



# **Identifying Community Perspectives on Hosting International Music Events in Saudi Arabia**

By

**Alhussain Manssor Hothan**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this research is to examine the impacts of hosting international events that are becoming increasingly commonplace in the context of tourism development in Saudi Arabia. It also aims to determine how members of the local community have reacted to these events, and their attitudes towards hosting them in the future. This study will contribute to contemporary tourism and events discourse by examining the following objectives: (1) To determine local Saudis' perspectives towards international cultural (music) events ; (2) To provide recommendations based on the perspectives of community members with regards to hosting international events in the future; (3) To determine the differences in perceptions to international events based on prior travel experiences.

To collect data, focus groups were chosen as they allow for in-depth information to be gathered and allow participants to talk more freely about topics of interest. The data collection was conducted between 27 April 2021 to 28 May 2021 which were conducted face-to-face at Flinders University and online via the Zoom App.

The findings indicate that establishing international musical events in Saudi Arabia is vital and may result in several cultural, economic, social, and scientific advantages for the country. Additionally, these activities will enhance the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's tourism image and attract a large number of people from across the globe. In addition, hosting these events will improve the infrastructure and amenities of the cities that host them. Nonetheless, there are some negative aspects that have been mentioned which event planners should draw attention to, including the inappropriate behaviour of some artists who performed at previous events and the inappropriate behaviour of the audiences who attended, such as sexual harassment and excessive drug and alcohol consumption. It is also clear that some international musical events are incompatible with the conservative Saudi Society's culture, and some people continue to oppose holding them in Saudi Arabia out of fear of eroding the conservative Saudi Society's culture, behaviour, principles, and values over time. These disadvantages may affect the local community's support, which is critical for the future continuation of such events.

## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own original work and the result of my research in full, has not previously been submitted for any degree or other purposes, and as such does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights. Furthermore, the used bibliographical references are clearly stated in the dissertation itself and the list of references.

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Alhussain Manssor Hothan

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Overview**

The international tourism economy in Saudi Arabia continues to evidence growth despite the continuation of geopolitical conflicts and instabilities in the Middle East. Beyond its role in attracting international religious tourists that participate in Hajj and Umrah, Saudi Arabia offers a wide variety of tourist attractions and an immense potential to build a more substantial international tourism economy (Henderson, 2017). Starting with the initiation of a Supreme Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) in 2000, there have been attempts by the government to promote domestic tourism and tap into the significant levels of capital Saudis spend on their holidays. Since its inception, the SCTA has been energetic in developing plans to grow its capabilities as a tourist destination by highlighting various and unique historical and archaeological sites, as well as the country's high-quality infrastructure and modern attractions (Mansour & Mumuni, 2019). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is a country with a rich history and a remarkable range of resources. The nation country contains a considerable number of natural resources amongst all countries including the Red Sea and Persian Gulf coastlines, expansive deserts, and mountainous regions in both the north and the south (Mufeed & Gulzar, 2014).

Mansour and Mumuni (2019) stated that Saudi Arabia is now the Middle East's most significant tourism generating market (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2019). According to the Supreme Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) (2014), domestic tourist trips in Saudi Arabia were anticipated to reach 128 million in 2020 before the emergence of COVID-19. These arrivals were estimated to contribute \$70.9 billion (SAR 263.1 billion) in revenues to the country's GDP during the same period. Additionally, according to the same report, tourism was set to contribute more than 7% to GDP before the pandemic reached the country. In line with the Saudi Vision 2030 a strategy designed to grow international tourism and diversify its economy, the government has drawn up plans to set aside \$64 billion to invest in the leisure, cultural and entertainment sectors over the next decade, which can expand the country's attraction as a tourist destination (WTM, 2019). Along with these markets, Saudi Arabia is situated at the Islamic world's center, hosting the Hajj, a critical annual

religious event. In the recent past, Saudi Arabia's government has sought to benefit from its role as a major religious tourism industry by developing additional festivals and events in popular regions. In general, the tourism industry, and more specifically the event tourism industry, provide a perfect opportunity for economic diversification and the creation of employment (Monshi & Scott, 2017). As part of the Saudi vision 2030 plan to reduce its dependence on oil, the tourism sector is set to receive billions of dollars in funding to attract more tourists from a broader range of destinations. Thus, in order to diversify its economic reliance on oil and gas exploration, Saudi Arabia endeavours to diversify and expand other tourism activities including geo-tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, and ecotourism (Abuhjeeleh, 2019).

According to Monshi and Scott (2017), in Saudi Arabia the event sector began with the Aljanadriyah festival organised by the National Guard ministry in 1985 in Riyadh. Other events, such as the two annual Eid celebrations, were organised by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in all provinces of Saudi Arabia. The Supreme Commission for Tourism (SCT) was founded in 2000 as the main government tourism organisation for legislation, organisation and management of the Kingdom's tourism industry (Winckler, 2007). Prior to its creation, there was no supervisory authority or development plan in the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia. With the exception of Makkah and Madinah, the hotel sector was run by the Commercial ministry and had less than 100,000 rooms at low occupancy rates. By 2015, SCT had gained the responsibility for archaeological locations and tangible and intangible heritage, and in the same year changed its name to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTNH). Since then, the SCTNH has led coordinated Saudi National Government Organisations (GOs) to develop three categories of events: cultural celebrations and festivals, sporting, and business events that create a portfolio of events (Monshi & Scott, 2017). In summary, the development and management of tourism activities and assets in the country has changed dramatically during the past 40 years. It is now critical that government proposals to grow the international tourism sector - and the potential changes this growth may instigate - is explored in further depth.

## **1.2 The importance of the study**

Despite the continuation of political tensions in the Middle East, the tourism market in Saudi Arabia is growing gradually. In Saudi Arabia, the growth and expansion of the tourism and event sector are significant elements of the 2030 Vision of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Furthermore, music events are set to play an essential role in developing Saudi tourism and its economy. However, high quality of life and resident satisfaction are considered critical outcomes for a destination's sustainable development. While economic impacts are significant, social impact could have a substantial effect on society and the Saudi way of life. It is therefore critical that future research considers the impacts of tourism development in Saudi Arabia and identifies the potential positive and negative outcomes its development may yield. This study is unique in its endeavour to explore the emergence of new 'forms' of tourism in the context of Saudi Arabia.

