to be undertaken. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Humphrey (2013), research paradigms can be characterised as adopting one of these three main positions. First, ontology is broadly defined as the study of the nature of being or what exists (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Lawson et al., 2013). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) understood ontology as the belief system that guides researchers when attempting to grasp the nature of reality. Researchers can adopt two opposing ontological stances. On one hand, a realist ontology posits that reality exists independently of the people perceiving it (Krauss, 2005). On the other hand, a relativist ontology rejects that reality is an objective entity that exists independently of an individual mind. This position acknowledges that perceptions of the world are constrained by both the perceiver and the context within which perceptions take place (Smith and Darlington, 1996). However, scholars such as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Scotland (2012) have not denied the external world but, instead, have claimed that human beings give meaning to the world via social relationships, language and culture.

Second, epistemology is the theory of knowledge (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004) or the study of knowledge (Lawson et al., 2013). Willig (2013:2) claimed that epistemology answers the question: 'How, and what, can we know?' Epistemology involves the relationship between the knower and what is known (Krauss, 2005). There are two opposing epistemological positions: objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism is the epistemological view that knowledge emanates from the object researched, so

researchers merely act as observers of the truth residing in the object (Crotty, 2003) and should remain detached and report only what they observe. In contrast, subjectivism is the epistemological view that reality can never be objectively observed from outside (Mack, 2010). This view holds that knowledge is an exclusively mental product emanating from the subject, while the object being studied has no involvement in this (Crotty, 2003).

Third, the methodology is the process of studying knowledge (Rageh et al., 2013). Ponterotto (2005) defined the methodology as the processes and procedures of research, and Solórzano and Yosso (2002) called it the place where theory and methods meet. Inductive and deductive methodological approaches exist. Also called theory-building research, the inductive approach involves inferring a conceptual framework and patterns from the observed data. Conversely, the deductive approach is called theory-testing and involves testing a theory and possibly refining, improving and extending it (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Both qualitative and quantitative research strategies are used as methodological approaches to describe practical research designs used to gain knowledge of the social or natural world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Bryman, 2016). For instance, qualitative methodologies are considered to be more appropriate approaches to explore ‘why’ questions (Ritchie et al., 2013) and to understand individuals’ beliefs and attitudes more deeply than enabled by scientific methodologies. Open-ended interviews, observation and other qualitative research methods are used to collect data (Bryman, 2016). In contrast, quantitative methodologies enable researchers to answer ‘what?’ questions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) and explain phenomena primarily through the collection of numerical data (Petty

et al., 2012). Closed-ended questions and surveys and structured interviews are examples of quantitative research methods for collecting data (Bryman, 2016).

The present researcher is aware of the ongoing debates on these ontological, epistemological and methodological positions. This discussion on these philosophical positions is intended to provide a framework for exploring the following research paradigms. A literature review (Crotty, 2003; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Ponterotto, 2005; Bryman, 2016; Gray, 2017) identified three major research paradigms in the social and human sciences: the positivist, post-positivist and interpretive paradigms. The positivist paradigm emerged from the work of early social scientists, such as Emile Durkheim (Craib, 1997), and has been widely applied in the natural sciences (Fox, 2008). Positivism is based on a realist, foundationalist ontology that views social reality as existing independently of knowledge of it (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Moon and Blackman, 2014). Positivists believe that the natural world and the social world have no qualitative differences, and general and universal laws govern individuals' social behaviour (Crotty, 2003), so they employ scientific methods to analyse the social world. In line with this point, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2017:21) stated that data are already 'there, and the task of the researcher thus becomes to gather and systematise them'. Accordingly, researchers should discover the truth, research should be objective and value free (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004), and a strong subjective inflection is to be avoided (Masadeh, 2012).

Regarding the methodologies and methods employed in positivist research, quantitative tools, such as questionnaires, experiments, are most commonly used. Other means of inquiry include comparative experimental, survey, observation and quasi-

experimental methods. Quantitative data are emphasised, but qualitative data can also be used, as and when appropriate (Ponterotto, 2005). Although positivism shifts from religious dogmas (Liburd, 2012), it, like all paradigms, has been the target of strong criticism. The aspects most commonly criticised include: the positivist application of laws and natural sciences to society where human thoughts and emotions cannot be directly measured (Bhattacharjee, 2012); the view of participants as passive and researchers as detached observers (Crotty, 2003; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004); and the exclusion of certain fundamental sources for understanding the world, such as subjective experiences and human beliefs, due to the positivist emphasis on quantitative methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

The post-positivist paradigm arose from dissatisfaction with some positivist tenets. For instance, positivists argue that an objective, observable reality exists, whereas post-positivists acknowledge that objective reality is only imperfectly observable (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Post-positivists, according to Crotty (2003), acknowledge limits to the certitude of knowledge generated by empirical observation. They believe that researchers sometimes impose the regularities they seek (Blaikie, 2007), so findings cannot always be generalised. In addition, post-positivists are aware that research, by its very nature, is not completely objective, so they recognise that scientific knowledge is neither perfect nor accurate. In an attempt to get closer to the truth, post-positivism tends to combine quantitative and qualitative research methods (Blaikie, 2007; Sparkes, 2015).

Despite these important differences, the post-positivist paradigm does not refute the positivist paradigm as it does not distance itself from the positivist emphasis on

research into causal relationships (Ponterotto, 2005). Furthermore, post-positivism does not challenge the notion of a single reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Creswell and Poth, 2017) that underpins the positivist focus on the researcher's control over investigations and the resulting exclusion of participants' voices.

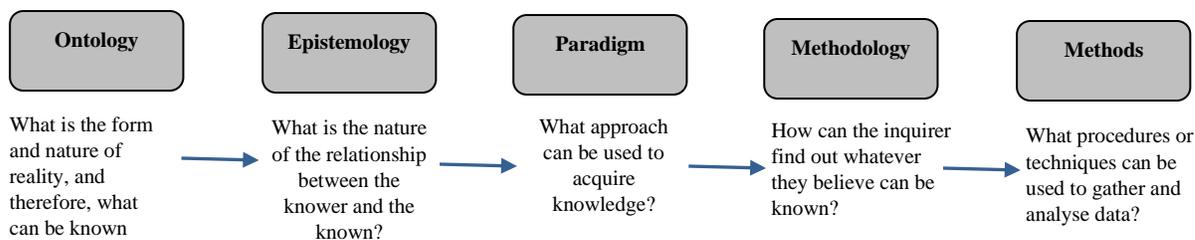
As noted, post-positivism does not reject many of the main tenets of positivism, so it does not fundamentally differ from positivism. Consequently, the interpretive paradigm emerged to push research away from these scientific paradigms. The interpretive paradigm, according to Humphrey (2013), has its origins in Weber's *verstehen* (understanding) approach to sociology. Unlike the positivist paradigm, interpretivism distances itself from absolute knowledge by aligning itself with a constructionist epistemology (Crotty, 2003; Ponterotto, 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Knowledge is believed to be formed through the co-construction of meaning in interactive dialogues between the researcher and the researched; consequently, there is no single truth to be found. If knowledge is co-constructed, and reality is manifold in nature, then research is value mediated rather than value free, which implies that the researcher is not a detached observer. Although authors such as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Scotland (2012) have not denied the existence of the external world, they have claimed that human beings give meaning to the world via social relationships, language and culture. Likewise, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) asserted that natural sciences and laws cannot be used to explain the social world as knowledge is an exclusively mental product (Crotty, 2003).

Interpretivists want to understand the social world through the lens of the people living in it, and such an understanding is reliant on the meanings people attach to their actions,

so it follows that interpretive research is concerned with listening to what people have to say. Interpretivists do not find it appropriate to test hypotheses or establish causal relationships using quantitative methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Petty et al., 2012). Instead, social phenomena can be understood only through qualitative methods (Angen, 2000). Interpretivism has been criticised for its subjectivity, but the rigor of interpretive research can be evaluated with an alternative set of criteria, such as dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Figure 3.1 outlines the key points discussed in this section.

Figure 3.1: Research Paradigms



Source: Adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994), Crotty (2003) and Humphrey (2013)

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. First, crucial debates surround these research paradigms due to scholars' diverging experiences, views and cultural and religious orientations. Second, this discussion highlights the different scientific and social mechanisms of producing knowledge. Finally, this description of research paradigms provides a framework for researchers to define philosophical positions consistent with their study objectives and research questions.

In light of this discussion, it is necessary to choose a research paradigm that fits the study objectives and research questions. The aim of exploring communities'

understandings of tourism planning and development in the Najran Region indicates a need for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon studied, which can be best supplied by using the interpretive paradigm. For instance, Bochantin and Cowan (2016:370) stated that interpretive research ‘is fundamentally concerned with meaning and seeks to understand individuals’ definitions and experiences in a situation’. The use of this paradigm is further explained and justified in the next section.

3.2 The Interpretive Paradigm of this Study

As indicated, the ultimate goal of this research is *verstehen*, Weber’s (1947) term for grasping, understanding, perceiving, knowing and comprehending social nature. Interpretive research is more appropriate than positivist research to achieve the study aim as the issues surrounding locals’ understandings of tourism and their involvement in decisions related to tourism development, as in the Najran Region, need to be placed within the context of the natural environment in which they occur. This point accords with Bryman (2016) and Harrikari and Rauhala’s (2016) assumptions that the social world cannot be understood in isolation from its natural context. The study aim, therefore, can be achieved only through visits to local communities in the Najran Region, and any observable phenomenon cannot be isolated from the social, cultural and religious dimensions of Najran society. This approach aligns with the beliefs of Creswell (2009), Scotland (2012), Chowdhury (2014) and Bryman (2016) that the social world cannot be understood in isolation from its natural setting.

Moreover, understanding and exploring possibly hidden meanings is central to this study, but explaining behaviours and thoughts in purely scientific terms would superficially meet this study aim (see Crotty, 2003). Accordingly, an emphasis on

figures, surveys and structured techniques, as used in scientific approaches, would not be consistent with the research questions posed. Moreover, this study does not test a theory but instead analyses data collected in the field (see Bhattacharjee, 2012), making the interpretive paradigm the most suitable approach. These ideas draw support from Radnor (1994:9), who argued that it is 'not possible to go into the field of inquiry with a tight research design' as it might mislead researchers into seeing only what they want or expect to see.

Furthermore, the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions are in harmony with the interpretive paradigm. For instance, this study follows a relativist ontology, which holds that multiple realities exist. Similarly, interpretive research aims to see the social world through the lenses of the researcher and the people studied (Greener, 2008), allowing for multiple views of reality rather than one single truth, as in positivism. Realities, as both Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Green (2017) argued, are produced by individuals' consciousness and cognition, influenced by the social environment and the culture in which they find themselves. Similarly, Moon and Blackman (2014:1170) asserted that reality 'is constructed within the human mind, such that no one true reality exists; instead, reality is relative according to each individual who experiences it at a given time and place'. Consequently, Najran residents' understandings of tourism and the extent of their participation in tourism development can be best understood through the eyes of these local people, keeping in mind that this phenomenon cannot be isolated from its natural context. In sum, the realist ontology of absolute knowledge and an external reality independent of human experience does not fit this study.

Regarding the epistemological stance, the researcher chooses co-constructionism, which acknowledges that knowledge is socially constructed. In this study, the researcher is linked with the participants in an interactive relationship as they co-construct meanings around local communities' participation in planning in tourism development. Likewise, Carter (1998) and Young (1999) upheld that tourism is socially constructed and can only be understood through an interactive process of creating meaning by the researcher and the researched. Truth and meaning thus are not discovered, as in the positivist epistemology, but are constructed. In sum, the philosophical position of this research corresponds with the interpretive paradigm, which is appropriate for the study aim.

Having given the rationale for the selection of the interpretive paradigm for this study, it is important to discuss the research strategy to select the appropriate data collection and analysis methods for this study. The need to do so is consistent with Denzin and Lincoln's (2005:25) argument that 'strategies of inquiry put paradigms into motion. At the same time, strategies also connect the researcher to specific methods of collecting and analysing empirical materials'. However, according to scholars such as Crotty (2003), the same strategy can be informed by different research paradigms depending on the epistemological stance adopted by the researcher. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) showed that research techniques not only form distinct strategies but also convey their distinct histories and sets of underlying principles. Thus, in line with the interpretive paradigm and the study's philosophical stance, the selection of social constructionism as the research strategy for this study is justified in the next section.

3.3 Social Constructionism as a Research Strategy

The terms ‘constructivism’, ‘constructionism’ and ‘social constructionism’ are often used interchangeably in a range of academic areas, such as psychology, methodology and tourism, which may cause confusion about these terms’ various meanings and applications (Young and Collin, 2004; Raskin, 2008; Pernecky, 2012). In this study, ‘social constructionism’ and ‘constructionism’ are understood to have the same meaning and are used interchangeably. The origins of social constructionism can be traced to various intellectual traditions, notably sociology, social philosophy and the sociology of knowledge. Within sociology, for instance, we find Garfinkel’s (1967) notion that a sense of the real is a practical achievement, accomplished through contextual, embodied and continuous interpretations of human beings. This orientation often focuses on interactions among people in the contexts in which they naturally occur. Within social philosophy, Schutz (1960) focused on the life-world, proposing that personal experiences are shaped by social processes and interactions among people within their natural environments. From the sociology of knowledge, Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) influential book *The Social Construction of Reality* stands acknowledged as the origins of the concept of social constructionism.

Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann (1966) proposed that all knowledge is socially constructed as people are born into a society and a culture with their own existing norms and predefined patterns of conduct socially transmitted among generations. The construction of reality, therefore, is produced by social construction processes, influenced by historical, cultural and social conditions. Accordingly, Young and Collin (2004:376) stated that social constructionism takes the view that ‘knowledge in some

areas is the product of our social practices and institutions, or of the interactions and negotiations between relevant social groups'. Crotty (1998:42) had a similar emphasis and defined social constructionism as

The view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.

In the social constructionist view, therefore, the generation of knowledge, opinions and ideas about reality is sparked not by individuals but by social processes (Gergen, 1994). If all reality is socially constructed and historically bounded, 'knowledge is not something people possess somewhere in their heads, but rather, something people do together' (Gergen, 1985:270). However, the claim that all knowledge is socially constructed has been criticised. Hanson and Grimmer (2007) argued that physical facts can indeed be objective and independent of human consciousness. Social constructionism, though, does not deny the existence of objective facts (Ragin and Amoroso, 2010) but, instead, claims that 'things' are in themselves 'meaningless', and it is people who give meanings to things through social agreements. In this way, social constructionism marks an attempt to bring objectivity and subjectivity together (Segre, 2016). As mentioned, knowledge and reality are constructed through social interactions and the language people employ within their natural contexts.

Language represents 'a convention people establish in order to understand each other' and construct social reality (Cojocaru et al., 2012:35). People use agreed-upon contextual conventions such as labels, categories and concepts to facilitate daily communication and jointly construct their world (Fuller and Loogma, 2009; Segre, 2016). Accordingly, social constructionists see language as a vehicle for the

construction of worldviews and realities (Lit and Shek, 2002; Walker, 2015). Language, therefore, is fundamentally viewed as having not a fixed meaning but a socially constructed meaning (Parker, 1998), which is always questionable, contestable and temporary (Burr, 2015). It is also ‘a site of variability, disagreement, and potential conflict where power relations are acted out and contested’ (Lit and Shek, 2002:111). Language, therefore, can be an engine for social action and is considered to be fundamental to the process of producing knowledge in the contexts in which people live.

In line with this discussion, several features of social constructionism highlighted by McLeod (1997) are relevant to this study. First, social constructionists challenge the traditional scientific approach to knowledge, which is essentially non-reflexive in nature. Second, they adopt a critical position on assumptions about the social world, which are seen as entrenching the interests of dominant social groups. Third, social constructionists believe that understandings of the world are the products of historical and cultural processes of interactions and negotiations among groups of people in their contexts. Fourth, social constructionists maintain that the goal of research is not to produce fixed, universally valid knowledge but to open up appreciation of what is possible.

As part of the social sciences, tourism is seen as inherently socially constructed in nature (Carter, 1998; Young, 1999). In the past two decades, social constructionism has increasingly appeared as a theory of knowledge in the tourism literature (Pernecky, 2012). Many tourism studies have applied social constructionism (Small, 1999; Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001; Kayat, 2002; Hollinshead, 2006; Uriely and Belhassen, 2006;

Ryan and Gu, 2010; Pernecky, 2012; Laeis and Lemke, 2016; Mottiar, 2016; Huang et al., 2017; Longart et al., 2017). Studies have used a social constructionist approach, for example, to explore the outcomes of CBT, understand local communities' worldviews and perceptions on tourism, investigate female tourists' experiences and analyse the motivations of tourism social entrepreneurs.

Tourism is a complex phenomenon (Isaac et al., 2016) involving multiple players with different views and opinions and varying levels of power and capacities (Cizmar and Lisjak, 2007; Gezon, 2014). Approaching tourism issues from the perspective of social constructionism offers the advantage of closely collaborating with local people and other stakeholders in natural settings (Longart et al., 2017) where they can describe their views on tourism development tourism. This is because social constructionists are principally concerned with exploring how people experience and describe the world in which they live (Slife and Williams, 1995). Social constructionists also look for the common forms of understandings and worldviews created and shared by the people in a given society.

This study, therefore, employs social constructionism as its research strategy for a number of reasons. First, in line with the interpretive paradigm and the ontological and epistemological stances of the research, social constructionism is consistent with the study aim and research questions exploring communities' understandings of tourism planning and development in the Najran Region. Understanding local communities' worldviews and perceptions of tourism and participation in tourism development recalls the analogy of the iceberg: most of the information lies below the surface. A social constructionist approach allows for close interactions between the researcher and

the participants, which bring to the surface hidden meanings through the co-construction of knowledge about the world (Crotty, 2003; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015; Green, 2017).

Second, the study is concerned not with finding a unique reality but, instead, determining the participants' constructed realities (see Fuller and Loogma, 2009). Social constructionism enables the researcher to explore the inherited categories and concepts used in everyday interactions to produce knowledge about tourism and local communities' involvement in tourist activities in Najran. In addition, socially defined labels such as gender and race can be best uncovered through a social constructionist strategy (Harris, 2006; Burr, 2015), allowing various interpretations of tourism in Najran to emerge. Ultimately, this research is exploratory and seeks a deep understanding of how local communities construct knowledge about their participation in tourism decisions, and a positivistic orientation would contradict this objective. Surveys and quantitative figures fail to fully capture the meanings people attach to their individual experiences. Thus, in line with social constructionism, qualitative research is adopted for the research design, described in detail in the next section.

3.4 Research Design

This study is aimed at exploring communities' understandings of tourism planning and development in the Najran Region of Saudi Arabia, with research questions inspired by the literature review and developed to meet this aim. The selected qualitative research design suits both the research aim and the research questions. Qualitative research

Helps us to understand human experience and meaning within a given context using text rather than numbers, interpreting experience and meaning to generate understanding and recognizing the role of the researcher in the constructing of knowledge. (Petty et al., 2011:267)

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Bryman (2016) saw qualitative data as rich and detailed, providing in-depth understandings through inductive analysis. Similarly, Charmaz (2014:23) asserted that qualitative methods are capable of producing rich data ‘reveal[ing] participants’ views, feelings, intentions and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives’.

Although there is still a growing volume of positivist types of research, which are published in leading international journals, such as *Tourism Management* and *Annals of Tourism Research* (Decrop, 1999; Crotty, 2003; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Morgan and Pritchard, 2005; Maguigad et al., 2015; Nunkoo et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2020), the interpretive paradigm has acquired importance in recent decades, and this paradigm can only be implemented using qualitative methods. According to Riley and Love (2000), qualitative research has gained increasing acceptance in many fields, especially newer disciplines such as tourism. These disciplines have challenged the scientific approach as it cannot fully address questions of understanding and meaning. In addition, positivism and quantitative approaches are concerned with theorising the entire social world but ignore the underlying subjectivity of the tourism experience and create frameworks that do not allow for freedom of expression (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Morgan and Pritchard, 2005; Ren et al., 2010; Xin et al., 2013; Cetin and Dincer, 2014). Consequently, many researchers have begun to explore paradigms beyond positivism.

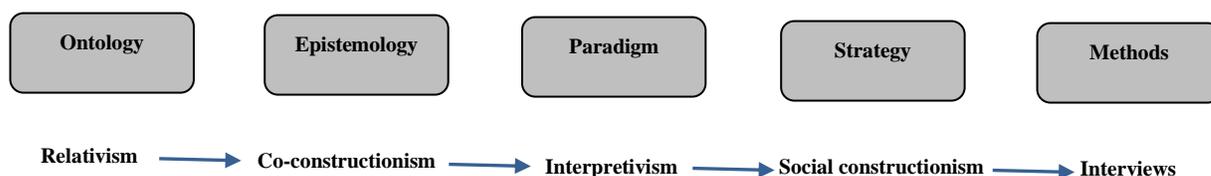
The concept of scientific truth is especially challenged when attempting to understand what is true in society (Riley and Love, 2000; Ryan and Gu, 2010). Tourism is one of the social sciences that has realised the importance of moving away from the notion that reality is 'out there' (the objective, 'expert' view) towards the concept of multiple realities and subjective perspectives held by the inhabitants of the social world (Echtner and Jamal, 1997; Getz, 2008). Many researchers have recognised this shift towards a qualitative approach in tourism research. For instance, Phillimore and Goodson (2004), Fox (2008) and Dredge and Jamal (2015) stated this approach provides insights into the complexities of tourist interactions and listens to otherwise barely audible voices. Qualitative approaches, therefore, have been increasingly used, and scholars have moved away from marketing research focused on demography and expenditures to explorations of opinions, motivations and experiences (Dredge and Jamal, 2015).

Qualitative research has further favoured understanding power dynamics and politics from the perspectives of community members (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). In addition, qualitative research has been viewed as a tool of empowerment. Constructing common meanings and understandings with local communities, in addition to enhancing their capabilities, can help them cease from being passive voices and instead participate more directly in tourism development decision-making (Cole, 2006; Sedgley et al., 2011). Qualitative methods are employed to elicit in-depth insights and acquire robust information about local people's attitudes towards tourism and issues surrounding participation in tourism planning and development (Valencia-Sandoval et al., 2010). This is consistent with the study aim and is in line with the research strategy of social constructionism. It is also especially suited to the nature of the research

questions concerned with deepening understandings of participation in planning and the ways in which local people construct their social world through the case of tourism development in the Najran Region.

The next section explains the research methods employed. Figure 3.2 provides a visual summary of the discussion so far and the methodological framework adopted in this research.

Figure 3.2: *Methodological Framework of the Study*



3.5 Research Methods

This section explains, justifies and describes in detail the data collection and analysis processes employed in this study, including the use of thematic analysis. Finally, the ethical considerations and the concepts of reflexivity and positionality are discussed.

3.5.1 Data Collection

This section explains the data collection process, including the sampling criteria, participant recruitment and interview formats. The following section discusses the first phase as a tool for collecting project data.

Phase one of data collection: Interviews

Aligning with the research design outlined, data were collected by conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The interviews in this study followed the framework

of Sarantakos's (2013:280) standards and technical elements of qualitative interviewing:

- Reflexivity: Interviews involve methods allowing researchers to reflect upon their subjective approach to the world and consider the implications for social life from the knowledge they produce.
- Naturalism: Qualitative interviews are directed to study reality as it really is on its own terms manifested in everyday life events.
- Primacy of the participants: The participants are the experts who provide valuable data. They are as important as the researcher and not merely a data source.
- Openness: Qualitative interviews require willingness to change, correct and adjust the course of study as required by the research. Interviewers are expected to engage in open discussion with the participants and to maintain a stimulating but not dominating role.
- Flexibility: The qualitative researcher follows the course that emerges during the interview.
- Life as process: Interviews determine aspects of personal experience displayed in everyday life.

In short, face-to-face semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to immerse himself in the participants' wealth of knowledge and reveal possibly hidden meanings surrounding local communities' understandings of tourism and involvement in tourism

development decision-making. These interviews also offered a distinct advantage by capturing 'social cues', such as voice, intonation and body language (Irvine et al., 2013:6). Moreover, Irvine et al. pointed to the advantage of developing rapport between the researcher and the participants working together to co-produce the data. In contrast to semi-structured interviews, a structured approach appeared too rigid for this project. In the latter approach, the inquirer would take more control over the direction of the interview and ask short, specific questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Bryman (2016) highlighted the similarity to questionnaires with questions constructed in advance to elicit answers fitting into predetermined categories. Using a sequence of set questions was not appropriate for this research as it would allow the researcher little flexibility and relegate the participants to a passive role.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, unstructured interviews would have no real structure and would be guided entirely by the interviewee. The researcher would start with one interview question and then respond according to the respondent's answer (Smith et al., 2009). In this approach, the data collected would reflect what was important to the interviewee, not the researcher, although the researcher could delve further into areas of interest (Smith et al., 2009). They suggested that semi-structured interviews would allow enough flexibility for an in-depth exploration of the topic concerned but would provide the researcher with a 'loose agenda' (Smith et al., 2009: 58) to ensure that the data analysis could answer the research questions. Ultimately, the construction of meaning was central to this study, so semi-structured interviews were deemed to be appropriate and congruent with the interpretive paradigm, social constructionist strategy and qualitative methodology chosen for the study.

Some interview questions were developed from the literature to guide the interviews during field work. Following Bryman’s (2016) suggestions, this guide comprised three types of questions: icebreaking, preliminary and key questions (see Table 3.1). The questions were largely inspired by the literature review.

Table 3.1: Interview Questions

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Icebreaker questions | Tell me about your job? |
| | How is tourism involved in it? |
| Preliminary questions | What does tourism mean to you? |
| | What do you believe are the benefits and drawbacks of tourism? |
| | What does ‘community’ mean to you? |
| | What does ‘participation’ mean to you? |
| Key questions | What do ‘planning’ and ‘decision-making’ mean to you? |
| | Why is local participation important in making decisions about tourism in the Najran Region? |
| | What kind of participation by local communities is taking place in Najran? |
| | What potential challenges may affect local communities’ participation in decision-making in tourism development in Najran? |

To recruit participants to answer the research questions, inclusion criteria for the target samples were set, as discussed in the following.

Sampling criteria

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants traditionally linked to tourism development in the Najran Region. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research

requires purposefully selecting small samples of participants to study in depth (Bryman, 2016). Purposive sampling is defined as ‘selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study’s questions’ (Teddlie and Yu, 2007:77). As suggested by Erlandson (1993:82), the use of purposive sampling in qualitative-based research ‘maximise[s] discovery of the heterogeneous patterns and problems that occur in the particular context under study’. For this study, the following inclusion criteria were developed to select the participants:

- Age 18 years or older
- Both men and women
- Saudi nationals and other nationals who live in Najran, such as Yemenis, Jordanians, Egyptians and Palestinians
- Ability to speak Arabic or local dialects

In this study, the target participants were selected to represent local communities in Najran. They belonged to both groups traditionally associated with tourism activities (e.g. taxi drivers, hoteliers and tour guides) and groups not traditionally associated (e.g. elders, journalists, activists, environmental groups, women’s group and Bedouins). This diversity of genders, tribal affiliations, religions and traditional links (or lack thereof) to tourism in the sample provided insights into the collective experiences of the region. After the inclusion criteria for the target sample were set, the process of recruiting the participants began.

