# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1. Introduction

As a growing area of concern in world tourism, sustainable tourism development is a compelling issue that acknowledges the importance of the three dimensions of sustainable tourism in today’s practice of the industry. Sustainable tourism aims at positive tourism impacts on the destinations, meaning that the resources of a country and its cultural attractions are not consumed and/or destroyed by tourist activities and other related visitors’ amenities and thus preserve them for future generations. The authors Bramwell & Lane (2018) define sustainable tourism as not just a segment of the market, but as a fundamental approach to the whole structure of tourism that seeks to minimise the negative effects, while promoting the more desirable effects of tourism to host economies. Long-term environmental management, socio-cultural environmental and economic sustainability are the other aspects highlighted by Dodds and Butler(2019) on the same note, the four pillars must be understood as interrelated.

Sustainable tourism is also recognised on the international level, as it is integrated into the framework of such global objectives as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals including the eighth and the twelfth goals, which address the issue of sustainable economic growth and sustainable consumption and production patterns respectively (United Nations, 2020). The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) in 2021 also supports sustainable tourism as a means to fostering the conservation of biodiversity the advancement of the standing of local communities and combating the effects of global warming. This continual global confirmation of sustainable tourism is desirable to push economic performance but also to operationalise other general environmental and social objectives.

Nevertheless, the concept of sustainable tourism is implemented on a practical level in a very different way depending on the context and geographical area, taking into consideration aspects related to the governance, the economic organic dependencies, the culture and the vulnerability of ecosystems. Buckley (2019) postulates that despite considerable awareness of the postulates of sustainable tourism, their implementation is rather irregular: some geographical zones are gradually adapting sustainable tourism concepts into their planning and management platforms while others fail to do so due to such factors as the lack of resources, political will, or proper stakeholders’ engagement. Such differences can be explained by noting that it is necessary to have a context-dependent approach that focuses on the peculiarities of each destination.

### 2.1.1. Contextual Background of the Al Wasta Region

The Al Wasta region of Oman has the potential to be used as a model area for studying sustainable tourism development because of its existing attributes in terms of ecology, culture and economics. The climate varies through the different terrains in the region; some are flat, and some are mountainous plain deserts; the vegetation and animal species in the region are unique to the region (Al-Rawahi et al., 2020). That is why Al Wasta has become a preferred location for people who would like to have exciting eco-tourism experiences, especially if they are fond of wildlife. However, soil and water fertility and environmental concerns are still major factors in organising sustainable tourism and enhancements, for embracing unchained touring growth spoils the environment through effects such as carrying away habitat and losing species variety (Al-Kalbani et al., 2019).

From a cultural point of view, Al Wasta includes many historical and archaeological sites that represent the culture of the region in addition to traditional handmade crafts customs and traditions (Al-Hamadi et al., 2021). These areas are significant to future tourist development and maintenance of the area’s cultural integrity and pride are important to the tourist industry. However, the aspect of an increasing number of tourists increases the danger or risk of cultural static consumption in which cultures are sold in the market in a manner that demeans them and their importance (Jones, 2020). It is a sensitive fact that weighs social, cultural and economic challenges in the nation, which can be noted as a significant problem in comprehending the potential of cultural tourism.

Historically socio-economically, the Al Wusta region has not been a productive region with jobs and economic activities mostly confined to agriculture and petty trade (Al-Kharusi & Al-Barwani, 2019). Some of the effects of tourism have been viewed as positive in that it was suggested that tourism could act as a way of diversifying the economy and therefore move away from reliance on agriculture, and in the process create employment opportunities for the people within those locales.

Importantly, this economic change is not without a challenge; the economy of the region becomes highly dependent on tourism which puts the region in worldwide competition, and the number of tourists is affected by fluctuation or the economic downfall (Al-Mukhaini, 2018). However, the positive impacts of tourism are not always achieved at the same level, there are questions regarding whether local communities are benefiting from the tourism development or whether the revenues are being channelled back to external investors (Al-Wahaibi & Al-Hatmi, 2019).

### 2.1.2. Purpose of the Literature Review

This literature review aims to analyse the state of knowledge regarding sustainable tourism development and its applicability to the Al Wasta region more critically. The literature review builds on the justification where the various studies are reviewed to establish certain factors that affect sustainable tourism in Al Wasta focusing on the environmental, cultural and socio-economic aspects. It will also consider the impact and prospect of sustainable tourism development for the region based on comparison with similar places which have already developed the strategies.

The identification and evaluation of current sustainable tourism practices in Al Wasta constitute one of the major goals of the literature review in the context of environmental conservation, the participation of local communities, infrastructure, and cultural heritage. For example, Al-Kalbani et al. (2019) as well as Al-Hamadi et al. (2021) proposed analyses of the ecological and cultural perspectives of tourism in the area and identified deficiencies in the current approach of the PRC to sustainable improvement expectations. These studies, however, also show a lack of research on the role of integrating local knowledge and people in tourism development which this paper seeks to highlight.

Also, the research objective is to establish the gaps that exist in the literature regarding the socio-economic analysis of tourism in Al Wasta. Although there is increasing research on the environmental and cultural aspects of sustainable tourism, Al-Wahaibi and Al-Hatmi (2019) pointed to the lack of knowledge on the impact of tourism development on the economy and livelihood of the area. This review will endeavour to bridge this gap by focusing on such issues as income generation, employment generation and economic vulnerability due to the incapacitation of tourism in Al Wasta.

In addition, the literature review will discuss the effects of government policies and regulations on the enhancement or the acting against sustainable tourism in Al Wasta. As the empirical literature review by Al-Mukhaini (2018) and Al-Kharusi and Al-Barwani (2019) showed the role of sound policies and frameworks in advancing sustainability goals it remains important to gain a more granular view of how policies are enacted and how effective they are in a real-life setting. The policy review will in turn compare policy structures in Al Wasta with other regions to identify areas of policy effectiveness and policy improvement.

The literature review offers a systematic appreciation of the factors that support and hinder sustainable tourism in Al Wasta, as well as the knowledge of sustainable tourism in similar settings. The review of the literature will be done in the form of an assessment of the various studies that are available and from this, the complexities of the different strategies that are necessary for the promotion of sustainable tourism that does not compromise the economic as well as the environmental and cultural aspects will be made clear to policymakers, practitioners, and other researchers who are interested in sustainable tourism.

## 2.2. Theoretical Framework

This paper on sustainable tourism development in the Al Wasta region employs theoretical concepts and models that have informed the theoretical development of sustainability in the tourism industry. To show the application of the specific subject matter in addressing the research objectives and questions, this section comprises an analysis of theoretical frameworks including Triple Bottom Line (TBL) and carrying capacity.

### 2.2.1. Sustainable Tourism Theories

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory, by John Elkington in 1994 is one of the fastest-growing theories of sustainable tourism. It emphasises the need to balance three critical dimensions: economic sustainability, ecological sustainability and social sustainability (Elkington, 2018). The TBL approach has been embraced in tourism research, with Bramwell and Lane (2019) noting that it is a holistic framework whereby the sustainability of tourism undertakings can be evaluated. The theory is even more suitable to the Al Wasta region since the growth and development of the tourism industry must embrace all of the following aspects: the economic aspect, which deals with the growth of the economy, the environmental aspect, which focuses on the need to protect the environment, and the societal aspect that looks at the welfare of the people.

While the TBL offers a commercial approach to the limits of the development of tourism, the carrying capacity concept deals with the extent to which tourism development can be carried out without straining the capacity of the environment (Butler, 2020). This theory was developed based on the premise that there is an optimal level at which visitors can use a given space before the reception and supply experience degrades (Manning, 2019). In some works, for instance, Simpson et al. (2020) adopted the carrying capacity model in forecasting potential threats of tourism to the ecological regions with tourism management practices set within the carrying capacity as the key approach. As far as Al Wasta is concerned the concept of carrying capacity is significant because of the sensitivity of the landscape and the fact that an excessive influx of tourists may put extra pressure on the environment.

Another theoretical framework in sustainable tourism is the notion of responsible tourism which holds that the tourists themselves the toured businesses and governments have to ensure that the impacts of tourism are positive and its profitability humane (Goodwin, 2019). Unlike TBL which is more structural, responsible tourism emphasises the choice and conduct of tourist-focal players; and business operators within the system (Spenceley, 2020). This theory has received more attention in recent years as specific guidelines for adopting sustainable development, particularly in areas such as Al Wasta where the community must be involved as well as local governing bodies in the success of sustainable tourism strategies.

A comparative look at these three theories shows that were as useful as TBL in providing an over-arching and holistic view of tourism, carrying capacity was more specific in explaining how the impacts of tourism could be managed and RT emphasised the behavioural aspect of the stakeholders involved. All the theories discussed above have their unique advantages and drawbacks and are applicable depending on the Al Wasta area’s conditions and opportunities. For example, TBL is effective in multiple sustainability objectives while the carrying capacity model is crucial in the ecological capacity of the region. At the same time, there is a concept of responsible tourism, which can be regarded as a way of making local communities interested in a sustainable approach to tourism activities.

### 2.2.2. Tourism Development Models

By analysing tourism development models, one can identify systematic approaches to describing the potential of tourism’s further development. The most commonly used framework in tourism studies is referred to as The Butler’s Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model. This implies that tourism destinations are cycled through several phases comprising exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and decline/recovery each of which has implications for sustainability as postulated by Butler (2019). Literature by Zhang & Xiao (2020) have used the TALC model for several destinations pointing out that tourists and policymakers ought to make changes at the development stage for sustainable tourism to be achieved. When speaking of Al Wasta, the TALC model could help recognise the stage that concerns the given destination and predict future issues.

The other model of tourism development is the Integrated Tourism Development (ITD) model which focuses on the cooperation of various actors and sectors of the destination in a bid to attain sustainable impacts (Inskeep, 2020). This model is especially useful in areas like Al Wasta in which CE-Tourism is connected with other industries such as agriculture, cultural preservation and stimulation of the inhabitants. The ITD model stresses inclusive decision-making, which includes all stakeholders, and defending the coherent interaction of ITD with wider regional objectives (Ruhanen et al., 2019). Albrechts (2021) and Garrod (2020) have emphasised that the application of the ITD model contributes to sustainable tourism development in rural and other sensitive areas like Al Wasta.

A later model is the Ecotourism Development Model (EDM) which only targets tourism activities that are nature-centered and support conservation objectives (Weaver & Lawton, 2019). This model does not deviate from the concept of sustainable tourism since it encourages the use of environment-friendly practices that will also encourage the sustainability of natural features. The EDM has been successfully used in numerous settings and thus proves ideal for protected areas and areas of high biological diversity; Al Wasta is replete with This flora and fauna.

The study of similarities and differences between these models confirms that the TALC model is well suited for interpreting the stage nature of the development of tourism destinations, and the key role of cooperation with stakeholders, revealed by the use of the ITD model. The EDM, on the other hand, offers a focused method for nature-based tourism–a niche which is highly applicable to areas like Al Wasta endowed with abundant natural resources. The suitability of the stated models for the Al Wasta region will only be as valid as the particular goals of sustainable tourism development whether it is related to the life cycle management of the destination, the stakeholder's cooperation or the conservation-oriented tourism activities.

### 2.2.3. Linking Theories to Research Objectives

The overall theory used in this study and the sub-theories or models discussed above were found relevant to responding to the research objectives and questions of the study. According to the TBL theory that focuses on economic, environmental, and social sustainability, the purpose of the study is to determine the way through which the tourism development in Al Wasta can be achieved in harmonisation with the three aspects of sustainability. Thus, through the application of the TBL framework, the study seeks to establish sustainable strategies that contribute to the economic growth of any country besides supporting environmentally friendly solutions and encouraging the welfare of the communities.

The carrying capacity theory is useful towards the achievement of the research objective of assessing the environmental effects of tourism in Al Wasta. Applying the carrying capacity model of the study will help identify the level of tourism that can be supported by the region without compromising on its resource base. This is in response to the research question of how the numbers and activities of tourists could be well controlled to reduce their otherwise adverse effects on the environment.

The idea of responsible tourism is connected with the research goal concerning the involvement of the local communities and stakeholders in the process of sustainable tourist development. The research study will seek to establish whether community participation and sustainable tourism measures can be used to improve sustainable tourism in Al Wasta; in answering the research question of how local stakeholders can be involved in tourism planning for the area.

The TALC model is applied in this objective of the research which is to determine the current status of tourism development in Al Wasta and its sustainability. Using the TALC framework, this study aims to find out future threats and opportunities in the sustainability of tourism in the region.