## **1.3 Research aim and objectives**

This research aims to examine the impacts of hosting international events that are becoming increasingly commonplace in the context of tourism development in Saudi Arabia. It also aims to determine how members of the local community (that reside in settings that have hosted Western-focused events) have reacted to these events and their attitudes towards hosting them in the future. This study will contribute to contemporary tourism and events discourse by examining the following objectives:

- i. To determine local Saudis' perspectives towards international cultural (music) events;
- ii. To provide recommendations based on the perspectives of community members with regards to hosting international events in the future;
- iii. To determine the differences in perceptions to international events based on prior travel experiences.

## **1.4 Research methodology of the study**

In order to collect qualitative data which would explore the participants' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes concerning these events and their continuation, semi-structured

interviews were chosen as they frequently result in obtaining in-depth information and provide room for the participants to speak more freely about issues of interest. According to Newcomer et al. (2015), semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable when more than a few open-ended questions need follow-up queries. Interviews were conducted with tertiary educated Saudi citizens, specifically university students or people who have previously studied at a university. To explore if attitudes towards tourism development and the implementation of international events differed between Saudis that had travelled overseas or not, the study engaged both groups. Thus, sixteen participants who have never travelled outside Saudi Arabia or the Gulf Cooperation Council, and sixteen participants who have previously travelled outside these areas or are currently outside Saudi Arabia for tourism, study, or any other purpose were asked to take part in the study.

## **1.5 The study structure**

This research consists of five sections beginning with the introduction and ending with the conclusion. Chapter 1 outlines the background of the Saudi tourism and events sectors, the importance of the study, the research aims and objectives, and the methodology. Chapter 2 will present a review of the literature related to the impact of hosting international events, cultural clashes, communities' perspectives on hosting international events and Islamic laws regarding hosting international events. Chapter 3 will illustrate the methodology that was used for collecting information for the study and includes the research design and questions. It will also provide detailed information about the data collection and analysis processes undertaken. Chapter 4 will illustrate the research findings and provide a discussion of the key observations made by linking them back to contemporary literature. Chapter 5 presents the conclusion of the significant findings of the study. and offers both several recommendations for further research and an outline of the study's limitations.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Overview**

Andereck et al. (2005) argue that tourism is widely regarded as an important economic base because it provides features that might enhance a society's quality of life, including new job opportunities, increased tax revenues, economic diversity, improved access to natural and cultural attractions or festivals, and opportunities for outdoor recreation that can support physical and mental health. However, there are concerns that tourism can impede the quality of life if it develops unsustainably. Issues can include everything from overcrowding (and overtourism), traffic problems, increased criminal activity, increased living costs, and friction between tourists and residents that can ultimately change the way that locals lead their lives (Andereck et al., 2005). Substantial work on residents' perceptions of tourism influences and, to a lesser extent events, have been carried out during recent decades. Through this work, many of the potential impacts of tourism and some of the variables that tend to produce either positive or negative responses to tourism activity have been identified (Fredline et al., 2006). Improvements in quality of life, and the satisfaction of residents, are acknowledged as key outcomes of sustainable destination growth, which services the real needs of the local community while preserving local tourism through political patronage, the development of hospitality cultures and the involvement of community members as employees or other key tourism stakeholders. However, achieving a scenario of this nature is frequently challenged by tourism's connection to a complex range of economic, socio-cultural and environmental benefits and costs. There is a continuous discussion on the viability of tourism-led economic growth as a tool to achieve development goals (Shakeela & Weaver, 2018). Aman et al. (2019) reported that tourism development can be a development tool that can support the host culture or community by generating opportunities for employment, the creation of new services and facilities, and the promotion of the conservation of cultural resources. Moreover, Shakeela and Weaver (2018) claimed that attempts to gauge citizens' perceptions and attitudes regarding the effects of tourism development can lead to positive relationships between tourism and host communities. The following chapter now provides a review of relevant studies on the impacts of hosting events, including an overview of tourism and events in Saudi Arabia, followed by a discussion of music

festivals and their positive and negative socio-cultural impacts on the host community. Additionally, this chapter provides community perceptions of tourism development in contemporary academic literature.

## **2.2 Defining Events and Music Festivals**

According to Fredline et al. (2006), the term "event" is used in tourism to describe many event groups, each of which have different or varying features. Such events span from the Olympic Games at the end of the mega-event to small regional festivals. Even in these sub-groupings, there is considerable debate over the appropriate definitions that can be adopted. Jago and Shaw (1998, p.29) have defined the event as "a one-time or rarely occurring event of a limited period which offers the consumer a social and leisure experience beyond everyday experience. This term is taken as including the other subclasses of events, including mega-events and community festivals".

Additionally, an event is a carefully crafted experience designed to deliver a reaction from the individual or audience. Events bring individuals together to share an experience and achieve a measurable result. They may serve as a means of marketing the city "as a product" by drawing visitors, industries, and investments, as well as providing an opportunity for people to come together in a social setting to celebrate their own and others' accomplishments (Yürük et al., 2017). Thus, events are essential for both tourists and communities as they are typically designed to entertain both groups (Reid, 2007). In addition, media coverage generated by events assists destinations in establishing visitor confidence and in fostering a positive destination image (Yürük et al., 2017). Moreover, events and festivals may support other forms of tourism and receive prominence in most destinations' development and marketing plans (Alonso Vazquez, 2015). Derrett (2003) argued that the connection between events and festivals and a location's prosperity and destination image illustrate the important role that events and festivals play in the 'tourism system'. Here, festivals and events may act as attractions, markers, or places of interest that not only attract additional tourists but help shift perceptions. Due to the development of events, a sizable number of visitors from various locations travel to places because they seek

opportunities to engage or participate, especially if these events do not exist in their region or country of origin. Events may also represent the primary reason tourists visit particular locations, suggesting that hosting them can in turn produce changes in the appeal of a particular place or destination (Simeon & Buonincontri, 2011).