Participant recruitment

The participant recruitment process followed several steps:

1. The Tier 2 Application Form was prepared and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) for the College of Social Sciences at the University of Brighton. Notably, the Tier 2 application presents a higher level of ethical risk that is considered by the CREC at the University, and the work of all PhD students has this level of ethical risk.
2. The researcher coordinated with the participants to obtain their consent to take part in the interviews. The invitations to take part in the interviews were delivered verbally. Written information and consent forms were not provided for the following reasons. First, in Saudi Arabia, people do not feel comfortable being asked to sign a formal consent form. Second, they typically worry that their written consent may affect their future relationships with the relevant government departments in the region. It is quite acceptable to informally make arrangements through oral conversations as written forms are not the norm in Saudi society. Third, this approach was more likely to encourage the participants to freely interact with the researcher. This is in line with Metro (2014), who claimed that one of the dilemmas facing researchers in recruiting participants is how to inform them about the research and obtain their permission to participate, without formalising or unnecessarily complicating the relationship between the researcher and the interviewees. Likewise, Matelski (2014) argued that using written consent forms often causes problems, most notably creating a

hierarchy between the researcher and the participants, which may have negative consequences, especially for people who live in areas that are not democratic. Therefore, this study saw no need to send written consent forms to encourage participation in the interviews. Moreover, less formalisation of the interviews meant the participants could likely speak freely and give an honest answer about tourism. (Written information and consent forms are attached in Appendix A.)

Access to the female study participants was achieved, either directly or in coordination with their male relatives in line with the Saudi custom of *mahram* (guardianship). Doing so was especially important in the highly patriarchal society of Najran, which is very different from societal norms in other cities within KSA. For some of the interviews, male relatives had to be contacted in order to invite female participants to attend the interview sessions. Per *mahram*, these male relatives were also invited to attend the interviews. However, it is worth mentioning that all the interviews with the female participants were conducted one-to-one, and no guardians were present. To ensure that the women were genuinely in a position to autonomously decide whether to participate in the study, the researcher employed his sister who has worked as a teacher for 25 years and who offers self-development courses for women in Najran. This family member coordinated the female participants' involvement in the research and informed them about the research objectives and questions via the phone.

Arguably, there are two reasons why the researcher hired his sister as a gatekeeper and not some other woman or another female researcher who is not a relative. First, the religious and cultural limitations that shape people's daily lives in Najran have an impact on the people that choose to assist in the data collection (see Alhazmi and Nyland, 2015; Erogul et al., 2019). For instance, it is more likely that seeking help from a woman who earns her living as a professional researcher and is not from the researcher's family, will cause them harm, especially in a tribal context, such as Najran (Doumato, 1999; Al-Rasheed, 2013; Bajnaid and Elyas, 2017) where direct communication between genders is still a taboo. The second reason was strategic; the coordination for the interviews required frequent meetings and contacts between the myself and the female assistant. This makes it even more difficult, especially when the female assistant is not blood-related to the researcher. Therefore, the researcher's sister was strategically used because of the ease and flexibility of communicating with her, especially in dealing with urgent matters that needed direct intervention from her in relation to the study's female participants.

3. The researcher travelled to Najran in Saudi Arabia to conduct interviews with the participants to collect data.

Conducting interviews

In this project, the interviews took place in two phases. After receiving ethical approval, phase one was conducted in August and September 2017. These pilot interviews

involved seven participants representing local communities in the Najran Region (see Table 3.2). The pilot interviews reminded the researcher of the complexity of interviewing, although he had carried out research interviews while studying for his master’s degree. He found that interviewing consisted of an exhausting combination of being anxious, asking questions, trying to listen to the interviewees and remembering what they said to bring them back to points of interest. It was apparent that the researcher could not underestimate the skills required to capture the needed data. The researcher also recognised that he had missed opportunities to ask more specific follow-up questions that would have provided a deeper understanding of issues related to participation in tourism planning and development in Najran. Phase one, therefore, can be called the stage of lessons learned or learning from mistakes. The challenges and mistakes of phase one were addressed in phase two, which took place from July to September 2018. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 participants, whose profiles can be found in Table 3.2, with noting that the given names are pseudonyms.

Table 3.2: Participants’ Information

| Participants’ Codes | Age | Gender | Education | Nationality | Place of Birth | Work | Interview Method | Data Collection Method |
|---------------------|-----|--------|-------------------|-------------|----------------|---|------------------|------------------------|
| Phase One | | | | | | | | |
| Ebrahim | 50 | Male | High school | Saudi | Najran | Owner of an Arabian equestrian school (event organiser) | Face to face | Taking notes |
| Mashaal | 40 | Male | Bachelor’s degree | Saudi | Najran | Community activist and Twitter writer | Face to face | Taking notes |

| Participants' Codes | Age | Gender | Education | Nationality | Place of Birth | Work | Interview Method | Data Collection Method |
|---------------------|-----|--------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|--|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ali T | 62 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Tourism guide | Face to face | Taking notes |
| Hamda | 70 | Female | No formal education | Saudi | Najran | Salesperson in the female market | Face to face | Taking notes |
| Riyad | 55 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Jordanian | Jordan | General director of the Gloria Inn Najran Hotel | Face to face | Taking notes |
| Saleh | 52 | Male | High school | Saudi | Najran | Handicrafts worker | Face to face | Taking notes |
| Rahma | 54 | Female | No formal education | Saudi | Najran | Handicrafts worker | Face to face | Taking notes |
| Phase two | | | | | | | | |
| Asmaa | 22 | Female | Diploma | Saudi | Najran | Director of Dorar Celebrations (for 5–11 year-old children) Professional photographer | Phone | Taking notes |
| Hamadna | 48 | Male | PhD | Sudanese | Sudan | Supervisor of the Community Service Department, University of Najran | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Mohammed N | 52 | Male | PhD | Saudi | Najran | Chair of the Management Association in Najran Activist in tourism issues | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Elham | 33 | Female | Bachelor's degree | Yemeni | Yemen | Presenter on social and tourism programmes on Al Wadi satellite channel in Najran | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Hussein G | 46 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Craftsman Graphic artist (painter) | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Dalamah | 40 | Male | High school | Saudi | Najran | Member of the Municipal Council Investor in tourism activity | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |

| Participants' Codes | Age | Gender | Education | Nationality | Place of Birth | Work | Interview Method | Data Collection Method |
|---------------------|-----|--------|-------------------|-------------|----------------|--|------------------|--------------------------------|
| | | | | | | Member of the National Committee for Tourism in the Council of Chambers of Commerce in the Kingdom | | |
| Mounira K | 44 | Female | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Businesswoman Supervisor of the Women's Tourism Committee in the Chamber of Commerce in Najran | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Zaid | 60 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Tribal leader | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Saeed M | 48 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | President of literary club in Najran | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Mounira D | 55 | Female | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Former chair of the Women's Tourism Committee in Najran | Face to face | Taking notes |
| Masoud | 45 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Imam of Khaled ibn al-Walid Mosque in Najran | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Fatema | 29 | Female | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Owner of a women's cafe | Phone | Taking notes |
| Abdullah | 32 | Male | High school | Yemeni | Yemen | Craftsman | Face to face | Taking notes |
| Hussein A | 61 | Male | PhD | Saudi | Najran | Social activist and writer on heritage and tourism issues in Najran | Face to face | Taking notes |
| Masada | 35 | Female | High school | Saudi | Najran | Journalist Member of Amal Association for People with Special Needs | Phone | Taking notes |
| Ali S | 26 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Chairman of Youth Tourism | Face to face | Recording data |

| Participants' Codes | Age | Gender | Education | Nationality | Place of Birth | Work | Interview Method | Data Collection Method |
|---------------------|-----|--------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------------|
| | | | | | | Committee in Najran | | Taking notes |
| Ali H | 29 | Male | Master's degree | Saudi | Tabuk Region, KSA | Social activist Recruiter of local people who close to tourist sites in Najran Member of Najran Prisoners' Support Committee | Face to face | Recording Data +taking notes |
| Ali N | 51 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Director of the Culture and Arts Association in Najran | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Maryam | 30 | Female | Master's degree | Saudi | Najran | Teacher and coach in social development | Phone | Recording data Taking notes |
| Mubarak | 44 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | President of the Najran Green Environmental Association | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Mohammed G | 38 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Abha City, KSA | Director of the Committee for Social Development in Najran | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Mohammed H | 45 | Male | High school | Saudi | Najran | Tour operator | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Nada | 36 | Female | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Tourism event organiser | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Nasser | 40 | Male | Bachelor's degree | Saudi | Najran | Teacher in a mosque group | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |
| Mohammed W | 23 | Male | Student | Saudi | Najran | Student Member of a Najran tourist group | Face to face | Recording data Taking notes |

The researcher was more confident and knowledgeable about the research in phase two than phase one. After obtaining approval from the participants, the interview locations were identified following Edwards and Holland's (2013) suggestion to conduct interviews in available spaces that minimised interruptions and were convenient and accessible for both the interviewer and the participants. The interviews were held in the participants' workplaces and houses and public places such as hotels, cafes and parks.

Before starting the interviews, the researcher again reviewed the consent and participant information sheets with the participants. The researcher was very keen to build trust with the participants by informing them about their rights and the role required of them. The researcher also discussed recording the interviews (see Seidman, 2013), and some participants agreed to record their interviews, while others declined. For the latter, the researcher took careful notes during the interviews, and to ensure that he understood the answers, he repeated the participants' responses and asked them to confirm their answers. The interview length ranged from 90 minutes to two hours due to the Najran custom of exchanging gifts and serving coffee and tea. While the interviews were initially planned to take 45–60 minutes, some participants' educational level also necessitated formulating questions in different, less formal ways corresponding to the participants' local dialects. Although such challenges occurred during some interviews, they produced rich information through the interactions between the researcher and the participants.

The researcher avoided giving any signs to the interviewees that he agreed, disagreed, approved or disapproved of their perspectives, which may have affected the depth and

quality of the data generated. The researcher tried to avoid asking questions that were biased or led the interviewees to give answers they believed he wanted to hear (Bryman, 2016). To avoid making any assumptions, it was important to check after most responses that the researcher had understood the meanings the participants had ascribed to their perspectives or experiences and the language they had used. While recognising that the researcher's interpretations would affect his understandings and that he could never truly access the participants' direct experiences and understandings, reflecting back on what the researcher had heard presented the opportunity for the interviewees to clarify or expand their understandings and increased the researcher's confidence that he had understood what they had said. At the end of each interview, the participants were given opportunities to discuss any issues they felt had not been covered.

3.5.2 Data Analysis

The data collected during the semi-structured interviews were subjected to theoretical thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a commonly used approach to understand qualitative data and a useful method for researchers working within interpretivist paradigms. Thematic analysis enables researchers to organise data and identify common themes and patterns both within and across data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). As a tool for data analysis, thematic analysis is not constrained by pre-existing theoretical frameworks. It is also not associated with any particular qualitative methodology, so it has been used flexibly across different types of qualitative research (Braun and Clarke 2006). It can be suggested that all qualitative analysis is thematic, and its application

simply depends on what the researcher is seeking. This study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) protocols for coding and analysing interview data:

1. Familiarisation with data: transcribing the data, reading and rereading the data and noting initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes: systematically coding interesting features of the data across the entire data set and collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes: collating codes into potential themes and gathering all the data relevant to each potential theme
4. Reviewing themes: checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2) and generating a thematic map of the analysis
5. Defining and naming themes: performing an ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells and generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6. Producing the report: performing the final analysis, including selecting vivid, compelling extracts; conducting the final analysis of the selected extracts and relating them back to the research questions and the literature; producing a report of the analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a detailed, six-step guide to conducting thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is not a linear but an iterative process, which develops over time and should not be done quickly (Patton, 1990; McShane and Cunningham, 2012).

Using this protocol to analyse the data collected in the field, the researcher took the following steps.

Transcription

As mentioned, some study participants gave consent to record their interviews, while others did not. The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim into Microsoft Word documents. Each page had a wide margin for making notes and analytic comments. Smith et al. (2009) suggested writing initial ideas and comments during the transcription process and then re-visiting them during and after conducting the analysis. These notes were written in an individual journal kept for each interviewee. All the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Although the process of verbatim transcription is time-consuming, complex and fraught with technical dilemmas (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006) and, for every hour of taped interview, 6–7 hours of transcription is required (Britten, 1995), it was decided that the researcher would transcribe the interview data himself.

An interviewer who chooses to transcribe her/his own data ‘takes the opportunity to listen carefully and think deeply about the recorded voices and the interview context, using sensory and other memory’ (Park and Zeanah, 2005:246). This also provides a unique opportunity for researchers to critique their own work and potentially improve their interviewing technique (Matheson, 2007). Furthermore, professional transcription services offer varying levels of skill, which may not adequately represent the nonverbal elements that can significantly impact the meanings of the words (Cope, 2016).

During the transcription, which was very time consuming, the researcher documented initial, emerging interpretations and feelings about the findings and then revisited them in the analysis stage. A similar process was conducted with the unrecorded interviews. Notes were taken during each interview, and after the interview, the researcher wrote down initial comments, impressions and points requiring more details. The quality and depth of the data notably increased from one interview to another, along with the researcher's experience and confidence. The transcription processes performed in the field were followed by reading all the transcripts as a whole in the next step.

Transcripts review

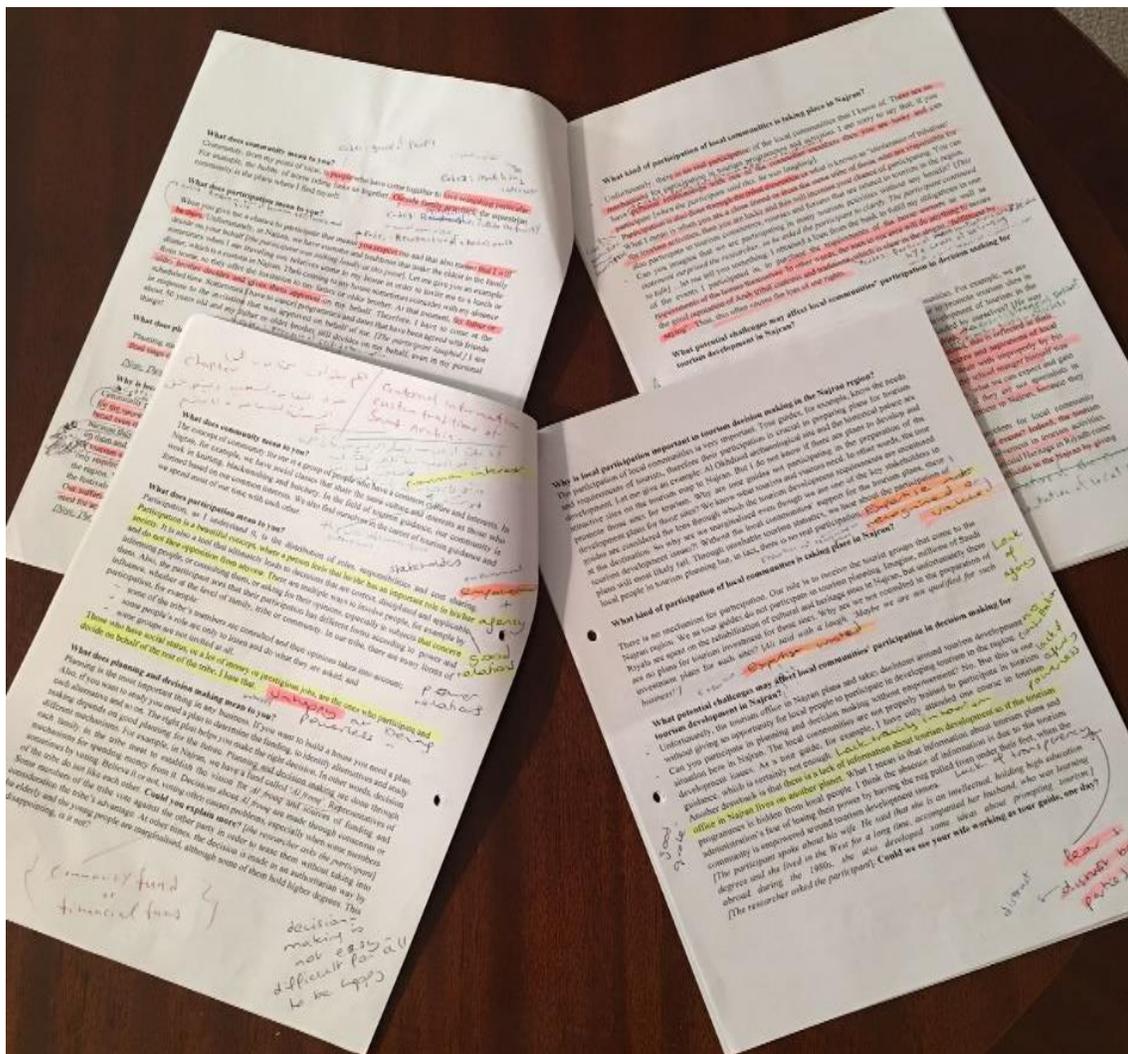
After the researcher's return to the UK, some interviews were translated into English for a number of reasons (see Appendix B for an example). The first reason was to show the researcher's supervisors the quality of the data collected in the field. The second reason was to benefit from their experience in data analysis. Accordingly, in line with member checking, the supervisors reviewed the transcripts, which verified and cross-validated the data with fresh of pair of eyes (Harper and Cole, 2012). Despite the lessons learned, the researcher, upon returning to read all the transcripts, was **amazed** by the large amount of data collected from the field. After the researcher became accustomed to the data and gradually merged the data, his frustration faded, and his enthusiasm began to increase. He very carefully read all the transcripts line by line, one by one (Burnard et al., 2008), to gain a holistic understanding of them (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Initial thoughts and interesting points regarding the research questions were written down (Esfehani and Walters, 2018), alongside the notes recorded during the transcription phase. This step was followed by the coding process.

Coding process

Relevant words, phrases, sentences, sections, concepts and opinions were labelled in a process called 'coding' (see Figure 3.3) based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) criteria:

- They were repeated in several places.
- They surprised the researcher.
- The interviewees explicitly stated that they were important.
- Similar points were made in the literature review.

Figure 3.3: Examples of coding



Mural painting

In this stage, the extracted codes were transferred to yellow sticky notes, which were posted on a large wall. This step in the thematic analysis step allowed the researcher to stroll through the whole image in the participants' minds. In other words, it was a silent dialogue between the researcher and the participants. In this stage, data not relevant to the study were filtered and placed in a separate file where they could be accessed whenever needed. This step was important and took several weeks.

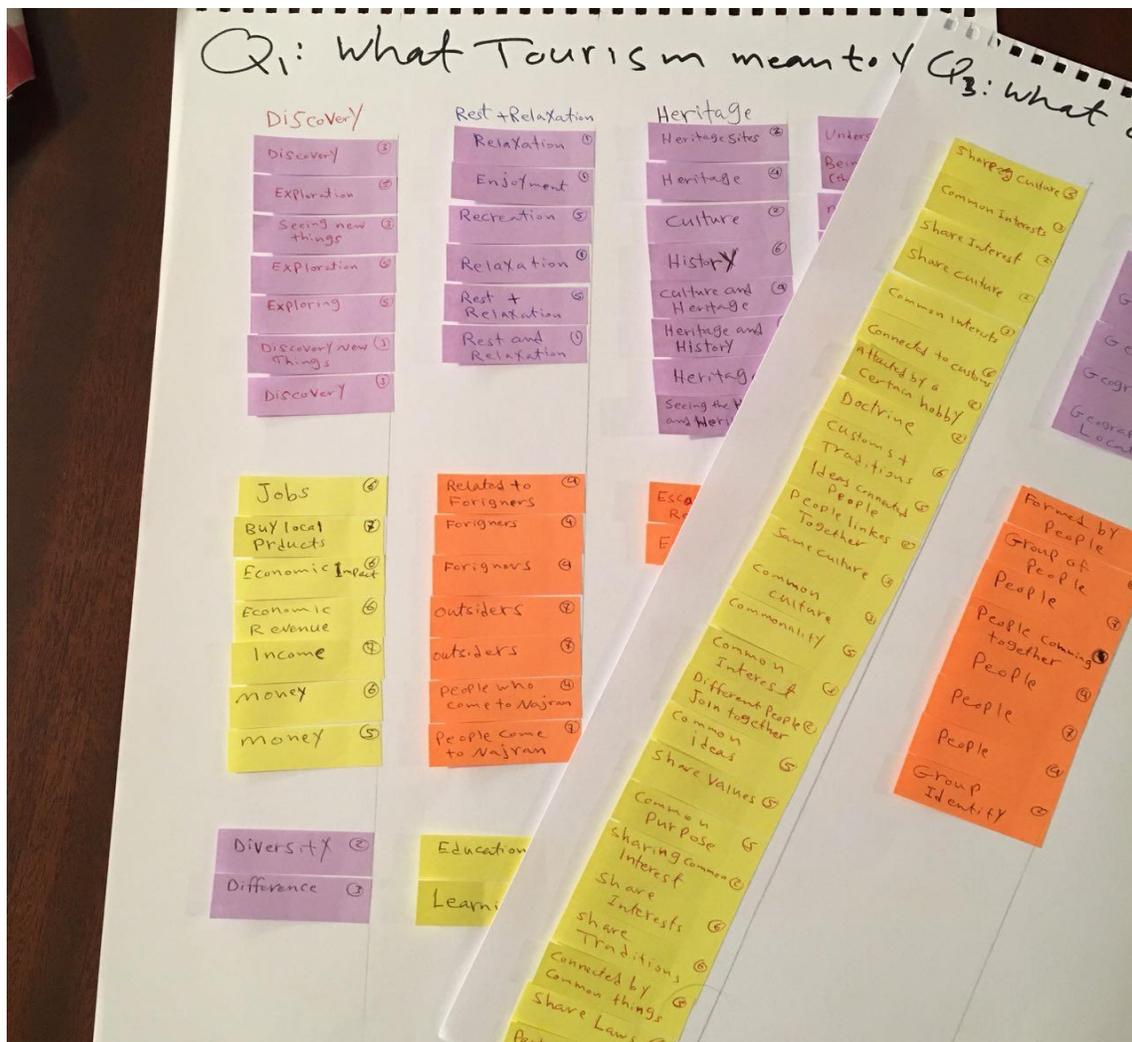
Figure 3.4: *The Mural Painting*



Development of basic themes

In this step, the sticky yellow notes were collected to determine the similarities and differences between the codes. The notes were then placed on tables and then re-posted to form relationships among the codes, decide which codes were the most important, create categories by bringing several codes together and developed new codes by combining two or more codes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Esfehiani and Walters, 2018). At all times, the researcher attempted to be unbiased, creative and open-minded. In this stage, basic themes began to emerge (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: Emerging Themes



Development of higher-level themes

The basic themes were further condensed into higher-level themes. Repeated reviews were performed to check the coherence and clarity of the themes, their associated data and the coded extracts. Each theme was carefully defined to ensure that it truly reflected what it was attached to (Braun and Clark, 2006). After this step, the findings and the discussion sections of this thesis were written. Thematic analysis presents significant advantages, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) and shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: *Advantages of Thematic Analysis*

| No. | Ten Advantages of Thematic Analysis |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Flexibility |
| 2 | Relatively easy and quick to learn and do |
| 3 | Accessible to researchers with little or no experience in qualitative research |
| 4 | Results generally accessible to the educated general public |
| 5 | Useful method for working within the participatory research paradigm with participants as collaborators |
| 6 | Usefully summarises key features of a large set of data, and offers a thick description of the data set |
| 7 | Highlights similarities and differences across a data set |
| 8 | Generates unanticipated insights |
| 9 | Allows social and psychological interpretations of data |
| 10 | Produces qualitative analyses suitable for informing policy development |

Source: *Braun and Clarke (2006)*

This approach has become increasingly popular in tourism and hospitality studies in recent years (Esfehani and Walters, 2018). Walters (2016:108) demonstrated that thematic analysis is suitable when ‘a concept is cloaked in linguistic ambiguity and/or is subject to social, cultural and temporal variation, such as the study of meanings of place or representations of leisure’. In this study, this type of analysis allowed the

researcher to exercise flexibility, be fully immersed in the data and find the meanings constructed around the concepts of tourism, society, participation, planning and decision-making. In line with social constructionism and qualitative methods, the researcher was part of the data collected through co-building the meanings with the participants (see Miles and Huberman, 1994; Bryman, 2016). Noteworthy, participants did not help in co-creating codes as this process is a contentious issue (Forbat and Henderson, 2005; Goldblatt et al., 2011; Stevenson and Taylor, 2019), as some researchers do not believe in the importance of giving the full transcript back to the respondents for amendments or addition, or helping to co-build the codes for a number of reasons. Most notably, according to Forbat and Henderson (2005), it is very likely that many of the participants have forgotten the interviews, especially if the interviews have been conducted many months prior. Moreover, the coding process is iterative and continuous, which makes it difficult to send the transcript back to the participants (Carlson, 2010). Furthermore, the process requires experience and training, which most likely limit the participants' capability in co-creating the codes (Stevenson and Taylor, 2019).

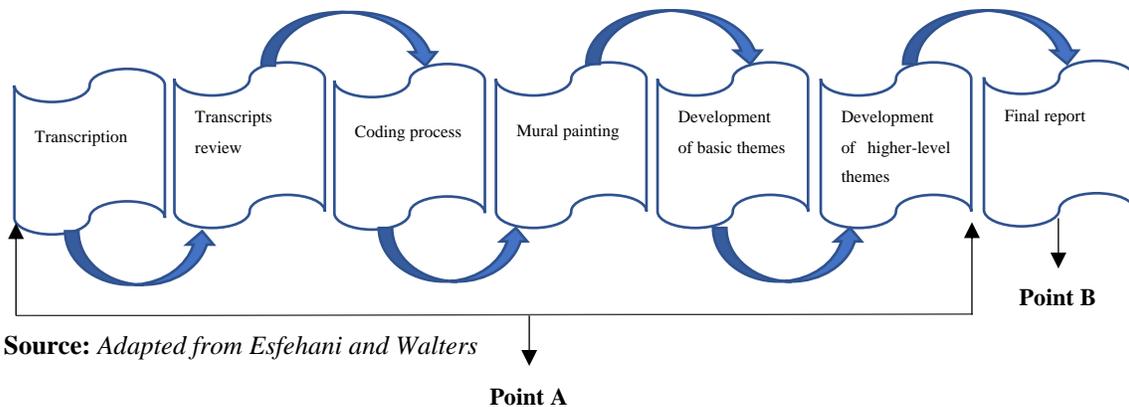
Qualitative analysis software programmes were not used. Despite the merits of utilising software packages for qualitative data analysis, such as faster data retrieval and efficient establishment of connections between codes (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Bryman, 2016), the researcher decided to manually analyse the data so that he could deeply engage with the data, which facilitated reflexivity throughout the process (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Supporting this decision, Sarantakos (2013) and Sapat et al. (2017) showed that such programmes can distance researchers from their fieldwork.

Researchers might also lose closeness to the data and not be able to retain knowledge about the content.