Hence, the ITD and EDM models as generally pertinent to the research objectives of stakeholders’ cooperation and Conservation Tourism activities. The purpose of the study is to determine the impact of integrated tourism development and ecotourism as sustainable tourism practices in Al Wasta to answer the research questions associated with the biosphere reserve’s stakeholders and conservation.

## 2.3. Environmental Impact of Tourism

The effect of tourism on the environment has been viewed for years as a two-sided coin. As much as it benefits the economic growth of a country, and helps in the exchange of cultures it poses a lot of menace to the environmental conditions of a country. This section assesses critically the global environmental impacts of tourism with a focus on the Al Wasta region. By drawing and comparing various cases this section presents the major environmental issues of tourism and discusses previous approaches that could address these effects.

### 2.3.1. Overview of Environmental Impacts

Tourism may cause environmental degradation in many and complex ways such as pollution, resource exhaustion, habitat destruction, and loss of biological diversity. In the opinion of Gössling and Hall (2019), tourism imposes detrimental impacts on the environment as it is a resource-intensive phenomenon that entails the use of natural resources such as water, energy and land. Physical planning especially the development of tourism infrastructure involves the construction of hotels, resorts, and transport infrastructure among others destroying the natural environment hence the disruption of ecological systems and anthropogenic impacts on wildlife (UNEP, 2020). Besides, through tourism, unpredictable amounts of waste, specifically plastic waste, wastewater, and GHG concentrations affecting climate change are produced and released into the environment (UNWTO, 2021).

According to Liu & Tisdell (2020), the combined effect of tourism on coastal and marine habitats indicated that engagements such as snorkelling, diving and boat access were destructive to the coral reefs and other ecosystems. It also focuses on the negative effects of the tourism industry on water sources by tourist and tourism facilities in arid areas; it is reported that the extraction of water to meet the needs of the tourists and the tourism industry is often beyond what is available, while the quality of the water is also compromised (Cole, 2019). These environmental impacts are felt more in developing countries since the laws and policies governing the environment and compliance with environmental management standards are often Vicarious or poorly implemented (Buckley, 2019).

A comparison between these studies shows that there is general agreement on the fact that there is a tremendous amount of pressure that tourism exerts on the environment especially where it is sensitive. Nevertheless, there are disparities in the contention as to the extent of particular effects. Gössling and Hall (2019) examine some of the general issues with environmental concerns of tourism and the impact of tourism while Liu and Tisdell (2020) present some of the specifics of the impacts on the coastal and marine environment. Cole (2019) is aware of the problem of water shortage as one of the major difficulties of tourist development in the areas of mass concentration of tourists.

### 2.3.2. Specific Impacts in the Al Wasta Region

Environmental impacts of tourism in the Al Wasta region have greatly affected the region and this is due to the high impact of environmental risks in the area as a result of its ecological and cultural features. According to Al-Rawahi et al. (2020) suggest that off-road driving is catastrophic for the environment of the region because the environment is sensitive due to the desert, which causes soil erosion and the destruction of vegetation. The effect of tourism on water resources is also discussed in the study revealing that the utilisation of water by the tourism facilities has led to a water scarcity situation in the region due to its high potential of drought risks and limited water access.

In another study by Al-Kalbani et al. (2019), a focus is focused on the effects of tourism on wildlife in the Al Wasta region, including endowment and threatened species. The study makes a statement that watching and photographing wildlife affects the behaviour of animals hence low reproductive success and high mortality rates increased. However, the study also indicates that there are concerns about the germination of new invasive species whenever tourism activities take place, and hence increased effects on the diversity of the region.

On the other hand, Al-Hamadi et al. (2021) concentrate on the cultural-social effects of tourism within the Al Wasta area, and they pointed out the consequences of commercialisation of culture as an attractive tourist attraction hence losing culture and traditionalism in the process. The study also reveals that cultural tourism poses some environmental challenges like the vandalisation of archaeological sites as well as the exploitation of natural resources in events and festivities embraced during tourism.

A comparison of the above studies shows various environmental issues related to tourism development in the Al Wasta area including ecological loss, and cultural changes. While Al-Rawahi et al. (2020) and Al-Kalbani et al. (2019) mainly address the ecological consequences, Al-Hamadi et al. (2021) also address the cultural and social effects. Taking into consideration the findings of these studies, it is possible to conclude that there is a mandate for an Integrated approach to address the environmental issues of tourism in this region in considering ecological cultural and social interrelatedness.

### 2.3.3. Mitigation Strategies

Addressing the impacts of tourism on the environment therefore needs to be achieved through legal frameworks and guidelines, benchmarking and excellence as well as an involvement of people in their communal society. One strategy is the adoption of sustainable tourism certifications that acknowledge measurable goals and objectives in environmental management and motivate other tourism operators to follow suit (Font & McCabe, 2019). Another study by Honey & Rome, (2020) emphasises the ‘Yes to Certification’ model stating that organisations that have adopted Green Globe and Blue Flag have proved to have credibility in delivering sustainable tourism where the physical environment is a major issue.

One of the strategies that can be implemented is the choice of the nature of tourism, including making a transition to low-impact tourism activities that in turn do not harm the environment but contribute to the conservation of natural resources (Weaver, 2019). Ecotourism in the context of the Al Wasta region shows that it may have positive impacts on the economies of the people who inhabit the area while at the same time conserving the natural and cultural resources in the area. In a study by Stronsa & Hunt (2020), it is noted that ecotourism has been successful in other areas with similar environmental features, which recommends that the practices be applied in Al Wasta as well.

Some of the measures that have been applied in the effort to reduce the impacts of tourism on the environment are as follows: Community-based tourism supports the participation, in the planning and management of tourism, by local people to guarantee that tourism activities are at parity with the interests of the locals and environmental conservation (Ashley and Goodwin 2019).

Thus, the comparison of these strategies shows that certification schemes offer a bureaucratised approach toward enhancing sustainability in tourism while ecotourism and CBT contain a more place-based and community involvement orientation. All approaches have their strength and weaknesses, and therefore it can be concluded that they are sensitive to the context in which they are applied. For instance, certification schemes may apply for large-scale tourism businesses while CBT and ecotourism may apply for small-scale community-based businesses in the Al Wasta region.

### 2.3.4. Research Gaps

There is little research done on the adverse effects of tourism on the environment and most of the documented information is insufficient, especially concerning the Al Wasta area. Acknowledged for the first time is the problem of insufficient information regarding the total amount of the effects of tourism activities during a certain period. That being the case, there is a need for longitudinal research that investigates changes taking place in the environment of the region over a valid time of time.

Another gap is that a lack of information can be regarded as the absence of research on the effectiveness of currently used mitigation measures within the Al Wasta region. Studies from other areas have shown that for example, ecotourism and CBT can be useful strategies concerning environmental conservation but more studies using empirical data are required to establish whether such strategies are being practised in Al Wasta and if so, to what effect.

Moreover, there is inadequate research done on the kind of local governance and policy environment that underlies the development of tourism activities in Al Wasta as well as the role it plays in managing or exploiting the environmental impacts which arise from the business. While there is a discussion of the issue of cultural commodification in some of the works, among which are the works of Al-Hamadi et al. (2021), there are few investigations into how local policies and regulations are responding to the general environmental impacts of tourism. However, there are calls for a better fusion of ecological, cultural, and socio-economic models aiming at offering a more comprehensive outlook of the effects of tourism on Al Wasta. One could find that such research is vital as a frame of reference to better establish strategies for sustainable tourism in the region.

## 2.4. Community Involvement in Tourism Development

People’s participation in tourism development is generally recognised as fundamental to sustainable tourism. It refers to the involvement of local populations in development, management as well as determination of the demand for tourism in their areas. Such participation means that the development of tourism is in a way that is appropriate in terms socio-cultural and economic aspirations of the communities and within the environmental constraint of the host region (Cohen, 2021). The notion of community participation has emerged widely in tourism discussions as it takes into account the equity issues that result from the application of tourism in a top-down manner; it also recognises the rights of the host community to participate in the use of the available resources. This is a critical appraisal of the role of community involvement in tourism development; the appraisal entails the demonstration of practical uses and issues as witnessed in the following cases. The review also looks at the specifics of Al Wasta focusing on the degree of community engagement in the tourism sector within the area and the challenges to effective community engagement.

### 2.4.1. Importance of Community Involvement

The involvement of the local people in tourism development is vital for several reasons. First, it guarantees to enhance the positive economic impact of tourism, hence avoiding misappropriation of community resources by foreign investors, making efforts to fight poverty (Timothy, 2018). It has been highlighted that in places where people have a positive attitude towards tourism, there is greater potential for employment, development of physical facilities and standard of living (Byrd et al., 2019). In addition, the involvement of the members of the community in the development and management of tourism reinforces ownership and thus results in sustainable practices among tourists (Jamal & Camargo, 2018).

Some of the factors that communities consider participation include; The social structure in every community has its unique architecture and it is an essential factor that is protected by the community. This is because whenever people of a particular culture are involved in Tourism, they are very much conscious of the cultural site and their cultural practices hence making the place more authentic (Hall & Richards 2019). This is equally relevant where cultural tourism is a key factor adopted by those who are interested in visiting a particular area. In such contexts, there are heightened risks of cultural commodification and this can be problematic since it distorts the subculture, norms and practices of the society (Simpson, 2020). Nonetheless, when communities can uphold modes of how their cultural assets are portrayed and controlled it is likely to outcompete such risks and guarantee that tourism advancement is consistent with the cultural conservation objectives of the communities.

Another important area of concern for community involvement in tourism is the sustainability of the environment. People living in the communities are likely to have the biggest stake in the management of the tourism resources and their involvement in the planning process is likely to reduce the negative impacts of tourism activities (Moscardo, 2020). For instance, communities can act in a manner of controlling and reducing visitors’ traffic flows, handling wastes, or even preserving biologically sensitive zones. One of the emerging trends is that locally originated projects tend to be considerably more effective in terms of contributing to environmental sustainability than externally initiated ones (Tosun, 2020). This is because close to nature people would invest their interests in the conservation of the environment due to many reasons including economic and cultural values.

However, the involvement of the communities in tourism also has its drawbacks as described below. Another remarkable weakness is a conflict of interest within the communities by having different perceptions on the way tourism should be taken, or by receiving different/negative perceptions on the distribution of the income generated from tourism (Gursoy et al., 2019). Also, there is an inability of the community to develop or possess the skills, knowledge, or resources required to engage effectively in drawing tourism plans hence relying on outsiders who may have parochial interests (Sharpley, 2018). Such challenges make it important to focus on the issue of capacity, which is the extent of people’s ability to constructively engage in the development of tourism.

### 2.4.2. Case Studies from Similar Regions

The significance of locally oriented involvement in the process of sustainable tourism has been examined in different geographical areas and each study has something in the way of lessons to impart about community appreciation of both the opportunities and drawbacks that go with participation. A classic case is the Annapurna Conservation Area in Nepal in which a model of community-based tourism has been well practiced. Participation of the local people in this region is highly relevant concerning the regulation of tourism, including the definition of the number of tourists, tourist facilities and services like accommodation and guided tours (Sharma & Nepal, 2020). This model has contributed positively towards environmental conservation including afforestation, and wildlife conservation and it has provided people with economic benefits. Hence, the experience of the Annapurna model supports the passion for community ownership and operation for sustainable tourism.

On the other hand, this paper reveals another face of community participation in tourism in the Maasai Mara region of Kenya. Here community-based conservancies for tourism as well as wildlife management are established. These conservancies are community-owned and these communities have the prerogative to determine the uses of the conservancies, the types of tourism allowed within the region as well as the percentage split of the revenues (Biggs et al., 2020). The Maasai Mara case shows effectiveness of the community participation in making sure that tourism was encompassed in cultural and environmental sustainability. It does so by showing the impact which community-based alternatives have on the sustainability of tourism where locals take ownership and responsibility for the destination.

The ecotourism strategies used in Costa Rica provide an understanding of the tendencies concerning community engagement in tourism. Community engagement has therefore been central to the success of ecotourism in Costa Rica which is famously known for its environmental conservation policies (Honey, 2018). Since the beginning of ecotourism, the local population in Costa Rica has been an initiator and main participant in the creation of protected areas, and the management of eco-tourist facilities, including eco-lodges and tour operators. This has not only had a positive economic impact on the local people but has also had a positive impact on the conservation of the diversity of the country. It has been learnt that economic benefits have not only accrued to the local people but also the natural resources especially the bio-diversity of the country has been conserved. These arguments show that the Costa Rican model is effective in illustrating that such communities are capable of attaining the goal of the simultaneous protection of natural resources and the generation of income.