Additionally, and more specifically, music festivals can contribute significantly to the growth of tourism. They may serve as an effective catalyst for the destination's image, depending on the event's characteristics, magnitude, and type (Duarte et al., 2018). The image of a destination is formed by a variety of attributes or unique features that attracts visitors, ranging from activities and experiences to unique landscapes (Lew, 1987). Thereby, visitors' perceptions of a music event are linked to the destination's permanent tourism resources such as hotels, monuments, restaurants, or entertainment, which contribute to the place's overall image. As a result, visitors to host destinations have a confidence that they can find certain tourism attributes or experiences. Similarly, promoting events that are appropriate for a location - a function of its uniqueness, location, or the image it transmits to visitors - may enable the transmission of value generated by the brand of the event on to the location's image. Moreover, having a positive experience at a music event is likely to lead in more loyal visitors returning and recommending the event to others, resulting in increased revenue and a more positive image for the host destination (Duarte et al., 2018).

Furthermore, festivals organisation is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors of the tourism industry and can have a major influence on local communities (Gursoy et al., 2006; Pavluković et al., 2017; Pavluković et al., 2020). Gursoy et al. (2006) suggest that since the 1980s, festivals have grown rapidly in terms of number, diversity, and popularity. Many societies have developed, or are developing, new events and festivals to provide recreational and cultural opportunities for locals and tourists, and contribute to economic and community growth. According to several studies, one of the most significant benefits of developing a festival is the anticipated positive economic effect of visitor expenditures on the host society surrounding the festival zone. As a result, there is growing interest in the study on the theme of festivals, particularly with regard to measuring the effect of festivals on host communities (Pavluković et al., 2020). In addition, Pavluković et al. (2017) reveal that contemporary

literature generally groups festival influences into sociocultural, economic, environmental, and political aspects. More essentially, local societies perceive these effects because they might impact their acceptance, support, and involvement in the festival organisation.

Dwyer et al. (2000, as cited in Pavluković et al., 2017) stated that a festival's success is measured not only by economic contributions but also by the positive and negative effects of the festival's physical, social environment and political impact. The impacts or effects of events might occur at different stages of the event process, including prior to the event is staged, during the event, or even long after the event has concluded. Therefore, events may yield longer-lasting or residual social impacts in comparison to economic or environmental impacts that are often shorter-term in nature. The term "social impact" is defined by Balduck et al. (2011, as cited in Yürük et al., 2017, p.368) as "the way that tourism and travel influence changes in the communal and individual value systems, community structures, behaviour patterns, quality of life and lifestyle". When considering that events may produce a range of social impacts it is now important that they are explored in different geographical contexts. Moreover, consistent with other studies, it is important that community participation is sought during the planning and organisation stages of the event so that they may benefit (Yürük et al., 2017).

### **2.2.1 Types of Festivals and Events**

There are many different types of festival and events. Bowen and Daniels (2005) suggested that music events are unique special events which, for many reasons, can attract individuals. Unlike conventional concerts, where people are generally drawn to hear and watch a specific artist's live performance, music events frequently involve a diverse range of performers and might or might not follow a specific genre. Music is frequently viewed as a universal art form, capable of transcending social and cultural fault lines and can be appreciated, if not understood, by all (Bowen & Daniels, 2005).

Thus, music events may have broad appeal since they usually include different activities in addition to the music performance that are consistent with festival's theme.

The supply of music festivals has increased in response to a steady increase in disposable incomes and by a raise in the amount of time devoted to vacations (Frey, 1994; Maharjan, 2014). This growth includes both indoor and outdoor music festivals that have increased both in importance and value in many tourism industries around the globe. Music festivals are now organised to promote businesses or industries and may be arranged to serve a number of different purposes including economic gain or to create a more positive image of a place (Smith, 2009, as cited in Maharjan, 2014). As a result, music festivals are becoming an increasingly important area of research because they may encourage social change and have positive impacts on the psychological and social well-being of participants (Maharjan, 2014). This effect is a result of the unique opportunities that music festivals offer for active interaction between attendees and music, allowing attendees to be receptive to experiences that foster personal growth and self-discovery (Alonso-Vazquez, 2015). Likewise, McGrath (2015) stated that music is an influential vehicle that can affect many individuals' behaviours and pursuits.

According to research conducted by Hallam and MacDonald (2013; MacDonald et al., 2009 as cited in McGrath, 2015) music is effective on both a social and personal level. On a social level, it facilitates communication, fosters shared emotional reactions, and contributes to the group identity development. Similarly, it is effective on an individual level since it may elicit a variety of reactions such as psychological, mood, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural. Music connects a variety of human characteristics in a holistic fashion, allowing for expression and eliciting emotions. Also, individuals may use music to alter their moods, foster individuality and inspire (McGrath, 2015). Hargreaves et al. (2002) explain how individuals 'increasingly utilise music to develop and express their distinct identities, present themselves in a certain manner to others, make statements about their beliefs and attitudes, and communicate their worldviews'. Music has the power to provide a common ground and help bringing individuals together. When individuals are engaging in the same event and experiencing a similar range of emotions, they can experience a shared connection of collective

effervescence (McGrath, 2015). In short, individuality will be diminished as the group's personality will gradually take over the individual's individuality and a group identity will evolve (McGrath, 2015).

Music plays an essential role in cultural festivals. Every year a large number of music festivals attract a great number of national and international audiences, with touring artists or bands remaining one of the most popular types of performance for music festivals. (Maharjan, 2014).

Festivals have long been considered essential attractions and are therefore an essential aspect of the tourism industry. For young people specifically, travelling to and participating in a music event assumes added significance in its connection with self and social identity, as well as a rite of passage (Wu et al., 2020). For many regions around the world, music tourism is a lucrative business and attracts those who travel to a new place to attend concerts or music shows or even to a larger festival. When individuals buy tickets to attend a festival or show far away from their areas, they will also need to travel and spend money in the local economy for food and accommodation. Therefore, numerous regions are now recognizing the value of music tourism for these reasons and others (Maharjan, 2014). However, Pearce (2005, as cited in Pegg & Patterson, 2010) has stated that studying motivations was necessary and important in the study of tourism development and the use of events. Nevertheless, despite this recommendation, much of the research in the field of festival management has remained concentrated on economic benefits. These studies have frequently focused on the financial expenditures of attendees and participants, as well as changes in the turnover of businesses over the short and long term. Yet, the causes behind festival attendance have been generally disregarded. Crompton (1979, as cited in Pegg & Patterson, 2010) asserts that while tourist behaviour may be observed and classified, motivation (that is considered as the driving force behind all tourist behaviour) is difficult to fully establish. Despite the awareness of the need to develop visitor motivation theories having grown, there is still a dearth of academic literature on motivational studies particular to music events (Pegg & Patterson, 2010). Crompton (1979 as cited in Alshammari et al., 2019) listed seven socio-psychological motivation for tourism: escape, self-discovery, relaxation, regression, prestige, strengthening of familial relationships, and social engagement. In contrast to pull

factors that represent destination characteristics, these motives are push factors that indicate socio psychological demands. According to the studies on events motivation, two types of characteristics impact attendance to events: those that motivate people to leave their homes and those that draw a person to a particular location (Pegg & Patterson, 2010; Adsett, 2011; Bowen & Daniels, 2005). In terms of events, the need to escape from routine, seek novelty, reassert one's self-identity, and socialize all impact a person's incentive to attend events. Additionally, factors such as social opportunities, cultural experiences, and the character of tourist sites influence people's attendees at a specific site (Alonso-Vazquez, 2015).