Translation during the data analysis phase

The Arabic language was the mother tongue of all participants and the researcher. Because of the richness of data collected from the field and the complexity of the way in which values, beliefs, attitudes, ideas and sentiments are constructed, all the analyses were systematically processed in Arabic. This is in line with the interpretive paradigm and social constructionism, language (local dialects) was central to this project: ‘a gateway to a culture [that] produces meanings and describes and constructs representations of people and the world in which they live’ (Esfehani and Walters, 2018:3160). Accordingly, the researcher decided to conduct the analysis in Arabic and local dialects. Figure 3.6 illustrates the translation process during the data analysis phase, which followed Esfehani and Walters’ (2018) translation timing model.

Figure 3.6: *Translation during Thematic Analysis*



Translation was not done at point A for several reasons. First, translating the entire data set from the field would be time-consuming and expensive (Regmi et al., 2010). Second, the researcher needed to gain a high degree of familiarity with the empirical

data as the reliability of the subsequent analysis depended on how much the researcher captured the core meaning of the text in the initial phases (Squires, 2009; Esfehni and Walters, 2018). Finally, translation into English could lose the richness, meaning and cultural flavour of the data (Halai, 2007).

In this project, translation was performed upon reaching point B. According to Santos et al. (2015), an advantage of this timing was that translation was less time consuming for the researcher as he did not have to translate the initial raw data not used in the final report. Moreover, at this point, according to Esfehni and Walters (2018:3166), 'no longer is the participant's authentic voice because it already has been penetrated by the voice of the researcher'.

Importantly, the direct quotes used in the findings and discussion were translated from Arabic into English. However, this can be problematic when a research project is underpinned by a qualitative research paradigm, 'requiring accuracy in interpreting the data within the cultural context, as effective translation is paramount to conveying the message of the participants' (Al-Amer et al., 2016:151). This has also been acknowledged by Al-Amer et al. (2015) who believed that conveying the same message between languages in cross-language research is often a laborious process, especially with Arabic language due to its linguistic structure (Al-Amer et al., 2016). As recommended by Lopez et al. (2008) and Van Nes et al. (2010), to ensure that the translated quotes convey the same meaning in English as they do in Arabic, this issue was discussed with two professional friends as a member-checking process. The first person was Habib Habash, a tourism consultant who is of Jordanian origin and who

holds British nationality and speaks Arabic and English fluently. The second person was Dr Mohammed Naji, who is from Najran and holds a degree in English literature. The researcher had a series of conversations with them in order to check the validity of the translation and to ensure conceptual equivalence between the Arabic and English versions (Birbili, 2000; Laeli and Kusumaningrum, 2018).

According to Miall et al. (2005), although most qualitative researchers take for granted that there will be a certain amount of ‘cleaning up’ during the translation process from one language to another, this study used careful translation in consultation and discussion with the two professional friends who were hired in order to retain the spirit of the participants’ words. The quotes also took into consideration any pauses, hesitations and colloquial Arabic dialects/words/terms that are commonly used in daily conversation and in informal communications. However, some of participants’ quotes look very polished, because they were speaking eloquently and they are well educated. Others are less educated, so their quotes seemed less polished. Because using the equivalent words in English would not convey the intended meaning, the participants’ statements are sometimes rephrased. This was done in order to capture the intended meaning of the culturally-bound expressions (Al-Amer et al., 2016), and to ensure that the text was comprehensive to the reader (Helmich et al., 2017). It is important to note that the participants’ body language and other interactions are usually scattered within the texts in the findings and discussion sections or in the footnotes.

3.5.3 Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research, like quantitative research, raises ethical issues, including confidentiality, anonymity, deception and possible harm to the participants (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2016). Consequently, research ethics are very important and provide guidance on how to conduct morally acceptable research (Pring, 2000). Key ethical considerations include negotiating access, obtaining informed consent from the participants and securely storing data and personal information (Pring, 2000; Cohen et al., 2011). In addition, it is important that qualitative research designs permit engaging the participants early in the process to ensure their equality with the researchers. Such participation and collaboration between the researchers and the participants has been found to overcome ethical problems (Burgess, 2002). These ethical considerations were addressed in the current study, as follows.

Interview arrangements and the participants' consent

The researcher arranged the interviews by phone and explained everything to the participants to ensure that:

- They had a clear understanding of the purpose of the study.
- They understood the interview process.
- They were introduced to the researcher.
- They understood how the researcher would use the data.
- The researcher spoke the same language as the participants to allow using easy conversational terminology (Ritchie et al., 2013; Silverman, 2016).

Written information and consent forms were not provided for the reasons explained in the participant recruitment section. Gender was also considered, as described in the same section.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Once the participants gave their consent, the researcher had to keep their identities anonymous and confidential. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) and Parry and Mauthner (2004) stated that anonymity is a key issue to consider throughout research to prevent any potential harm to the participants. This study, therefore, used pseudonyms to guarantee the participants' confidentiality, in line with Seidman's (2013) guidance on the necessity of maintaining their confidentiality. In addition, the personal contact details provided to facilitate the interview arrangements will be destroyed upon project completion. During this project, personal information was kept in a locked drawer in the PhD suite in the University of Brighton. The researcher and his supervisors had access to the data when needed. The male and female study participants were informed about the confidential and anonymous nature of their interviews, in accordance with ethical interview guidelines. Recording the interviews, as noted, was discussed with the participants, of whom some agreed and some declined for their interviews to be recorded. For the latter, the researcher carefully took written notes once the participants granted permission.

Data storage

According to Brighton University's Research Data Management Policy, all data (including field notes, memos, voice recordings and data analysis) were held digitally

on a password-protected USB flash drive, meeting Lyons and Coyle's (2016) guidelines. The data will be kept for a minimum of 10 years, and data from student research will be held until the student's award is conferred. The research data are published in the researcher's doctoral thesis and potentially in print and online journals. The published data may also be shared with those working in the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia. The researcher may also wish to provide a short report to all participants who indicate that they wish to be informed of the findings. Ethical guidelines and considerations were followed as stated in the guidance on good practice in research ethics and governance handbook (University of Brighton, 2015/16), and approval was sought from the University of Brighton.

3.5.4 Trustworthiness

The quality of scientific knowledge is assessed by three criteria: validity, reliability and objectivity (Angen, 2000; Bryman, 2016). Validity consists of whether findings express truth (internal validity) and are applicable to other contexts (external validity; Golafshani, 2003). Reliability refers to the replicability of findings (Bryman, 2016), and objectivity consists of the researcher's neutrality (Angen, 2000). These notions are usually applied to evaluate the rigour of quantitative research, and they assume that truth is unique, and the researcher is unbiased. These assumptions, though, are contrary to interpretivist paradigms, so naturalistic inquiry and qualitative research should be evaluated according to trustworthiness (Erlandson et al., 1993). Curtin and Fossey (2007:3) indicated that establishing the trustworthiness of research 'increases the reader's confidence that the findings are worthy of attention'. Shenton (2004) identified

four components of trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. The mechanisms used in this study to meet these criteria are explained.

Credibility is equivalent to internal validity and relates to the correspondence between the respondent's reality and the investigator's representation of this reality (Erlandson et al. 1993). Credibility can be strengthened by a member check (Erlandson et al. 1993), which consists of double checking the information with the interviewees. This approach was applied in this study by asking clarifying questions in the interviews. At the end of each interview, the researcher also summarised the main ideas discussed to check whether they were close to the respondent's understandings. Another approach in order to achieve sufficient confidence about what everybody told the researcher, some of the participants' previous answers were given to subsequent respondents to help facilitate some interviews and illuminate the questions if they did not understand them, and to verify the quality of the data collected. The cross-check allowed for more credibility (Prameswari and Kurnia, 2018).

In the data analysis, it is vital to conduct a peer review of how the themes, subthemes and codes were initially constructed and how the relationships between the themes were manipulated (Santos et al., 2018). To do so, the supervisors performed a double check with the researcher by coding six interviews to see whether they assigned the same codes to the same segments of the data. After three meetings, the researcher and the peer reviewers reached agreement on the recurring themes.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also cited long engagement with the participants as a way to gain their trust and increase credibility. In this research, prolonged engagement sessions with interviewees were not always feasible (most interviews lasted 60–90

minutes), so the researcher gained the interviewees' trust through other means recommended in the literature (Angen, 2000; Erlandson et al., 1993): personal presentation and the use of jargon-free language. Furthermore, the use of the snowballing technique in this study was paramount to developing trust, which was reinforced by the common culture of the participants and the researcher.

Transferability corresponds to external validity and refers to the feasibility of applying findings to other settings (Golafshani, 2003). Transferability requires that naturalistic researchers be able to describe the research context so that other researchers may judge whether findings can be applied to their own projects (Lincoln and Guba 1985). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained, purposive sampling, as used in this inquiry, increases transferability. Another suggested technique to do so is thick description, which is a contested term in the literature. In this study, thick description is understood as a thorough description of both the data (Merriam, 1998) and the research context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Erlandson et al., 1993). According to Erlandson et al. (1993), thick description should give the reader a clear picture of the setting and people involved in the research. In this thesis, the results are illustrated with quotations from the interview transcripts to make sure that the reader has access to some original data and to justify the proposed interpretations of the emerging patterns and subthemes.

Dependability, the equivalent of reliability, refers to the 'trackability' or the documentation of the research process (Erlandson et al., 1993:34). As well, confirmability, which corresponds to objectivity, describes the possibility of tracking down the interpretations of the findings (Bryman, 2016). In other words, dependability involves tracking the whole research process, and confirmability involves tracking the

data analysis in particular. To increase dependability and confirmability, all the changes to the research design and data analysis must be recorded in an audit trail (Lincoln and Guba 1985). In the case of this study, a research diary of all the changes was kept from the beginning of the research process. Moreover, the adoption of contact sheets and reflective remarks, as discussed, enhanced this project's confirmability.

3.5.5 Reflexivity and Positionality

The researcher's background

The researcher's role as the primary data collection instrument necessitates identifying the researcher's personal values, assumptions and biases at the beginning of a project (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The researcher's positionality is a central component of qualitative research (Ganga and Scott, 2006), informing all the stages, including development of the research questions, methodology, data collection, discussion and interpretations. This section, therefore, presents some details of the researcher's personal life, including his background, biases and values. This section also discloses the researcher's economic, social and cultural situations and other details that may have guided him to explore Najran communities' understandings of tourism planning and development and participation in tourism development decisions.

In the 1970s, the Saudi oil boom changed the country's social life. During this era, I was born into a family consisting of six people: my parents and four sisters. Within several years, the family grew to include seven females and two males in addition to the parents. My family lived in a mud house with two bedrooms. The first bedroom was shared by the parents, my brother and I, while my sisters occupied the second

bedroom. During the winter, the sheep the family owned stayed in the basement of our mud house, which was a grain and feed store. My father was a simple, uneducated farmer, and my family all worked on our small farm, which was the source of our livelihood. The living conditions of my family gradually evolved. Some of my sisters became teachers, which positively affected the family's life. For example, after I spent nearly sixteen years of my living in the old mud house, the family moved to a modern villa, where every family member had their own room.

After completing high school in Najran, I moved to Jeddah in the western KSA to study environmental science at King Abdulaziz University. Moving to Jeddah away from my family in the Najran Region opened a new chapter in my life. In Najran, traditions, customs and tribal norms shaped daily life. Also, in Najran, I was under my family's supervision, and my father decided everything in my life. The situation was different in Jeddah, where tribal restrictions faded due to multiculturalism and greater freedom from customs and traditions than in Najran. Although I kept my customs and traditions, I had opportunities to form my own identity that did not contradict my family values. My independent personality began to form apart from direct family intervention. However, that did not mean that I was freed from the collectivistic culture still influencing the Najran people, especially those from my generation.

In Saudi Arabia, including Najran, the family has significant influence over young members' personal lives, including the areas of marriage, education and sometimes even friendships. Being part of a family means that a person should follow and respect the family's rules. Islam and Saudi culture both emphasise respect for the family, especially parents and older brothers and sisters. The degree of such respect varies

across families and regions, from blind obedience in many cases in tribal environments considered to mutual respect in big cities such as Jeddah. The situation has changed recently as the community has become better educated and recognised the importance of individuals making their own decisions. However, family and tribe remain significant influences on their members.

I attended university from 1994 until 1998. After spending five years in Jeddah, I returned to Najran and started looking for a job. After searching for about a year and losing hope, I decided to travel to the US to learn the English language in 1999. I had encouragement from my sister, who covered all my tuition fees for about a year. Life in America was very different from in Saudi Arabia. I moved from an environment characterised by a collectivistic culture to an environment characterised by individual identity, freedom, gender equality and permissiveness. The huge cultural distance between the US and Saudi Arabia posed a major challenge to me. I came from a conservative environment that did not allow mixing of the genders, was male dominated and centralised decision-making within the family and the tribe. In the US, I had many friendships with men and women from different nationalities, and it can be said that this period was one of the most beautiful in my life. As the oldest male in my family, I was involved in family decision-making, and at that time, I was not convinced of the importance of participation in decision-making by other family members, especially women. After studying in the US, I became more open-minded due to contact with people from diverse cultures, races, religions and nationalities.

At the end of 1999, I returned to Najran, and after about two months, I got a temporary job with a low salary at King Khalid Hospital in Najran. In 2001, I joined the SCTNH

when it was founded, and I have been with it to the present. In 2002, I married and became the father of three children over several years. I was keen to give my children space to participate in family decision-making, and I did not want to repeat with my children the marginalisation practiced against me early in my life. It can be said that my studies in Jeddah and the US contributed to these shifts in my life. From 2006–2009, I represented the SCTNH as the branch general manager in Najran. Before going to study in the UK in 2015, I was director of the Empowerment Programme at the SCTNH from 2013 until early 2015.

During that period, Saudi Arabia was preparing for *Vision 2030*, aimed at diversifying the Saudi economy and weaning it off its dependence on oil. The plan places significant emphasis on tourism development as a key driver of the Saudi economy, and the involvement of local communities is a key element in planning and developing tourism. As director of the Empowerment Programme and as an SCTNH employee, I realised the importance of exploring local people’s perceptions of tourism and the challenges that limit their participation in decisions related to tourism planning and development. The Arab region, including the KSA, has a significant lack of research seeking to understand tourism from the perspectives of local people. Among the other factors that may have guided me to explore Najran communities’ understandings of tourism planning and development and their participation in tourism development decisions, my cultural, social and professional backgrounds and the social transformations in the country intersected and led to the implementation of this research. After highlighting the researcher’s cultural, social and professional background, the next section explores his reflexivity and positionality.

Reflexivity

The social sciences increasingly recognise that researchers personally participate in the field work, the social world studied and the data and knowledge produced (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Ritchie et al., 2013). This position is consistent with social constructionism, adopted as a research strategy in this study. Social constructionism holds that researchers are not detached, participants are not passive, and both shape knowledge through an interactive process of co-constructing meaning. Researchers thus cannot remove themselves from the research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2017). Researchers following a social constructionist approach (and qualitative researchers in general), therefore, must continuously reflect on their relationship with the research as a whole.

Researchers are part of the world they study (Feighery, 2006), so this reflexivity assists in critically questioning their own experiences and, even more importantly, how these experiences affect their relationships with the study participants and the data (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Finlay and Gough (2003:ix) defined reflexivity as

Thoughtful, self-aware analysis of the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and the researched. Reflexivity requires critical self-reflection of the ways in which a researcher's social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impact the research process. It demands acknowledgment of how researchers (co-)construct the findings. [...] Reflexivity both challenges treasured research traditions and is challenging to apply in practice. (Finlay and Gough, 2003:ix)

Reflexivity is researchers' conscious self-awareness of their position within the research and their relationship with the participants. Reflexivity may increase the honesty and trustworthiness of qualitative research by considering the interconnectedness of the researcher and the researched. Through reflexivity,

‘researchers engage in explicit, self-aware analysis of their own role’ (Holloway and Galvin, 2017:9). Although positivists have criticised reflexive strategies for their ‘groundless solipsist relativism’ (Cunliffe, 2003), the use of reflexivity in social research has increased in recent years (Berger, 2015; Holloway and Galvin, 2017). Ultimately, within social sciences research and this particular study, reflexivity is an indispensable practice.

Reflexivity, as Hall (2004) stated, is a practice rather than a theory or a model. According to Everett (2010), reflexive practices must also address researchers’ positionality, which is a mixture of their age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality and social and economic status (Rose, 1997; Merriam et al., 2001; Bourke, 2014). Positionality is believed to provide researchers with a worldview that helps them decide what data are relevant to the research. Indeed, Wilkinson (1988:494) stated:

There is a wealth of literature documenting how the personal characteristics and life circumstances of the researchers (such as cultural, ethnic and disciplinary background) affect what they choose to study, how they proceed, and what they find. (Wilkinson, 1988:494)

In this study, I as researcher had a unique positionality as an insider, which allowed me to enter and know a world most other researchers could not.

My position as an employee of the government agency representing tourism development in Saudi Arabia led some participants to think that the interviews were tests of their knowledge of tourism, resulting in questions about whether their answers were ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Other participants, especially older people working in handicrafts, assumed that the purpose of the interviews was to understand their needs, both financial and logistical, and report those demands to national decision-makers to

improve their living conditions. Thus, the initial stage of the interviews was challenging as I needed to build trust and understanding with the participants. I carefully and clearly explained that the Ministry of Tourism sponsored the project, but the data gathered would not be included in official reports or strategies. I also emphasised that he was first and foremost a student at the University of Brighton completing the project as part of his PhD research.

As a government employee and a member of the SCTNH's top management, I was aware that at times, I used words and expressions other than those that emerged from the data, especially when they were critical of the SCTNH and its branch in the Najran Region. I did so for a number of reasons, primarily my loyalty to my SCTNH work and the fear that criticism of my work might embarrass me, especially as a founder of tourism in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, a person like me in his 40s, was born and raised in the Najran Region and was part of Najran culture, so he can be considered to be immersed in the culture and to adhere to its conventions. Consequently, I responded emotionally to the data from the participants and sometimes tried to use terms and expressions less severe than those that emerged from the data, especially from the female participants. Several workshops were conducted with the study supervisors to jointly code the data. Through these workshops, I began to gain the appropriate experience to avoid such mistakes, which could have otherwise affected the credibility of the data provided. Ultimately, these factors illustrate the influence of positionality on the participants' perceptions of the researcher, as well as the data collection and analysis.

Currently, I am defined by two contradictory roles. First, I lived in the UK while studying for my master's degree in 2009–2011 and my PhD since 2015. In this role, I have been influenced by Western values advocating equal rights for men and women, particularly in participating in decision-making that affects their lives. One of the most significant results of that experience was that I encouraged my wife to apply for a UK driver's license and buy a car. This decision-making approach has also changed how my family members are granted the right to participate in decisions concerning them all. In my second role, I am a person who grew up in a conservative tribal society and is proud of its cultural identity. I have been influenced by the environment in which I live and believe in men's authority over women. Consequently, while visiting my family early in my PhD studies, I attempted to not discuss the study aim and research questions with my sisters. The topic proved embarrassing for me as it involved empowering local communities to participate in tourism-related decision-making, while decisions in my own home were made centrally, and my female family members were not allowed to participate in decisions affecting their lives. These two contradictory roles necessarily influenced the structure of the questions, study design and data collection and analysis.

I have realised that the study of communities' understandings of tourism planning and development and locals' involvement in tourism development decisions in the Najran Region would lose credibility if I did not begin to adopt empowerment principles in my own family. Consequently, I am giving my sisters more opportunities to participate in decision-making at home in Najran. However, the concept of women's empowerment likely will need time to take root and will be significantly advanced in

future generations. When I arrived in the UK to study for his PhD, my most important goal was to receive a certificate, which confers high social status in Saudi Arabia. However, my priority has changed over time into a serious desire to make an important change in my country by building knowledge of how to empower local communities to participate in tourism-related decisions with authentic participation by women.

Indeed, reflexivity concerns not only how life experiences influence the research conducted but also how the research itself influences future life experiences and understandings as the two have a 'reciprocal relationship' (Wilkinson, 1988:494). Reflexivity involves a continual process of reflection and conscious awareness of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Reflexivity can also serve as a form of self-monitoring, which helps the researcher deal with some issues that may otherwise affect the study's credibility. Reflexivity also encourages transparency and answers many questions the reader may ask about how the researcher dealt with data collection and analysis.

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the research methodology and methods used to answer the research questions. The analysis has covered the major research paradigms (positivism, post-positivism and interpretivism) to understand the knowledge production mechanisms in scientific and social sciences research and to choose a research paradigm consistent with the study objectives and the associated research questions. The interpretive paradigm was chosen as it is in line with the research questions, aimed at gaining a deep understanding of how to construct knowledge about tourism issues in Najran. Scientific paradigms do not similarly fit with the study objectives.

With the interpretive paradigm chosen, social constructionism was selected as the research strategy to link the study with appropriate data collection and analysis methods. Social constructionism adopts a critical stance towards assumptions about the social world. It holds that understandings of the world are the products of historical processes of interactions and negotiations between groups of people. Moreover, the goal of research is not to produce fixed knowledge but to open up appreciation of possibilities. Consequently, a qualitative methodology was adopted as the research design to allow deeply exploring and bringing to the surface possibly hidden meanings. This was done through conducting structured, face-to-face interviews with representatives of local communities in the Najran Region, which facilitated close collaboration between the researcher and the participants who co-constructed knowledge within the natural setting of the region.

The data collected from the interviews with the participants was subjected to thematic analysis. The advantages of thematic analysis are flexibility, the ability to highlight similarities and differences across the data set and the allowance for social interpretations of data. In addition, this recursive, non-linear method allows the analysis to develop over time. Finally, the researcher's role in the data collection and analysis was highlighted through the concepts of reflexivity and positionality to ensure the honesty and transparency of the research results.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and the discussion following the framework of the three series of in-depth questions asked to the representatives of local communities in Najran. The first series of questions investigated the multi-layered interpretations of tourism among the people in Najran. Along with breaking the ice between the researcher and the participants, this initial series of questions served as the key to navigating the complexities surrounding tourism and its development in the region. The second series of questions was aimed at exploring the nature of the social structure in the Najran Region and investigating Najran residents' understandings of community and its meanings to them. The third series of questions was used to investigate their understandings of participation, power distribution and tourism decision-making in Najran.

The findings are intended to give the reader a holistic view of the data collected and the participants' responses to the research questions. Direct quotations from the interviews are used throughout the findings section to support the arguments. At the end of the findings section, the main points are summarised to bridge the gap to the discussion section.

The discussion places the key points that emerged from the findings in wider debates. This section goes beyond description and basic interpretation to analyse and interpret the findings in grand narratives, contrast them to the literature and offer the wider theoretical implications of their meanings. In other words, the discussion section, in

line with the interpretive paradigm, uncovers the latent meanings within the data (Boyatzis, 1998), captures the essence of the phenomenon studied (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and scrutinises the participants' language to reveal the subtleties and contradictions of their perceptions, attitudes and opinions (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2003). Direct quotations from the interviews are used to support the arguments throughout the chapter, including the discussion section. The use of verbatim quotes is a significant feature of qualitative research that allows the reader to assess the trustworthiness of the researcher's interpretations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Erlandson et al., 1993). Ultimately, the selected quotations used in the discussion are those the researcher feels best reflect the points made.

4.1 Findings

The findings cover three topics: Najrani people's understandings of tourism, community and participation. As noted, this section presents and describes the data collected from the field.

4.1.1 Najrani's Understandings of Tourism

It was highly important to understand how the participants perceived tourism to prepare them for more complex questions about community and participation. It was also essential that the researcher fully comprehended Najran residents' understandings of tourism and issues related to tourism planning and decision-making in the Najran Region. The conversations with the interviewees revealed diverse perspectives on tourism. For example, *Zaid* (M, 60 years old) stated that 'tourism is now a concept of travel as a person moves from one place to another with different goals, including moving away from the

hustle of the city to natural places’. *Asmaa* (F, 22 years old) defined tourism as ‘...uh...a journey in which people are freed from the customs and traditions that exist in their habitual environment’. In the same vein, *Hamadna* (M, 48 years old) stated that ‘tourism is travelling for the purpose of visiting, for example, the Holy Places to explore, to discover different experiences and cultures, or it is leisure and recreation, or it is all that was mentioned at the same time’. *Dalambah* (M, 40 years old) said that ‘tourism is related to all matters of life. Tourism has become an industry that supports the economies of many countries. There is also a large sector of citizens and investors who rely on tourism as a source of livelihood’.

During the conversations, some participants mentioned that the word ‘tourism’ is not commonly used in Najran. These statements prompted probing questions about the term used in the region instead of tourism. The interviewees indicated that people in Najran prefer to use *Tamshia*¹, as stated in the following quotes:

[I] swear to God, we do not use the word ‘tourism’. We use the word *Tamshia* or *Kashta*. Even if we travel outside the kingdom, we say that we go for *Tamshia*, and [we do] not say that we go for ‘tourism’. (*Maryam*, F, 30 years old)

In people’s everyday lives, we say, ‘Let’s go for *Tamshia*’. For example, we say ‘Let’s go for *Tamshia* at the Najran dam or at the Al-Okhdood archaeological site’. The word ‘tourism’ is a new word for Najran communities, but in Najran, we replace the word ‘tourism’ with the word *Tamshia*. (*Mohammed N*, M, 52 years old)

The participants were asked about the reasons for using the term *Tamshia* instead of tourism. *Mounira K* (F, 44 years old) answered:

¹ *Tamshia* is a local term used to express recreational and leisure activities performed by people in Saudi Arabia in general and Najran in particular, both within and outside the environment in which people live in Najran. *Tamshia* means traveling or moving from one place to another. While *Kashta* is a picnic with cooking.

The term ‘tourism’ is still strange to the region, and people are not used to it. It is not in our dictionary, in our studies or in our community, and we do not see it on the street signs. We frankly are not accustomed to this term.

Hussein G (M, 46 years old) also stated, ‘I am about 46 years old, and I had not heard the word “tourism” in Najran until about two years ago’. *Abdullah* (M, 32 years old) said that ‘here, in Najran, we do not use the word “tourism” because it is still an official term for only government use’. From these narratives, it appears that tourism has little relevance to people in the region, but *Tamshia* is a cultural product ingrained in Najran residents’ consciousness. In line with this point, Whitney-Gould et al. (2018:4) believed that local communities tend to use local language to ‘find a way for traditions to survive in the modern world’. Arguably, tourism is expressed in different ways in various cultures, and consequently, the concept varies across contexts (see van Egmond, 2007).

This led to another question about how people in Najran distinguish tourists from non-tourists. Almost all the interviewees agreed that tourists come from the West. For example, *Nasser* (M, 40 years old) stated that ‘you will not find two people in Najran who disagree that the tourists are Europeans with blond hair and blue eyes’. *Hamadna* (M, 48 years old) asserted that ‘all agree that people with European features visiting Najran are tourists’. Similarly, *Zaid* (M, 60 years old, tribal leader) mentioned that ‘the people of the West are the ones who draw attention as tourists. Some people in Najran call them *Al-Nasaraa* (Christians)’. Moreover, *Nada* (F, 36 years old) added:

I met a Belgian at the hotel. From the backpack and water bottle hanging on his back, I knew that he was a tourist. My friends asked me, ‘How did you know that?’ I said to them, ‘If you see a foreigner carrying a backpack...uh...a water bottle...uh...a map and asking a lot of questions, he is coming for tourism’.