Comparing these cases with the Al Wasta region of Oman it was found that though community participation has great importance for sustainable tourism its context and governance also matter a lot. In another study from an Institution, a community-based approach to natural resources has been institutionalised in areas such as Nepal and Costa Rica meaning that the returns on tourism are distributed in a much more fair manner and the environment is given a topmost priority. Nevertheless, in areas such as the Maasai Mara where the involvement of the community is carried out through conservancies power relations and issues of inequalities in welfare provision can be witnessed. These examples demonstrate the strategies that have to be synchronised with the cultural, environmental and governance frameworks of each district to encourage communities to participate.

### 2.4.3. Community Involvement in Al Wasta

Al Wasta region in Oman is chosen as a case study because it presents a special setting of community contribution towards tourist promotion. The region is marked by the presence of numerous attractions influenced by the beauty of the region which comprises a blend of culture and natural features. However, studies show that the degree of community participation in tourism is low in Al Wasta and this is a challenge to the tourist development plans in the region.

Al-Harthy et al. (2021) Community involvement was also discussed in Al Wasta because according to Al Wasta people, there are actual ways that local communities can benefit from tourism but the problem is that they do not have an official place in decision-making on tourism. This has led to, for instance, top-down and investor-initiated tourism development, where few key decision makers in the government and the external investment circles make the decisions without involving the people on the ground. The study also pointed out that culture is marginalised in tourist development, thus making culture ascribed a commercial value as well as alienating tourism from the processes of cultural conservation.

Al-Sadjali (2019) conducted another investigation to determine the involvement of local people in preventing and controlling the impacts of tourism on the environment of Al Wasta. The study established the fact that people in the region are becoming more sensitive to the environment and natural resources conservation, however, there is low capability of implementing efficient environmental management plans and programs. This is in part due to, among other factors, not getting access to training and essential tools besides the absence of an integrated approach towards environmental conservation at the community level. Thus, the study indicated that an increased stakeholder engagement in the management of the environment should be nurtured so that the tourism business in Al Wasta can be sustained in the long run.

However, some cases portray successful community-based tourism in Al Wasta and hence enhance the growth of this industry. For instance, community management of camps established in desert areas offers inhabitants an opportunity to expose their cultural identity and, at the same time, earn income from tourism (Al-Saadi et al., 2020). These initiatives would also have a bearing on environmental causes as the areas of fragile desert conditions; and the support and encouragement of sustainable manner of land usage. However, these are few and far between, and thus there is a need to look for interpretations and practices that are more extensive and all-encompassing concerning community participation in the region’s tourism industry.

In this context, the relationship between Al Wasta and other regions in which the community has successfully engaged in tourism is clear that there’s a very major distinguishing factor for governance and institutionally supported community-based tourism. In areas such as the Annapurna Conservation Area or Costa Rica, community participation is encouraged using policies and programs that enable the local communities and furnish them with the instruments and knowledge as to how the management of tourism should be done. On the other hand, the absence of structures for community participation means that in Al Wasta there has been no favourable environment for the sustainable development of tourism. These comparisons raise issues about the need to develop structures through which tourism development can be managed to reflect the needs of users and the general populace.

### 2.4.4. Barriers to Participation

This front reveals that there are numerous factors which limit the community participation in tourism development in the Al Wasta region. However, one of the most important factors that remain unresolved is the poor level of education and knowledge of the importance of tourism for communities. Al-Rashdi (2020) noted that the understanding of the residents of Al Wasta on the possible positive development and negative consequences of tourism is still limited and hence their lack of active participation in the decision-making processes of tourism planning. This knowledge is particularly aggravated by low literacy levels as well as reduced training and educational facilities, especially in rural settings.

Another factor that hinders the participation of the community in tourism is the economic factors. Al Wasta residents depend on traditional means of earning a living through farming and fishing among others; therefore, lack the capital and time to venture into tourism undertakings (Al-Salti 2021). Furthermore, the costs of constructing tourist facilities, and marketing the destination, among others are expensive and may put a lot of pressure on the local people to seek assistance from the outside world which may not embrace sustainable tourism. This also acts as cultural factors which hinder people in the community from participating in tourism. Al-Khatri (2022) highlights some of the communities in Al Wasta resist being involved in tourism because of the fear that their cultural beliefs and social relations may suffer deterioration. For instance, culture and tourism breastfeeding marketers and commercialisation of cultures foster only cultural commercialisation and the decay of cultures. Such issues are most acute in the contexts of conservative cultures for which the main values are identity and social cohesion.

Other challenges include the absence of physical structures as well as structures that would encourage people to take part in the activities of the community. Earlier there was a discussion that due to the top-down approach to tourism development in Al Wasta, the role of people in tourism development and management has been restrained to a great extent. This is exacerbated by the lack of formulated policies and sustainable standards for the support of community-based tourism and the inclusion of people’s participation in the development of the tourism sector (Al-Maawali, 2021).

The challenges the community faces regarding participation in tourism in Al Wasta are therefore general and obtainable in other regions with similar characteristics in terms of social, economic and cultural. Nevertheless, the mentioned barriers can be solved only through the cooperation of the state government and the population (Timothy & Boyd, 2019). Policies strengthening community capacity, which may involve educational and training programs, also do a lot in closing the knowledge deficit and enabling the communities to engage more fully in the tourism development processes. Moreover, the lack of governance structures that would engage the community in the development of appropriate tourism and ensure that the set development objectives correspond to the needs and wants of the locals are the barriers that remain to be solved if sustainable tourism in Al Wasta is to be achieved (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2020). There is a challenge that requires the involvement of communities in tourism development as a way of fostering sustainable tourism results. They make certain that the advantages of tourism arrive at absolute fairness; communal customs are conserved; and effects on the physical setting are least.

However, the extent of community participation is also a cause of variation in the level of participation which depends on certain factors like governance structures, institutional frameworks as well and socioeconomic characteristics (Dodds and Butler, 2019). Al Wasta's case illustrates that the lack of sufficient inhabitants’ engagement in tourism is far from being a success and proves the necessity of more effective community participation in tourism projects. Thus, the mitigation of the barriers presented by the community to get involved in the planning and management of tourism will allow for a model of sustainable and fair tourism in Al Wasta and other areas. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be developed:

***H1: There is a positive relationship between Community Involvement and Sustainable Tourism Development.***

According to this hypothesis, improved and active participation of the community in tourism results in sustainable actions since the community will be more inclined to support sustainable strategic tourism practices.

## 2.5. Tourism Infrastructure and Sustainability

Tourism infrastructure is a prerequisite for the growth of tourism and can best be described as an important facet of tourism. This involves the infrastructure that enables the overall support for tourism which ranges from transport, hotels, water, electricity and social amenities (Gössling andHall, 2019). The promotion and sustenance of tourism infrastructures are essentially essential to ensure that the destination is capable of hosting tourists as well as to avoid or at least limit the negative impacts that affect the physical environment while enhancing the favourable social and economic effects on the society of the locality (Sharpley and Telfer 2018). In the perspective of sustainable tourism, infrastructure means facilities and services which has to be planned and developed must cater for the needs and demands of both the tourists and environment and host communities in a sort of manner that would not negatively affect the sustainability of the touristic destinations (Gössling, 2018; Ruhanen, 2020).

### 2.5.1. Tourism Infrastructure and its Importance

The role of infrastructure can be paramount for the development of tourism. In this paper, infrastructure is defined as the support system for the development of tourism since it offers the amenities, utilities, and facilities that make it possible for tourists to arrive at a location, be comfortable and engage in tourism activities. Lack of infrastructure would make it difficult for the tourism sector to be sustainable rather they are likely to exacerbate the negative environmental, social and economic effects (Dodds and Butler, 2019). From the transport to the accommodation, from the utility to the public services, tourism infrastructure holds a big meaning. Transport networks including roads, airports, and means of public terminals are among the requirements that allow tourists to access and circulate within a given destination (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2020). If there are poor transport facilities and services which the tourist can use, he is prevented from accessing the places of interest.

Tourism infrastructure therefore comprises several sub-items, which include; Accommodation infrastructure is another important aspect of the tourism element. Accommodation services refer to the provision of shelter and other related facilities such as hotels, resorts, homesteads and other types of accommodation facilities that are essential in determining the nature of the visitors. Comfort and convenience of tourists, as well as the income and employment, generation for local communities, are some of the benefits associated with high-quality accommodations (Sharpley and Telfer 2018). However, the advances in the construction of accommodation facilities can also assume great importance concerning the sustainability of the area in question. For instance, the development of green lodges and tourism resorts which serve to conserve the environment and involve the community in conservation activities in the region can complement economic gains while improving sustainability in tourism (Timothy & Boyd, 2019).

Several other facilities can also be named as being part of the tourism infrastructure, including ones that are related to the provision of utilities and public services, including water supply, waste disposal and health care services. These services satisfy the requirements of tourists and the communities, which, in turn, play a role in the improvement of the quality of life as well as the sustainability of the destination (Spenceley, 2019). For example, better management of waste is necessary for minimising the negative effects of tourism on the environment, while adequate supplies of water and medical facilities are important because their access is important to both the visitors and the locals. Thus, such services should be developed and maintained taking into account the principles of sustainable tourism, but that is possible only with proper planning and management.

It should however be realised that infrastructure for tourism is not only important in serving the end consumer, the tourist. In this respect, it is also important to note that infrastructure is a major factor of support to the general objectives that stem from sustainable tourism some of which include conserving the environment, promoting social justice and economic advancement. For instance, integrating environmentally sound structures, energy-efficient constructions of the edifice, and systems of renewable energy, efficient and environmentally friendly means of transport in developing and implementing tourist facilities and services reduces the negative impacts of tourism on the bearing capacity of the destination (Gössling and all, 2019). Further, infrastructure that seeks to address the needs of the community which includes the provision of water, education and health facilities can improve the living standards of the people so that the positive impacts of tourism are felt by all.

### 2.5.2. Current State of Infrastructure in Al Wasta

Like many other developing regions that are seeking to establish tourism as a major economic activity, the Al Wasta region has major issues of adequacy and sustainability of infrastructure. The region has a generally poor transportation network, few accommodation facilities and poorly developed public utilities which are some of the barriers to sustainable tourism development (Al-Harthy, 2021). Research has established that the availability of credible transport sources in Al Wasta especially in rural and remote areas is a key challenge that hinders tourists in their efforts to visit specific tourist attractions, which in broad daylight compromises the region’s competitiveness as a tourist-friendly region (Al-Maawali, 2020). This has a connotation with other studies carried out in other terrains that poor transportation network is a hindrance to tourism growth (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2020).

The accommodation sector is also less developed in Al Wasta and there is no or little provision of standard lodging facilities where tourists from other parts of the world can find accommodation as per their expectations. Such a situation does not only impact the visitor experience but also the returns on investment that the tourism sector has to offer to the region (Al-Maawali, 2020). Baas also points out the absence of diversified buffet solutions which include green lodges, and community-based homestead solutions, adding to the top barriers to sustainable tourism advancement in Al Wasta. This is similar to trends witnessed in other emergent tourism destinations whereby the growth of accommodation has not been able to respond with adequate basic infrastructures hence having negative impacts on the physical environment and the populace (Sharpley & Telfer 2018).

Furthermore, the various forms of public services and utilities in Al Wasta are lacking to meet the increasing requirement of tourism. For example, the region's water supply and waste management organisations are not capable of coping with the additional load caused by tourism practised by tourists and hotel residents which results in environmental pollution and health effects for tourists and inhabitants (Al-Salti & Al-Rashdi, 2021). Furthermore, tourism infrastructure in the region includes weak hospitals and emergency medical services that are not able to address the problems which might come along with an increased number of tourists, as it can include accidents diseases, or even natural calamities. The lack of such accommodations likewise weakens the viability of tourism in Al Wasta besides proffering acute threats to the safety and hence the popularity of the region as a tourist destination (Al-Sadjali, 2019).

However, small efforts have been made to develop the infrastructural facilities for the Al Wasta population. Some of the new important investments include road works and the construction of new tourism connecting centres that have improved accessibility and the general transport network within the region as categorised below (Al-Sadjali, 2019). Nevertheless, such efforts are still limited and have not touched upon such matters as the sustainability and inclusion of people with disabilities. For example, the emphasis of these developments has been largely on tourism accessibility for visitors, not on the adequacy of these developments to address local populations’ needs or on the reduction of adverse effects on the environment (Al-Harthy, 2021). This is a typical case that which tourism development puts much economic sense that social and environmental aspects are ignored (Dodds & Butler, 2019).