### **2.3 Tourism Development in Saudi Arabia**

The tourism market in Saudi Arabia is growing gradually despite the political stresses in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia has a wide variety of religious and heritage tourism attractions that offer the potential to elevate the number of international arrivals (Henderson, 2017). With the establishment of a Supreme Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) in 2000, the Saudi Government has attempted to promote domestic tourism as a way to tap into the considerable amounts of capital that Saudis spend on both their domestic and international holidays. Since its inception, the SCTA has been dynamic in developing plans to grow the country's potential as a tourist destination by highlighting its unique historical and archaeological sites and the country's high-quality infrastructure and modern attractions (Mansour & Mumuni, 2019).

In addition, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) was established with the primary purpose of managing the Kingdom's tourist sector through organisation, development, and promotion. The Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage also aims to strengthen the tourist sector's role by removing impediments to its development. Moreover, its efforts include preserving, developing, and maintaining the Saudi Arabia's national heritage and promoting antiquity as a cultural and economic asset to citizens through tourism. SCTH envisions the tourism industry playing a role that is commensurate with the Kingdom's status and position,

as well as its part in the development of human civilization in the Middle East (SCTH, 2021).

According to Mufeed and Gulzar (2014), Saudi Arabia is a country with a rich history and a remarkable range of resources. The nation of Saudi Arabia has a considerable number of natural resources compared to most countries in the Middle East and features several natural heritage settings that can be used to grow tourism predominantly in coastal or mountainous regions. These areas include the Red Sea coastline and the Arabian Gulf, the Arabian Desert, and the spectacular mountains in both the north and the south of the country.

Mansour and Mumuni (2019) stated that Saudi Arabia is the Middle East's most significant tourism generating market. In addition, referring to the Supreme Commission for Tourism and Antiquities press releases (2014, as cited in Mansour & Mumuni, 2019), pre-COVID-19, local tourist trips in the Kingdom were anticipated to hit 128 million in 2020. These arrivals contributed \$70.9 billion (SAR 263.1 billion) in revenues to the country's GDP in 2019. Additionally, according to the same source, tourism was set to contribute more than 7% to GDP in 2020. In line with the Saudi Vision 2030, the government has now drawn up plans to set aside \$64 billion to invest in leisure, cultural and entertainment sectors over the next ten years, which can expand the country's attraction as a tourist location WTM (2019 as cited in Mansour & Mumuni, 2019).

Saudi Arabia developed "Vision 2030" as a part of its strategy for economic and national development. "Vision 2030" also outlined Saudi's general objectives, targets and goals to become a model nation that is praised across the world. Saudi Arabia will fulfil its "Vision 2030" objectives via three primary approaches: A Vibrant Society, a Thriving Economy, and an Ambitious Nation (Vision-2030, 2016). Moreover, five years following the unveiling of Vision 2030 in 2016, several notable accomplishments have been accomplished to advance the Kingdom's economic diversification goals and create a brighter future for Saudi citizens. The Vision Realization Programs have achieved exceptional accomplishment in every pillar of the vision ("Progress & Achievements", 2021):

- **Vibrant Society:** This pillar has advanced because of adopting healthy lifestyles and servicing Hajj and Umrah pilgrims from all over the globe and embracing and inscribing the Country's historical buildings on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- **Thriving Economy:** In 2020, this pillar achieved the 2030 objective for women's labour force participation. Additionally, the Public Investment Fund's assets have extended dramatically, as has the SME sector's contribution to GDP.
- **Ambitious Nation:** This pillar has achieved great progress towards achieving its two strategic goals of "Effectively Governed" and "Responsibly Enabled," as non-oil income climbed considerably in 2020 and the number of volunteers doubled yearly to hit 409,000 volunteers in 2020.

Furthermore, the Vision 2030 of the Kingdom is comprised of 96 strategic goals, controlled by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which can be achieved via several initiatives developed and executed by many governmental entities, with private as well as non-profit organisations (Vision-2030, 2016). Alzhrani (2020) wrote that the Vision 2030 plan of Saudi Arabia is to diversify the economy from an oil-based economy and to concentrate on the public sectors such as tourism. Implementing strategic management tools and techniques in the tourism sector in the Kingdom could help to achieve this objective. The eighth theme of Vision 2030 (Development of the Tourism and National Heritage Sectors) aims to promote KSA as a regional and global tourist destination, build advanced infrastructure, prepare appropriate legislation, and establish institutional capacity that will create a wide range of employment opportunities and enhance the tourism sector's contribution to the country's economy. This subject is also concerned with reviving, preserving, promoting, and classifying the Islamic, Arabic and national heritage in the list of world heritage sites (Vision-2030, 2016). Saudi Arabia is situated at the Islamic world's centre, hosting the Hajj, a critical annual religious event. Saudi Arabia's government has sought to benefit from its expertise in religious event tourism by developing the region's broader event sector in the recent past. In general, the tourism industry and event tourism specifically provide an important opportunity for economic diversification and the creation of jobs (Monshi & Scott, 2017). In addition, the new Saudi Arabia international tourism visa that was launched in 2020, will help the country become more than just a global Islamic religious destination. This visa was designed to open up travel options for tourists that are not

required to be traveling for either religious or business purposes, however it was only implemented a few weeks before the emergence of COVID-19. As part of the Saudi Vision 2030 plan to lessen its dependence on oil, the tourism sector received billions of dollars in funding to attract more tourists. In order to diversify its economic reliance on oil and gas exploration, Saudi Arabia takes the lead in tourism investment. The primary tourism industry in the country is based around the Hajj, which brings religious tourists from around the world. Other than religious tourism, Saudi Arabia seeks to diversify and expand other tourism activities like, for instance, geo-tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, and ecotourism (Abuhjeeleh, 2019).