In these quotations, stereotypes still associate the tourist in Najran with the Western blond-haired, blue-eyed backpacker who constantly carries a camera with him while visiting tourist sites. This once again emphasises that tourism is a Western construct not universally used among locals. Some studies (e.g. Towner, 1995; Winter, 2009; Franklin, 2018) have stressed this point, mentioning that the conventional view of tourism remains dominated by the history of Western cultural experiences.

A series of in-depth exploratory questions was asked to uncover possibly hidden deeper meanings connected to tourism. The interviewees revealed that local words such as *Siah* and *Siaha*², respectively referring to a male and a female tourist, still have negative connotations in Najran to this day. These particular terms are derived from the word *Alsiyaha*, the Arabic equivalent of ‘tourism’, and are used in southern Saudi Arabia, including Najran. In this regard, *Mohammed N* (M, 52 years old) stated that ‘the word “tourist” in the past was used as a metaphor for a person who is wasting his or her time aimlessly as he or she was called *Siah* or *Siaha*’. This usage was mentioned by *Maryam* (F, 30 years old), who stated that ‘in Najran, the word *Siah* or *Siaha* still refers to an irresponsible or lost person who has no purpose other than to wander from place to place’. *Hussein G* (M, 46 years old) also shared, ‘When I am upset with my son, I say to him *Siah*, which means “the lounge” or “lost person”’. In addition, *Zaid* (M, 60 years old) reported that ‘in Najran, the term *Siaha* refers to a decadent woman looking for sexual relations with men outside the marital house’.

² Note that some participants were reluctant to mention the words *Siah* and *Siaha*. After the recorder was turned off, one participant said, ‘Yes, the word “tourism” has negative connotations, but I did not want to mention that when the recorder was on’.

The interviewees seem to have attempted to create a barrier to the concept of tourism as an activity that is done by others and has nothing to do with life in Najran or *Tamshia*, a local concept rooted in Najran culture. For instance, some interviewees such as *Nasser* (M, 40 years old) stated:

Europeans and Americans who come to the Najran Region come for the purpose of tourism, while those coming from the Gulf countries and from within Saudi Arabia come for *Tamshia*.

The implicit distinction between tourism as a Western construct and *Tamshia* as a local concept emerged in the conversations with the participants. Some participants feared being labelled loungers or seekers of immorality due to Najran residents' ingrained interpretations of tourism. Accordingly, *Hamadna* (M, 48 years old) stated that 'many people in the community in the Najran Region still link tourism with Western tourists, who have needs that are contrary to the religion and values of the community and are not available in most Arab societies, including Saudi Arabia'. Similarly, *Mohammed W* (M, 23 years old) reported that 'some local terms such as *Tamshia* are considered to be close to the people's hearts in Najran. Contrary to the word "tourism", which, if someone mentioned it in public, it would be met with a mixture of jokes and laughter'.

It can be said that the historical, religious and cultural contexts that still constitute Najran residents' consciousness of tourism have created a gap between the wishes and the reality of the tourism project in Najran. For example, many participants welcomed tourism as an economic component, a social space and as a promoter of Najran identity:

...mmm...tourism has an economic impact and can contribute to solving the problem of unemployment in Najran, which is recorded as one of the highest unemployment rates among the regions in the Kingdom, and this appeared during the Najran Investment Forum II that was held in Najran. (*Masada*, F, 35 years old)

Tourism plays an important role in connecting us to the world and contributes to our openness to different cultures, so we need tourism like others. ... Human contact anywhere means that you transfer your heritage and culture to the other, and the other brings you habits and traditions, and this leads to people learning from each other. (*Ali N*, M, 51 years old)

From the social point of view, tourism will provide a healthy atmosphere for women and a suitable environment for practicing sports with women...uh...encouraging dialogue, speaking freely and reflecting positively on their moods...sigh...the problem is that most clients of our psychiatric clinics are repressed women who cannot talk freely or express their opinions to their male relatives. (*Mounira D*, F, 55 years old)

However, when *Maryam* (F, 30 years old), who held a degree from the US, was asked if she would be happy if her relatives worked in the tourism industry, for example, in handicrafts, she hesitatingly replied:

I say to you, no ... no [emphasis by the interviewee]. This is not acceptable with all honesty because work in handicrafts is for people who are considered second-class, whereas the sons and daughters of tribes cannot work in such areas³.

Ali T (M, 62 years old), who studied in the UK, stated:

...Ooh...I will not allow my wife to work in tourism because I grew up in a conservative tribal environment that does not allow women to mix with men or foreigners. This is not in line with our customs and traditions in the Najran Region, although she holds a high degree and lived with me in the West for many years.

In addition, *Mounira D* (F, 55 years old), who studied in the UK, contradicted herself when she praised tourism:

We in Najran have our privacy, customs and traditions. We cannot allow women to rebel against social norms under the pretext of empowerment. ... We are with tourism that empowers woman, but that does not mean to spoil her. ... We want to separate women from men. We do not want the dignity of women to be abused. ... Women in Najran are ready to lose their freedom in return for maintaining the reputation of their family or tribe.

³ In Najran, work in the handicrafts professions remains seen as shameful, especially for the tribes. Consequently, Najran communities view those working in crafts as inferior, unworthy of respect or appreciation.

These quotes show the mixed feelings and anxiety regarding tourism development in the Najran Region. Some participants studied overseas but continued to hold traditional views once they returned to the country. In other words, long-held customs and traditions in the Najran Region temper enthusiasm for tourism development. Similarly, some studies have found that tourism is still heavily influenced by theoretical academic research, which often lacks practical application (see van Egmond, 2007; Mura et al., 2017; Stergiou and Airey, 2018).

The preliminary in-depth questions navigating the complexities surrounding the concept of tourism and its multi-layered interpretations led to a series of key questions investigating the concept of community, its relationship to tourism and Najran residents' formation of their own communities, as presented in detail in the next section.

4.1.2 Understandings of Community in Najran

The participants were asked about their understandings of the concept of community in general, and their responses varied. For example *Ali H* (M, 29 years old) stated:

I understand that there is a local community, a regional community and a global community. Let me talk about the local community by highlighting Najran...uh...a community is a group of people living in similar circumstances with very similar principles and values that vary in standards of living, educational level and social status. Also, they live in the same place and have a common culture. In the other words, a community is a micro-social system governed by principles agreed upon by its members in a friendly way. The members of that community are the ones who create the laws that regulate the relationships between them within the boundaries of their small community. Those laws should not contradict the official system of the state.

Mubarak (M, 44 years old) stated that 'communities [are] small economic circles whose members depend on each other through the integration of their experiences'.

Abdullah (M, 32 years old) reported that a 'community is an integration of experiences.

No work can be accomplished without cooperation among people who work in handicrafts. We need each other because each of us has a role to play'. *Saeed* (M, 48 years old) described a community as 'a group of people who live in one environment, under one sky, interact daily with each other, have common interests'. The participants' understandings of community recall the literature review (e.g. Mitchell, 1979; Poplin, 1979; Cohen, 1985; Anderson, 1991; Blackshaw, 2010; Lyon and Driskell, 201; Murphy, 2013; Ellis and Abdi, 2017). Despite the diversity of responses, many participants found it difficult to understand the concept of community. Similarly, Selznick (1994) asserted that community is a difficult term to define.

The participants also talked about how they formed their own communities in Najran:

The person in Najran has a two-fold community: first, relatives; second, work colleagues and friends. The community of kin is inevitable for a person where blood ties are dominant. The community of friends is formed by the person according to his or her needs and is not binding on the person. (*Hussein A*, M, 61 years old)

A community is the social circles in which a person lives and varies according to his interests and requirements. There are some circles where a person is forced to live, such as family and tribe, while other circles are of his choice and meet his requirements and needs. Examples of social circles are the mosque, cultural circles, art, theatre, music, sports and football. (*Mohammed G*, M, 38 years old)

There are two types of community in Najran. The first is called the primary groups, while the second is called the secondary groups. The primary groups in which a person is born are not chosen, and the relationships in these groups are stronger than those found in secondary groups. The family and the tribe are examples of those groups. The person is a member of those groups by birth, and their relationships are always (kinship) or (blood ties). ... Whereas the secondary groups can be called *the Shela*⁴, which is the group with which the person sits or meets in *the diwaniya*⁵ or plays football with them. Therefore, that group is voluntarily chosen by the persons, and

⁴ *Shela* is a group of individuals often associated by common hobbies or interests. This term is frequently used to describe the relationships that occur within secondary groups.

⁵ A *diwaniya* is the place where friends and people with common hobbies meet, and these meetings are friendly and informal, in contrast to those within the tribe.

often there are no blood ties or kinship between them. These groups are easy to disassociate from or leave, unlike primary groups. Secondary groups are more flexible, and these groups are chosen by the person himself and according to his nature and hobbies that meet his wishes and needs. (Hamadna, M, 48 years old)

These interviewees revealed a 'enforced' community represented by the tribe in contrast to the optional community consisting of friends and colleagues at work or in a profession, the so-called *Shela*.

This finding prompted probing questions that prompted the interviewees to further clarify the differences between these communities:

The community of friends has more freedom, and the family or tribe community is more formal. With my ordinary colleagues, I show my natural image, while with my family or tribe, I have to be more formal. There are usually no taboos in the community of friends, whereas in the family community, there are taboos such as breaking the elderly's words. This does not exist in the community of friends or the community that I freely formed. (Saeed M, M, 48 years old)

The links between us in the friends' community are our common ideas. In family, ...hmp...there are restrictions and barriers set to woman where she can't overcome that, so she will find space with friends where she can express about herself freely. She can discuss any issue with friends, which may be forbidden in the family. (Mounira K, F, 44 years old)

The interviewees revealed that Najran residents give priority to the tribe and family as binding social entities in contrast to communities of friends, and the tribe's strict norms restrict its members' freedoms. The tribe imposes its values on its members even if they want to form a community of friends outside the tribe. Some interviewees highlighted this issue:

...sigh...sadly, most people in Najran, when they seek to form a community of friends, must do so through standards imposed by the tribe. So many people cannot escape the mantle of the tribe. (Mohammed W, M, 23 years old)

There are many people who form their communities based on their class and tribal values. The family or tribe intervenes and imposes on their sons and daughters the community that they should be in. ... Unfortunately, many people in Najran, even though they are from the elite class and educated, still look down on others. (*Fatema*, F, 29 years old)

It, therefore, can be said that the tribe continues to dominate the norms governing all walks of life in the Najran Region. Some interviewees believed that:

The tribe is against the building of a civil state. It is against the building of a free economy. It is against all civilised things. (*Zaid*, M, 60 years old)

Secondary communities that are based on professional and cultural associations and civil society institutions, such as Western communities, are more receptive to tourism than the primary groups that are based on kinship and religious ties, as in Najran. (*Hamadna*, M, 48 years old)

Conservative communities such as our community in Najran are always trying to close themselves from new ideas such as tourism, which are still alien to people. (*Ali H*, M, 29 years old)

Some people in Najran do not want to open up to the other because they see tourism only through the lens of songs and dance, and these people believe that tourism will spoil the morals of their sons and daughters. (*Ali S*, M, 26 years old)

These interviewees emphasised that the conservative nature of Najran communities, interwoven with religious values, poses a potential challenge to tourism development in the region. Some clerics highlighted this issue in a number of statements:

What worries us is our fear that our children will be affected by certain dialects. They may also learn certain dances that are not from our heritage, and this is what we fear when we open the door to foreign tourism. Also, tourists may come with certain clothes and different customs that are inconsistent with the values of Najran communities. This is what we fear. (*Nasser*, M, 40 years old)

We are with tourism that does not encourage mixing between men and women and in which Islamic dress that is in harmony with religion and with the customs and traditions of the Najran people is adhered to. Also, we are with tourism that does not encourage musical songs. Therefore, tourism should be within the Islamic controls and compatible with customs and traditions in Najran. (*Masoud*, M, 45 years old)

These interviewees appeared to implicitly reject tourism and desire to close Najran communities to foreign tourism. Accordingly, multiple interpretations of Islam are used as tools to isolate the communities from the outside world, as *Mohammed W* (M, 23 years old) indicated:

One of the obstacles to tourism is some religious *Fatwas*⁶ from some clerics who prohibit some tourist activities, including visiting archaeological sites, and consider them to be contrary to the Islamic religion, and this is not true. Therefore, this may cause some people to refrain from participating in tourism issues in Najran and outside Najran.

The tribal dimension is a very complex subject, especially in Saudi society in which religion and culture constitute everyday life (see Moaddel, 2006; Idris, 2007), and poses a challenge to tourism development.

The nature of the tribal community in Najran, as revealed by the interviews, raised many questions about the concepts of participation and decision-making mechanisms and the extent to which people in Najran participate in tourism decisions at the social and institutional levels. These questions are explored in the next section.

4.1.3 Understandings of Participation

Understanding the distribution of authority in the Najran Region required investigating participation as a core concept in tourism development to grasp how tourism decisions in the region are made and to what extent people are involved. Accordingly, the participants were asked about their understandings of not only participation in tourism but also the wider concept of participation. Despite the variety of responses, most

⁶ *Fatwa* is a non-binding legal opinion on a point of Islamic law given by a qualified cleric in response to a question posed by a private individual, judge or government official.

interviewees talked about participation from the perspectives of appreciation, respect, self-confidence and sharing of responsibilities and successes:

Participation means that I share with my community in everything, whether ideas or projects, giving me a chance to decide my fate. I swear to God, this means a lot to me because they will give me confidence in myself. This will make me feel responsible because they gave me a decision that will reflect positively on my behaviour, and I will be at the level of responsibility that has been given to me. (*Mounira K*, F, 44 years old)

Participation, as I understand it, is the distribution of roles, responsibilities and cost sharing. Participation is a beautiful concept in which a person feels that he/she has an important role in his/her society. It is also a tool that ultimately leads to decisions that are correct, disciplined and applicable and do not face opposition from anyone. (*Ali T*, M, 62 years old)

These descriptions of the concept of participation are similar to those in the literature (see Richardson, 1983; Dowse and Hugh, 1986; Santhanam, 1993; UN, 2000; Crocker, 2007), which includes many views on the concept. Nevertheless, many participants found the concept to be difficult, and similarly, many studies have reported that the term 'participation' has taken different forms and meanings and is difficult to define (e.g. Paul, 1987; Oakley, 1991; Nikkhah and Redzuan, 2009; Kanthong and Jotikasthira, 2013).

The interviewees were asked about their role in decision-making in society. For example, *Ebrahim* (M, 50 years old) answered:

In Najran, we have customs and traditions that make the eldest in the family decide on your behalf. Let me give you an example. Sometimes, when I am traveling, our relatives come to my house in order to invite me to lunch or dinner, which is a custom in Najran. Their coming to my house sometimes coincides with my absence from home, so they offer the invitation to my father or older brother. At that moment, my father or older brother decides and gives them approval on my behalf. Therefore, **...hmph...** I have to come at the scheduled time. Sometimes, I have to cancel programmes and dates that I have agreed with friends in response to the invitation approved on behalf of me.

This statement indicates that fathers and the elderly dominate decisions in Najran communities. *Nasser* (M, 40 years old) acknowledged this situation, stating that ‘...hmp...we lack the concept of participation because decisions are concentrated in the hands of our elders in the tribe, and this is painful for me’. *Ali S* (M, 26 years old) also shared that ‘...hmp...our elders in the tribe or in the family are our decision-makers in Najran. We have no concept of participation, where the decision comes ready, and our role is implementation’. This reflects a state of frustration, disenfranchisement and resentment due to the centralisation of decision-making in Najran communities.

The in-depth conversations reveal that the term ‘participation’ is not commonly used in daily life in Najran. Instead, local terms such as *Al-Shura* and *Barza*⁷ are used.

In some of our Arab societies, notably Saudi Arabia, the concept of *Al-Shura* is more common than the concept of participation. The concept of *Al-Shura* is mentioned in the Holy Quran, the Almighty says: ‘And consult them in the matter’ Al-Imran 159. And he said: ‘And ordered *Al-Shura* among them’ Shora 38. (*Hamadna*, M, 48 years old)

The local word for participation is called *Barza*, which means a meeting. The topic will be talked about, and everybody in the meeting will be asked to give his opinion or his initiative or his participation. So *Barza* is synonymous with participation in Najran society, where family members meet to discuss a topic and decide on it and determine the roles between the family members or the tribe. We have a saying, ‘Every breast has an opinion’. To be updated, this word has been replaced by the concept of participation, especially in formal using among the government sectors. The old and new generations continue to use this term in daily life in Najran. (*Mohammed N*, M, 52 years old)

⁷ *Al-Shura* and *Barza* are local terms considered to be synonymous with ‘participation’. Both terms mean ‘consultation’, but *Barza* is a local term ingrained in Najran culture. *Al-shura*, according to Sidani (2005) and Hasan (2011), refers to mutual consultation used in Islam as a tool to make decisions or rule on matters related to the affairs of Muslims.

In the interviews, the interviewees expressed the concept of participation in local terms, indicating variations in understandings across places. The interviewees explained the differences among *Al-Shura*, *Barza* and participation:

Al-Shura, from my point of view, is that the decision-maker only advises the others. If the decision fails, the decision maker is the one who bears the issue alone. In other words, I consult people and take their opinions, but in case of failure, the people have nothing to do with it. In the case of participation, the participants are asked to make an effort and work, and they are also asked to express their opinions. Therefore, in the case of failure or success, everyone is involved. *Al-Shura* is just an opinion, and people give their point of view on the subject, and the decision is made by the guardian or the manager. (Maryam, F, 30 years old)

Barza is mostly limited to the elderly, wise people in the tribe, and what they decide should be done by the rest of the group. The term is closer to the concept of *Al-Shura* than to participation as it is mostly non-binding and limited to a certain group of older persons. (Hussein A, M, 61 years old)

In our tribe, there are many forms of participation. For example, some tribe members are consulted, and their opinions are taken into account. Some people's role is only to listen and do what they are asked, and some groups are not invited at all. Those who have social status or a lot of money or prestigious jobs are the ones who participate and decide on behalf of the rest of the tribe. I hate that. (Ali T, M, 62 years old)

The interviewees saw participation and authority as spread among a wide spectrum of people. To the contrary, *Al-Shura* and *Barza*, which sometimes allow room for consultation, reflect the centralisation of decision-making dominated by the elderly and the elites in communities. Arguably, *Al-Shura* and *Barza* are consistent with citizen tokenism in Arnstein's (1969) ladder and functional participation by consultation in Pretty's (1995) typology. The interviews reveal that *Al-Shura* and *Barza* are mostly limited to men in Najran communities and do not include women's views. As noted

during the interviews, some female participants resented women's lack of a voice in Najran communities, including tourism affairs⁸:

I am a member of the Chamber of Commerce in Najran, and when I put an idea against the idea of a man, the idea of the man is accepted without discussion, although my idea is often better than his idea...hmp...the reason is that the man's voice is louder than the woman's voice. (*Mounira K*, F, 44 years old)

Women appear to be disenfranchised and excluded from decision-making. Male control over decisions also casts a shadow over tourism development, as shown in the following quotes. *Riyad* (M, 55 years old), a general manager of a five-star hotel in Najran, stated:

Hiring women means providing them with an appropriate environment isolated from men, and the process of communication with those girls will also not be an easy task. Therefore, I do not want to give myself a headache, and as the Arab saying says, 'The door that brings you the wind, shut it, and have a rest'.

Similarly, *Nada* (F, 36 years old) stated:

In Najran, in particular, many people still see women working in tourism or participating in its activities as shameful. For example, a group of young males who have a tourist group in Najran refused to allow me to go with them for a tourist tour. And they said, 'We do not take women with us'. ... I started moving my job outside Najran because the environment is still not suitable for the work of women.

The quotes appear to reflect the situation of women in tribal contexts such as Najran where men make decisions even in issues related to tourism. This situation occurs in many Arab societies, as Al Haija (2011) emphasised, as tribal norms still heavily influence Arab culture.

⁸ On a personal level, the researcher is male, and the female participants' speech about male domination and control over decisions put him in an awkward position. For instance, one woman pointed with her finger towards the researcher while saying, 'You men'. He sometimes attempted to find a way to move away from the subject to avoid embarrassment. This point is discussed in the positionality section.

Although women complained of males' superior voice in Najran communities, the interviewees also revealed that mothers and other women play roles in promoting the communities' strict cultural values. *Mounira K* (F, 44 years old) illuminated this point:

There are many Najran girls who in their lives have not entered a restaurant or market, and some of them do not have mobile phones or the Internet. Even if you talk to them about tourism, they will not know it, and the reason is that they have not experienced tourism at all. Unfortunately, these girls are from Najran City, which is the capital of the region.

These interviewees showed that mothers have the final say in this home and make decisions on behalf of their children. This point prompted a question about the possibility of allowing relatives, sons and daughters to work or participate in tourism.

Mounira K (F, 44 years old), a mother, considered working in handicrafts to not fit with a tribal identity:

I will not allow my sons to work in the field of handicrafts because those occupations have their own people, who are usually from a lower social class, and this is unacceptable in our customs and traditions and is considered to be shameful. For me, it is difficult ... difficult to accept that. Who will accept marrying his daughter to a person working in a profession such as carpentry or knitting?

Similarly, *Hamda* (F, 70 years old) stated:

Some people came to us asking us to participate in the festivals related to the Najran heritage, which are sometimes held in the historic palace, which is only 50 metres away from my shop. However, I refused because I was afraid of the shame that may be inflicted on my tribe.

Some women seem to refuse to work or participate in tourist activities in an attempt to avoid shame as they have imbibed cultural norms and values. It, therefore, can be said that mothers and other women have authority that works behind the scenes, decreasing children's confidence in themselves and not providing them with opportunities to make

decisions on their own. Mothers play pivotal roles in shaping the identity of their sons and daughters. The interviewees highlighted this point:

Children in homes and schools have learned to rely on parents to plan their lives, decide their fate, set their goals, choose their specialties, etc. Therefore, this often creates generations that are not independent and do not believe in participation. (*Elham*, F, 33 years old)

Socialisation and the education system in our communities in the Najran Region have produced generations that are not aware of the concept of participation. (*Nada*, F, 36 years old)

These quotations suggest that some mothers have authority in the home through children's socialisation. However, it cannot be said that mothers and other women have authority outside the home as men remain the decision makers, both inside and outside the home.

The participants were asked whether they were able to participate in decision-making in tourism in Najran. The following quotes are representative responses.

There are no tourism decisions taken by the local community or people. The tourism decisions are taken by the government, whether in Najran or outside the region. Any decision needs an authority, logistical support and operational mechanisms, and therefore, whoever has those things together is only the government. (*Mohammed N*, M, 52 years old)

In our community, decisions are often made centrally by the tribal leader, the head of the family and the government official. This, therefore, is a major obstacle to participation in tourism planning in Najran. (*Zaid*, M, 60 years old)

The tourism authorities in the Najran Region are the owners of the decision. For example, the Najran mayor is a decision maker, the Ministry of the Interior is also a decision maker, etc. Thus, the tourism decision is in the hands of several government agencies in Najran. (*Ali S*, M, 26 years old)

These responses reflect a top-down approach, and the local people do not believe that they have the power to influence tourism government agencies. This situation has led to the marginalisation of some people, even at the level of offering opinions and

suggestions on tourism development in the region. For example, *Mubarak* (M, 44 years old) claimed:

The archaeological city of Al Okhdoud has a large number of trees, rabbits and birds. Unfortunately, the branch of tourism in Najran has built a cement wall on the borders of the archaeological city that hinders the entry of floods to the site, which has led to the death of many trees and the disappearance of the wildlife that existed on the site. I have communicated with the branch of tourism in Najran and told them that what they are doing destroys the environment and causes the disappearance of wildlife, but none of the tourism bodies in the region has listened to me. We have provided them through the Najran Green Environmental Association with numerous solutions to preserve the environment, and we are willing to work with them but have failed to convince them.

Saeed M (M, 48 years old) further explained that:

Tourism and communities serve each other. We cannot offer anything for tourism in which we are marginalised, and our opinions are not taken into account. I say it to you and do not consider it to be a secret. I have met many young people in Najran who say, 'We have submitted projects to the tourism authority in Najran, but unfortunately, the tourism body did not interact with us'. This is a problem when those people knock on the door more than once, and they find that no one gives them attention. As president of the literary club in Najran, I knocked on the door more than once, asking for collaboration with the tourism branch in Najran, but no one listened to me.

These conversations reveal a feeling of frustration and exclusion from participating in shaping the region's tourism future due to the centralisation of tourism planning in Najran. Najran residents seem fed up as nobody listens to them, and it can be said this has created a feeling of powerlessness among locals.

Accordingly, the interviewees were asked what type of participation local communities have in tourism in Najran. They shared the following comments:

Our participation is mostly only through official letters asking us to support festivals or any other occasions in the region. Or we are sometimes invited to attend some meetings of the accommodations sector, either to request support or to participate in tourist exhibitions inside or outside Najran. **...hmp...** imagine, we do not participate in planning for such important

events where our role is only to provide financial support. (*Riyad*, M, 55 years old)

The problem that we have in Najran is the collection of funds from investors in the tourism sector in order to support the tourism authorities in their participation in exhibitions and forums ... as well to provide for the hospitality and the cost of accommodations in hotels for the guests of those parties at the expense of investors who are supposed to be supported instead of extorted. (*Dalamah*, M, 40 years old)

We are invited by the event organisers in Najran to participate, and we just do what we are asked to do. We are excluded from planning tourism activities, even in cases of activities considered to be specialised such as handicrafts...hmph... I am sorry to say that those who do not have experience in our work are the ones who manage tourism development issues. (*Rahma*, F, 54 years old)

The interviewees thus described the role of Najran communities as limited to only providing logistical, financial and volunteer services.

This point led to another question on the participants' perspective on the importance of local people's participation in tourism development in Najran. *Hussein A* (M, 61 years old) stated:

Fifty years ago, the community in the kingdom was not prepared to live in apartments, while it was acceptable in other societies such as Egypt and Syria at that time. Consequently, the buildings that were built by the state at that time remained unoccupied for more than 30 years as the planners did not take into account the environmental and social dimensions of the kingdom. Thus, if the team of planners had a community representative, that problem would have been remedied. Fifty years later, these buildings have become acceptable to a large proportion of Saudi society, including Najran, because of the change in social concepts and values. Therefore, the community should be involved in formulating tourism strategies in Najran to ensure that these strategies will meet their needs, and thus this will be reflected in their positive support for tourism.

Ali H (M, 29 years old) mentioned:

The local community is the incubator of the tourism authority in Najran as an entity, for tourism as an industry, as well as an incubator for visitors from outside the region. Therefore, community participation is important in tourism planning.

Hussein G (M, 46 years old) stated:

Community participation is important because the local community owns the land and the places where tourism is located. It is also the decision maker on whether to receive tourists. So, without the owner of the land or place, the tourist will not be able to enter tourist sites and will not find his rest. Our culture in Najran is different from any culture. The Najran community is a conservative tribal community compared to the rest of the kingdom. The Najran community has privacy, so it is difficult to impose tourism on the communities within villages and rural areas without people taking part in tourism issues and getting permission from them before entering their villages. Local people influence and are influenced by tourism, so they should be at the same table with tourism officials to draw the tourism plan.