### 2.5.3. Sustainable Infrastructure Development

For this reason, sustainable infrastructure development plays an important role in the context of infrastructure which supports tourism as a process that should contribute to the sustainability of the destination. These include the use of green technologies, efficient consumption of resources and integrated processes of planning for the utilisation of resources that are friendly to the environment embracing all stakeholders including future generations and the local people (Gössling and Hall, 2019). Sustainable infrastructure in the context of tourism is therefore important in reducing the negative environmental impacts of tourism, ensuring that tourist destinations are climate change-ready and ensuring that the benefits of tourism are fairly distributed within the society.

Other works have also explored successes and advances in the construction of the other components of sustainable tourism that might also apply to Al Wasta. For instance, the application of green building technologies that include energy-efficient buildings and structures, renewable energy technologies, and ecologically friendly building materials has been revealed to decrease the environmental impacts of infrastructures of the tourism industry (Dodds, 2018). This is in line with studies done in other studies where green building practices have been embraced resulting in the enhancement of limited energy use and Carbon dioxide emissions (Timothy and Boyd, 2019). In the same way, most tourism-related issues have a solution hence calls for the implementation of integrated waste management systems that will assist in recycling and waste minimisation hence reducing the effects of these systems on ecosystems (Timothy, 2019).

Some of the principles that need to be employed to prevent the excessive use of water in the region include the use of water-efficient fixtures, rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling (Al-Shidhani, 2020). These practices have been adopted in other areas and have an impact on sustainable tourism by preventing water wastage and the effects that it has on water resources (Byrd et al., 2019). However, Al Wasta has not been able to adopt most of these practices successfully mainly because of inadequate financial resources and a lack of adequate technical know-how in the implementation of sustainable infrastructure projects as noted by Al-Rawahi in his analysis of the matter.

One of the other important issues is the focus on the effective participation of local communities in the planning and further management of tourism infrastructure. The studies have indicated that the involvement of the community in infrastructure delivery will result in better results of projects as people who live in the area will have incentives for the protection of the environment and promotion of fairness besides the culture of the people (Byrd et al., 2019). For instance, the development of community-managed eco-lodges and tourism infrastructure has been successfully practised in several regions globally and portrays the right model for the development of sustainable infrastructure that is consistent with the strategic needs of communities (Al-Saadi et al., 2020). In Al Wasta, the approaches could assist in the provision of proper direction of the development of infrastructure for tourism while considering both the sustainability of the region and the well-being of the people of the region (Al-Sadjali, 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis can be developed:

***H2: The quality of Tourism Infrastructure is positively associated with Sustainable Tourism Development.***

This hypothesis implies that efficient tourism infrastructure for sustainable tourism contributes to the sustainability of tourism growth in a specific region by improving the quality of the environment while delivering an improved tourist experience.

### 2.5.4. Gaps and Challenges

There are some gaps and challenges to the formation of the sustainable infrastructure development concept which requires some elaboration in Al Wasta. It is imperative to recognise that KS has several obstacles, one of which is financing and technological capabilities to drive sustainable infrastructure projects (Al-Rawahi, 2021). The cost of efficiently sourcing green energy solutions like renewable energy systems and energy-efficient buildings is too expensive for many communities in Al Wasta especially in the rural areas where resources are scarce. This problem which we discussed with Al Wasta is not the only one, similar problems have been identified in other parts of the world where the initial cost of implementing sustainable infrastructure became the barrier (Dodds and Butler, 2019).

The third problem is the absence of synergy and cooperation between all the entities engaged in the construction of tourism infrastructure. In Al Wosta there is a lack of coherence in what the government agencies, private sector developers and the local communities seek to achieve hence resulting in haphazard and unsustainable infrastructure developments (Al-Maawali, 2020). For instance, while government officials may have an interest in promoting economic development, particularly in the tourism sector, the locals may be interested in the conservation of natural resources, and social justice (Al-Sadjali, 2019). Such a misfit may lead to infrastructure that does not address the needs of the stakeholders and erodes the sustainability of tourism in the region.

The government policies and regulations for establishing the tourism-related infrastructure in Al Wasta also act as challenges. More often than not, there is a lack of or inadequacy of policy and regulatory frameworks in the highly dynamic nature and scope of sustainable tourism development (Al-Harthy, 2021). For instance, policies such as building codes, and environmental regulations may neglect the impact of promoting green technologies or resource-efficient practices hence developing infrastructure which does not embrace the sustainable tourism principles as recommended by Al-Salti and Al-Rashdi, 2021. However, there is poor compliance with these regulations due partly to weak enforcement and; coupled with inadequate supervisory and monitoring institutions, especially in developing, distant as well as rural regions (Al-Maawali, 2020).

However, other factors related to the knowledge and research present a challenge to sustainable infrastructure development in Al Wasta. Although the literature on sustainable tourism and infrastructure is fast emerging, there is limited evidence that has been produced to explore the concept from the developing world or emerging tourism markets. Therefore, a dearth of contextualised information and industry norms exists to direct sustainable infrastructure in other emerging tourism prodigies similar to Al Wasta (Al-Rawahi, 2021). This lack of information is accompanied by limited availability of information on the environmental, social and economic consequences of the tourism infrastructure in the region; it becomes almost impossible to evaluate the sustainability of the current structures in tact infrastructure along with future development projects (Al-Maawali, 2020).

However, overcoming these gaps and challenges will require a synergy approach by all the stakeholders including the government, private developers, locals, and academic institutions (Gössling and Hall, 2019). This may include elaboration of policies and measures that will encourage as well as support the implementation of sustainable infrastructure such as financial support to organisations to embrace sustainable infrastructure practices; formulation of policies for regulation of sustainable tourism development etc (Dodds and Butler, 2019). Further, capacity development activities and knowledge exchange platforms could assist the stakeholders in filling the knowledge gaps and familiarising themselves with the tools and frameworks that are pertinent to the implementation of sustainable infrastructure projects in Al Wasta (Al-Saadi et al., 2020).

Tourism infrastructure thus has a significant role to play in the role of sustainability of tourism destinations, enabling the needs satisfaction of; tourists, the environment and the locals. As it has been portrayed in this paper, the initiatives of sustainable tourism in Al Wasta are constrained by the weak infrastructure which is a major challenge in producing adequate transport networks, accommodation, power, and relevant social services. Some of these challenges may be mitigated by sustainable infrastructure development that is, the implementation of better practices and technologies that address environmental impacts of tourism activities, improve the sustainability of tourism destinations and ensure fair distribution of the tourism benefits. Nevertheless, there are financial, technical and regulatory constraints and, a lack of adequate knowledge and research on the best sustainable infrastructure practices that have engulfed Al Wasta. Meeting these challenges calls for concerted action that will engage all the players in the tourism infrastructure development.

## 2.6. Government Policies and Sustainable Tourism

It has been found that government policies are key determinants in the development and sustainability of this sector. These policies define the nature and the extent of management, promotion, and control of tourism activities and consequently the economic returns, and social, and environmental costs of tourist activities. Niche tourism that aims at evolving a sustainable form of tourism that will not harm/destroy the environment or infringe on the rights of the people will only be effective if the government has good policies.

The first key in government contribution towards sustainability in tourism is to set standards to effectively conserve those scarce resources in the natural and cultural hemisphere. This may involve the formation and compliance to standards of the environmental team, land use and conservation measures which check over-exploitation and destruction of the environment. For instance, the Central American country of Costa Rica has made firm policies about environmental conservation while supporting its tourism industry, particularly through eco-tourism (Rivera & de Leon, 2020). These policies have made Costa Rica a model of sustainable tourism in the world and are clear examples of how government interference can act as a promoter in the development of this sector.

Apart from legislation, social institutions and government have a very central role in coordinating the efforts of the stakeholders and in engaging the society in the decision-making process of tourism development. This way local communities’ input can be sought and tourism development can be in line with the expectations and demands of the concerned locals. It also prevents erosion of social welfare among the community members while creating awareness and ownership of tourists’ destinations. For example, the Bhutan tourism policy focuses on high-value impact tourism that encourages local stakeholders’ involvement in decision-making about the conservation of cultural values and management of tourism effects bearing in mind the distribution of tourism effects on the community (Tshering & Wangchuk, 2019).

Thus, differing levels of success can be observed in the implementation of governmental policies for sustainable tourism development. In many developing countries, including Oman, the fast development of tourism is extended in an attempt to diversification of the economy. This strategy is not free from challenges towards effectiveness though it enhances economic prospects; challenges such as unbalanced policies that focus on economic benefits at the expense of ecological and societal benefits in the long run. For instance, in Oman, the efforts made regarding the development of tourism infrastructures have noticed some negative impacts such as environmental deterioration, particularly in Important Bird Areas such as Al Wasta (Al-Khouri & Al-Suleimani, 2020). Thus, the a need for authorities to come up with policies that address the middle ground of environmental conservation and economic development.

However, sustainable tourism policies are also related to the implementation and enforcement of those policies. In most cases, the governments set good policies but they fail to support them financially or politically to ensure implementation. This can be a problem because the gap between policy formation and policy execution could be detrimental to the sustainability course; for instance, Oman has inadequate implementation of environmental laws permitting unsustainable tourism in some areas (Al-Balushi et al., 2021). And so, strengthening the regulatory enforcement approaches and increasing institutional capacity are deemed to be important in attaining sustainable tourism objectives.

Thus, the Governments can encourage the proper implementation of the developed tourism strategies on sustainable patterns of growth through the support of the right regulatory environment, involving the community members directly and exercising successful implementation of tourism development. Nevertheless, issues of policy implementation and the requirement of holistic, place-based strategies reveal that the pursuit of sustainable tourism is a practical concern. Over time, tourism has grown and developed in many directions and so the governments must be proactive and adhere to sustainable tourism development to promote the positive effects of tourism in communities and on the global environment.

### 2.6.1. Role of Government in Tourism

The governments of nations play a key role in the steering wheel of the industry as they control the direction, shape, and form of the development of this sector; and its compliance with sustainable development goals. Meanwhile, Ruhanen et al. (2019) also note that government action entails putting in place the enabling legislation in the form of policies, focusing on financial incentives, and most importantly, establishing the basic infrastructural facilities needed for the growth and sustenance of this segment of tourism. These interventions may involve the creation of protected areas, and such measures as the application of environmental laws, and the support of culture.

However, if considering the utilisation of governmental strategies in the development of tourism, it is crucial to define that their efficiency far from always overlaps with each other. Hall (2020) noted that though the government provide direction by establishing great sustainability goals, there is a lack of commensurate pull using suitable policies and measures. Such a situation makes it possible that while policies are on paper, the implementation of the policies will not yield any results. For example, Dangi and Jamal (2018) take a step towards describing the logical inconsistency in many government policies pointing to the fact that the economic interests overlapping each other negatively affect sustainable goals.

On the other hand, Bramwell and Lane (2019) establish that government policies need to be strategic and sensitive to the changing forms of the tourism industry. In the opinion of these critics, the application of rigid policies limits development and may hinder a tourism response to emerging issues such as weather change or alteration in consumer habits. This view is well echoed by Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) who have opined that there must be both socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable and it must positively impact minority groups in the host country.

However, it can be noted that the government is not the only regulator and enforcer in the tourism business. According to Alipour et al (2020), the governments have a vital role in engaging the key stakeholders, coordinating and encouraging the partnership between the private and public sectors as well as the local people in the planning and or development of tourism. This is crucial because all stakeholders must be involved in the process of planning the future of tourism to avoid any negative impact on the further development of tourism.

There is a criticism that in many developing countries including countries of the Middle East, governmental policies remain still oriented to economic growth which often has negative impacts on the environment and society (Al-Momani & Jamal, 2019). This critique situates well in the context of Oman, where the emphasis on the fast growth of the tourism industry is often motivated by calls for diversification of the country’s economy and diversification of its non-renewable resource-based revenues, even if it often leads to drastically negative environmental and cultural impacts.

### 2.6.2. Policy Framework in Oman

The strategies used for Oman’s tourism policy have been informed by Oman Vision 2040 with the principle aim of diversification of the economy where tourism forms a major segment. Al Salmi & Al Riyami (2020) noted some of the Omani government’s measures towards sustainable tourism including; the administrative designation of protected areas, legislation and policies regarding environmental conservation and culture and tourism shield.

However, the efficiency of these policies for sustainable tourism development in areas such as Al Wasta remains an issue of controversy among researchers. Indeed, Al-Balushi et al. (2021) opined that although Oman has formulated an ideal policy structure, the programme’s delivery has been patchy, especially in the Al Wasta region. They also complain that there is a lot of fragmentation in implementation functions where different sections of the government overlap by performing tasks that should be the functions of other sections and recommended policies that are counterproductive towards sustainability.