### **2.3.1 Events and festivals in Saudi Arabia**

According to Monshi and Scott (2017), in Saudi Arabia the event sector began with the Aljanadriyah festival organised by the National Guard ministry in 1985 in Riyadh. Other events, such as the two annual Eid celebrations, were organised by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in all provinces of Saudi Arabia. Aljanadriyah Festival is one of the Kingdom of Saudi's national heritage and cultural festivals. It was held by the National Guard as an historic occasion demonstrating the Kingdom's interest in culture, heritage, traditions, customs, and Arab values. Through numerous cultural, artistic, and heritage participants that generate significant public interest via the establishment of cultural seminars, art exhibitions, and the promotion of popular heritage and cultural achievements, the Riyadh region's most significant heritage and cultural festival now contribute to a substantial domestic tourism industry and a growing international one (Boker, 2019).

The Supreme Commission for Tourism (SCT) was established in 2000 as the main government tourism organisation for legislation, organisation, and management of the Kingdom's tourism industry (Winkler, 2007). Prior to its creation there was no supervisory authority or development plan in the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia. With the exception of Makkah and Madinah, the hotel and accommodation sector were run by the Commercial Ministry and had less than 100,000 rooms at low occupancy rates. In 2015, SCT had gained the responsibility for archaeological locations and tangible and intangible heritage, and in the same year changed its name to the Saudi

Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTNH). Since then, the SCTNH has led coordinated Saudi National Government Organisations (GOs) to evolve three categories of events: cultural celebrations and festivals, sporting, and business events that create a portfolio of events (Monshi & Scott, 2017).

Furthermore, Almathami et al. (2020) note that during King Salman's regime in 2016, the General Authority for Entertainment with the mission of 'organising, developing and leading the entertainment section to deliver exciting entertainment options and tailored experiences for individuals from all walks of life in the Kingdom' was established. Moreover, it was raised by the General Authority that tourism and events industry should contribute to the improvement and enrichment of the community's lifestyle and social cohesion and be identified as a catalyst for economic diversification. Additionally, this approach supports the proliferation of small and medium-sized businesses and encourages foreign direct investments to spur job creation in the entertainment sector. The General Entertainment Authority provides full entertainment that is aligned to global standards and is available throughout the Kingdom, accessible to all individuals of the community, including locals and expatriates, and by different income levels. As such, it may contribute to social cohesion, offering families and friends opportunities to experience a variety of different activities together (General Entertainment Authority, 2021). The entertainment industry is intimately connected to the tourism industry, with significant overlap between the two. Pre-COVID-19, the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia performed well; between 2005 and 2016, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) organised about 730 events and festivals in the Kingdom, attracting over 28 million foreign tourists and 85 million domestic tourists. These events and festivals produced over SR8 billion (USD2 billion) and resulted in over 86,000 temporary jobs, 70% of which were for youths (Almathami et al., 2020).

### **2.3.2 Shifting attitudes towards hosting international tourism in Saudi Arabia**

Historically, Saudi Arabia has always been one of the most religiously conservative countries globally (Al Alhareth et al., 2015; Alshammari et al., 2019), with numerous social restrictions linked to the entertainment sectors such as musical, comical, or

sporting events. As a result of the Islamic religion and way of life, participation in leisure and entertainment events was culturally discouraged (Alkhudair, 2018; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010 as cited in Alshammari et al., 2019). On the other hand, Saudi Arabia has recently begun to alter its ultra-conservative image and diversify its economy by leveraging its unused potential as a nascent state-backed entertainment destination (Alshammari et al., 2019). Thus, Saudi Arabia is seeking new resources, and developing other prospective industries, such as tourism, in order to address the social contract's reformation (Young, 2020 as cited in Al-sakkaf et al., 2020). Saudi Arabia's government announced the Vision 2030, which prioritized tourism as an economic pillar in the transition to a post-oil future (Al-sakkaf et al., 2020). In addition, Alshammari and Kim (2019) stated that Saudi Arabians are increasingly accepting of non-traditional activities and interests, including attending concerts and soccer matches and men and women sitting next to each other in public spaces. Additionally, because of economic development opportunities in non-traditional industries, the government and the local community have become more adaptable and less constrained in their development of entertainment sectors and this may also contribute to the future development of festivals in Saudi Arabia. This shift is consistent with the goals of the Saudi Government's Vision 2030, which encourages non-traditional festivals so that individuals can enjoy modern entertainment activities that feature shows and contemporary music, games, theatre, shopping, and adventure (Alshammari et al., 2019; Mumuni & Mansour, 2014).

Saudi Arabian events and festivals are categorized as either traditional or non-traditional. In terms of the traditional context, these festivals commemorate religious or cultural activities that illustrate a microcosm of the society's traditions. For instance, attendees of traditional Saudi events have the opportunity to sample traditional foods and participate in activities designed to instil traditional culture and values. Additionally, attendees of traditional events take part in a range of culturally rich programs (for example, poetry reading, traditional music), all while reminiscing about previous times. As a result, traditional Saudi Arabian events are hosted on a yearly basis and they are considered the norm in the country. While non-traditional Saudi events are unrelated to established cultural and religious norms, contemporary live entertainment elements (for example, circuses, camel racing, and musical performances) offer significant connective experiences for event attendees

(Alshammari et al., 2019). The country took this step by establishing the General Authority for Entertainment (GAE), tasked with the responsibility of organising and launching the entertainment industry. Saudi Arabia hosted the world's first jazz event and Saudi Comic-Con in 2017 with support from GAE. Additionally, the country recently lifted a 35-year-old ban on cinemas. GAE announced in 2019 that the country would host additional non-traditional events where individuals can enjoy special events such as auto races, magic shows, and theatrical performances. By 2030, the GAE projects that non-traditional events will contribute \$64 billion to the annual GDP and produce 224,000 new jobs. This illustrates how the Saudi Government is attempting to diversify its economy by increasing recreational and leisure opportunities (Alshammari et al., 2019).