The interviewees revealed that local communities play significant roles in the success of tourism development issues. This finding led to a question about the reasons for excluding local communities from tourism development issues in Najran. Many participants attributed it to a lack of tourism planning in Najran. For example, *Maryam* (F, 30 years old) acknowledged this point:

We have an absence of the concept of planning, both at the community level and at the level of tourism operators in Najran. We follow a traditional style of planning that is unorganised and random and does not depend on measurement of objectives.

Hamadna (M, 48 years old) criticised planning in Arab societies, including Najran:

Unfortunately, our emotions in Arab societies are high. So many prefer traditional planning because written plans keep the person away from emotions. ... Most people unfortunately do not like written plans because those plans make them bored and routine and do not give a person a chance to do the things he is in the mood for.

To clarify what was meant by traditional planning, a probing question was asked.

Hamadna answered:

Today, a group of colleagues and I went out for lunch at one of the restaurants. We do that about one a week, and we were planning for that moment through a WhatsApp group that was established for that purpose. Whenever we decided to go out, family circumstances appeared to prevent

some of us from meeting. After those circumstances went away, we went out for lunch with each other. Here, our planning was traditional and not scientifically written in schedules. We have not set a certain timeframe for the time we will spend with each other; we have not defined responsibilities. Planning here is a social practice that has existed for a long time in all societies. But with the development of management and economy sciences, the social practices of planning and management have been transferred from the level of social practice to the written and organised scientific level.

These interviewees indicated that random planning dominates in the Najran region. It was observed that a number of participants had proper knowledge of tourism planning, but many struggled to answer, and the concept seemed to remain specialised and difficult for them. Similarly, many studies have found that planning is complex and is considered to be a separate language with its own vocabulary and grammar (Elliott, 1958; Kornai and Boskin, 1979; Tosun and Jenkins, 1998; Weigand et al., 2014).

A probing question was asked about the negative consequences of a lack of planning for tourism and participation issues. Many participants, including *Mounira K* (F, 44 years old), mentioned the poor quality of tourism activities and programmes:

In the Jizan Region, which is the neighbouring place to us, there are many beautiful events attended by many people from everywhere in the kingdom. Jizan's events are diverse and well organised and supervised by the tourism authority. Why doesn't Najran have the same? Don't Najran and its people deserve such events? The region should have suitable festivals. It isn't an 'animal farm'. This is a shame ... shame [emphasis by the interviewee]. Tourism officials in Najran carry out events in any way and do not care whether people are satisfied or not.

When I see the festivals in Najran, I feel that I am in one of the remote countries in Africa. We bring the world's rubbish from theme parks, tents and goods, etc., and put them in our festivals. Those responsible for these festivals do not respect the minds of the people, and the calamity is that those responsible for tourism in Najran do not go with their children to these festivals, which means that they themselves are not convinced of what is presented at those festivals. (*Dalamah, M, 40 years old*)

This reveals a lack of respect for Najran residents' aspirations to be consumers of tourism products. In addition to a lack of respect, other participants mentioned the

exploitation of local communities by tourism officials. *Ali S* (M, 26 years old) highlighted this point. When asked about the obstacles to participation in tourism development, he talked about his formation of the Youth Tourism Committee (YTC):

When I was elected as chairman of the YTC in Najran, I had hopes and dreams that never came to fruition. The committee was formed of youth and girls from the university and high school levels. After the formation of the committee, we met with the branch of tourism in Najran, who explained to us the role expected of us in supporting the tourism plans and programmes among young men and women in Najran. The theme of the meeting was to minimise the word, 'We travel a lot'.

After that, we represented the Najran Region at the Youth Tourism Forum in Riyadh and put forward our vision and requirements of tourism as young people. After the forum ended, we returned to the Najran Region, and we were very excited to formulate a plan reflecting youth's tourism needs in Najran. But, unfortunately, we discovered that the formation of the youth group was only a trick, and the branch of tourism in Najran was seeking only to participate in the forum at our expense. No one contacted us, and no one came to us, and we discovered that the subject of the youth committee was only for media consumption. (*Ali S*, M, 26 years old)

Mubarak (M, 44 years old) talked about another form of exploitation:

We campaigned to clean the Najran Wadi, and a large number of Najran residents participated based on their potential. But at the end of this wonderful work, the wadi was not beautiful. And the reason why was that a number of people among us were exploiting this cleaning campaign for their own interests in front of the governor of the Najran Region. That is why many people are reluctant to participate in development issues, including tourism ones.

Mohammed W (M, 23 years old) highlighted another case:

Community members are concerned about the loss of their intellectual rights they provide, so they are very tight about the disclosure of a lot of historical and social information. Because people do not see the benefit from disclosing such data, especially when tourism officials in Najran use that information without permission from their owners. Consequently, local people lose their intellectual rights.

Many participants attributed the planning failures to the randomness and the lack of motivation to work among Najran tourism officials. *Maryam* (F, 30 years old)

highlighted this point: ‘The government official does not enjoy his job because he considers it a burden, and it is just a task that only needs to be accomplished’. *Ali S* (M, 26 years old) stated that ‘tourism in Najran is just government work or daily tasks requested by the central administration in Riyadh’. *Ali H* (M, 29 years old) commented:

In Najran, we need to manage tourism with a business mentality rather than the bureaucratic mentality that disrupts many projects. We do not want employees who do routine daily work that are not accompanied by mechanisms for reward and punishment. My friend [speaking to the researcher], what do you expect from a manager who stays in his position for more than 20 years? What do you expect him to do? There is no one to compete with him for his job. Unfortunately, such models of managers do not care much about customer satisfaction and do not consider themselves to be partners. For example, in my life, I have not received a questionnaire that measures the satisfaction of visitors with events and festivals held in the region. I mean, they do not care about measuring the satisfaction of people about the services they provide. This is evidence that they are not interested.

As the participants explained, exploitation and a lack of respect have generated a sense of frustration that may have negative impacts on support for tourism.

Further probing questions were asked to uncover more issues related to participation.

Many participants cited nepotism, or *Wasta*, in Arab culture, as among the challenges to tourism participation in Najran, as illustrated by the following quotes:

In Arab societies, patronage plays a role in letting friends and relatives who are not qualified participate in tourism development issues, while there are no opportunities for creative and loyal members of communities. Therefore, so-called ‘nepotism’ or favouritism of relatives and friends is one of the main obstacles that hinders the participation of communities in tourism development in Najran. (*Hamadna*, M, 48 years old)

I am Yemeni. We do not participate in tourism planning, and we are not invited to participate in tourism festivals, whether inside or outside the region. But we hear that there are craftsmen of non-Saudi nationalities participating in festivals, including the Janadriyah Festival in Riyadh, because of the friendship that brings them together with some government officials. (*Abdullah*, M, 32 years old)

You need letters and approvals from several government entities to enter the archaeological sites, and this is a major disappointment and obstacle to participating in tourism issues. ... You need *Wasta* from Najran tourism officials to enter Al Okhdoud. For example, we came to the grove with a group of visitors, and we were stopped by the guard, and he said, 'Today is for families'. And the problem is that most of the visitors who were with us were from outside the region. ... So I had to use *Wasta*. Then I spoke to a friend of mine who worked at the tourism authority in Najran, and he spoke to the guard and allowed us to enter. (*Mohammed W*, M, 23 years old)

The interviewees revealed the influence of *Wasta* (nepotism) on tourism work in Najran, which seems to have generated feelings of frustration among many people in Najran who do not have access to *Wasta*. Some participants mentioned that the tribal nature of community promoted *Wasta*:

Our eternal problem is that every person who is assigned to a job position comes to imagine that this job falls within the property of his tribe, so you must praise him and lie to him, or else you will be an unwanted person. Honestly, this is frustrating and is one of the main obstacles to the participation of people in tourism. (*Dalamah*, M, 40 years old)

The Najran culture prevents us from filing a complaint against the organisers of the festivals or tourism events because we feel shame from their relatives with whom we sometimes have friendship or kinship, which prevents us from claiming our rights. Also, we participate in a friendly manner and do not sign contracts between us, but unfortunately, sometimes, we do not get our rights. And sometimes, we agree on a certain amount, and we are surprised that the amount changed at the end of the festivals. (*Saleh*, M, 52 years old)

These quotations can be interpreted as showing how the tribe permeates daily life in Najran and casts a shadow over the work environment in tourism. Many participants attributed this to the absence of local community institutions:

The absence of an elected tourist club in Najran, which includes specialists in archaeology, architects, doctors, intellectuals, tourist planners and so on, leads to weak participation in tourism. (*Mohammed W*, M, 23 years old)

I hope there is an agency or entity to manage tourism in the region that is not entirely the government. There is no objection to the tourism authority being a supervisory body, but it should leave the planning and implementation to the local elected administration or agency that represents

all the local population in the Najran Region. (*Mohammed N, M, 52 years old*)

At the end of every interview, the participants were allowed to comment on issues they believed were important that the interview had not addressed. Many participants commented on empowerment as an issue related to participation and tourism support:

The community needs to be empowered in tourism planning issues in order to be able to participate. ... The operators of tourism in Najran, most of them were employees in sectors that may have no direct relationship with tourism. This is reflected in the issues of tourism development and thus issues of participation. (*Hussein G, M, 46 years old*)

A very important obstacle is the lack of planning skills in the tourism bodies in Najran. Therefore, there is a need to qualify tourism management in Najran in tourism planning issues. This also applies to community members who need empowerment to be able to participate. (*Mohammed G, M, 38 years old*)

Communities' lack of initiative to support tourism was another issue mentioned by the interviewees:

Communities in Najran are still dependent on the government...uh...they believe that the country must take care of tourism and tourist sites, and the government is the one that must invest and clean facilities and work everything, etc. And this is one of the most important obstacles. (*Elham, F, 33 years old*)

We established a tour group and asked for a small fee from some people who wanted to go with us on a tour. The fees we requested were simply to cover the costs of transportation, eating and drinking. Unfortunately, many refused to pay and said that it is the responsibility of the government, which is supposed to pay fees and to support such tourism activities. [...] many still want to live as a burden or dependent on the government...hmp... there are still many people who do not have the motivation to participate in tourism issues. (*Mohammed W, M, 23 years old*)

...er...every 10 families in Najran have the right to apply to the Commission for Social Development. Unfortunately, people in Najran have not demanded, and they are not so enthusiastic about it. [...] therefore, the lack of desire and enthusiasm of some members of the community towards development is considered to be one of the obstacles to participation in tourism and non-tourist development issues. (*Mohammed G, M, 38 years old*)

Awareness and initiatives to reach people were also mentioned by many interviewees as another problem in tourism planning in Najran:

There is a weakness in the media aspect of tourism. ... The concept of the tourism industry is unclear or minor to many people in Najran. ... There is a lack of initiative from the tourism branch to reach people in their workplaces, sports clubs and private councils for local people to build partnerships with people and take their views on the issues of tourism development. (*Mohammed G, M, 38 years old*)

I hope tourism officials enter the fabric of the community and move away from official agendas and media speeches that serve only personal purposes. ... I have never found the director of tourism in Najran sitting with people to know what they want and what their tourism requirements are. Unfortunately, our officials—if they want to sit with people, the majority of them cannot come without the press and cameras. I wish from the tourism director to come to people without journalists and cameras and ask people about their needs and what their goals from tourism are. (*Mohammed W, M, 23 years old*)

Arguably, obstacles to tourism participation and support include the absence of civil society institutions, social initiatives, empowerment and training, as well as poor awareness and outreach to local people.

4.1.4 Summary of the Findings

The findings show that the tribal nature of daily life in Najran persists. In tribal societies such as Najran, customs and social norms heavily influence the cultural identity of the local people, including in relation to tourism. The enthusiasm the interviewees express for tourism is tempered by its inconsistency with the inherited cultural values in Najran. Among the reasons is the tribe's attempt to preserve social structures and long-held customs and traditions. There appears to be anxiety about tourism's potential to promote resistance to centralised decision-making in the tribal structure. In other words, the globalisation of Najran society through tourism could contribute to undermining the roles of elites and tribal leaders who monopolise decisions related to communities. In

addition, *Wasta* (nepotism) constitutes an additional tool of the tribe's authority. As shown, *Wasta* permeates daily life in Najran and casts a shadow on work environments, including tourism. This has contributed to reducing the opportunities available for people eligible to participate in tourism in the region.

Religiosity also appears to be among the challenges to the development of tourism revealed by the interviews. The industry has been linked with alcohol, forbidden sexual relationships, concerts and mixing of men and women. As revealed, this is due to the adoption of multiple readings of Islamic texts, especially *fatwas* issued by some clerics. There seems to be an attempt to close Najran communities on the pretext of preserving them from the potential dilution of religious and cultural values by external influences introduced by tourism. Traditional clerics appear to be wary of the role tourism may play in promoting modern values in Najran, which could reduce their influence and control over communities.

In another layer of complexity revealed by the conversations, Najran is male dominated, and men's voices are always superior, even in matters related to women's futures. In the region's tourism sector, men's control over decisions undermines women's opportunities to participate in tourism development. Arguably, men's absolute authority has generated feelings of frustration, disenfranchisement and disempowerment among women due to the lack of consideration of their roles in society and tourism. However, the conversations also reveal mothers' and other women's invisible influence on decision-making, especially in the family. The mother is not the ultimate decision-maker as in Najran as men generally make the final decisions inside and outside the home. Nevertheless,

mothers play significant roles in the socialisation of sons and daughters and effectively influence the formation of their cultural identities.

In short, the findings reviewed can be summarised in three key themes: strict adherence to tribal rules, conflicts between and within patriarchy and matriarchy and multiple interpretations of Islamic religion (religiosity). These themes intersect to create significant challenges to tourism development in Najran. The next section places these themes in wider debates.

4.2 Discussion

This part analyses and interprets the three key themes that emerged from the findings into grand narratives and moves beyond description and basic interpretation.

4.2.1 Strict Adherence to Tribal Rules

Strict adherence to tribal rules constitutes an impediment to tourism as the tribe has ingrained values and norms that maintain Najran communities as a homogenous collectivistic culture. This is reflected in the attempt to isolate Najran communities from the outside world where tourism might introduce them to different races, religions and cultures. Anxiety about tourism as a significant driver of globalisation that lessens the power distance in Najran has pushed the tribe to create barriers to potential external influences that might disturb the centralised decision-making and influence in Najran's tribal community. This section discusses this topic in detail and provides an explanation of the nature of Najran society and its relationship to tourism. The power distance is identified as one of the main features characterising Najran as a collectivistic culture.

The social hierarchy and cultural practice of *Wasta* (nepotism) are investigated as two elements that reflect the power distance.

In the findings, Najran is described as follows:

A tribal community belonging to the primary groups where the social bond, or what we call the blood ties, is dominant. They are united by a single leadership called the 'tribe *Sheikh*' (tribal leader). (*Hamadna*, M, 48 years old)

Tribe and family are binding communities for the people of Najran, and their members are governed by strict social rules, unlike the communities of friends and co-workers. (*Mohammed N*, M, 52 years old)

This has been supported by some previous studies. For instance, Assad (2002) pointed out the Saudi social structure centres on the primary groups of family, tribe and kin, indicating a collectivistic culture based on blood ties and kinship. Similarly, Al-Harthi (2005) and Khan et al. (2016) stated that Arab societies are characterised by collectivistic relationships that place importance on social and security needs. In such cultures, people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups from birth (Hofstede, 1980), and priority is given to the goals of in-groups (Rhee et al., 1996). People behave in communal ways, family integrity is always valued, social surveillance is high, and the culture is considered to be isolated and strict (Triandis, 2001).

Unlike collectivistic cultures, individualistic cultures view the self as independent from the in-group (Hofstede, 1980) and prioritise personal goals over the goals of in-groups (Rhee et al., 1996). In addition, people have an emotional distance from groups, freeing them from social beliefs and norms (Triandis, 2001). Furthermore, individualistic cultures are considered to be loose and open, with little social surveillance. In contrast, Saudis are socially attached to the communities and social groups to which they belong.

For instance, in Najran:

A community consists mostly [of people] from one tribe, which makes self-censorship and social surveillance in the region higher than in the kingdom's other regions, such as the Asir Region. (*Hussein A*, M, 61 years old)

This indicates that Najran is a closed community, and studies have found that the Arab world mostly consists of closed societies in contrast to individualistic cultures as in the West (El Mallakh and El Mallakh, 1982; Al-Harhi, 2005; Al-Kandari and Al-Hadben, 2010; van Wijnen and Barnard, 2017). In Najran residents' perspectives, 'open societies are vulnerable to customs and traditions that come from outside their natural environments ... unlike closed communities that are less affected by the internal or external influences' (*Mohammed N*, M, 52 years old). In addition, Najran society 'is usually apprehensive about strangers, unlike Western societies' (*Hamadna*, M, 48 years old).

This indicates that Najran residents strictly adhere to customs and norms as cultural identities shape daily life in the region. This casts a shadow over tourism in Najran. The interviewees explained:

I had American tourists in one of our abandoned mud houses in our village. When we came, and tourists began to capture photos, our neighbour came up with a stick and accused us of shooting his house, his wife and his daughters. It was nice that we had some security escorts who treated him and resolved the subject amicably when we agreed to delete the photos. (*Mohammed W*, M, 23 years old)

I participated in a photography competition organised by the Tourism Authority targeted on the historical area in the centre of Najran. Unfortunately, many locals close to those sites did not allow us to take pictures. They threw stones at us, and they seemed to be sceptical of us and claimed that we were breaking into their privacy and photographing their houses. (*Asmaa*, F, 22 years old)

This indicates that Najran communities still have concerns about the external influences than tourism may bring, as clearly shown in hostile reactions towards visitors and tourists. Indeed, hostility towards tourists and visitors is nearly universal and

accompanies tourism development in many places (see Al Haija, 2011). Najran, though, is in a unique situation significantly dominated by a single tribe that contributes to hostile reactions towards tourism. Most of the Najran population is composed of the Yam tribe, which is among the largest Arab tribes that settled in Najran ages ago (Hussein, 2019) and is considered to be among the tribes most strongly adhering to customs and traditions today.

Hostile reactions to tourism in Najran are due to the following reasons:

Tourists are different from others who come for educational, sport or diplomatic purposes because those who come to the region for tourism are heterogeneous, and no one can sort them. They come with different agendas and motivations, integrate with local communities, break local people's privacy, and reveal their secrets. (*Mohammad N, M, 52 years old*)

Among Najran residents, tourism generates some uncertainty and anxiety about its role in providing opportunities for foreign cultures to infiltrate Najran communities. Similarly, Hermans and Kempen (1998) and Song and Cao (2018) considered tourism to be a decisive driving force of globalisation as it draws people from different cultural origins into close relationships.

Concern exists about the spread of tourism in society as an instrument of globalisation, which may weaken the social structures represented by the tribe. Saudi Arabia is a collectivistic country with a high-power distance (Khan et al., 2016; Alexander et al., 2017), which means that power is unequally distributed within society. Consequently, the transition to an individualistic culture and open society may reduce the power distance in Najran. The power distance indicates the extent of interactions and relationships in society and refers 'to the degree to which individuals, groups, or societies accept inequalities (e.g. inequalities in power, status, wealth) as unavoidable,

legitimate, or functional' (Daniels and Greguras, 2014:1203). The power distance represents the extent to which less powerful individuals comply with the wishes and orders of high-ranking, powerful members of society (Beekun et al., 2008). Collectivistic societies with a high power distance are inclined to allow considerable differences among their people (Daniels and Greguras, 2014). The social hierarchy and the cultural practice of *Wasta* (nepotism) are two significant factors that reflect the power distance in Saudi Arabia, including Najran.

The social hierarchy centralises decision-making in society in cultural figures such as clerics, elites, tribal leaders and men (Sidanius, 1994). As discussed in the findings, in Najran society, decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of family heads, the elderly and tribal leaders. The conflicts between the tribe and tourism are reflected in the tension between the cultural figures who dominate decision-making in society and the younger generations who feel frustrated, disenfranchised and not listened to. Traditional figures seek to maintain their influence and control in society by applying traditional forms of participation, such as *Al-Shura* and *Barza*. To ensure the success of such traditional forms, obedience to the elderly and guardians is instilled through socialisation processes (Khakhar and Rammal, 2013) until it becomes part of what is generally regarded as common sense Avdikos (2011). It is also strengthened by being linked to religion. *Al-Shura* and *Barza*, as traditional paradigms, derive their legitimacy from cultural and religious values embedded in Najran local culture. Islam (2017) and Ibrahim and Muhammed (2018) emphasised that *Al-Shura*'s legitimacy is derived from the Quran, which links obedience to guardians⁹ to obedience to *Allah*. In contrast,

⁹ A guardian is a responsible person, whether a father, older brother, tribal leader or ruler.

democracy derives its legitimacy from people (Beath et al., 2017; Alnufaishan and Alrashidi, 2019). This resonates with the work of Gramsci (1971), who used hegemony to explore how ruling classes establish and maintain control of subordinate groups. Hegemonic power, according to Gramsci (1971), is gained through complex processes of consent and coercion associated with religious, political, cultural and ideological practices. In other words, what Gramsci called ‘hegemonic blocs’ diffuse certain ideological elements crucial for maintaining their hegemony throughout communities (Avdikos, 2011). In the case of Najran, therefore, certain cultural and religious values have been infused into the culture to preserve traditional forms of participation that ensure the hegemony of cultural figures.

However, the participants directly criticise *Al-Shura* and *Barza* for soliciting only ‘opinions. And people give their point of view on the subject and the decision is made by the guardian, or the manager’ (*Maryam, F, 30 years old*). *Al-Shura* and *Barza* are also ‘confined to old people in the tribe and often the decision is in their hands’ (*Hussein G, M, 46 years old*). These statements indicate that the traditional forms of participation only give an illusion of power-sharing and no longer convince younger generations and marginalised people. Participation in *Al-Shura* and *Barza* is only tokenism, and the hegemonic figures continue to monopolise decision-making in society. Likewise, Beath et al. (2017) emphasised that *Al-Shura* gives decision-making power to communities’ elites. It also aligns with Fattah and Butterfield’s (2006) and Alnufaishan and Alrashidi’s (2019) view that *Al-Shura* is impractical and inappropriate as it is not based on elections or the participation of many people as the democratic model is.

This discussion reflects the ebb and flow of power between cultural figures (e.g., elites, the elderly and tribal leaders) and younger generations who feel excluded from the decision-making processes in society. On one hand, hegemonic figures fear that the globalisation of society brought by tourism will erode their power and influence. On the other hand, younger generations and those excluded from the decision-making processes seek to improve their positions in the centralised decision-making processes. These groups strive to go beyond the tokenistic participation in *al-Shura* and *Barza* to citizen power in Arnstein's (1969) ladder and spontaneous participation in Tosun's (2006) typology of community participation. This aligns with Gramsci (1971), who stated that power is not stable, and some people always try to build counter-hegemonic forces. In line with Gramsci, the questioning of traditional forms of participation by young people in Najran is considered to be a form of resistance to the centralised decision-making in the communities' power structures (Sullivan et al., 2011).

Although rapid elsewhere in Saudi Arabia, including Jeddah, Riyadh and the Eastern Region, social transformations are proceeding slowly in Najran due to the strict adherence to tribal rules that still characterises daily life in the region. Cultural figures still control Najran society, and accordingly, they have concerns about tourism's potential to undermine the social hierarchy of power by making Najran into an individualistic society. This leads to resistance to tourism and hinders opportunities to strengthen the industry and make it sustainable.

Moreover, the cultural practice of *Wasta* (nepotism) is another dimension of the power distance. Perceptions of nepotism differ across cultures; some see it as good, reflecting the concept of an extended family whose members should help each other. On the other

hand, other cultures link nepotism to corruption, see its practice as evil and believe that those who practice it are certainly not democratic (Jaramillo, 1970; Firfiray et al., 2018; Sroka and Vveinhardt, 2018). It can be said that nepotism exists in all societies, interpreted differently according to the context (Khakhar and Rammal, 2013). In the Arab region, including Saudi Arabia, nepotism is referred to by the term *Wasta* (Sroka and Vveinhardt, 2018), defined as ‘the process whereby individual goals are achieved often through personal links with people in high-status positions, derived from family relationships or close friendships’ (Syed et al., 2018:165). Harbi et al. (2017) described *Wasta* as connections, network, contacts and nepotism. Unlike in cultures with a low power distance, *Wasta* is a cultural practice in the Arab region and is considered to be a moral obligation towards relatives (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011; Harbi et al., 2017; Caputo, 2018; Syed et al., 2018), as shown in the following quotes:

I am from the people sent to the Municipal Council through the tribe. I received votes from outside my tribe, but it was weak. ... I asked my tribe to vote for me before candidates from outside the tribe. The tribe voted for me not because I was the right person to serve Najran but because I was one of its members. (*Dalamah, M, 40 years old*)

Tourism in Najran is managed in a *Shaliliya*¹⁰ style through the deliberate choice of those who do not honestly say their opinions. ... This is frustrating for many of Najran’s people, contributing to excluding creators from participating in tourism in Najran. (*Ali H, M, 29 years old*)

Tourism work in Najran is done through relationships. Tourism plans may suddenly change once a call reaches the director of tourism from a government official or tribal leader requesting the establishment an event or a tourist activity in a specific place. And this is common in tribal areas such as Najran. (*Ebrahim, M, 50 years old*)

Wasta appears to cast a shadow over tourism in Najran, limiting future opportunities and complicating tourism planning in the region. The collectivistic nature of

¹⁰ *Shaliliya* is derived from the word *Shala* but has negative connotations, referring to a group of individuals who share illegal interests and oppose the public interest.

communities allows the tribe to permeate all aspects of life in Najran. Similarly, Branine et al. (2010), Al-Kandari and Al-Hadben (2010) and Al Subhi and Smith (2019) stated that the tribe constantly tries to penetrate economic, social and political institutions to make them serve its interests. *Wasta* is a cultural product that the tribe uses to gain power and influence in Najran. *Wasta* arises in Najran culture as a kind of *Al-Himya* (bias towards the tribe), which renders criticism of it a violation of tribal norms. Socialisation makes *Wasta* hegemonic in every area of daily life and an integral part of locals' identities (Gramsci, 1971; Avdikos, 2011; García López et al., 2017).

Arguably, *Wasta* flows through daily life in Najran like blood through the veins as it has been embedded through socialisation. Some non-tourism studies (e.g. Khakhar and Rammal, 2013; Harbi et al., 2017; Syed et al., 2018) and some tourism studies (e.g. Arasli et al., 2006; Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011; Pelit et al., 2015; Elsayed and Daif, 2019) have examined the use of *Wasta* in the Arab world. However, all of these papers have focused on the influence of *Wasta* on business and employment in the hospitality sector. They are inadequate to understand the complexities surrounding *Wasta* in the Najran Region. The current study highlights the significance of *Wasta* as a form of traditionalism that affects the ability to properly develop tourism.