However, the analysis revealed that there is a worry that Oman’s tourism policies are skewed towards foreign tourists, meanwhile compromising environmental integrity, and people’s participation (Al-Khouri And Al-Suleimani, 2020). As Al-Mahrouqi and Al-Busaidi (2019) have underlined such focus on the fast growth of tourism as part of the country’s diversification efforts to the detriment of environmental and cultural sustainability. This has had some adverse consequences concerning the natural environment for instance areas like Al Wasta where some of the induced tourism infrastructure projects have been established near or within environmentally sensitive areas.

However, the following are some of the achievements recorded by Oman on its tourism policy framework; For instance, to enhance the sector the government has launched measures regarding eco-tourism and sensible travelling which include the positioning of international accreditation of tour operations and the encouragement of the communal tourism projects (Al-Salmi & Al-Riyami, 2020). All these efforts aim at achieving sustainable tourism development in Oman with more benefits given to the people of Oman. However, that can be largely attributed to the absence of concrete and comprehensive policy measures to improve the strategies for policy implementation.

### 2.6.3. Comparative Policy Analysis

Therefore, the differences and similarities between Oman’s tourism policies and other countries with good sustainable tourism policies are very useful for understanding more about Oman’s policy effectiveness. Coastal nations like Costa Rica and Bhutan are best practice examples as most of them are endowed with a coherent policy environment that focuses on sustainable tourism.

For instance, Costa Rica has developed an effective system of protected zones and national parks and strict legislation and enticements for companies involved in the sustainable tourism industry (Rivera and de Leon, 2020). Thanks to this approach not only has Costa Rica’s unique bio-diversity been conserved but the country has become the worldwide destination of ecological tourism. Oman has also adopted similar policies as part of its vision to improve its environment to global standards; however, the enforcement of these policies is rather weak, especially in the region Al Wasta which is currently experiencing soaring development pressures that are unsustainable for the natural environment (Al-Salmi & Al-Riyami, 2020).

Also, Bhutan has employed a policy of ‘high-value impact’ tourism meaning, the amount of tourism developed does not overwhelm the cultural and natural heritage of Bhutan (Tshering & Wangchuk, 2019). This approach is different from Oman’s approach which has sometimes allowed large-scale tourism in some destinations; this has caused difficulties in regulating the crowds, and the sustainability of the environment. In comparing the two jurisdictions it appears that Oman should apply stricter policies of regulating tourism growth and preserving the environment and cultural landscapes.

The acknowledgement of sustainable development in Costa Rica and Bhutan is respect to institutions that rhetoric sustainable development and up-to-date awareness from the public domain. Meanwhile, Oman’s tourism industry is still emerging, and the country has not yet developed enough institutions and capabilities that would allow it to establish sustainable tourism (Al-Balushi et al., 2021). This context should be taken into consideration while investigating the efficiency of Oman policies and determining the deficiencies of the system. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be developed:

***H3: Government Policy Effectiveness is positively correlated with Sustainable Tourism Development.***

This hypothesis argues that sustainable tourism is achieved where the implemented government policies are well-implemented and support sustainability policies.

### 2.6.4. Policy Gaps and Recommendations

Meanwhile, some policy gaps were observed in the approach of the Omani government to sustainable tourism development; these gaps could become an obstacle to the successful sustainable development of the Al Wasta region in the long term. The central major weakness is the absence of a systematic and cohesive policy for tourism planning and administration. As Al-Mahrouqi and Al-Busaidi (2019) also noted there is no strategic approach linking environmental, social and economic goals resulting in uncoordinated and sometimes even inconsistent policies. This lack of integration is exemplary in the Al Wasta region where various agencies of government have undertaken conflicting courses of action as a result of which all efforts to stir the wheel of sustainable development end up as mere motion without progress.

Another very crucial failing seen in many organisations is the lack of proper implementation of existing environmental laws. While Oman has set laws and policies for the protection of natural resources, the level of compliance with such regulations is faint, especially in remote areas such as Al Wasta (Al-Balushiet et al., 2021). This has created room for the invasion of tourism activities into the sensitive depressed sections of the environment which leads to the destruction of habitats and biodiversity loss. More focus on a new approach for increasing regulatory enforcement together with declared resources and capacity building is needed to fill this gap.

However, there is little participation of the people in the planning and decision-making of the tourism sector. For instance, as pointed out by Al-Khouri and Al-Suleimani (2020), local communities of Al Wasta have been excluded from the tourism development processes which denies them a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the promotion of sustainable tourism. Although Oman has set the tone of the fast growth of tourism as one of the pillars of diversification of the national economy, it poses a threat to the idea of sustainability. Although the attraction of tourists is extremely important for economic growth, it is also equally important not to forget about the environmental and historical values. This means that there is a need to move from the sharp focus on quantity towards the careful selection and management of the tourism development so that it is sustainable (Al-Salmi & Al-Riyami, 2020).

## 2.7. Cultural Preservation and Tourism

There has been a growing concern about the interrelatedness of cultural conservation and tourism over the past years as scholars and developers engage in combating the challenges that arise from the pursuit of cultural conservation and growth in tourism. Culture forms an important part of many tourist destinations and thus culture conservation in tourism cannot be overemphasised since it helps in sustaining the cultural endowment of people’s community destinations. This paper aims to critically review the literature on the Place of cultural conservation in tourism, The effect of tourism on the cultural sites in the Al Wasta region, How tourism development and cultural conservation can be balanced, Opportunities for cultural conservation in the tourism sector of Al Wasta and the major challenges posed in the same.

### 2.7.1. Cultural Preservation in Tourism

The promotion of culture in tourism areas should be practised to protect the respective cultural characteristics of people living in the area. As sustainable techniques of tourism are being practised the protection of cultural endowments as a critical influential factor remains a significant factor. Amartya and Nyaupane (2018: 69) have pointed out that Sandalow’s argument means that tourism can only act as a motivation for keeping the culture intact due to the economic benefits which are realised from It. These cultural assets are visited by tourists who are in search of an experience to gain nutrition, thus there is a commercial value to cultural heritage that can be wholesome for locals.

Nonetheless, there is a challenge in maintaining culture in tourism this is because sometimes outsiders with little or no sympathy for the culture of the people in the tourism development projects. According to Su and Wall (2019), tourism influences culture to some extent primarily because it becomes commercialised; that is, cultural products are changed or distorted to fit the tourists’ expectations. This process which is also known as ‘staged authenticity’ leads to the breakdown of the cultural norms and values that tourism intends to uphold. Economic development through tourism is one of the most researched concepts, and while there are scholars who believe that it is beneficial for the development of the host communities there are others who raise issues of cultural imperialism when touring.

On the other hand, Smith and Richards (2019) have argued that the active participation of an individual or a group in the communities is vital in the process of conserving cultures. For that reason, they post that if local citizens participate fully in the tourism development process, then they are in a good position to manage their cultural resources and guarantee that the tourism uses correspond to their existing culture. This bottom-up approach to cultural conservation is also more effective in benefiting the local population and in offering tourist experiences which are true to the cultural lives of the people.

The position of policy in cultural conservation is also very crucial. As mentioned in the work of Ashworth and van der Aa (2020) appropriate policy that recognises cultural heritage and supports its protection will decrease the intensity of negative impacts of tourism on culture. Such policies may be the measures regulating the utilisation of cultural assets, standards of culture-friendly tourism, and the stimulation of the preservation of nonmaterial cultural heritage. However, when it comes to the practice of such policies, this meets a lot of challenges, particularly from tourism developers who place a lot of emphasis on the economic benefits, particularly those associated with the degradation of cultural values. In light of this, there is a need to devise a workable balance between the conflicting interests through the involvement of the government, the locals and the commercial tourism industry actors.

### 2.7.2. Impact of Tourism on Culture in Al Wasta

Analysing the effects of tourism on the culture of the Al Wasta area has been at the centre stage for most researchers and community members. It is, however, important to understand that on occasion tourism may result in positive implications for cultural tourism, while on other occasions it causes negative impacts on cultural tourism as it does in the Al Wasta region. Research has established that the positive impacts of tourism, inclusive of economic impacts on cultural conservation, are potentially offset by negative impacts such as site deterioration and loss of non-material cultural assets.

For instance, Mustafa et al., (2019) on the implication of tourism on the culture of Al Wasta, noted that resource received from tourism was used to support certain aspects of culture such as events and festivals. However, the same study pointed out the fact that this has resulted in the commercialisation of these practices with the cultural performances being modified to fit the tourist tastes. Such a commercialisation leads to a loss of meaning of significance and original meaning of cultural expressions where findings from Su and Wall (2019) on the commercialisation of other cultures corroborate the findings of their research.

Account has also been taken on the physical pressure of tourism on cultural assets in the Al Wasta area. Al-Belushi and Al-Hadhrami (2020) mentioned that due to high tourist arrivals, most of the heritage buildings and archaeological structures have been damaged. According to the authors, the economic benefits of tourism are beneficial for the region but the cultural sites receive a lot of pressure from the increased flow of tourist traffic although they do not have sufficient resources to contain the numbers. This is made worse by the fact that most of these sites do not have infrastructure and management regimes that could effectively buffer them from the negative impacts of tourism.

Furthermore, concerns about the impact of tourism on extra-feature of cultural variables like language, customs and practices have been raised. Al-Mahrouqi et al. (2021), show how cultural tourism influences the social landscape of Al Wasta; this is due to changes to local culture and practices associated with exposure to foreign cultures through tourism. While some people consider this process of cultural interaction as positive, others carefully speak of the potential negative impact of the mentioned cultural interaction on the culture of the region. This division is in line with the general discussion in the literature on how globalisation affects local cultures with some authors perceiving this process as threatening to produce monocultures (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2018).

In addition to the other physical and social changes, the economics of tourism has also affected cultural conservation in Al Wasta. From the previous research conducted by Al-Saadi and Al-Maawali (2019), it is evident that tourist revenue has been used to finance the renovation of monuments and boost artisans. The authors note that there is the problem that such reliance on tourism for cultural sustainability means that there are potential risks of something happening that can damage cultural resources, especially when there is an economic or political crisis.

### 2.7.3. Balancing Tourism and Cultural Preservation

The challenge of maintaining tourism development while at the same time ensuring the cultural integrity is maintained in the Al Wasta area. The above-discussed literature shows that this balance can only be achieved by adopting an interdisciplinary approach whereby cultural considerations have to be normally incorporated into the tourism planning and development process. Dangi and Jamal (2020) pointed out that sustainable tourism should embrace the following pillars: Cultural integrity where the sustainable development of tourism should not be at the cost of the culture of the people.

Reducing tourists’ impact on the culture of their host communities is one of the approaches to addressing the balance between tourism and culture; this can involve, for instance, cultural tourism products that bring a genuine representation of culture. According to Smith and Richards (2019), the promotion of cultural tourism with emphasis on traditional arts and crafts cultures, and festivals can benefit the cultural markets in terms of the conservation of cultural heritage besides offering economic returns to individuals in the cultural markets. This is in line with what is currently referred to as ‘slow tourism’, which offers a slower and more culturally sensitive travel experience that lets the tourists engage more fully and meaningfully with the culture of the host country (Fullagar et al., 2019).

However, the subject of such strategies’ utilization has certain problems. Strategies also show that there is pressure to maintain the cultures despite the entrance of more tourists into specific cultural sites. This therefore underlines the importance of the diversification of culture as a way of preserving her besides the aspect of tourism. According to Su and Wall (2019) puts pressure on local people to elicit nods from tourists and therefore flattens culture, that is, where culture is simplified to meet the expectations of tourists. This may lead to a situation where their culture disappears, especially when their dances and other cultural values are performed or practised to suit the foreigners’ tastes and desires.

One of the issues that remains when it comes to the ability to balance tourism and culture is the question of the management of those cultural assets. Al-Belushi and Al-Hadhrami (2020) posit that if cultural sites are to be safeguarded from the adverse effects of tourism, then management of these sites has to be well done. This incorporates the visitor management measures or actions that have to be taken, for instance, restrictive measures on the type and number of visitors allowed to micro cultural landscapes, conservation measures, and educational measures informing both the tourists and the local people. The authors also stress the significance of incorporating the local community members in the management of cultural assets since this fosters sustainable practices in the exploration of tourism and guarantees that cultural heritage preservation, accords with the interests of the community of aboriginal occupants.

In addition, it cannot be overemphasized the role of policy when it comes to addressing the challenge of developing tourism to avoid the negative impacts on culture. The authors Ashworth, and van der Aa (2020) also emphasize the fact that there must be appropriate policies for cultural conservation as well as tourism sustainability. These policies should include legal actions that restrict the usage of cultural sites for various purposes, a code of ethics for cultural tourism and provisions for stimulating the protection of intangible cultural heritage. Policymakers are also advised to thoroughly analyze the effects of tourism on cultural properties and come up with long-term approaches that would see cultural resources receive higher protection as opposed to “quick-money” motivations.