## **2.4 Tourism Development and Host Community Perceptions**

When places are transformed into tourism destinations, tourism affects inhabitants' quality of life. As citizens, pro-tourism development behaviour is viewed as a prerequisite for sustainable tourism, and this sustainability will be realized if residents' perspectives are considered and integrated into the tourism development strategies. In this manner, the core principle of sustainable tourism is to meet local residents' essential needs and concerns within a tourism growth strategy. Additionally, recent studies indicate that pro- or anti-tourism development behaviour may be evaluated by inspecting local residents' attitudes that might serve as indicators of the extent to which residents accept tourism (Ribeiro et al., 2017). El-Gohary (2016) claimed that tourism and tourism associations play a major role in the economics of the world and are considered one of the key contributors to economic development and employment growth in some countries. As a result, tourism can therefore be considered one of the leading sources of global gross domestic product (GDP) and is regarded to be an essential part of many countries' economic and social existence. Tourism and tourism associations play a notable role in the business world today, and a strong tourism sector can contribute extensively to the economic development of many countries. Tourism has consistently and dramatically contributed to providing possibilities for employment, self-fulfilment and economic development. However, residents usually play a part in developing tourism strategies and innovations (Aman et al., 2019).

Balduck et al. (2011) reported that only during the current decade has an emergent stream of literature appeared, that concentrates on dimensions beyond traditional economic factors, including the social effect of hosting events. Understanding the social impacts and attitudes of the local people towards these effects is a prerequisite for mitigating the potential for undesirable disorder in a society that such events may cause.

Tourism research has long acknowledged the value of stakeholder cooperation in tourism development (Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011; McCabe et al., 2012). The theory of the stakeholder suggests that anybody with legitimate interest in an organisation or its activities (often in tourism where activities of a single organisation may influence the opinions of other people or an organisation) should be considered a stakeholder, and that all stakeholders must merit consideration irrespective of the functional value they may provide to the organisation (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984 as cited in McCabe et al., 2012). Moreover, Hall (1999) claimed that since the 1970s, Western tourist governance has tended to diminish the state's involvement and progressively delegate responsibility for tourism planning and development to collaborative partnerships of stakeholders. The trend towards the privatization and to commercialise functions which were once performed by the government that has been nearly universal in Western countries from the late 1970s has significantly impacted the nature of numerous national governments' participation in the tourist sector (Pearce, 1992; Hall & Jenkins, 1995 as cited in Hall, 1999). However, to garner community support, event planners must first get a deeper understanding of how residents view both the good and negative effects that events provide (Kim & Walker, 2012; Kim et al., 2015). It is claimed that the development of tourism, or even its demise, is contingent upon the attitudes and views of host communities (Sharpley, 2014; Gursoy et al., 2002).

One of the main theories used by the researchers in these recent investigations is the theory of social exchange (Deery & Jago, 2010). According to Meimand et al. (2017), the social exchange theory implies that people might support growth as long as they believe that the anticipated benefits outweigh the cost. As an indicator of tourism growth funding, two variables exist: perceived socio-cultural advantages; and social-cultural costs. Although the perceived socio-cultural advantages are anticipated to

boost tourism growth, perceived socio-cultural costs may adversely affect support for tourism development. In the case of the social effects of events on societies, the host residents are often deemed to be the judges of their feasibility and acceptability, and if they perceive that an activity is problematic they are likely to withdraw support that in turn impacts on broader economic goals (Deery & Jago, 2010).

While positive economic effects are essential for the sustainable development of tourism, the exploration of social impacts may be of greater significance. Understanding the importance of a balance between economic and social aims is critical for the successful establishment of sport tourism events (Kim et al., 2015). Aman et al. (2019) stated that previous research examining local communities' support to develop sustainable tourism is usually dependent upon sociological and psychological perspectives, and that such views among the inhabitants of communities are not homogenous. Diverse tourism, tourist, and resident contexts, frequently linked to particular destination 'life cycle' stages, yield various results on factors that are regarded to generate satisfaction or disaffection. For example, disapproval has been associated with place attachment, a sense of location identity linked to a long-term residence and perceived rises in the cost of living associated with tourism. Additionally, the loss or reduction of income resulting from changes from high-wage manufacturing to low-wage hospitality employment has generated negative perceptions of tourism workers, which can lead to a decrease in employment in tourism and hospitality.

Tourism's facilitation of heritage preservation is recognized but concerns about the loss of heritage, tourism's negative environmental effects on residents' social capital and tourism's interference with everyday life persist (Shakeela & Weaver, 2018). The local people in a host community might view these negative and positive effects differently. Furthermore, in an atmosphere of exchange, those who find tourism more helpful will support it, and others who find it to be an interference or impediment will not support tourism growth (Meimand et al., 2017). Mathieson and Wall (1982, as cited in Brunt & Courtney, 1999) emphasize that although numerous studies make passing mention to the existence of social effects, both positive and negative, the majority of them shed little light on their nature or call for their investigation in greater detail. They assert that research can be more explicitly directed at determining how the host

population is perceptions and attitudes towards the presence and behaviour of visitors and that without contacting residents, it might not be possible to determine the true significance of any change.

## **2.5 Socio-Cultural Impacts of Events and Festivals**

Galdini (2007) argued that tourism's social and cultural influences must be carefully considered as these effects may either become assets, or harm communities (Galdini 2007). Sharpley (1994, as cited in Brunt & Courtney, 1999) stated that cultural influences are those which lead to a gradual longer-term change in beliefs, values, and cultural practices of a society. To a certain extent this is a result of visitors' demand for instant culture and authentic souvenirs, but also at the extreme can lead to the situation in which the host community is culturally dependent on the tourism-generating nation. However, in other circumstances, even when the growth rate is fast local communities may be quite ambivalent about its development. The degree to which the social and cultural influences affect, or are experienced by, host societies might rely on many factors such as the number and type of visitors, the nature of tourism growth in the region, and the rate of development (Brunt & Courtney, 1999). Schlenker et al. (2005, p.67) wrote that among event organisers and scholars, there is a rising acknowledgment of the importance of measuring the sociocultural effects of events and festivals, as local resident's dissatisfaction jeopardizes their long-term success, even if the event is economically feasible. In addition, Cohen (1984, as cited in Gjerard, 2005) considers the sociocultural influences of tourism as one of the most critical issues in tourism research. However, according to Mbaiwa (2005), Sociocultural influences of tourism results from the interplay between 'host', or residents, and 'guests', or visitors. As Glasson et al. (1995, as cited in Mbaiwa, 2005) describe, sociocultural impacts refer to tourism's 'people impacts,' with an emphasis on changes in the daily quality of life of citizens in tourist locations, and cultural effects that are concerned with changes in norms, traditional ideas and values, and identities as a result of tourism. The larger the difference between the local society and the visitors, the greater the influence of tourism on the community. This depicts a dilemma to decision-makers in terms of the type of tourism which a place is attempting to attract. The issue becomes more complicated when the area of the decision-making process

is expanded to involve the attitudes of, and benefits that are gained by the visitors (Spanou & Elena, 2006). However, Pavluković et al. (2017) stated that social impacts refer to the positive or negative changes in cultural and social situations which occur as a direct or indirect outcome of an activity project or program hosted by a society.