For example, *Wasta* poses a threat to tourism development in Najran as decision-makers and tourism staff have adopted it as a cultural value. Moreover, the hegemonic cultural forces represented by the tribe have made *Wasta* integral to the institutional identity of tourism officials. This likely negatively affects development decisions in Najran, especially when tourism development is used to serve the tribe's interest or is directed away from tribal areas in response to the tribe's desires. Tourism officials may be

unaware of these consequences of *Wasta* as they were raised to view *Wasta* as a moral duty towards their tribe, family, relatives and friends (Branine et al., 2010), in contrast to cultures with low power distances that value meritocracy and social improvement (Beekun et al., 2008).

In sum, social transformations that reduce the power distance are likely to lead to confrontations as the tribe tries to resist the individualistic culture tourism may bring. The erosion of the power of *Wasta* relative to meritocracy as a form of modernity weakens the tribe's role and robs it of influence and prestige. Strict adherence to tribal rules by Najran residents reinforces this tension. There is still a significant shortage of studies investigating the hegemony of *Wasta* in tourism planning and decision-making, especially in the Arab Gulf region.

4.2.2 Conflicts between and within Patriarchy and Matriarchy

Patriarchy and matriarchy are highly complex and reflect multiple layers of power, posing challenges to tourism development. On one hand, patriarchy, described as the 'rule of fathers or men' as the head of the family, creates tensions between men and women (Haj-Yahia, 2000; Farrelly, 2011; Collins et al., 2014; Adisa et al., 2019). The former possess and seek to retain ultimate power, while the latter strive to acquire or participate in it. On the other hand, matriarchy refers to mothers' and other women's influence on economic and social decisions in the home related to their children's lives (Farrelly, 2011; van der Meer, 2017; Goettner-Abendroth, 2017; 2018). Matriarchy involves a struggle between mothers who seek to control their children, who desire to be free from the constraints and norms imposed by the family. These multiple layers of power constitute barriers to tourism development as tourism has the potential to

undermine social ties, reduce the power of the dominant group and increase the power of disadvantaged groups. The discussion on this topic is presented in two sections. The first section highlights the conflict between men and women and its implications for development issues. The second section investigates the role of patriarchy in obstructing tourism development in Najran.

In patriarchy in the Arab region, according to Haj-Yahia (2000), the father is considered to be the head of the family and has considerable power based on his economic and social status. Despite changes in the past few decades, gender inequality remains a major issue in the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, as highlighted in the following statements:

Woman is weak, and her voice does not rise above the voice of a man, especially when she is not educated or is restricted by customs and traditions that consider women to be inferior or below men. (*Rahma*, F, 54 years old)

I have a colleague at work who cannot go to the market and does not know how much her salary and daily programme are from home to work and vice versa. ... I swear to God, her husband holds an important position in Najran. ... This is one of the main obstacles hindering women's participation in tourism. (*Fatema*, F, 29 years old)

These quotations reflect the reality in tribal contexts such as Najran where women are subordinated to man, even in decisions related to their lives. Women's subordination to men is rooted in Saudi culture (Quamar, 2016) and has become accepted as a common sense, as Gramsci (1971) indicated. To maintain men's authority in the social hierarchy, boys are taught to be strong and girls to be weak and submissive (Haj-Yahia, 2000; Bajnaid and Elyas, 2017). Moreover, family honour is linked to 'female sexual misconduct, which is considered a *fadiha* (scandal) [and] results in disgrace for the family name' (Bajnaid and Elyas, 2017:80). Consequently, women's behaviour is

restricted, and control over women is tight (Cohen and Savaya, 2003; Quamar, 2016). However, this generally is not common in the western regions of Saudi Arabia, such as Jeddah (see Hamdan, 2005; De Jong and Moaddel, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2018). However, in Najran, women still occupy an inferior position in the social hierarchy (Quamar, 2016).

These hegemonic ideologies have been handed down from the past and still inform men's attitudes towards women. Consider the following examples:

I went to the tourism branch, where I had some opinions and thoughts about tourism in Najran. Unfortunately, the security guard stopped me at the branch door and told me that women are forbidden to enter. (*Nada*, F, 36 years old)

I'm asking a man to get in touch with the tourism bodies in Najran about obtaining approvals and support for the participation of my squad for children in tourism events. The reason for this is that some tourism officials in Najran refused to communicate with me when I tried to communicate with them. The tourism branch in Najran told me that I am a woman, and they needed to communicate with my male guardian. This was in fact frustrating to me, and such matters make participation in tourism issues difficult. (*Asmaa*, F, 22 years old)

Direct communication between women and men remains taboo in the region. Gender stereotypes rooted in the socialisation of both men and women frame thinking in Najran (Doumato, 1999; Al-Rasheed, 2013). However, recent social transformations in Saudi society have created a desire among many women in Najran to play a role in development issues, including tourism, as shown in the following statements:

Women in Najran should face the community and the customs and traditions that exist in it and not hide their heads in the dust like ostriches. (*Mounira D*, F, 55 years old)

My family does not allow me to drive the car, and I gave them a one-year deadline. Then I will put them in front of a *fait accompli*. (*Mounira K*, F, 44 years old)

When I was young, my dreams were to be as famous as American programme presenter Oprah Winfrey, but unfortunately, my dream faded due to the social reality in Najran. ... I struggle with the community here in order to organise a small event led entirely by a woman. ... I think my ambition and success bother many Najran residents. (*Nada*, F, 32 years old)

These statements indicate that women desire to be free from social constraints that hinder their ability to decide their own futures. Although women in Saudi Arabia have started to work side by side with men in all fields (Quamar, 2016; Sabir and Zenaidi, 2019), this practice is not common in tribal areas such as Najran, particularly in tourism. Accordingly, studies conducted in the Arab world have confirmed that tourism remains a highly gendered activity (Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017; Koburtay et al., 2018). In Najran, people still view women's work and participation in tourism as shameful as it brings people of all races, religions, cultures and social classes into direct communication (Hermans and Kempen, 1998; Song and Cao, 2018). This potential worries many Najran residents who fear that tourism may provide opportunities for Najran women to come into contact with all these segments of society. In Najran, there persists a belief that only women from low origins¹¹, not tribal women, attend and participate in tourism activities. Consider the following statements:

Because of my work in tourism, some say that I am of low origins, and there is no man from my family who controls me, and I will spoil Najran's women. (*Nada*, F, 36 years old)

I am from a well-known tribe, not *Hayaka*, *Kharaza*¹². ... We leave participation in tourism and festivals to those who have no origins, like the woman sitting there [pointing to a woman sitting opposite her store]. (*Hamda*, F, 70 years old)

¹¹ In contrast to tribal people, those with low origins have unknown histories. They may not marry into the tribe as they do not have adequate descent. Most came from neighbouring countries and settled in Najran. They work for the tribe in activities such as agriculture and handicrafts tribe members view as too shameful to carry out themselves (Samin, 2008).

¹² *Hayaka* is a woman who works in the profession of knitting, and a *Kharaza* is a woman who works in the profession of beading.

Tribal women's contact with those of so-called low origins worries the tribe as it might encourage women to revolt against the tribal norms and men's absolute authority. This view is due to the prevailing impression in Najran that those who do not belong to the tribal class (those of low origins) are often free from the norms and values that govern Najran tribal women. Arguably, tourism causes anxiety among Najran men as it allows tribal women to mix with others from different cultures not compatible with tribal norms, possibly encouraging women to resist the authority of *Wali*¹³ (guardians).

However, for women,

Tourism is an outlet and recreation for the girls of Najran. ... I know that girls, whether from my generation or older than me or even the youngest, need women's tourism projects in the region in order to avoid the pressures of home, customs and traditions that restrict their daily lives. (*Fatema*, F, 29 years old)

We need tourism. ... On a personal level, tourism will contribute to the development of my talent in painting. ... It will give me opportunities to learn about the history and monuments of the region and its urban heritage by giving me opportunities to participate in photography and painting competitions organised by the Saudi Commission for Tourism. ... Tourism will give Najran women opportunities to appear and introduce themselves to people inside and outside the country. ... Tourism also represents an economic income for women. (*Asmaa*, F, 22 years old)

These statements indicate tensions between men and women. On one hand, women pursue freedom from the cultural restrictions that maintain men's status and authority in the social hierarchy, which worries many men in the Arab world, including Najran. On the other hand, women strive to change stereotypes of women in Najran by working hand in hand with men and improving their positions in the social hierarchy in Najran

¹³ *Wali* is a woman's father, brother or husband.

society. Women in Najran have no power and stand on the rungs of manipulation and therapy in Arnstein's (1969) ladder.

However, although mothers and other women feel frustrated with men's absolute authority, they also have authority at the family level and contribute to the consolidation of tribal norms among their sons and daughters. For example, during the socialisation of children, mothers accomplish girls' subordination to males as mothers were themselves raised to be weak and unable to act without their fathers, brothers or husbands' protection. Due to strict tribal upbringing, 'women in Najran are ready to lose their freedom in return for maintaining the reputation of their family or tribe' (*Mounira D*, F, 55 years old). Moreover, 'a woman who respects herself is the one who obeys her husband and respects her tribe, customs and traditions' (*Hamda*, F, 70 years old). Similarly, Al-Harhi (2005:2) stated that 'most Saudi women are willing to accept the position of women in return for the guarantee of security that social and Islamic traditions provide for them; even those who seek change want that to occur within the context of the Arab culture'. Arguably, the traditional norms and values passed down by mothers have cast a shadow on raising children (see Khalifa et al., 2018) and have contributed significantly to shaping their cultural identities.

A further aspect of this tension is found in the home. Islam guarantees mothers' authority over children. Awde (2013:88) explained this authority by mentioning the *Hadith* (saying) narrated about a man who asked the Prophet Muhammad: "Who is most entitled to the best of my companionship?" "Your mother", came the reply. "And then who?" "Your mother", repeated the prophet. "And then who?" "Your mother", said the prophet for third time. "And then who?" persisted the man. "Your father".' Saleh et

al. (2014:255) referred to another *Hadith* from the prophet, stating that ‘Paradise is under the feet of mothers’. In addition, the Quran (the Islamic holy book) equates obedience to parents to obedience to *Allah* and regards disobeying a parent as a major sin. Failing to treat one’s parents kindly, therefore, makes one guilty of disobedience to them and to *Allah*, which may deprive one of the chance to be admitted to Paradise (Khan, 2015; Anjum and Wani, 2018).

Nevertheless, mothers’ hegemonic power over children as supported by cultural and religious values is beginning to be questioned. Consider the following examples:

Some Najran women say that I am deceitful, others say that I am morally decadent, and others say I am crazy. I met Najran girls who told me that their mothers warn them not to talk to me as they describe me as a bad woman without morals. ... But those girls said, We trust you and are happy to communicate with you’. (*Nada*, F, 36 years old)

My mother forbids me from leaving the house to participate in tourist activities because she says only a bad woman with no *Wali* (guardian) to govern or control her can participate in tourism. So I sometimes have to leave the house without letting her know. (*Asmaa*, F, 22 years old)

Here, the tension between mothers and children is manifested in the former’s pursuit to maintain hegemony over their children’s decisions. The latter desire to be free from family restrictions and to decide their own futures, especially as openness to the world enabled by technological progress motivates Saudi youth to question and criticise the social restrictions imposed by the family (Naji Bajnaid and Elyas, 2017).

Among mothers, some local terms such as *Siah* and *Siaha* have negative connotations and frame their consciousness. Mothers might feel anxious about the reputation of their children, especially daughters, creating tension about their behaviour outside the home:

Many girls when they work in places where they come into contact with males, those girls must show them the red eye.¹⁴ ... This is as a result of the strict instructions girls have from parents, which put them under pressure, often resulting in a reluctance to work. (*Fatema*, F, 29 years old)

Koburtay et al. (2018:5) emphasised that when Bedouin ‘females work in male-dominated jobs, they need to demonstrate their professionalism by adopting more masculine traits and playing their role as honorable wives in order to enhance their family’s image within society’. Arguably, one way to control daughters is to put pressure on them and insert illusionary conceptions in their heads that they will be run into trouble outside the home.

The globalisation of Najran society, of which tourism is a major driver, may weaken children’s maternal ties, so mothers are likely to lose their authority in the community. However, it cannot be said that women are the decision makers at the family level, where men make powerful decisions that control society. Arguably, giving women the perception of power within the home, perhaps by design, encourages them to accept male domination outside the home.

For sons and daughters, tourism represents an opportunity to develop their talents and connect with the world, as their peers in other regions of the country do. This desire to be free from some customs and traditions clashes with strict tribal norms in Najran (Minosa, 1983; SCTA, 2011; Hussein, 2019), in contrast to the country’s major regions such as Jeddah and Riyadh where big cities are shaped by the dynamics of globalisation (Addas and Rishbeth, 2018). Along with tribal values, Islam links obedience to mothers

¹⁴ The ‘red eye’ means that women show rigor when dealing and communicating with men in work settings and public places.

to obedience to *Allah*. Similarly, Khalifa et al. (2018) stated that children have a religious obligation to obey their mother as their disobedience will displease *Allah*.

In short, the conflicts between and within patriarchy and matriarchy are manifested in overt tensions between men and women. These conflicts are fuelled by anxiety about men's declining hegemonic power and influence, which is matched by women's desire to grab or at least participate in power. Socialisation by the tribe and the family has embedded men's power over women. Amid recent social transformations in the country, women who feel frustrated and disenfranchised have questioned this authority. However, the situation in Najran remains very complex, and men retain absolute power. Another conflict emerges over mothers' covert authority over their children: mothers seek to maintain their authority over their children in the home, while children want to be free from family restrictions. As mothers and other women complain about men's authority, their attempts to maintain hegemony over decisions regarding their children's lives seem contradictory. It may not be possible to label this behaviour as hypocrisy. Perhaps mothers are not aware due to the tribal norms ingrained in their lives.

These complexities of power pose potential threats to tourism in Najran. Most men try to resist tourism due to its potential to weaken social ties and thus their power relative to women's power. As tourism drives globalisation, the same dynamic applies to mothers who fear that their power will ebb away as their children's increases. Tourism planning in the region is likely disturbed by these less visible issues, especially mothers' covert power as it often operates behind the scenes. Moreover, Najran tourism decision-makers who belong to the tribe might not realise that they are hindering tourism due to the influence of the region's cultural ideology.

Many tourism studies have discussed patriarchy (Tosun, 2002, 2005; Alhasanat and Hyasat, 2011; Saufi et al., 2014; Mosammam et al., 2016; Bello et al., 2017; Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017; Harun et al., 2018; Koburtay et al., 2018; Shakeela and Weaver, 2018). However, some of these studies focused on the issue of gender inequality in employment in the tourism field, while others discussed the general influence of socio-cultural values on local people's attitudes towards tourism. Ultimately, these studies are not adequate to reveal the situation in Najran. It is worth mentioning that the review of many tourism studies did not find any published research on the effects of mothers' covert power on tourism planning and development.

4.2.3 Multiple Interpretations of Islam (Religiosity)

The multiple interpretations of religion have led to tensions between the traditional views held by clerics and the modern values held by others. *Al-Sahwa* (the Islamic Awakening), which has been led by extremist traditional clerics in the country for nearly four decades, seeks to tighten control over Saudi society, including Najran, under the pretext of opposing *Al-Taghrib* (Westernisation). To protect society from *Al-Taghrib*, clerics use various interpretations and readings of religious texts. For decades, this has disrupted tourism development as it is considered to be a tool of westernisation or globalisation that undermines social, cultural and religious values. The desire to modernise society through tourism bothers traditional clerics as they fear losing their power and social prestige. Clerics demonise tourism as they fear that their authority will shrink as that of those with modernist values increases. Thus, in this struggle, extremist clerics have used religion to resist tourism.

For more details, this section examines the difference between religion and religiosity with the aim of facilitating the discussion. Next, it sheds light on the historical context of *Al-Sahwa* as a religious movement that continues to have a role in hindering tourism development in Saudi Arabia, especially in tribal areas such as Najran. The implications of the multiple interpretations of religion applied by *Al-Sahwa* scholars to hinder tourism are reviewed. In the conclusion, the main points on this topic are summarised.

This study follows Hage and Posner's (2015:1) definition of religion as 'an institution often characterised as a unified system of beliefs combining various creeds, theologies, and doctrines about people's current and eternal destiny as well as people's relationships with themselves and others around them including friends, enemies, and God'. In contrast, they defined religiosity as 'a measure of religious knowledge, faith, fundamentalism, belief, piousness, orthodoxy, religiousness, holiness, and devotion of individuals and the extent to which they live and use religion for their own ends'. In addition, Ilter et al. (2017:1) described religion as 'a set of beliefs that are taught since childhood, and people gradually commit to the religion as they have greater understandings towards its teachings'. Religiosity, in turn, is 'the degree to which followers of one religion accept the major beliefs and practices of that religion' (Ilter et al., 2017:3). Consequently, it can be said that religion is a set of ideas and beliefs constituting a code of conduct for followers. Religiosity then refers to followers' commitment to these ideas and beliefs according to their understandings; in other words, it is the practical application of those religious beliefs and texts.

In this study, religiosity, not religion *per se*, is considered to be a key barrier to support for tourism and participation in tourism activities. For example, in the modern history

of the KSA, *Al-Sahwa* emerged during the 1970s and 1980s as a revival of the religion of Islam, manifested in ‘religious piety’ or ‘religiosity’, to protect Saudi society from *Al-Taghrib* (Fulu and Miedema, 2016; Khairuldin et al., 2016; Asuhaimi et al., 2017; Razak et al., 2018). The movement urged the adoption of Islamic culture expressed in clothing, terminology, gender segregation and adherence to values and ethics perceived as Islamic (Lacroix, 2011). *Al-Sahwa* emerged when a small fundamentalist group of young Saudis, led by Juhaiman al-Utaibi, took over the Grand Mosque in Mecca in late 1979. In response, the government sought to elevate the status of religious scholars who supported conservative interpretations of Islam and gave them more control over the educational curriculum (Montagu, 2015). The country became more rigid in its practices in the early 1980s. Since then, *Al-Sahwa* has cast a shadow over all aspects of life in Najran, including tourism. For example:

Women had been working side by side with men in the field and in other fields of work, supported by an authentic Najran culture that empowers women to enter the field of work with men. But unfortunately, that culture has been contaminated by other cultures that have come to Najran in the past decades, especially with the emergence of *Al-Sahwa*. (*Mashaal*, M, 40 years old)

In Saudi Arabia, previous generations’ understanding that tourism is sex and alcohol was one of the main obstacles. These generations played a role in the demonisation of tourism, and this has impacted the issue of participation in tourism. (*Mubarak*, M, 44 years old)

There are some people still circulating negative mental images and bad experiences about tourism that occurred in neighbouring countries, and they have tried to introduce tourism as a factor that damages the coming generations. In other words, some people seek to close the community on itself and do not want the community to develop, so they can remain dominant in the community by presenting tourism as a great evil and an offense contrary to religion as well as customs and traditions. (*Mohammed N*, M, 52 years old)

This reflects tensions between those holding traditional and modern values. The former want to control their communities and fear that tourism will penetrate them as a driver of westernisation. The latter hold *Al-Sahwa* responsible for demonising tourism by banning music and cinema, visits to archaeological sites and museums and all but necessary travel (Al-Atawneh, 2009; Henderson, 2010; Meijer, 2010). *Al-Sahwa* scholars believe that tourism will lead to the dilution of Islamic values and cultural conflicts and allow certain undesirable activities such as sex tourism to enter Saudi society and culture (see Pizam, 1978; Teo and Chang, 1998; Sanad et al., 2010). Despite the lifting of the ban on concerts and cinema and the opening of the door to tourism, especially with the launch of Vision 2030, *Al-Sahwa* thinking still casts a stronger shadow over Najran than the main tourist destinations in Saudi Arabia.

Unlike *Al-Sahwa*, Islam encourages tourism. Zamani-Farahani and Eid (2016:3) stressed that contrary to public belief, ‘Islam is receptive to tourism and encouraged it. When looking at *Shari’ah* and Islamic religious principles generated from the Quran (Islam’s holy book) and *sunnah* (teachings, guidance and practices of Prophet Mohammad), it is found that travellers are considered to be closer to God, and their *Doaa* (asking God for something) and prayers are more responded to while traveling’. Ali (2011) also highlighted that Imam Shafi’i (767–820), a prominent scholar on Islamic law, stated that travel has five benefits: relief from worries, company with good men and acquisition of livelihoods, knowledge and education. Islam thus encourages and does not conflict with tourism. With Islam undeniably the foundation of public and private life in all Muslim nations, including Saudi Arabia (Budhwar et al., 2010; Jafari and Scott, 2014; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010,2014; Bajnaid and Elyas,

2017), the big issue is clerics' exploitation of Islamic religion for the purpose of controlling society and retaining power. Perhaps, it may not be about piety or paradise, as they claim.

Arguably, Islam differs across Muslim countries due to different applications of Islamic teachings (Sorli et al., 2005; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010). For example, according to Ayoob (2004), religious precepts are interpreted differently among Muslim countries, so what works in Egypt might not work in Indonesia, and what works in Saudi Arabia might not work in Turkey. For example, in Saudi Arabia, 'a woman who talks to a man who is not from her family is viewed badly because in religion, when a man and a woman meet together, that means that "Satan (evil) will be their third"¹⁵' (*Mounira K, F, 44 years old*). However, this Saudi stereotype about women's relationships with male strangers does not exist in all Muslim countries, not even all the Gulf countries. Even during the Hajj and Umrah, men and women are not separated (see Mahallati, 2011). Accordingly, Al-Ahmadi (2011) stated that patriarchal societies interpret Islam in a way that supports their positions regarding what is and what is not socially acceptable behaviour by women. Similarly, Meimand (2017) believed that different Muslim nations interpret Islam according to their traditional cultures and roles of local people. This trend can be explained by the fact that cultural figures (e.g. men, clerics and tribe) use religion to serve their personal agendas. It, therefore, can be said that the issue is religiosity, not religion.

¹⁵ 'Satan (evil) will be their third' means that when a woman sits alone in an office or a room with a man who is not her brother, father or husband, the devil will be with them and entice them into a forbidden sexual relationship.

One factor related to this issue is that the main sources of Islam are the Quran, various *Hadith* and *Sunnah* (short texts concerning customs of Islamic communities, the sayings of Muhammad and legends about his life). However, religious scholars have adopted additional sources such as *Shari'ah* (Islamic laws and their interpretations), *Ijma* (the consensus of religious authorities), *Ijtihad* and *Fatwas* (works by religious scholars). They have applied these texts as sources of Islamic instructions for subjects not mentioned in the Quran and *Sunnah* to preserve Muslims' religious and cultural identities (Hallaq, 1984; Khan, 2003; Fielding and Shortland, 2011). These multiple sources of religious teachings can open the door to various readings and interpretations, sometimes led by personal and political agendas. Accordingly, Long (2005) argued that Islam lacks a unified vision, unlike Western law that divides human acts into two categories: licit and illicit. The multiplicity of religious sources poses potential risks to tourism development, as pointed out by Hashim et al. (2007), Pryor (2007) and Henderson (2008). They claimed the existence of Islamic religious texts other than the Quran and *sunnah* and the different implementations of Islamic law by influential Islamic scholars creates risks for the tourism sector in the Muslim world, including Saudi Arabia. Arguably, traditional figures have used religion to resist tourism with the aim of isolating society from the world to retain their power and avoid promoting modern values.

In sum, extremist clerics have used religion to isolate society from the world to maintain their power and influence. The Quran and *Sunnah* are the primary references for Islam, but these religious scholars have added new sources that give their personal opinions on topics not mentioned in the basic sources of Islam. This approach has led to multiple

interpretations and readings of religion that have allowed these religious groups to tighten their grip on society. This has negatively affected tourism development in Najran as tourism has been labelled a Western tool intended to dilute social, religious and cultural values. Tourism thus has been resisted for its potential role in increasing the power of modernists and decreasing that of traditional clerics.

Many studies have discussed religiosity and its impacts on local people's attitudes towards tourism (Hashim et al., 2007; Pryor, 2007; Henderson, 2008; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010; Zamani-Farahani and Eid, 2016; Shakeela and Weaver, 2018). Most notably, Shakeela and Weaver (2018) investigated the impacts of religiosity and religious differences in the socio-cultural context of the Maldives, a peripheral Muslim country dependent on tourism with hedonistic motivations. Shakeela and Weaver (2018) found that devotion to religion and piety have negatively influenced local residents' perceptions of tourism due to the close relationship between religion and tourism, especially in Islamic contexts. Shakeela and Weaver (2018), therefore, concluded that traditional religious beliefs pose potential threats to tourism.

However, Shakeela and Weaver's (2018) study is not adequate to illuminate the situation in Najran as it focused on Maldives, a well-established tourism destination, unlike Saudi Arabia, which does not have a long history of tourism. The Islamic and the Arab world continue to suffer from a scarcity of studies explaining the relationship between tourism and religiosity beyond the focus on religious tourism related to the Hajj and Umrah (Poria et al., 2003; Jafari and Scott, 2014; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2014).

4.3 Significance of the Findings and the Discussion

After discussing the main themes that emerged from the findings, several questions need to be asked: ‘What is really going on here? What is the story is told by these findings? Why is this story important or significant? What can be learned from these findings?’ (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2018:285). Addressing these questions returns the discussion to the key purpose of the study: to explore the extent to which local communities in the Najran Region participate in tourism planning and decision-making. Through the discussions with local people, three key themes related to multi-layered power struggles emerge: strict adherence to tribal rules, conflicts between and within patriarchy and matriarchy and multiple interpretations of Islam (religiosity). These themes ultimately lead to a wider debate on the tensions between modernity and traditionalism.

The discussion reveals the multi-faceted layers of power that intersect to form barriers to tourism development in Najran. These complex power struggles arise from the tensions between traditionalism and modernity. Traditionalists, on one hand, strive to preserve the legacy of values, beliefs and cultural heritage transmitted and handed down from the past to the present as a source of power and influence (Shils, 1981; Habermas, 1989; Moten, 2011; Juma and Lee, 2012; Farasin et al., 2017). These traditional values are reflected in the *Badawah* (Bedouin) people in the Arabian Peninsula, who have high cultural solidarity (Ibn Khaldun, 1332–1406, cited in Moten, 2011; Johari et al., 2014; Christian, 2017; Tang et al., 2018).

Modernists, on the other hand, seek to move from a society based on perceived cultural traditions (see Taylor, 1998; Stöckl, 2006; El Idrissi and Corbett, 2016) to a more open

society that recognises equal rights and more closely embraces the cultural values of individualism (Juma and Lee, 2012). In the culture of the Arabian Peninsula, these modern values are reflected in *Hadarah* (civilisation), or sedentary urban civilisation that is somewhat liberated from conservative customs and traditions (Ibn Khaldun, 1332–1406, cited in Moten, 2011; Johari et al., 2014; Christian, 2017).