### 2.7.4. Challenges and Opportunities

Historical pieces of evidence and the significance of cultural assets are causes of concern in the tourism sector of Al Wasta which needs to be handled appropriately and professionally. Of these, there is a paucity of effective and sufficient infrastructure for the conservation of cultural items. As pointed out by Al-Mahrouqi et al. (2021), cultural heritage sites are underfunded across the region, and the physical structures are not developed enough to host large-scale visitors. This situation is even worse given the poor capacity of local authorities to manage and protect Cultural Heritage sites which are thus more often degraded and lost.

Another conflict is that between development and cultural conservation since most development projects threaten traditional cultures. In as much as tourism has been an important source of revenue for the region, tourism has equal impacts of degrading the socio-cultural fabric of the host community. This point has been made by Su and Wall (2019) stating that the commercialisation of culture often results in the dilution and or the disappearance of culture and cultural identity through the accommodation of tourist needs and demands. This challenge is further compounded by the poor involvement of communities in the tourism planning and development processes of the country, which leads to the domination of commercial interests and marginalization of sustainable cultural tourism benefits.

However, there are also several benefits for cultural sustainability in Al Wasta’s tourism industry, as well. With today’s society placing more importance on culture, tourism offers the chance to use tourism for purposes of cultural conservation. In the view of Timothy and Nyaupane (2018), cultural tourism can be used to promote the preservation of cultural assets since it entices tourists who are eager to get closer to the original culture especially those that have been practised in a given society. With this comes cultural regrowth and cultural heritage conservation as well as a boost in cultural pride.

Besides, there are the possibilities of creating novelties in the area of culture and history preservation for economic benefits. One of the beneficial opportunities which emerge due to the integration of digital technologies is the documentation and even preservation of cultural assets. Digital media can also be regarded as an effective means of promoting cultural tourism highlighted by Al-Saadi and Al-Maawali (2019) to the extent that cultural sites can post information about culture and traditions to reach a worldwide audience. This can help raise the consciousness of the people of the need for the preservation of culture and boost the flow of tourists to the area.

However, the participation of the local communities in the process of culture conservation is another important chance for improving the use of tourism practices. According to Smith and Richards (2019), community involvement enables the locals to be part of the solution in responding to the cultural asset management needs and also in ensuring that the proposal on tourism development is strong and in line with cultural frameworks. This can result in the improved practice of tourism activities that respect cultural values while at the same time supporting the locals socially and economically.

## 2.8. Financial Resources and Tourism Development

Having started the discussion with a focus on the economic importance of tourism to the development of destination areas, it is important to continue to the fiscal aspect as it relates to sustainability, especially to areas such as Al Wasta that stand to benefit much from tourism yet the vice could be an undoing factor due to the impacts it has of cultural and heritage as well as natural resource implications. The receiving of tourism financial resources and their proper utilisation is seminal in determining the capacity of tourism stakeholders to address the impacts of tourism. Based on the existing critical literature analysis, the current research focuses on the role of financial resources in sustainable tourism development, the current level of investment in Al Wasta’s Tourism sector, the existing challenges that slow down the funding for sustainable tourism projects and potential solutions and innovations for supporting sustainable Tourism in the region.

### 2.8.1. Financing Sustainable Tourism

There are significant issues in financing sustainable tourism because it is always a juggling act between economics, environment and society, yet we can always find solutions to these challenges. There is a common desire within the literature to indicate that sustainable tourism practices have to be adequately financially resourced, which is also stated in a study conducted by Moyle et al., (2018). These volunteers are essential to support initiatives that finance sustainable projects help to promote low-impact tourism in the community and guarantee the protection of natural and cultural assets.

Controversies exist on where sustainable tourism funding is to be sourced from and this constitutes one of the important discussions. Thus, public sector finance mainly through grants and subsidies is one of the key sources of sustainability tourism funding (Gössling et al., 2019). However, depending on public funds may not be ideal since governments’ financials are limited in many places or tourism is not on the development agenda. This has consequently created a demand for increased private-sector participation in funding sustainable tourism. It is widely recognized that tourism development needs to be financed and over the last decades, private capital, especially from impact investors seeking both financial and social/environmental returns, has been considered an essential source of financing for sustainable tourism (Vanclay et al . , 2018).

International financial institutions (IFIs) and development banks also play a significant view of sustainable tourism in the literature. International institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank promised to support financially and technically sustainable tourism projects, especially in developing nations (Twining-Ward et al., 2020). Such institutions tend to address infrastructure needs on a massive scale, namely environmental transport systems and disposals of waste that can alleviate the effects of tourism on the environment.

However, the outcomes of implemented IFI-led projects have been something of an issue, especially concerning the projects’ capacity to bring about fair distribution of the resulting tourism developments’ benefits. The critics have claimed that despite bringing positive economic impacts such as the creation of employment, increment in revenue, and change of perceived images, these projects have generated negative social and environmental impacts, hence inconsistent with the sustainable tourism model (Sharpley, 2020). This critique implies that it is high time that researchers seek cross-disciplinary solutions to the financing of sustainable tourism where funds would be allocated to structures for tourism development as well as the people.

Community-based tourism involves several small-scale community-based funding sources which have been applauded for their effectiveness in matching funding with sustainability (Zeng et al., 2019). Such schemes mainly consist of direct funding from the community with the addition of micro-finance or crowdfunding and focus on the preservation of the social and natural capital of the community. As with most frameworks, CBT is not without its weaknesses, especially in the extent to which it can be implemented on a large scale; notwithstanding, it forms the basis for a sustainable tourism financing structure that is much more equitable and environmentally friendly.

### 2.8.2. Investment in Al Wasta’s Tourism Sector

Tourism investment is one of the most important causes of development in the Al Wasta region, which is the homeland of many cultural and natural resources of the kingdom. Nevertheless, the sustainability impact of this form of investment has not always been aligned, as several works have pointed out. Al-Wahaibi & Al-Busaidi (2021), stress that over the years tremendous capital investment has been spent on developing the sector in Al Wasta predominantly more on low-density forms of tourism and not sustainable tourism. This has resulted in the commercialization and expansion of massive resorts and attractions based on short-term revenue without considering impacts on the environment as well as the communities.

The literature attributes this phenomenon not just to Al Wasta but as a universal trend within the tourism investment, where little efforts are placed on sustainability but optimism is placed on attaining a greater number of tourists and more returns (Brouder et al., 2019). This approach has the following implications: Exploitation of natural resources, environmental degradations and social exclusion of the locals. Some of the impacts of mass tourism found in Al Wasta include they have led to problems of water scarcity affecting the availability of water which is needed in handling the numerous guests, the environmental impacts such as; destruction of ecosystems, and effects on cultural assets because of mass tourism (Al-Harrasi & Al-Hamidi, 2020).

On the other hand, there are limited numbers of sustainable tourism investments in Al Wasta even though Al Wasta has great potential in Eco-tourism as well as cultural tourism. According to Al-Salmi and Al-Mukhaini (2020), another vulnerability is the little capital that was put into the development of low-impact tourism products including nature reserves, cultural attractions and community-based tourism businesses. Such projects need large initial capital outlay and have longer gestation periods for the returns on investment; factors that make some investors queue up at projects with short payback times. Furthermore, there is no comprehensible policy which can encourage sustainable investment, and this also poses a barrier to the improvement of these kinds of projects.

Nevertheless, there are few working examples of sustainable tourism investment in Al Wasta. There were a few pioneering small-scale eco-lodges and cultural tourism projects reported by Al-Kharusi et al. (2021), which have been funded by local investors and international donors. From such projects, it has been established that sustainable tourism can create value in terms of economic returns while at the same time protecting and conserving the cultural and/or natural resources in the area. For instance, the Al Wasta Eco-Lodge project has been greatly appreciated due to the use of green building materials, the issue of water and energy conservation as well as the aim of empowering the community.

Potential and deficiencies in the sustainability of the tourism money that has been invested in Al Wasta demonstrate how the area needs a better strategy for the development of tourism. According to Al-Hinai and Al-Maashari (2021), the government and private sector need to collaborate to enhance favourable conditions for sustainable tourism investment such as offering incentives for green projects, PPP, Technical assistance and financing for SMEs in sustainable tourism. These sorts of measures could assist in the promotion of positive changes in resource allocation in Al Wasta for the development of sustainable tourism relevant to the inhabitants of this region.

### 2.8.3. Challenges in Securing Funding

Perhaps the most obvious issue is the difficulty of funding these sustainable projects to a level where they can be effective and sustainable in the longer term; let alone in parts of the world such as Al Wasta where economic development impinges on environmental processes. The following factors make this challenge a reality; the perceived risk factors in sustainable tourism investment avails the SMEs in sustainable tourism a challenge to access adequate finance. The finance available to fund sustainable tourism is still rare and exotic hence the specific sustainable tourism funding mechanisms are still scarce.

The major concern that investors have about sustainable tourism projects is their risk, which is always a major hindrance when it comes to funding such projects. It is evident that sustainable tourism development projects need more capital investment than similar conventional tourism projects and also take a longer time to get the returns of investment, thus scaring off investors. Furthermore, gains on investments towards sustainability in tourism are relatively uncertain than those on conventional investment because they depend on conditions including the state of the environment, the policies governing the operation of ventures, and the tastes of consumers. This uncertainty hampers the ability of project developers to mobilize the required capital, especially from private capital markets which horde more on less risky high-return investment opportunities.

Another challenge is the issue of financing SMEs engaged in sustainable tourism due to the inability to access finance. Yfantidou & Mylonakis (2020) suggested that Small and medium enterprises are usually locked out of conventional banking channels because they lack collateral, credit history, and other forms of securities and because banks consider the business models of SMEs as high risk. This is particularly the case concerning SMEs, which can be associated with special forms of tourism like for instance sustainable tourism, eco-tourism or cultural tourism, which is seen as being less profitable than mass tourism. this means that SMEs in the sustainable tourism industry are unable to access the capital necessary to launch or develop their enterprise and consequently the development of sustainable tourism is constrained in certain areas like Al Wasta.

Additionally, there are few sources of funds which are specifically designed to fit the needs of sustainable tourism and this makes it even harder to obtain finance. While there are a couple of funding programs which are geared towards the promotion of sustainable tourism, these are usually not well-funded or barely accessible. For instance, an international organization’s grant or development bank’s funds may involve cumbersome procedures of application and stringent conditions and reporting issues that are not easily manageable for small-scale project developers. (Twining-Ward et al., 2020). Also, most of the time, these funds are highly competitive whereby numerous projects will be vying for a certain amount of money.

The literature also presents the issue of appropriate stakeholders’ interest in the financing of sustainable tourism. According to Sharpley (2020), sustainable tourism projects may have to be implemented through partnership that involves the public, private and community stakeholders, among others. However, these may not agree with the others and in many cases, it may be hard to obtain the necessary capital. For instance, private investors could mainly be motivated by profits while the public sector manufacturers may want to impact the community or the environment. Balancing all of these various concerns is often a difficult and lengthy affair which simply adds to the problems of finding the necessary financing for sustainable tourism projects. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be developed:

***H4: Financial Resource Availability has a significant positive impact on Sustainable Tourism Development.***

In this hypothesis, it is argued that financial resources are needed to support sustainable tourism measures as it facilitate the investment in key structures and technology for sustainable tourism.

### 2.8.4. Potential Solutions and Innovations

Nevertheless, there are some distinct ideas of the financing models that may be suitable for the development of sustainable tourism in Al Wasta. These are among the most effective ones: the investments in sustainable tourism with the help of a blending finance strategy that means the usage of public and private funds to minimize the risks and attract more money. Some of the structures of blended finance include grant funds, subsidized credit, and equity from public actors to mobilize higher private capital (Zeng et al., 2019). Blended finance serves to decrease the financial risks of private investors which will allow attracting the necessary funds for improving the sustainable tourism infrastructure in regions, such as Al Wasta.

Another possible way to solve the problem is to add a new issue of green bonds which will be directed to funding sustainable tourism. Green bonds are debt securities that can be utilized to finance eligible environmental assets, the use of which has recently grown significantly to attract financing for sustainable development (2020). If Al Wasta came up with green bonds for sustainable tourism, it could appeal to the demand of environmentally friendly investors and get the funds needed to support sustainable tourism in Al Wasta.