### **2.5.1 Positive Socio-Cultural Impacts of Events and Festivals**

Galdini (2007) stated that when attempting to conceptualize the relationship between tourism and destination identity, tourism has an effect on location identities. What is in dispute is the extent and nature of that influence. The term 'place identities' refers to a diverse set of social relationships that contribute to the formation of a 'sense of location,' a sense that allows people to feel as though they 'belong' to a destination or that a location 'belongs' to them. The plural form 'identities' implies that different versions of identity can circulate within an area, formed by people or collective experiences of different individuals. In addition, tourism contributes to the creation or reconstruction of destination identities (Galdini, 2007).

Festivals may also increase local incomes and employment opportunities for residents, the development of business contacts, the provision of forums for continuing education that facilitate the exchange of ideas and training, and the transfer of technology (Dwyer et al., 2000), that may also provide citizens with renewed pride in their home city (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Festivals have the potential to reinforce cultural and social identity and contribute to community cohesion. Additionally, festivals may help extend the tourist season, foster and create new location images, enhance appreciation for the arts, culture, nature, and heritage conservation, as well as support societal development more holistically. Moreover, according to Arcodia and Whitford (2007), festivals increase awareness of a destination, promote more effective use of society resources and expertise, and give chances for locals to train and develop various skills, thereby contributing to their well-being. Also, Arcodia and Whitford (2007) argue that attending festivals helps generate social capital by fostering the development of community resources. In addition, whether or not they are paid employees, the festival organisers who are in charge of the administrative sectors of the festival must communicate with local businesses and the general society in order to create festival

plans. This interaction occurs throughout the festival's duration, increasing awareness of society resources and expertise, establishing social ties between previously unrelated groups and people, identifying opportunities for community resource development, and generally encouraging stronger interaction between existing society organisations.

Furthermore, festivals promote more effective use of local resources by allowing organisers and participants to discover local resources that were previously unknown, perhaps protected by personal gatekeepers or ethnic social borders or otherwise lost within the complicated social web of societal structures and not usually accessible to everyone. The social networks which might develop via the festivals' organisation have the possibility to last well far beyond the short life of the festival. When festivals become recurring events, this may produce far greater long-term value. Festivals might not only be a catalyst for revitalizing current collaborations but also opportunities for building new ones. For instance, festivals that involve volunteers give chances for training and development in a range of skills and promote more effective use of business, local educational, and community venues (Sirianni & Friedland, 2000 as cited in Arcodia & Whitford 2007). In addition, festivals have a positive effect on the quality of life of the society by providing a chance to avoid daily routines and to socialize with friends and family within a community (Pavluković et al., 2017; Yürük et al., 2017).

It has also been argued that festivals can provide positive socio-cultural benefits to host societies, such as community cohesion, and entertainment (Gursoy et al., 2004), cultural recovery (Yolal et al., 2016). According to Small (2007), community identity and cohesion refers to the festival's effects on community members' feeling of identity and connectivity. Residents develop a sense of pride in the event as a result of their sense of community and ownership. Residents also take pleasure in demonstrating their community's individuality. These factors contribute to the development of a feeling of identity among members of the local community. Moreover, local residents attend local events for a diversity of hedonic and functional reasons (Gursoy et al., 2006), including entertainment, education, curiosity, socialization, aesthetic appreciation, personal development, self-expression, and to receive acceptance by others. Positive festival experiences are likely to contribute to participants' personal satisfaction, which will likely

increase their overall happiness and, consequently, their subjective well-being (Yolal et al., 2016). Individual identity is one of the most widely expressed psychological results. Self-identity (holistic understanding an individual has of him or herself) is a critical component in understanding human well-being. The impact of events on self-identity has been explored in a small number of studies and maybe a critical area for future development in terms of comprehending the role of events at a psychological level. For example, Packer and Ballantyne (2010, as cited in Kitchen & Filep, 2019) included identity in their survey of well-being at a music festival and discovered that attendees felt more positive about themselves because of attending the event.

Along with larger events, community events can have a significant impact on attendees by facilitating interactions that help attendees feel better about themselves. Furthermore, Packer and Ballantyne (2010, as cited in Kitchen & Filep, 2019) assert that events can serve as a platform for self-expression but also a means of testing and realizing identities. Recognizing this connection between identity and self-expression, the Bealtaine Festival (Ireland's national arts festival) was examined and found to facilitate self-expression and personal development (Kitchen & Filep, 2019). Festivals and events also contribute to the creation of a positive image of a society, act as animators for static attractions, and act as catalysts for additional socio-economic development, as well as attracting visitors, investors, and sponsors (Yolal et al., 2016). Festivals also promote cultural exchange and understanding among and between citizens and tourists by providing a platform for hosts and guests to enhance tolerance and understanding through the exposure of guests to the host culture (Besculides et al., 2002). Presenting one's own culture to strangers can strengthen ties to the community, thereby increasing one's sense of identity, cohesion, pride, and support. Additionally, the interactive nature of socio-cultural activities reinforces the link between culture and the growth of social capital (Yolal et al., 2016). The music festival setting may offer an environment which is conducive to positive psychological results as participants develop or reflect on their ability to understand themselves, cultivate new expressions of self-identity, as well as learn about music (Ballantyne et al., 2014). Furthermore, research related to culture/education benefits indicates that festivals offer unique opportunities for communities' cultural and educational development. Festivals enable local residents and tourists to exchange ideas and serve as an educational and training platform for citizens, and they may also help promote further understanding

between people of various races and cultures and act as building blocks for societies. The members of the community typically view festivals as a fun community-based event that celebrates and reflects the community's culture and history instead of a money-making tourist attraction. Moreover, festivals may also provide attendees with new venues for total immersion in local culture, learning, sensory, and emotional stimulations, that may increase their engagement and fulfilment (Yolal et al., 2016).