The tensions between traditionalism and modernity coincide with the social, cultural and economic reforms driven by Vision 2030 underway in Saudi Arabia. These tensions are affected by the strict adherence to tribal rules in Najran. Cultural figures such as men and tribal leaders still have hegemonic power over Najran communities and fear the erosion of that control. These cultural figures have boosted strict adherence to customs and traditions rooted in Najran culture until these long-held norms have become part of their cultural identities. To maintain the high power distance in society, traditional forms of participation such as *Al-Shura* and *Barza* have been designed and strengthened by linking them to religious and cultural values so that people accept the illusionary participation granted to them by the hegemonic cultural figures. To resist hegemony, modernist figures (e.g. young people and women) try to grab more power by using tourism as an instrument of modernity. This struggle is fuelled by the traditional figures' fear that their power must decline for modernist figures to achieve desire to improve their positions in centralised decision-making.

Furthermore, *Wasta* is another significant element that maintains the power distance embedded as a tribal norm in Najran culture. Tourism's potential to dilute social ties frightens cultural figures as it might reduce the role of *Wasta* as a traditional model and strengthen meritocracy as a modernist model. Consequently, Najran communities resist

tourism due to its potential role in weakening social ties and tribal norms, with the aim of maintaining social status hegemonic power over decision-making.

Tensions within and between patriarchy and matriarchy are another form of the power struggles that hinder tourism participation and support in Najran. Men's authority over women is rooted in Najran culture, and questioning that authority is considered to be a violation of tribal norms. Tensions are caused by men's fear of losing their power when the door is opened for tourism. Many Najran residents fear tourism's potential role as an instrument of modernity encouraging women to question men's power. For women, the social transformations taking place in Saudi Arabia, partly driven by tourism, offer opportunities for Najran women to gain power and improve their position in male-dominated centralised decision-making.

The conflict between patriarchy and matriarchy has another complexity: the power struggle between mothers and children. Cultural and religious norms guarantee mothers' authority over children. For mothers, losing this power represents a loss of prestige and influence in the family, and tourism may play a role in eroding this power. Many in Najran still hold the common impression that tourism attracts people who have low origins and whose cultures do not adhere to tribal norms and values. Mothers believe that this may encourage children to question their authority and resist social norms. In contrast, children see tourism as a social space and an opportunity to achieve their ambitions and develop their skills. However, these children still worry about violating tribal customs and disobeying *Allah* when they disobey their mothers.

The multiple interpretations of religion (religiosity) have emerged as another barrier to the support of tourism in Najran. The struggle between traditional clerics in what is

called the religious awakening (*Al-Sahwa*) with modernist values and the so-called *Al-Taghrib* (Westernisation) of communities creates more tensions over power. This situation poses challenges for traditional clerics, especially as their power ebbs away as the country becomes more open. In Saudi Arabia, *Al-Sahwa*, as mentioned, led to tighter control over society in the early 1970s, when it arose on the pretext of opposing the westernisation of society. Despite the country's social transformation and greater openness to the world, *Al-Sahwa* still seeks to maintain hegemony, especially in peripheral regions such as Najran, which maintains *Badawah* values. Driving the tensions with *Al-Sahwa* is the emergence of more modern and liberal generations who have begun to question cultural and religious beliefs in ways considered to be taboo in the past. The beginning of the decline of the clerics' power and its flow to younger generations has fuelled the battle between traditional and modern values.

Social values and tribal norms embedded in Najran culture and transmitted across generations have become part of what is generally called common sense (Gramsci, 1971). Traditional hegemonic figures such as the elderly, tribal leaders, men, mothers and clerics have inherited these tribal customs and hegemonic ideologies and diffused them into every area of daily life through socialisation (Avdikos, 2011). To boost the dominance of traditional figures, these hegemonic ideologies have been built up through complex processes of consent and coercion involving religious, cultural and ideological practices (Gramsci, 1971). For example, respect for the elderly and tribal leaders has been made into a tribal norm that cannot be violated, and obedience to clerics and parents has been linked to obedience to *Allah*. The house, the mosque and

the school have played roles in promoting these values and norms and rendering questioning of them taboo.

The opening of Najran communities to the world through tourism likely threatens the collectivistic nature of society, characterised by a high power distance. Tourism brings people from different nationalities, cultures, races and religions into direct contact and may weaken collectivistic values (Hermans and Kempen, 1998; Song and Cao, 2018). Communities might adopt more individualistic cultural values, likely undermining social ties and tribal norms and diminishing the power of traditional hegemonic figures. Consequently, these figures have resisted the globalisation of Najran communities through tourism to maintain their hegemony.

However, Gramsci (1971) rejected the idea that power is a possession that can be held (Holub, 1992), and power is unstable as some people try to build counter-hegemonic forces (Gramsci, 1971). Deprived social groups resist the centralised decision-making in communities' power structures (Sullivan et al., 2011). Consequently, in Najran, modernist forces such as women and younger generations try to resist social constraints to gain more power. Thus, along with globalisation and the Internet, tourism offers opportunities to push cultural barriers to reduce the power distance in the social hierarchy, thereby improving their positions in centralised decision-making in society.

The battle between traditional and modernity in Saudi Arabia is escalating due to rapid, massive social transformations. Arguably, the hegemony of traditionalism is gradually being eroded away by the forces of modernity as the big cities such as Jeddah are influenced by the dynamics of globalisation and the values of modernity (Addas and Rishbeth, 2018). In contrast, Najran is a peripheral region in the far south of the

country, geographically and culturally remote from the main urban cities. Despite rapid population growth, modern infrastructure and the desire to transform the region into a tourist destination under Vision 2030, Najran remains heavily influenced by traditional values (Minosa, 1983; SCTA, 2011; Hussein, 2019).

In Najran, tribal norms and religious values still heavily shape cultural identities, and residents are accustomed to these values, which have become daily practices in communities (García López et al., 2017). It, therefore, can be said that the transition to modernity in Najran has gone very slowly compared to the main destinations in Saudi Arabia. This has created significant barriers preventing the complete, successful adoption of tourism in the region.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

In its first chapter, this study explicated the current situation in Saudi Arabia, which coincided with the launch of its *Vision 2030*; this document laid out the Kingdom's plan to reduce its reliance on oil (they are currently the largest oil exporter in the Middle East) and identified tourism development as a key aspect of this economic reset. Relevant research gaps were also highlighted—specifically, the significant lack of research that seeks to understand tourism from the perspective of local people, especially in Arab countries, including the Gulf region. To achieve the goal of exploring local people's attitudes towards tourism and their role in related planning and decision-making, with a focus on the Najran region KSA, the second chapter developed the concepts of community, participation, planning and decision-making, and power in tourism. It also critically evaluated community participation in the planning aspects of tourism development, with a focus on the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of that process.

Importantly, typologies for community participation produced by Arnstein (1969), Pretty (1995) and Tosun (2006) were identified as key guiding frameworks. The importance of these models lies in their reversal of almost all possible forms of community participation in both the decision-making and the planning and development process. They also formulate a framework of power structures among different stakeholders. Despite the fact that these models have been criticised as being Western in their design and focus, they remain influential typologies and recent studies

still use them. Hence, they were utilized in this study to help explore local people's understanding of tourism in Najran and their role in decisions related to its development. Gramscian perspectives on hegemonic power also formed a cornerstone of this research, especially when analysing highly complex tribal aspects such as the Najrani context.

This background literature inspired research questions that guided this section:

- i. What is the local community's understanding of tourism in Najran?
- ii. Is local participation important in tourism planning and development?
- iii. What kind of participation by local communities is taking place in Najran?
- iv. What potential challenges may affect local communities' participation in tourism planning and development?

To answer these questions, the third chapter of this study adopted a qualitative methodology to allow deep exploration of the local Najrani people's attitudes towards tourism and their role in tourism planning and related decision-making. This was undertaken through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with a diverse range of subjects of varying ages from groups both traditionally associated with tourism employment—for instance, taxi drivers, hoteliers and tour guides—and those who are not associated with tourism—for example, elders, journalists, activists, environmental groups, women's groups and Bedouin. The aim of adopting this research method was to enable immersion in the participants' own wealth of knowledge. By facilitating a participatory relationship, this approach allowed the researcher and the participant to

‘co-produce’ the data by avoiding sequential and inflexible questions (which were inconsistent with the aim of the study).

The fourth chapter developed an empirical analysis of the nature of community participation in tourism planning in the Najran region, as well as the operational, structural and cultural limitations that pose challenges to local community participation in the development of tourism. In this section, the complexities surrounding the concepts of tourism, community and participation were investigated. As a result, three key themes emerged: strict adherence to tribal rules, the conflict between and within patriarchy and matriarchy, and multiple interpretations of Islamic religion (religiosity). In the discussion portion of the chapter, these three key themes were integrated into wider debates, moving beyond description to broader analysis and interpretation.

Finally, in the pages that follow, the fifth chapter draws conclusions regarding community understandings of tourism and participation in its planning and development in the Najran region; it does so by providing an overview of the study’s results and discussing its contributions to knowledge. It, also, highlights going forward, management implications of the study, and concludes with the recommendations for future research.

5.1 An overview of the study’s results

Utilizing Arnstein’s (1969), Pretty’s (1995), and Tosun’s (2006) typologies of participation, local participation in tourism planning in Najran can be described on a number of levels. First, there are those who are unable to participate in tourism development in the region; these include women and young people, as well as other

disenfranchised groups. At this level, people have no power, and those who represent them on tourism development councils and committees are neither elected, nor do they wield power. This level corresponds with non-participation in Arnstein's ladder, passive and manipulative participation in Pretty's typology, and coercive participation in Tosun's typology.

Second, there are those who are invited to attend meetings and workshops regarding the discussion of tourism plans in the region; these include social activists, environmentalists, members of the media, etc. Third, there are those who are invited to attend meetings related to tourism so that they might be urged to provide logistical, financial and voluntary support for tourism activities and programs in the region; these include members of the business community, tourism service providers, etc. At these levels of participation, local people are consulted, but they lack the power to ensure that their views will be considered by tourism officials in the region. In other words, those with less power are allowed to advise, and also asked to support tourist programs; but government authorities still have the final say because within the context of tourism development in the region, decision-making remains top-down. This kind of participation tallies with degrees of citizen tokenism in Arnstein's ladder, functional participation by consultation or participation for material incentives as described in Pretty's typology, and induced participation in Tosun's model. Nevertheless, while the participation models presented by Arnstein, Pretty and Tosun are useful, they are not adequate to explain the subtleties of tourism development in Najran.

In short, the situation in the Najran region is very complex: multifaceted power struggles intersect with each other, posing profound challenges to local participation in tourism

planning. For example, strict adherence to tribal rules leads to tension between those with traditional values, on the one hand, and those with modernist values, on the other; this is due to extreme power differentials in Najrani society. As a result of these powerful tribal norms, tourism in the region tends to face resistance from cultural groups and individuals—such as the elderly, tribal leaders, etc.—who harbour concerns about weakening social ties and the dislocation of power centres in the social hierarchy. The tension between and within patriarchy and matriarchy is yet another challenge to tourism development in the region. For example, men's fear that tourism plays a role in undermining their authority and social status while allowing women to improve their position in decision-making centres in society has fuelled gender conflict, which in turn has negatively affected tourism development. The covert tension that occurs within families between mothers and children is another power struggle within patriarchy and matriarchy that can affect tourism. Some mothers seek to maintain the authority that they lack outside the home at the expense of their children's desire to break free from customs, traditions and family restrictions. Arguably, then, the conflict between and within patriarchy and matriarchy creates barriers for women and children to work or participate in tourism. Religiosity is also among the challenges to tourism development in Najran due to the multiple interpretations and readings of religious texts. Although Islamic religion does not necessarily oppose the concept of tourism, excessive religiosity poses a threat to tourism in Najran. For example, extremist clerics fear that tourism will dilute Najrani cultural and religious values. What appears to be truly at stake, however, is clerics' concerns that tourism may play a role in the globalization of society, which could in turn undermine their control over society.

Revealing these familial, patriarchal, tribal and religious issues is crucial, especially at this pivotal time in which the Kingdom—in conjunction with its *Vision 2030*—is trying to modernize Saudi society and render it more global in its outlook. The intersection of these issues presents a challenge to the development of tourism as a key driver of the Saudi economy. The significance of this study includes its use of Gramsci's theory of hegemonic power to uncover the multifaceted aspects of power gained through complex processes of consent and coercion linked to religious, cultural and ideological practices. Despite their significance, the threat that these complex tensions pose to the future of tourism remains understudied; there is a significant lack of in-depth studies on the complexities of hegemonic power in conservative peripheral areas, especially in the Arab region, including Saudi Arabia. Differing from previous studies, this study is unique in its timing and context, as well as its ability to uncover hidden societal depths by exploring familial, cultural and religious challenges to the development of tourism in the Najran region. Understanding local realities is crucial for building realistic and sustainable tourism plans that can be applied and utilized in the region. Unfortunately, this local contextualization is precisely what many tourism studies and plans lack in the Arab region, including Saudi Arabia.

The tribal peripheral regions represent one of the main tributaries of tourism in the middle east, including Saudi Arabia, due to their richness in cultural and natural heritage. Consequently, the challenges facing tourism development in such areas shape the achievement of national strategic tourism goals for a number of countries, including Saudi Arabia. Despite the slight but notable openness of these societies overall, the situation in these conservative areas is still very complicated compared to the main

tourist destinations in the Kingdom, such as Jeddah and Riyadh. In such tribal contexts, for example, many people continue to cede to traditional retainers of social authority—such as the clergy, the elderly, and tribal leaders—as a result of tribal and social norms inculcated since childhood. In spite of the tension between traditionalism and modernity that coincides with the social transformations taking place in the Kingdom at this cultural moment, these regions remain largely traditional. In short, the transition towards modernity is still extremely slow in conservative peripheral areas such as Najran as a result of the huge cultural and geographical distance between these areas and the Saudi's main cities.

In these conservative rural regions, some individuals and groups demonize tourism and, by means of rumour circulation and negative talk, perpetuate its status as a pursuit that violates religion and tribal norms. This behaviour is a result of the fear that tourism could play a role in the erosion of the power and societal control wielded by hegemonic forces. Arguably, tourism continues to face rejection by many locals as a result of traditional and deeply embedded tribal norms that remain daily practice in the life of the Najranis. These same hegemonic cultural ideologies also overshadow work environments, including those related to the development of tourism. The official tourism staff, for example, are part of a community whose tribe forms their cultural identity. Some of those employees may constitute an impediment to the development of tourism, though they might not believe that to be the case: this disconnect is due to hegemonic cultural ideologies embedded during the process of socialization. For instance, such individuals may be unaware that *Wasta* (nepotism) can be seen as one

of the challenges facing tourism, simply because they were raised with the expectation that *Wasta* is a moral duty towards tribe, family, relatives and friends.

5.2 Contributions to Knowledge

This study offers three main contributions to knowledge; they are as follows:

5.2.1 Gramscian perspective on tourism in Najran

Developing a Gramscian perspective on power relation in Najran is a significant contribution of this study. In this regard, this research has revealed power struggles on varying levels, such as those between generations; those between men and women; and those between individuals—such as clerics—with traditional views, and those with more modern values. Even though Arnstein's (1969), Pretty's (1995) and Tosun's (2006) typologies address degrees of power distribution through different levels of citizen participation, they are not adequate to illustrate power hierarchies in the Najran region. This is because the Najrani context is notably complex and remains governed by long-held customs and strict tribal norms. In such contexts, hegemonic powers are gained through complex processes of consent and coercion associated with religious, political, cultural and ideological practices: the models produced by Arnstein, Pretty and Tosun are incapable of revealing such complexities of power.

Further, this study reveals the significance of covert matriarchal power within the family. In this respect, the Gramscian understanding of power was vital in illuminating how power actually functions in Najran. The covert matriarchal power within families in the region has not been taken into consideration by previous studies, especially those related to tourism. The common approach, evident in previous research, is that women

in the Arab context have no power. But this study reveals something different: a mother's significant authority at the family level, granted to them via religion and tribal norms. This hegemonic power plays a pivotal role in shaping children's cultural identity. There is tension in numerous family homes between, on the one hand, mothers who fear losing their power due to the potential significance of tourism in the globalization of Najrani communities, and, on the other hand, children who desire to be free from family restrictions and thus resist their mothers' hegemony. Although there are still many children afraid of questioning the authority of mothers for fear of inciting the wrath of *Allah*, this power struggle often extends beyond family homes and shapes outside conflicts, including those related to working in tourism. Arguably, this analysis of the covert power of mothers at the family level can be considered an original contribution to knowledge offered by this study.

In addition, this study reveals *Wasta* as a cultural or familial responsibility that has affected the development of tourism in the Najran region. *Wasta* could be called nepotism—but the word nepotism does not fully encompass the meaning of *Wasta*. Indeed, nepotism is not confined to Saudi Arabia: it is often an acceptable approach in international business. Still, the significance of this study is, at least in part, in its role in understanding the full cultural and social implications of *Wasta*. This study positions *Wasta* as a hegemonic power rooted in Arab culture, including Najrani culture. *Wasta* is ingrained in community members from childhood until it becomes, over time, an aspect of 'common sense.' There is a lack of research related to *Wasta* in studies on tourism planning and development in the Arab world. This is significant, because when some people have access to *Wasta* and others do not, its role in obstructing participation

issues and shaping tourism development programs can be significant. This study has shown that numerous people in the Najran region have had no opportunity to work or participate in tourism because they lack *Wasta*, and nobody is advocating on their behalf.

In short, this study is significant in part because it can be considered the first in the Kingdom and the Arab Gulf that reveals the intersection of complexities of familial, tribal and religious powers using the Gramscian perspective, especially in the field of tourism. This is particularly pertinent at this unique time in which the Kingdom is witnessing economic and social reforms since the launch of its tourism-oriented revisioning in 2016.

5.2.2 Local interpretation of tourism, community and participation

The significance of this study also lies in its in-depth exploration of local vocabularies. For example, in terms of tourism, people still prefer to use local vocabulary, such as *Tamshia*, to express tourism. It seems that in using this approach, Najranis are attempting to create a barrier, positioning 'tourism' as an activity done by others that has nothing to do with the them. In other words, people in Najran are still afraid of being stigmatized by *Siah* or *Siaha*, hence their use of *Tamshia* instead of tourism. The reason is that these local terms, which are derived from the word '*Alsiyaha*' (tourism), still have negative connotations to this day: they refer to those who wander from place to place without any goal, and decadent women or men who seek sexual relations outside the marital house.

These are important linguistic subtleties which previous studies on the Arab region—and the Arabian Gulf in particular—do not take into consideration. The concept of tourism has been broadly defined in previous research. (See Anwar and Sohail, 2004; Abdul-Ghani, 2006; Henderson, 2006; Mansfeld and Winckler, 2007; Mansfeld and Winckler, 2008; Sharpley, 2008; Ryan and Stewart, 2009; Buerkert et al., 2010; Inhorn and Shrivastav, 2010; Ramanathan et al., 2010; Stephenson and Ali-Knight, 2010; Michael et al., 2011; Feighery, 2012; Khodr, 2012; Ramanathan et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2012; Morakabati et al., 2014; Stephenson, 2014; Henderson, 2015; Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou, 2015; Dutt and Ninov, 2016; Zaidan, 2016; Mohammed, 2017; Zaidan, 2017). In addition, these previous studies do not adequately analyse how people integrate their natural environments into their understandings of tourism. After all, tourism is expressed in different ways in various cultures, which means that the concept varies from one context to another.

In terms of participation, this study offers new insights by revealing local concepts such as *Barza*, which is used to express the concept of participation: this is thus also an original contribution to knowledge provided by this research. As numerous scholars have shown, the term participation takes different forms and meanings. (See, for instance, Hollnsteiner, 1977; Midgley et al., 1986; Haywood, 1988; Sharpley and Telfer, 2002; Nikkhah and Redzuan; 2009; Kanthong and Jotikasthira, 2013; Li and Hunter, 2015; Mowforth and Munt, 2015; Manaf et al., 2016; Mosammam et al., 2016; Tovmasyan, 2016; Bello et al., 2017). Despite this, the term is still universal. Arguably, the social constructionism utilized as a methodological strategy in this study contributes to highlighting those socially constructed meanings that are transmitted

from one generation to the next. The Arab region remains largely lacking when it comes to in-depth research that plumbs local communities to reveal the social details that are not taken into consideration by authorities concerned with tourism planning.

5.2.3 Tourism development in Arab peripheral region

The study is also significant because it sheds light on an under-researched context by exploring community understandings of tourism and local involvement in tourism planning in Saudi Arabia. More specifically, this research explores local approaches to tourism in the Najran region—one of the most conservative tribal peripheral areas. In such contexts, the impact of tribal connections and religious affiliations pose research challenges, especially when it comes to researching women in patriarchal societies such as Najran. Access to women in Saudi is still not easy, especially in the tribal areas. This research is thus challenging, but also important, as it allows those female voices that would otherwise be barely audible to express views regarding tourism development in Najran. This is especially notable because this study adopted a qualitative methodology through face-to-face interviews.

5.3 Going forward

This study offers invaluable information, especially for the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) and local communities in the Kingdom. Following my return to Saudi Arabi, these results will be presented to The Board of Directors (BDs) of the SCTH, who sponsored this study. In the proposed presentation to the BDs, the results of this research will be converted into a proposed executive work program. The proposed program will highlight the challenges of this study, as well as

suggested empowerment mechanisms and training programs to address those challenges; it will also emphasize target groups, an implementation schedule and budgets. Assuming the BDs approve of the proposed work program, tourism officials, especially the tourism planners, will be targeted as a first step.

The results of this study represent a golden opportunity for tourism officials to descend from their ivory towers to understand local realities and social complexities that pose challenges for the tourism industry. This step is extremely important to bridge the gap between authorities and locals as tourism incubators. Tourism officials are often unaware of the complexities of these power struggles because they remain influenced by the cultural ideologies that have been instilled in their consciousness as part of socialization. (In this, they are unlike me; as a local researcher given the opportunity to study in UK, I am like an enormous giant with one leg in the West and the other one in Saudi Arabia.) However, this work has its challenges, and it is not expected that changes will take place overnight. Instead, medium- and long-term plans that include rehabilitation and training programs for tourism officials until the desired goals are achieved are likely advisable.

The second step, which may coincide with the first step, is working with local communities; the Najran region will be chosen as a model as it was the context of the study. In this region, there is a need to correct misconceptions about tourism that still constitute many people's consciousness about the industry. This will be done through a series of workshops targeting local leaders, clergy, the elderly and mothers. During these workshops, the results of the study can be presented by reviewing the multi-layered tensions endemic to the region and their potential threat to the future of tourism in

Najran. Tourism will also be explored as a potential development tool and a generator for jobs. During these workshops, my family can be introduced to convey their experiences of living in the West from 2009 to 2020. This step may offer considerable help in penetrating local culture in order to correct some the community's misconceptions about tourism—specifically, the prevailing impression of tourism as a force that dilutes social cohesion and cultural and social values. This aspect of the presentation may also help people shed some of the illusions that still frame their consciousness and make them anxious about change.

Of course, this does not mean that the local community is wrong in adopting religious and cultural values. Instead, the goal is to correct the misconceptions that have been ingrained in people's minds for the purpose of isolating local communities from the outside world so that they are easier to control. This corresponds to an interview Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman had with *Time* magazine in 2018, in which he expressed a desire to return to 'moderate Islam', claiming that contemporary Saudi Arabian Islamic practices have been 'hijacked' since 1979. He alleged that Islamic practice in 'the first' Saudi Arabia was different from today and expressed the opinion that Saudi Arabia should 'return' to a pristine, moderate Islam and be open towards all faiths. He added,

We believe the practice today in a few countries, among them Saudi Arabia, it's not the practice of Islam. It's the practice of the people who have hijacked Islam after '79. And also it's not the practice of the social life in Saudi Arabia even before '79. And even it's not aligned with the idea of Saudi Arabia that it's a country following the religion of Islam from the first Saudi Arabia. You see the

idea that the first Saudi Arabia tried to tackle. For Islam it's totally different from what the extremists are trying to promote today. (*Time* magazine, 2018).

Disseminating this study's results with the people of the region is very important because the villages are one of the tributaries of tourism in Saudi Arabia; farms, heritage villages, mud houses and other elements of rural life form tourist attractions. Despite their involvement in tourism, the people of the villages generally adhere to strict tribal rules, customs and traditions—in opposition to urban Saudis—due to poor educational levels and the influence of the 'collective mind' of the village. Therefore, it is necessary to present the results of the study to the people of the villages via presentations and discussions, so that locals have the opportunity to reformulate their previous conceptions of tourism as negative.

In this regard, there is a need to penetrate the traditional community in Najran with tools familiar to the community. For example, a tourism employee in Najran may use his family to encourage others to participate in tourism and support its programs in the region by requesting family members spread awareness and motivational messages at school, social events, etc. Although the subject of tourism is fraught in the region—and thus may require a long period before the benefits of this initiative reap rewards—tourism officials and their families should be role models for tourism in the region. For example, the wives and children of tourism officials may be messengers of tourism, due to their ability to communicate with all segments of society. For effective communication with locals, for instance, these family members could employ local concepts (such as '*Tamshia*', '*Al-Shura*' and '*Barza*') to communicate educational messages

regarding tourism, instead of concepts that are still widely considered Western constructs. Such traditional terms may also contribute to correcting some negative connotations of some inherited concepts, such as '*Siah*' and '*Siaha*.' Conversely, if a tourism official does not allow his wife and children to attend or participate in festivals or tourist activities, then then the official may implicitly send negative messages to society about tourism.

5.4 Management implications of the study and recommendations for further research

To ensure the success of such initiatives, there are a number of management implications that need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, government should establish a Social Development Committee (SDC) in cooperation with the Najran Tourism Branch (NTB) in one of the Najrani villages to serve as a model for implementing the proposed awareness program. Awareness programs should be implemented in cooperation with tribal leaders, families and local mosques. Any successful tourism project, especially in the peripheral areas, must start from the grassroots. This is because there are historical and cultural contexts that affect the locals' attitudes towards tourism—attitudes mostly not taken into account by traditional tourism planning. Therefore, it is necessary to enter into the social fabric to understand such cultural complexities and find appropriate solutions to ensure the success and sustainability of tourism.

Secondly, as part of the awareness program conducted by the SDC, it is advisable that officials establish a tourist project in which the villagers participate. This project may be an eco-lodge housed in traditional mud houses in the village. The eco-lodge project

can be under a joint administration consisting of women and men from the villagers. The people of the village may participate in this project, each according to their capabilities: some community members could provide agricultural and animal products, for instance, while others could provide traditional dishes, etc. The importance of this project lies in its role in building a concept of community based on common goals and interests that go beyond blood ties and kinship. This project may contribute significantly to narrowing significant power differentials in the community—between the elderly and young, between women and men, and between mothers and children, etc.—especially if this project succeeds in achieving economic benefits for the villagers. Although such initiatives would likely face many challenges in their beginning stages, their success would be a crucial step in the eventual success of the wider tourism project in Najran.

For future research, this study has some specific recommendations. First, there is an urgent need to qualify female researchers in qualitative research to facilitate access to a large segment of women within tribal areas. (This task is very difficult and risky for male researchers.) Second, it is desirable that scholars conduct comparative studies by using the tools of this study and applying them to other tribal peripheral contexts in the Kingdom. Third, there is a need for in-depth qualitative research within villages targeting families to understand tourism through the lens of the family (father, mother, and children); it is preferred that family members are interviewed together.