Nevertheless, this process would only be possible if backed up by a sound legal regime to guarantee that the raised funds would flow to their intended purpose and that the projects in question would generate the intended environmental gains. Another set of financing mechanisms that could apply to sustainable tourism is crowdfunding. A crowdfunding platform, whereby small and large amounts of funds are gathered from the general public by the project developers, most commonly through the use of internet tools (Zeng et al., 2019). This approach has the obvious ability of involving the tourists themselves, and other stakeholders in the funding of sustainable tourism projects. It is also especially applicable for micro-enterprise and community-based tourism which could have a problem attracting more conventional types of financing. Moreover, the outcome of different crowdfunding campaigns depends on marketing and sharing of the campaigns and the ability to explain how the different projects shall have societal and ecological value.

However, there is the idea of public-private investment which is another way through which sustainable tourism in Al Wasta can be financed. Public Private Partnerships refer to partnerships between government departments and firms in the private sector to finance and implement different projects in tourism with a common interest in infrastructure (Vanclay et al., 2018). The collaboration of resources and knowledge of PPPs makes it possible to eliminate the problems related to the financial and operational perspectives of sustainable tourism projects. Bringing together private capital and expertise in the case of Al Wasta, PPPs may be leveraged most successfully in financing sustainable infrastructure that could make tourism a low-carbon and low-waste activity in the country.

## 2.9. Climate Change and Tourism

Climate change is now set to be one of the largest concerns to the tourism sector globally. There is a variety of links between climate change and tourism; direct as well as indirect impacts that may have significant impacts on tourist destinations, tourist flows and the possibility for the future developments of tourism as an economic sector. Climate change brings severe threats to the areas and fields which are involved in the tourism industry including temperate changes, alteration of weather conditions and sea level rise.

It is befitting to note that among the most cut-and-dried effects of the climatic change on tourism is the change in the weather patterns which may either favour or humble the tourist visiting the particular tourist destination. For instance, areas that depend on winter tourism like skiing in Europe, North America and other winter destinations feel the impact of reduced snow and short winters most. According to the article by Steiger et al. (2017), the prolonged warmer temperatures and diminishing snowfalls are posing a threat to the sustainability of winter tourist attractions resulting in negative effects on the economy and high costs of artificial snowmaking. In the same way, climate change has negative impacts on coastal and island area tourism through increased incidence of severe weather conditions including cyclones which cost lots of infrastructure and act as a deterrent to tourists. Cabrini, Scott and Gössling (2018) specify that in addition to the aesthetic degradation of tourist sites and earning loss, these changes also led to an increase in the costs of reconstruction and sustenance of tourist facilities.

In some cases, climate change does not impact tourism directly but influences the flora, fauna, and environment through which many tourist products pass. For instance, the negative change in the conditions of coral reef ecosystems because of the ocean’s increased acidity and rising temperatures is one of the biggest threats to tourism-related industries in countries such as Maldives and Australia’s Great Barrier Reef region. Shakeela and Becken (2019) argue that when coral reefs disappear; not only does the aesthetic beauty that visitors pay to behold disappear but also people’s source of income as they rely on tourism. Besides, alterations to vegetation and wildlife owing to climate change can affect safari and wildlife tourism, a valuable money spinner in areas such as Africa. According to Moreno and Becken (2018), as these species move or go extinct because of the changing habitats, the nature of these tourism experiences is transformed which may decline the appeal of the destination.

Climate change is an issue that impacts the tourism industry and in turn, the industry has had negative impacts on climate change mainly through the emission of greenhouse gases especially through air transport. Gössling, Hall, and Scott (2021) argue that the tourism sector is on one hand a victim and on the other hand a perpetrator of carbon emissions and thus has a role to play in climate change. Due to this, the concerns of the position include mitigation measures in the industry; these include encouraging people to practice responsible tourism, decreasing on emission of greenhouse gases, and the support of innovations in green technology. The emerging trends towards sustainable tourism practices are hardly needed as more and more people and places realize the consequences that the global tourism system exercises on the environment.

Tourism management needs to adapt when responding to climate change or it will not long-term future. Some of the measures include diversification of tourism products to create other forms of tourism that do not rely on the threatened resources, and provision of physical infrastructure that will not be affected by climatic changes. Scott, Gössling, and Hall (2019) stressed that no matter the level of analysis and planning, climate change adaptation should be integrated into the tourism strategy. Also, teaching the tourists about sustainable tourism and ensuring they practice good behaviour whilst on their travelling reduces the impact of negative effects of tourism on the environment.

Climate change’s impact is both a threat and a potential to the tourism industry. There are positive and negative effects related to the issue at hand; however, the latter uncovered some opportunities for positive changes in the approaching years and the recognition of such principles that would help minimize the sector’s environmental footprint and increase climatic change resilience. Sustainable tourism will be the key factor in determining the development of tourism in the future climate, emphasizing destinations, policies, and industry to accept sustainable development as a form of tourism development.

### 2.9.1. Impact of Climate Change on Tourism

Global warming is the most pressing issue of the present age which significantly affects the tourism sector in the world. The industry is by nature quite sensitive to the environment and climate and therefore very sensitive to the impacts of climate change. Increases in temperature levels, variations in rainfall, and increases in incidences of severe weather events are shifting the opportunities for tourists and feasibility of the tourist activities. This is because, as identified by Scott et al. (2019), tourism is a business that depends on stable climates taking into account the fact that it is vulnerable to fluctuations arising from climate change. For example, due to warmer temperatures, such activities as alpine skiing can be reduced in their duration causing low tourism income and fluctuating economic status of regions that rely on winter activities (Scott et al., 2019).

Further, the exposure of tourism-related coastal regions to sea-level rise is enhanced by the rising rates of hurricanes. Some of these changes include; coastal erosion, flooding and damage to infrastructure as they make some tourism destinations less attractive or even inhabitable (Gössling et al., 2021). For instance, Maldives and several other island nations are in danger of seeing up to 80% of the land mass of their territory submerged and this could wipe out the tourism industry in these countries because it is one of the biggest economic activities in these nations (Shakeela & Becken, Parasitic tourism 2019). However, in certain areas such as the northern hemisphere, the warmer season is longer such as in Scandinavia due to the effect of global warming, hence it can be beneficial to these areas by increasing tourism (Steiger et al., 2017). However, this shift has the risk of occurring at the cost of the hot south European holiday spots that could become uncomfortably warm and with this flow alteration of tourist traffic and consequential major economic consequences for areas that are already bearing the brunt of climate change.

In addition, the effects of climate change affect the physical assets of the tourism business such as transport systems, hotels and resorts, and other recreation facilities. The author indicates that as a result of higher temperatures and other climatic changes, infrastructure can be affected and this poses a great challenge to the ability of places to keep their appeal and safety intact (Cabrini et al., 2018). This is more so for the developing countries since many among them rely on the tourism sector for the growth of their economy but the same countries are faced with the challenges of inadequate funds required for the adaptation to climate change (Hall, 2019). As a result, the global tourism industry faces a dual challenge to become resilient to climate change while at the same time reducing its effects by embracing change that proactively embraces sustainable practices.

### 2.9.2. Specific Impacts on Al Wasta

Al Wasta region has ecological and cultural tourism potential, however, the climate change that threatens the whole world will also affect the Al Wasta region. This is especially so because; the region comprises deserts and therefore changes in temperature and precipitations in the region are highly likely to worsen climatic effects. As analyzed by Al-Maamaryet al. (2020), global climate change is increasingly causing high temperatures and, low rainfall rate in Al Wasta, which results in more effects of desertification; availability of water resources is also limited with the scenery being reduced, which is a magnet for tourism. This pollution of the environment could result in a reduced number of visitors especially nature tourists who are attracted to the natural and unspoilt environment of the region.

Apart from the environmental effects, such effects as the social structures are equally threatened in Al Wasta. This area of endeavour may be a problem in the future for the identified region’s tourism industry which plays the role of a significant stream of income for many residents; climate change will make it increasingly difficult to sustain traditional livelihoods, and it will become more expensive to maintain and expand the relevant tourism facilities. Al-Sarmiet al. (2019) pointed out that due to frequently occurring and intensification of extreme climatic events like sandstorms or heat, tourists’ satisfaction with tourism-related activities of a country will decrease and therefore, the rate of revisits dramatically shrinks. Such changes do not only have consequences on the tourist industry in Al Wasta but have a direct potential on the economic stability of the region.

Also, greatly affected by climatic change are the cultural tourism attractions in Al Wasta particularly the cultural heritage sites. According to Jones and Phillips (2021), it is pointed out that climate stability is important for the conservation of such places as changes in temperature and humidity could fasten the decay of any ancient constructions and relics. This is especially so because Al Wasta has many cultural sites, most of which are endangered due to scarcity of funds for their preservation. This would not only reduce the cultural tourism prospects of the region but also strip the region of very important and valuable cultural and historical assets.

### 2.9.3. Adaptation Strategies

Due to the vulnerability of this sector to climate change, places such as Al Wasta must come up with and enforce strategies that can reduce the impacts of climate change. It is the act of making changes in the tourism systems that will minimize the effects of climate change on the tourism industry (Scott et al., 2019). Thus, the mitigation and adaptation of climate change in the tourism sector can be achieved through the following categories: Amongst them, one of the important methods is The promotion of climate residue Tourism structures. This covers the development of accommodation through the erecting- of tourism infrastructure that can survive natural calamities such as storms in Middle Eastern tourist destinations like Al Wasta to the availability and sustainable use and conservation of water especially in arid regions through the management of water resources (Gössling et al., 2021).

Another important adaptation strategy is the diversification of the tourism products and services offered to tourists. referring to Moreno & Becken (2018), the areas that rely on climate-sensitive tourist services and products including beach tourism or winter tourism need to include climate-insensitive tourist resources. For Al Wasta, this could include the development of cultural, eco- and adventure tourism as the latter types are less sensitive to climatic conditions and can offer the communities of the region different sources of income (Jones & Phillips, 2021). Secondly, developing off-peak tourism can also help level out the timings of tourists’ visits, thus offloading the pressure from the key seasons, and providing a steadier income for a tourism business.

Another integral piece of work is to engage the communities in the process of development, and the deployment of adaptation measures. According to Al-Maamary et al. (2020) integrating climate change adaptation initiatives within the local communities can increase the sector’s ability to address the impact of climate change by developing customized remedies. This comprises the participation of the locals during the planning phase for the effects and outcomes of climate change, or empowering a community by equipping them with adequate training and provisions to enable them to withstand the worst impacts of climate change. In addition, integration of the private and public sectors is important within the process of implementing adaptation measures. Governments can ensure the right number of enabling policies and adequate funds are provided while the private sector can ensure the development of climate-smart tourism products and enhancement of investments (Hall, 2019). Therefore the following hypothesis can be developed.

***H5: Climate Change Impact negatively affects Sustainable Tourism Development.***

This hypothesis implies that areas which are experiencing negative impacts of climate change may find it difficult to manage sustainable tourism development because environmental quality and conditions which would number among the pull factors for tourists are declining or changing rapidly resulting in negative consequences.

### 2.9.4. Research Gaps

While a large amount of work has been done in addressing the effects of climate change on the tourism sector and developing a framework of adaptation, there are still a lot of blanks in the literature, especially concerning area-specific issues such as Al Wasta. There is a dearth of literature that focuses on the regionalized effects of climate change on the tourism sector. Although climate change and tourism contributions to the regional and global level have received significant attention in previous studies, few in-depth works explore the challenges and management strategies in the regions that are more exposed to or unsure to respond to climate change like Al Wasta (Gössling et al . , 2021). This knowledge gap inhibits the formulation of specific adaptation measures that are based on the environmental, cultural and socio-economic contexts of Al Wasta.

One of the biggest gaps in the literature is the lack of knowledge about the long-term effects of climate change on the demand for tourism and tourists’ behaviour. Although there are several works developed concerning the probable effects of the climatic change on the tourist area, further research is required that explore the probable alteration in the preferences and purchasing behaviour of the tourists as a result of climatic change impacts. For instance, tourists may change their travel destinations, from regions that are being threatened by extreme climate events to those that are believed to be favourable to climatic change. Filling this gap of knowledge is important for devising appropriate marketing and promotion strategies that would assist regions like Al Wasta to sustain their competitiveness in the global tourism industry (Steiger et al., 2017).

Finally, more work still has to be done on comparing the impacts of various strategies on adaptation in the tourism industry. Although there are numerous strategies suggested to address Climate Change impacts; literature specifically about the effectiveness of these strategies is scarce, especially in developing communities of Al Wasta. This also covers the positive and negative effects of various adaptation strategies, or short-term/long-term adaptation objectives and their implications (Scott et al., 2019). Having identified these deficiencies, subsequent research will be able to offer useful data which can help create improved adaptation measures for the tourism sector in Al Wasta and similar regions.