5.5 Concluding remarks

Many Western-based studies, such as those by Mitchell (1979), Poplin (1979), Blackshaw (2010), Lyon and Driskell (2011), Murphy (2013) and Ellis and Abdi

(2017), helped increase the understanding of the concept of community. However, although the term, 'tribe', represents the community of most of the people in Najran, the definition of that term might not apply to the existing social structures. This is because a tribe, for example, is a closed system in which relationships are based on blood ties and kinship governed by strict norms, customs and traditions that shape the daily life of people, unlike Western contexts, which are characterised by individualism. Moreover, a tribe is considered to be a binding community for its members in which power is hierarchical and women still occupy an inferior position in the social hierarchy (Quamar, 2016). Furthermore, the concept of community produced by Western-centric literature might not apply to optional communities, such as those formed by friends and co-workers, because the tribe still imposes its values on those types of communities. Nevertheless, the Western-based definition provides some relevance to this study because it helps build an understanding of the concept of community, especially in light of the lack of Arab-centric research.

Furthermore, the participation models produced by Arnstein (1969), Pretty (1995) and Tosun (2006) are useful and relevant even though they are not fully adequate. However, these typologies were used in this study because there are no Arab-centric participation models in the literature that illustrate the power tensions in the Arabic context. Thus, this research still relies on the Western typologies because they provide some very useful context and categories, and they illuminate different forms of participation that could be relevant to the Najran region, even though religion and the tribe have a significant impact on community participation in the region, unlike in a Western context.

Since the existing communities in Najran require people to adhere to formal tribal rules and traditions, it can be said that they are not participatory. Hence, there is a potential need to build an alternative type of community with different goals or aspirations because community plays a significant role in facilitating the development of tourism, as supported by many studies (see Murphy, 1983, 1985; Inskip, 1991; Tosun, 2000; Ndivo and Cantoni, 2016; Hsu et al., 2019). However, this idea will not be easy to implement overnight, especially in conservative tribal peripheral contexts, such as Najran, in which religion and tribal norms are intertwined. Still, creating genuine economic opportunities will motivate people in Najran to work together to create an appropriate environment for the development of tourism in the region (see Darabseh et al., 2019; Goussous and Al-Jaafreh, 2020).

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Appendixes

Appendix A

written information and consent forms

Consent Form Template

Please note that this is a generic template for guidance, and that consent forms should be individually designed for each research project to reflect the scope of the participation for which consent is being sought. The example given below is the minimum requirement, but you may need a fuller form to cover other important issues, especially if additional elements are optional for the participant. These may include:

- Consent to being audio/video recorded or photographed, and to any potential use of the recordings and/or photographs (eg publication in thesis/journal article, display in exhibition, being made available online).
- Agreement to receive individual feedback from testing.
- Agreement for the researcher to use the data collected up to that point, should the participant withdraw from the project
- Where there is a possibility that data may be reused or shared, consent for the archiving and future reuse of the data for research purposes.
- Where there may be limits to confidentiality (eg if the participant reveals something that may put themselves or others at risk of harm), an acknowledgement that the researcher may need to break confidentiality, and agreement to any actions that may be required as a result of the disclosure.

The participant is consenting to everything described in the text of the information sheet, so please consider carefully what you need to include. If you are asking participants to take part in a number of different activities these should be itemised separately on the consent form.

The consent form should be signed by the participant and the researcher, and two copies of the form should be completed for retention by the signatories. An independent witness is not normally required, but may be needed in certain circumstances (for example, where a participant is not literate). For research involving children under 16 year of age, consent needs to be obtained from both the child and their parent/carer.

Please ensure that the consent form is written in language appropriate to the target audience. Where vulnerable people, such as children or adults with learning difficulties are to be recruited, it may be helpful to use visual aids such as pictures or symbols in order to make the information clearer. For older or visually impaired people you may need to print the text in a larger font size. Where you are intending to recruit participants who might not adequately understand written information in English, arrangements should be made for translation of the consent form, and the translated version should be checked by a native speaker of the language in which it is written to ensure that it corresponds to the English original.



University of Brighton

Participant Consent Form

Title of Project: Community Participation in Planning and Decision-making in Tourism Development in the Najran Region, KSA

Name of Researcher: Mana Al Mashreef

Please
initial or
tick box

I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study, and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions.

The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and any possible risks involved.

I am aware that I will be required to ***[take part in an interview, give a sample of blood etc. Add a box for each different activity.]***

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.

I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will normally be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else. Also, I understand the researcher may use the anonymised data in future publications and conference presentations.

I agree to take part in the above study.

.....
Name of Participant, Date, Signature

.....
Name of Researcher, Date, Signature

Manal Al Mashreef, 17/08/2017

Participation Information Sheet – PhD Study on Community Participation in Planning and Decision-making in Tourism Development in the Najran Region, KSA

The study aims to explore the extent to which local communities participate in planning and decision-making in tourism development in the Najran region, KSA.

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Invitation paragraph

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. Before you decide, I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. I am happy to go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have. This should take about 5-10 minutes. Talk to others about the study if you wish, and ask me if there is anything that is not clear. You will be given time to think about whether you wish to take part before making a decision, and may take this sheet away with you.

What is the purpose of the study/project?

The study is seeking to explore the extent to which local communities participate in the decisions around tourism in the Najran region. The objectives of the research are as follows:

- 1) To build an understanding of the concepts of community, participation, planning and decision-making;
- 2) To critically evaluate community participation in planning and decision-making in the context of tourism development, with focus on social, political, economic and cultural dimensions;
- 3) Through an empirical analysis to develop insight into the nature of community participation in planning and decision-making in tourism in the Najran region, and the operational, structural and cultural limitation that might hinder the involvement of local community in the region; and
- 4) To draw conclusions on community participation in planning and decision-making in tourism development in the Najran region, and offer recommendations that might assist to enhance community participation in tourism development issues in the Najran region.

Why have I been invited to participate?

The study is likely to involve from 20 to 25 participants for both interviews and focus groups. This study is seeking to attract a diverse group of people who influence and are affected by tourism in the Najran region. This is in order to understand the nature of participation of local communities in planning and decision-making in tourism development in the region. Thus, the participation of members of the local community whether males or females from those who have a diversity of experiences and background is crucial in order to build a common understanding on tourism development issues in Najran.

The study sees the importance of your participation as a part of the local community. In female participants case, a male member of their family will also be present. However, you are not obligated to participate and may withdraw at any time. Mutually agreeable times and locations will be discussed to ensure your participation suits your personal schedule and commitments.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary, and participants are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. There is no detriment or disadvantage to you should you decide to withdraw.

What is expected from participants?

Participants will be invited to participate either through interviews or focus groups (or both when needed) to talk about their experiences and perspectives on the concept of participation in tourism decision-making in the Najran region. The participation may provide an important opportunity for the researcher and participants to learn from each other. As well as to empower participants on the concept of participation in tourism development and to assist them in building strategies that take into account the requirements and objectives of the local community. Interviews and focus groups may be held in the participants' workplaces, public spaces such as hotels in Najran, or in any place that provides privacy and convenience for participants.

Some themes for interviews and focus groups will be discussed such as participants' experiences in tourism development, as well their involvement in the decisions around tourism in their local destination. Also, the potential challenges may affect their participation in planning and decision-making in tourism development in the Najran region. Interviews will be conducted by the researcher and in terms of focus groups one facilitator or moderator and one note taker will be attended with the researcher. Interviews and focus groups (If participants agree) will be audio recorded and transcribed. The audio recordings will be used by the researcher, however all data obtained will be in accordance with the University of Brighton's Research Ethic Guidelines. Each interview will take from 30 to 1 hour, and each focus group will take from 1 to 2 hours.

Will I be paid for taking part?

Participation is voluntary and participants will not be paid for their time. Reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed, if applicable. The researcher will provide refreshments.

What are the potential disadvantages or risks of taking part?

Sharing your experiences around tourism development with others can be enjoyable. However, there is a possibility that sharing your point of view and experience may bring up feelings of distress or discomfort, and you are able to withdraw at any time for any reason.

What are the potential benefits of taking part?

Your participation is voluntary and appreciated very much. The input you provide will be of great value and benefit to the researcher as well as help further understanding of the local communities participation in tourism planning and decision-making in Najran. There is a benefit in enriching your knowledge about tourism issues and the concept of participation in tourism activities. Also, there is a common learning and exchanging experiences between the researcher and participants about tourism planning. However, you may not benefit directly from participating.

Will my taking part in the study/project be kept confidential?

All data will be treated confidentially and the information you share will be protected following the Data Protection Act (1998) guidelines. The only people to have access to your information will be the researcher and the researcher's supervisors. Participants will be identified by first name only in the transcription and use of data.

In accordance with the University of Brighton's data storage policy, the data will exist in the form of audio recordings, field notes and typed transcriptions of the recordings. The data will be kept on a password protected computer and destroyed after ten years. The data will be used in the researcher's PhD thesis and possibly future research publications. If you prefer to be anonymous, please advise the researcher and this will be done.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You may withdraw at any time for any reason. The data you have provided until that point may be used by the researcher.

What will happen to the results of the project?

The results of the study will be published in the researcher's doctoral thesis which will be held by the University of Brighton and also held in the UK PhD database. The information may be used and published in the future in papers for academic or industry journals. If you would like to know the results of the study, please let the researcher know and you will be provided with information at the conclusion of the study by email.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised by the University of Brighton under the School of Sport and Service Management for the purposes of research to be used for a PhD thesis. The study is funded by Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia

What if there is a problem?

Any concerns or complaints will be addressed in a timely manner. Please contact the researcher or University course leader at the information below:

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Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by the University of Brighton Research Ethics Committee and meets the standards required to proceed. [The study has been granted a "favourable ethical opinion by the UoB Social Science Cross-School Research Ethics Committee."](#)

Mana Al Mashreef, 17/08

Appendix B

Translation form

Second trip from: July to September 2018

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Name | Mounira K |
| Age | 44 years old |
| Duration of interview | 4-5 PM |
| Profession | Business woman |
| Education level | High secondary school |
| E.mail | |

Researcher: What tourism mean to you?

Participant: Tourism depends on visitors who come from outside the area. The people of Najran when visiting the tourist sites inside Najran do not consider this tourism because they are used to visiting those places. We as a private sector or service providers operate on the basis of people coming from outside the region.

Researcher: Are we in Najran using the word tourism in our daily lives?

Participant: absolutely No

Researcher: So, what synonyms or words are used instead of the word tourism?

Participant: we use the word “*Tamsheah*”, which is a local term that means traveling or recreation.

Researcher: Good, why we don't use the word “tourism”?

Participant: because it was not with us in our dictionary, in our study, in our community, as well as what we do not see it in the street boards. The use of the word is found at the level of official government rather than in the daily lives of people. We are frankly not accustomed to this term. The elderly here in Najran have the impression that visitors who come to tourism from Europe or the United States have no goal in life and are lost and lounging. This impression is still present in our community to this day, and may be one of the reasons for not using the word tourism in Najran.

Researcher: How do you distinguish between tourist from non-tourist in Najran?

Participant: I know them according to their clothes and features; I climbed Raoum Mountain before 6 months ago accompanied with one of my friends, she is a channel TV broadcaster, from Sana'a- Yemen – working for Al-Wadi TV channel in Najran, we decided to climb at evening when we reached the top, we found some people there, I think they were US or Germany visitors, the important thing was that they were “Blondes” and old ,they have cameras and it seems to be foreigners.

For me, it is the first time to see the castle from the mountain's top, I see myself as “tourist”. The shape and dress make us distinguish tourists from non-tourists, photography and carrying cameras of the most characteristic features of tourists, they are interested in the details and always ask and document the moment, as well as the tourist carrying a backpack and camera, which is a prominent feature of tourists coming for tourism. Those coming from the Gulf States and from within the Kingdom are always limited to mobile photography, not the same foreigners, especially from Western nationalities who have a special interest in tourism.

Researcher: Do you see tourism as a good industry or not good? In other words, what do you like and do not like in tourism?

Participant: Tourism is an industry that promotes people and develops societies when they are properly exploited. Unfortunately, our tourism in Najran does not live up to ambition. We as women do not have active participation in tourism development issues.

Researcher: Why do not women participate?

Participant: I do not know what the reason is, is it because of the tribal system or the girls in Najran do not have the courage or the government did not empower girls to do their role in tourism in the region. If there is a women's tourist office in Najran, it will contribute to educating school girls and universities about tourism and its importance in empowering women and opening up new economic fields for them especially after allowing women to drive.

Researcher: What is your role in Najran chamber of commerce and industry?

Participant: I am the supervisor of the Tourism Women Committee at the Chamber of Commerce in Najran. The committee is composed of 8 members of businesswomen in commercial activities serving the community. There are initiatives of members of the Committee in the establishment of festivals of heritage and tourism, the most recent festival was "Najraniat". The Committee also supports the initiatives of women outside the Committee in the establishment of festivals and provide them with the necessary financial and logistical support for the success of such events. We are the umbrella for women's activities serving the community and the development in the region.

Unfortunately, when my family knew about my appointment in the chamber didn't accept that and rejected it directly, because they think that I will sit with men in one table, they haven't accepted that till this time, I'm now participating in festivals under a pseudonym that to keep away my family and my sons from criticism.

Researcher: What are the opportunities that tourism can offer you or change in you?

Participant: If there was strong tourism in Najran, we would benefit both economically and socially. I personally am able to allocate mobile vehicles at the Al-Okhdood archaeological city to show the handicrafts of Najrani women and the daughters of Amal Association for the deaf and dumb. This work will be volunteered by the Women's Tourist Committee in the Chamber to support families and handicrafts in Najran. Unfortunately, we do not find support from the tourism administration in Najran and we always collide with the bureaucracy. On the personal side, tourism if it flourished in Najran would provide me with many things. For example, I could learn to drive a car and take a job in tourism as a tourist guide for women.

So, tourism will provide us with additional financial income even though there is fierce resistance from the family and tribe. I gave my family one year to allow me to drive and I put them in front of the *fait accompli*. The woman was banded to carry a mobile phone and was banded to work in some areas where there was mixing with men such as health and banking. She was deprived of education, but now days the community has waived due to the life pressures and social changings. The woman has an ambition in which some women are willing to sacrifice their lives in order to achieve their goals.

Tourism will empower women in Najran, whether in investment or in tourism guidance, as well as will play in the self-development of females. For Najran, the flourishing of tourism will resuscitate hotels, restaurants and shops, as well as develop roads, public facilities and tourist attractions in Najran.

Researcher: What makes you worry from the development of tourism in Najran?

Participant: I worry from one thing and this is due to lack of caring of the tourist and historical sites, so I worry about the view of visitors and tourists who come to Najran or will come in the future. So, there will be nothing forcing them to stay in Najran despite of the region's possession of a cultural and natural heritage that may exist only in Najran. For example, the site of Al-Okhdood is the most important tourist site in Najran at all, the site is not prepared and there is nothing tempting people to stay inside the site for a long time.

I do not expect there to be any worry about tourism, for example if I agree that my daughter works as a nurse and mix with men in the hospital of all nationalities and cultures, if I agree that my daughter is driving, if I agree that my daughter enters the malls alone and talks to the male vendors, so what is inhibited to work in tourism. This is not logic that looking to tourism as evil and prevent women to work in. Tourism is a social activity, like a variety of activities that we practice in our daily lives. Tourism could provide my girls and boys by new languages, and they will help change bad things in us for the better when we touch people from other cultures.

Environmentally, there are concerns about waste disposal and lack of caring in cleanliness within tourist sites. In fact, the lack of cleanliness of tourist sites alienate

us from access to parks and tourist sites. Therefore, the large number of tourists will add a burden on the environment, especially in the absence of awareness and cleaning of environmental and tourist sites. Foreigners, especially from developed countries, if they sit in a place and they leave it clean, but in our Arab society find some of us on the contrary. Economically, tourism resuscitate the business sector and tourism service providers. Conversely, when tourist visas are not opened, this is negatively reflected on hotels, popular markets, taxi drivers and other tourist service providers.

Researcher: What do we need to attract tourism to Najran?

Participant: Popular festivals are supposed to be attractions for tourism, but unfortunately our festivals are a failure and are some of the activities and bazaars run by some of our Indian brothers. These festivals sell higher than the market price or parallel to the market price. There are no new events and in fact we felt boring from repetition for the same events. Why do not we have musical theaters similar to those held in Abha, Riyadh and Jeddah? Kingdom regions if they knew that we had musical theaters attended by top artists in the Kingdom or the Gulf they would come to Najran in thousands.

We need cinema that meets the needs of young people in Najran and attracts tourists and visitors from inside and outside Najran. we need modern café for women and men because people of Najran like to get entertainment and they will not concern about money. At the Park Hotel in Najran they opened a place for Shisha (hubble-bubble) for girls, which is crowded daily. We are in a rapid development and openness and we

have new generations so we must meet their requirements and aspirations for what benefits them and contributes to the discharge of their energies.

Researcher: How do you want tourism be managed?

Participant: I expect, if tourism managed by foreign director, this will lead it to be the first one in kingdom.

Researcher: Why the foreigner?

Participant: The foreigner will not be interested in how much he collects in his pocket and will pay more attention to the quality of work as part of his culture. The foreigner has a vision for the future, unlike the people in Najran who have no ambition, no vision, no desire for change. I expect that managing tourism through the private sector is the best of our tourism.

Researcher: How do you want to see Najran in the future regarding to tourism?

Participant: I love Najran more than my soul. I hope the Najran Tourism Administration will work for the public interest and not with the aim of staying in the job and receiving the salary. I hope to see Najran on the list of tourist destinations that tourists prefer, but we need a lot to achieve that.

Researcher: what does community mean to you?

Participant: The community is a part of us and we are a part of it, my community is my friends, the links between us are the common ideas. In family, there are restrictions and barriers set to woman where she can't overcome that, so she will find space with friends, that she can express about herself freely, she can discuss any issue with friends

which may be forbidden in family. I have another community which is the members of the women's committee in the Chamber of Commerce and what brings us together is work.

Researcher: How is the decision made between you in the Women's Committee?

Participant: we just spreading ideas and every member tell about her vision until reaching final decision, sometimes we use voting or by consensus. Unfortunately, the management of the Chamber of Commerce is the decision maker either with approval or rejection (participant, said with Unger). We haven't any role of decision making, director of women section in the chamber hasn't any decision yet, she used to say "let me discuss that the chamber administration" when we said to her you are the manager, she said "I have to discuss that with chamber, decision be made by the chamber only if I made decision that will bring me troupes". Thus, the decision in chamber is central, I seem that is selfish or love of authoritarianism or abuse of power. Ultimately, the women section in chamber is only decoration.

Researcher: How can tourism serve society and vice versa? Explain?

Participant: Tourism contributes to increased income for the business sector; tourism enhances communication with the other world from inside and outside the Kingdom; and tourism develops human and place. Tourism has a role in breaking the boring daily routine. Tourism will help the employee, and business people to entertain themselves in Najran, which will reflect positively on the behavior of people and to create a healthy environment that is free of squabbles and convulsions.

The community has a role to play in presenting ideas or objectively highlighting tourist services in Najran, which need attention, which may reflect positively on the development of tourism in Najran. For example, I was contacted by the mayor of Bir Askar, who did not hear his voice in my life, because I was tweeted and criticized some of the services provided at one of the sites of Bir Askar. He said to me: "What is the wrong thing that you noticed on the site?" I told him. He asked me two months to fix the problem. Two months later, the services on the site were improved. This is what I mean by the fact that society must interact and objectively highlight the pros and cons of services provided in the field of tourism in Najran.

Researcher: Does tourism build or destroy the Nigerian identity? Why? why not?

Participant: If tourism is invested in Najran properly, it will contribute to building our identity and will give us love for our region and love for our heritage which begins to disappear. Tourism connects us to our heritage, culture and our Najrani identity, which we cherish and love very much. Never travel ... never destroy identity (said that with trust). We are on the doors of Vision 2030, and women through the vision will have the opportunity to work and participate men in development. So, tourism will be a beautiful addition to women and will contribute to open many areas of work for women, so tourism will build our identity and will not destroy it.

Researcher: Do you allow your daughter or son to support tourism fields by working in handcrafts or sewing and Carpentry or others?

Participant: I will not allow them to do so because those professions have their own people and they are of a lower social class and this is unacceptable in our customs and

traditions and it is a shame, I find it so difficult. Who will marry your daughter or your son if he/ she practicing sewing or Carpentry? In religion there is no ban, thus prophets used to work in that jobs and marry slaves women and they were “Elite of Creation”, but the tribe here is the big barrier in the Najran region.

Researcher: Does the woman's view of tourism differ from that of a man?

Participant: Yes...yes (said that several time)

Researcher: Why?

Participant: I think if a woman works in tourism, she would have creative ideas than men. Women have a touch and a more attractive view of tourism than men. Truly, I sit with girls of all ages who have found creativity and love of work and have touches in drawing, photography, design and other areas of creativity. I hope women could steer tourism in Najran. I bet that tourism with women will wear a new garment. Unfortunately, some men care more about salary than achievement unlike women who spend a lot of creativity and achievement. Tell me the man who leads tourism in Najran from about 15 years, what did he achieve for it? (directing her speech to researcher).

Researcher: What is the role of chamber of commerce regarding to tourism in the region?

Participant: So far, the Chamber of Commerce in Najran does not play its role in tourism development issues in Najran, as in the Chambers of Commerce in Jeddah, Riyadh and the Eastern Province, which play a very large role in supporting tourism.

Researcher: What is the relationship between the chamber and private sector which working in tourism, like hotels, tour guides and tour operators and so on?

Participant: The role of the Chamber of Commerce is to complicate the procedures and not provide the necessary support to those operating in the field of tourism. The Chamber collects only money from those entities through licenses for such activities on which tourism is depending on. Those entities need to open a commercial register and pay an amount, which is unlike the licenses obtained from the municipalities, the civil defense, the tourism authority and the Ministry of Commerce. Tourism event organizers, for example, when a festival or event is held, approvals must be taken from the Chamber of Commerce as the merchant's house. This is in addition to the licenses obtained by the organizers of the events from several governmental bodies in Najran. In short, its role is weak in supporting the business sector and meeting their requirements.

In Jizan region, which is the neighboring place to us, there are many beautiful events attended by many people from everywhere in the Kingdom. Jizan events diverse and organized well and supervised by tourism authority. Why Najran hasn't the same, Najran and its people deserve such events. The region should have suitable festivals, it isn't "animal cowshed", this shame...shame (she said that with Unger). Tourism officials in Najran carry out events in any way and do not care whether people are satisfied or not. Tourism activities are important to them, which have to be accomplished anyway, because of the absence of professional conscience.

Researcher: In chamber of commerce, who has a loud voice and should be heard?

Participant: The person who has money is the one who hears his voice more than others and the reason is that the money is the one who speaks. The money holder finds all the people in the Chamber of Commerce serving him, but who does not have the money and has ideas only, this has no voice at all.

Researcher: Business people, who affiliated to the chamber, do they have routine meetings?

Participant: No, there is no meetings and what comes from the chamber is dictations only.

Researcher: Have you heard about tourism plan of Najran?

Participant: I swear, I haven't heard or seen any tourism plan in Najran (she swears to a part of conformation). let me ask you, On your way to the hotel for this interview, have you seen any board talk about tourism (she asks the researcher), how we can speak about tourism plans and we haven't read any board in the main roads speaks about tourism.

Researcher: So, who has the tourism decision in the Najran region?

Participant: Particularly I don't know, but the Chamber of Commerce has a role in tourism, the branch of the Saudi Commission for tourism and National Heritage in Najran has a role, the Association of Culture and Arts has a role, the entertainment body has a role, municipalities have a role. It is supposed that there is a committee that manages the tourism affairs from those entities and should be granted the powers and

must have an account in Twitter or in the Snapchat or other social networking tools for the purpose of reaching people of all ages.

Researcher: Do you want to participate in the forming of the Najran tourism plan?

Participant: I certainly hope to serve the Kingdom and the Najran region as much as I can.

Researcher: What are barriers that hindering participation of the local community in Najran tourism planning?

Participant: The main obstacle is the lack of a women's place or section that allow them to manage the tourism development process in Najran. The tribal dimension prevents women from meeting men in their offices or sometimes in a coffee shop. Although I personally do not have a problem with that because I am a confident woman and a mother of daughters and sons in universities, but other women or girls may not accept this and their parents will not allow them to do so, of course, difficult ... very difficult (she repeated this several time). Hence, the family will arise problems when you meet with their girls, and if you made problems with those girls during the work this may affect you negatively and you may have a head ache, however problem may escalate more and brings you more obstacles.

Unfortunately, some of the young people who study abroad when they return home are becoming more strict in restricting women. I do not know what the reason is the lack of trust in women or there is a mistake in raising these young people, Or our problem that we planted in them by asking them “your sister should not go alone, your sister should not be seen by others, your sister.....and so on”.

Researcher: Studying abroad is supposed to contribute to expanding the perceptions of these young people to benefit from the beautiful experiences of the West, what do you think?

Participant: Unfortunately, some young people when they return back to the country become more radical towards woman's rights than before their traveling from Saudi Arabia. These young people lived freely in the West and practiced their lives freely so they imagine that if we open the door of tourism it will be the same as in the West.

There are other barriers, which reflected in lack of awareness of tourism in TV, as I told you before, there are many women haven't seen restaurants or markets, some of them haven't Internet or Mobile phone. If you say the word tourism to them, they will not accept it because they do not know what it is; unfortunately, human being is enemy of what he unaware. This is an obstacle to participation or volunteering in tourism issues in Najran. Unfortunately, the channels in Najran show only weddings and graduation ceremonies, and I hope that they will focus on raising the awareness of old people and other segments of community about tourism.

Researcher: What participation mean to you?

Participant: Participation means that I share my community and my region in everything. I share everything I have, whether by idea or project. The participation of women with men "zero" in tourism. To participate in the family or community in making the decision that belongs to me, "I swear by God this means a lot to me" because they will give me confidence in myself and give me a place among them and an appreciation. This will make me feel responsible because they gave me a decision,

a status and a place that will reflect positively on my behavior, and I will be careful to be at the level of trust and responsibility that I have been given. My participation means building a personality or self that will enable me to face the world without fear or hesitation; therefore, I will not be afraid to meet a man who is a brother, friend, husband and father.

Unfortunately, community is looking at women who talk to a strange man that there is a bad relationship among them. This must be wiped out of our imagination and the imagination of our children and daughters, because in religion, when man and woman meet together that means "Satan (evil) will be their third". We respect religion, but we must also trust women to play their role in society. Therefore, mental images of women's relationship with men are an obstacle to participation.

The mentality of officials in Najran is the same "Subhan Allah" even in the Chamber of Commerce, the Tourism Authority, or in the rest of the other sectors in the region. Many of them reject the participation and success of women because of the tribal dimension, for example, I am a member of the Chamber of Commerce in Najran when I put an idea against the idea of a man, the idea of a man is accepted without discussion, although my idea is often better than his idea. The reason is the man's voice is higher than woman's voice. So, this is another obstacle to the participation of community, especially women in tourism.

Researcher: I have finished, do you want to add any things, or think there is important thing and we haven't covered it?

Participant: Thank you...

Appendix C

Some images during the interviews with participants



Source: *Author*



Source: Author