## 2.10. Synthesis and Conceptual Framework

### 2.10.1. Integration of Key Findings

The integration of advances in literature on sustainable tourism shows that there is a close relationship between different factors environmental, social and economic. There is also one of the central themes that introduces the importance of active community participation for the sustainability of tourism projects. Many scholars established that people from a particular area are not only interested in but also should be involved in the tourism planning and development process (Byrd, 2018; Tosun, 2020). For instance, Byrd (2018) believes that the sustainability of tourism projects will not be realized since they are likely to lack support from the local communities, and may not address the needs of these communities. As highlighted by Tosun (2020) bottom-up initiatives should be promoted to drive the development of tourism, especially in regions that rely heavily on tourism.

The second significant outcome identified by the author is the effects of government policies to support sustainable tourism development. The literature was found to reflect the need for a supportive and coherent policy which is alongside sustainability goals (Bramwell, 2019; Hall, 2020). For instance, Hall in his article published in 2020 shows how policy gaps and weak legal frameworks adversely affect sustainability efforts, especially in the developing world. Bramwell (2019) further elaborates on the use of international principles and policies in the development of national policies, the notion that indicates that it is global frameworks that can offer the needed direction to countries as they foster sustainable growth of their tourism industries.

The literature also reports major issues concerning the financing of sustainable tourism programmes. According to the findings by Gössling et al. (2021) and Shakeela and Becken (2019), there is an emerging tendency towards implementing sustainable practices but the problem is that enough funds are still hard to come by. Gössling et al. (2021) show how the lack of funds hinders the sustainability agenda’s relevance and applicability and the significance of the development of infrastructure, especially in emerging tourist destinations like Al Wasta. However, Shakeela & Becken (2019) point out more solutions that can be used in other areas, including the use of such financial mechanisms as public-private partnerships.

The influence of climate change on tourism has become a key emerging issue and concern, especially in the Al Wasta area which is sensitive to environmental alterations (Scott et al., 2019; Moreno & Becken, 2018). Scott et al. (2019) described and explained how climate change will impact different areas of tourism including the seasonality and availability of resources. Moreno & Becken (2018) specifically concentrate on small island developing states (SIDS) although they find it possible to extend the same conclusions to other areas such as Al Wasta, and argue that the same vulnerabilities are present and need to be addressed.

### 2.10.2. Conceptual Framework

**Independent Variables**

Community Involvement

H1

Tourism Infrastructure and Sustainability

**Dependent Variable**

H2

H3

Sustainable Tourism Development

Financial Resource and Tourism Development

H4

Climate Change Impact

H5

Government Policy and Sustainable Tourism

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Based on the synthesis of findings, the potential for the development of a conceptual framework for this study can be made which can incorporate all the parameters classified as independent and dependent variables that have been revealed in the course of the literature review. In this framework, sustainable tourism development acts as the dependent variable that depends on several independent variables such as the community’s participation, government policies, financial resources and climate change.

On that basis, community involvement is postulated as one of the supply-side success factors, which has a positive or negative impact on sustainable tourism development following the level of community engagement and empowered rights. As Tosun (2020 indicates, engaging tourism stakeholders Is Key to achieving success in sustainable tourism since stakeholders possess relevant knowledge and resources.

Policies are another independent variable that exist at the government level and they play the role of either enhancing or hindering sustainable tourism development. In turn, maintaining policy coherence for development with sustainability means that policy frameworks require coherence, fit for purpose, and properly aligned with sustainable policy objectives as Hall observes, the policy can give the right regulatory push and support for positive sustainable change. On the other hand, one can have gaps or even inconsistent policies and this hinders the facet of the account of Bramwell (2019).

Financial resources also form part of the conceptual framework since it is used to support sustainability efforts. Gössling et al., (2021) explain that governments need to ensure that enough funds are available for investment in infrastructure and other sustainability projects. Thus, Shakeela & Becken (2019) as well as several other authors pointed to the problem of financial constraints being one of the primary challenges for sustainable tourism development and the use of innovative financing models would be the key to boosting sustainable tourism programs’ sustainability. However, using data from the field, climate change is the last variable of the conceptual framework as it influences the aspects of sustainability affectation in tourism. From the case of Scott et al. (2019) and Moreno & Becken (2018), it is clear that to eliminate the effects of climate change on tourism, adaptation measures have to be properly taken to affected areas like Al Wasta.

It is to be noted that the analyzed variables relate significantly to each other and are rather flexible connectors. For example, proper policies could increase community engagement in tourism and also mobilize capital which would make resilience increase, rejecting climate change effects. On the other hand, poor community participation or insufficient funding hampers the delivery of policies set by the government and also worsens the impacts of climatic change on the tourism business.

### 2.10.3. Implications for Future Research

Based on the literature review conducted there are some implications which can be recommended for further research on sustainable tourism appropriate for the regions like Al Wasta. Specifically, there is still a need to investigate richer and contextualised forms of community participation and engagement constructions in tourism. That said, it might be useful to review existing methods and types of community engagement and shift to more qualitative studies to establish what types of community engagement are more effective in contributing to cultural and socio-economic change in one's culture and society (Byrd, 2018; Tosun, 2020).

One more prospective for further research is the assessment of governmental measures and their effectiveness in the process of sustainable tourism development. In line with the above comments, Hall (2020) and Bramwell (2019) explain that there is a poss for more comparative work on how various policy contexts might shape sustainability performance. This could be beneficial to the policymakers who are in the process of developing a more efficient and suitable tourism policy for their country.

There is therefore the need to further explore some of the research gaps such as the ability to obtain sufficient financial capital for sustainable tourism. Gössling et al. (2021) and Shakeela & Becken (2019) also stress the role of new non-equity-based funding models, nevertheless, more could be done to understand under which circumstances such models provide the best results. Future research could build up further on the identification of innovative financing tools including green bonds, impact investment etc., concerning sustainable tourism development.

Furthermore, the effect of climate change on tourism and since Al Wasta falls within the sensitive areas there is a lot of concern about how it will be affected. Scott et al. (2019), and Moreno & Becken (2018) underscore the importance of research in finding out more information about coping strategies that could be used and implemented in the tourism businesses and tourism destinations. Such research could help build new models of tourism development that would not be as vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

## 2.11. Conclusion

### 2.11.1. Summary of Key Insights

This conceptual framework gives a detailed analysis of the complex interdependency between tourism development and sustainability with a reference to the Al Wasta area. There is information as regards government policies, cultural aspects and infrastructure management that need to be safeguarded to enhance the growth of tourism. The review was done in such a way that sustainable tourism was described as not being just a theme, but a complex notion that works by entailing a bottom line that seeks to work towards the proper balancing of environment as well as sociocultural and economic aspects and hence, and supports the sustainability of the areas of tourism (Smith & Puczkó, 2018; Hall, 2019).

It was also established that the policies put in place by the government played centre stage in determining the practices that could be realised under sustainable tourism. It is argued that good policies may either support or oppose sustainable tourism development depending on how they are oriented towards sustainability (Gössling & Higham, 2021). There was a reminder of the role of stakeholders in the community in which the index plays a key part in the sustainable tourism agenda. Incorporating local people extends the culture of tourism besides promoting the distribution of advantages across the region (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

Cultural sustainability as the literature suggests is very important in the preservation of cultural integrity of tourism destinations. This loss could reduce tourism to generic experiences solicited by global-headed companies as opposed to the unique cultural tourist attractions that tourism should offer (Timothy, 2018). Furthermore, the role of environmental conservation and degradation due to tourism was discussed including areas such as Al Wasta which is known to have sensitive termination. Sustainable tourism infrastructure, therefore occupies an important place in reducing these effects and the development of the tourism industry.

The need to apply sustainable changes, and one of them is sustainable investment in tourism was named as one of the major factors. However, getting capital for sustainable projects up to this level has always been a challenge, especially in the less endowed regions (Spenceley, 2019). The review also means that there is a dearth of funding which should be harnessed to finance the gap to support the sustainable financing of tourism in Al Wasta (UNWTO, 2021).

### 2.11.2. Relevance to Al Wasta Region

The findings arising from the literature survey are especially germane to the Al Wasta region which is in the process of formulating a plan for developing tourism as an avenue of diversifying its economy. The peculiarities of this region’s ecology and culture suggest that it should become a target for sustainable tourism development, given that some measures should be taken to prevent the common mistakes made in the course of the process. The review notes that the key strategies of sustainable tourism in Al Wasta will depend on the formulation of proper government policies, the sound implementation of infrastructure projects and the active involvement of the community (Jafari & Xiao, 2021).

About the cultural and natural tourist attractions, Al Wasta has a great cultural endowment to the tourist attraction besides having a variety of ecosystems. But the same factors are also susceptible to the impacts of tourism if not well controlled and this is according to Holden (2020). According to the review, it is recommended that the region need to recognise the protection of cultural heritage as one of the important elements to be incorporated into its tourism master plan. This approach not only improves tourist awareness but also makes sure that the local people are the main benefactors of the process of tourism (Richards, 2018).

Also, the present tourism facilities in Al Wasta are insufficient to cater for the projected future demand in the tourism business. They note that further research into sustainable infrastructure points to the fact that considerable investment will be required for the construction of infrastructures with low environmental impacts that will support the necessary facilities for the tourists, (Bramwell & Lane 2019). This is especially the case of Al Wasta as the natural settings are both a selling point and a resource that should be conserved for future generations.

### 2.11.3 Recommendations for Practice and Policy

According to the literature review conducted, it is possible to make the following recommendations concerning the development of tourism in Al Wasta: Firstly, there is a need to organise a consistent policy that includes the aspect of sustainability in all stages of tourism planning and resource management. This should be done in such a way that it complies with the global benchmarks and at the same time reflects the circumstances of the Al Wasta region (Bramwell & Lane, 2019).

There is also the need for the sustainable establishment of the tourism infrastructure that can support transformative tourism. This ranges from building environmentally socially responsible accommodations and the setting and operating of waste management systems as well to the measures put in place in putting into practice energy efficient transport facilities (Gössling & Higham, 2021). The mentioned infrastructure will not only have positive impacts on the environment by lessening the negative effects of tourism but at the same time improve the experience of tourists.

Tourism promotion must instil integration into the communities, which should be one of the main features of Al Wasta. Involving the locals in the planning and development facilitates the unique design of large-scale development tourism for the communities (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). This can be done through the development of capacity programs which enable the community to participate in the process of tourism development and management.

There is also the need for investment in sustainable tourism through appropriate financial mechanisms for innovation. Private partnerships, international funding and Sustainable tourism funds could be the fundamental solution for sourcing the needed financials for sustainable development projects (Spenceley, 2019). Also, rewards could be given to companies practising sustainable methods, for instance, the internalisation of pollution to allow the exemption of taxes or subsidies. However, there is a lack of regular assessment of the state of tourism in Al Wasta in terms of development. This should involve the integration of performance benchmarks concerning sustainable tourism and proactive measures on management that can tackle rising challenges (Hall, 2019). Such measures will help to put and keep this region on the right track in regards to sustainability.

### 2.11.4. Suggestions for Further Research: Outline areas where further research is needed, particularly in the context of Al Wasta.

The literature review has been useful in identifying crucial areas towards sustainable tourism development in Al Wasta but there are several areas of further research. First, there remains a sound need to undertake more research to establish the exact effects of climate change in the region on tourism. This entails understanding the various ways in which the tourism demand and the sustainability of some forms of tourism may be influenced by shifting weather conditions, hotter temperatures, and higher incidences of extreme events (Becken, 2019).

More research should also assess the socio-cultural effects that come with the development of tourism in Al Wasta and the communities that are affected. This knowledge is important for formulating intervention measures that will counter adverse effects arising from tourism while also promoting the beneficial effects for social organizations, cultures and communities (Timothy, 2018). This is because geographic location, gender, age, and socio-economic status will affect the response to tourism in a community.

However, more research and longitudinal studies that follow the consequences over a long time of sustainable tourism ventures are required for Al Wasta. Such studies would have given useful information on the types of approaches that work best and the issues that crop up when pursuing sustainability incrementally in the longer term (Dodds & Butler, 2019). It could be useful in enhancing the quality of policies and practices of tourism in the region since the data collected was current. However, technology integration to practice sustainable tourism in Al Wasta requires further investigation. These are aspects such as the opportunity of digital media in greening tourism promoting concepts, opportunities of ‘big data’ in measuring tourism impact and opportunities for green technology application in tourism facilities (Gössling & Higham, 2021). Some of the technological innovations developed could help to address some of the challenges which have been discussed in the literature: resources management; and visitor experience.