### **2.5.2 Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts of Events and Festivals**

Whilst economic benefits are frequently assumed to improve residents' quality of life significantly, sociocultural factors might not always be as positive during the development of tourist activities or events. The development of tourism has an impact on the sociocultural features of citizens which including habits, social lives, daily routines, and values. These factors may lead to psychological tensions amongst community members if tourism impacts on them in predominantly negative ways. Additionally, in regions with a high level of tourism is frequently an increase in population because of new residents moving from other areas. When a high growth rate is combined with poor planning and management, there is frequently a loss of inhabitant identity and local culture (Andereck et al., 2005). Changes in society values and patterns, environmental degradation and litter, increased prices for basic services, disruption of normal business, resident exodus, insecure sexual behaviours, noise and crowds, alcohol and drug use, xenophobia, commodification and exploitation of culture and traditional ways of life, clashes with festivalgoers, and so on. Anti-social behaviour is prevalent at events such as music festivals as a result of excessive alcohol and drug consumption, which results in drunken, rowdy and delinquent behaviour. These negative aspects may threaten the local community's positive attitude towards hosting an event. More essentially, this negative attitude may significantly harm an event's image and reduce or remove community support. (Pavluković et al., 2017; Yürük et al., 2017).

Dilkes-Frayne (2016) wrote that despite being the primary sites for alcohol and drug use by attendees worldwide, music festivals have received comparatively little research attention. Research on music festivals and the social contexts of drug use, in general,

have tended to concentrate on social and cultural processes without adequately considering the mediating role of space and spatial processes. The majority of research on music festivals has concentrated on the festival experience and the attraction of people to it, drawing on carnivalesque liminality, communities, ritual, and neo-tribes. Drug use has not been a primary focus of festival research, as researchers have claimed that it is not a necessary aspect of festival participation (Dilkes-Frayne, 2016). Where drug use has been particularly addressed, research has inclined to survey use prevalence among festival attending population instead of examining how drugs are used at the festival. However, music festivals are gaining popularity among young individuals as places for leisure, entertainment, and socializing internationally. Festivals are frequently highly anticipated occasions that are seen as a break from everyday life and can offer an opportunity for alcohol and drug use (Dilkes-Frayne, 2016). In addition, illicit drug use is prevalent among attendees of electronic dance music festivals worldwide. Previous research has established that festival attendees have a higher risk profile than the general population because of their use of such substances, which may result in serious physical and psychological harm (for example, hyperthermia, seizures, multiorgan failure) and are a frequent reason for presentation to emergency departments (McCrae et al., 2019). According to the existing understanding of drug and alcohol use at outdoor music festivals, young people aged 25 or younger are more likely to participate in excessive and dangerous levels of alcohol consumption and related risk-taking behaviours such as violence (Jaensch et al., 2018).

By definition, an outdoor music festival is a gathering of a great number of people and are considered to be events that are attended by great numbers. As such, the scale of these events significantly increases the demands on the planning and response capabilities of the host society, city or region in which they take place. On-site support services have become critical in providing health and medical care to attendees at large gatherings. For example, Hutton et al. (2014, as cited in Jaensch et al., 2018) discovered that the majority of people transported to hospitals from outdoor music festivals were adolescents who had consumed an excessive amount of alcohol. While alcohol consumption prior to, during, and following the outdoor music festivals is receiving increased attention, it has not been the main focus of event or mass gathering research, especially from the consumer/attendee point of view (Jaensch et al., 2018). With the popularity of outdoor music festivals growing, the combination of sun, large

crowds, and alcohol may have disastrous consequences. According to Hutton et al. (2014), young people aged 18-25 are the group most frequently transferred to hospital for drug and alcohol-related illnesses. There are many influential factors that are linked to alcohol consumption at outdoor music events, one of which is that young adults attending these festivals consider alcohol consumption to be the social norm (Hutton & Jaensch, 2015). The literature corroborates this observation, which indicates that alcohol consumption occurs at a greater frequency and greater levels in social contexts. Additionally, there is a social status which comes with consuming a large amount of alcohol. For instance, those who consume large amounts of alcohol are seen as a 'hero-like status', while those who eat while drinking are accorded a lesser status. Young people do not vigorously seek out health messages to stay safe and healthy. At music festivals, alcohol is frequently consumed to celebrate and facilitate a good time. This lack of attention to health is unsurprising, given that young people are generally quite healthy and thus unaccustomed to worrying about their health (Hutton & Jaensch, 2015).

### **2.5.3 The Demonstration Effect**

The demonstration effect is a term that has progressed regularly in the literature of tourism. It is a theory which seems intuitively true yet with few empirical proofs. This is because it is hard to differentiate between the effects of visitors' behaviour on residents and other impacts including advertising, films, television, and the like (Fisher, 2004). According to Monterrubio et al. (2014) the encounter between residents and visitors has been critical in understanding tourism as a sociocultural phenomenon. Since the beginning of sociological and anthropological interest in tourism and up to the 1990s, scholars have focussed their research on tourism as a product of Western society, especially as many popular destinations were viewed as pleasure peripheries as well as a new form of colonialism (Monterrubio et al., 2014). There is a considerable discussion regarding the positive and/or negative influences that tourism demonstrations may create. Early studies indicate that some of the most obvious, common social impacts of tourism involved the introduction of foreign ideologies and lifestyles into comparatively traditional or isolated communities. In other words, as a result of direct interaction between residents and visitors, the local residents begin to

adopt tourists' attitudes, behaviours, values, and consumption patterns (Yasothonrikul & Bowen, 2015). One of the significant effects of the tourist–host relationship is the demonstration effect, which occurs when the host behaviour is modified to imitate that of the visitors. Tourists visiting developing countries demonstrate a foreign way of life to host community, particularly if these visitors come from diverse communities. Local residents are frequently inclined to imitate the seemingly rich visitors, and as a consequence, may shift in consumption patterns occur towards Western products (Mbaiwa, 2005).

Fisher (2004, p.436) argued that individuals are more likely to imitate those with greater prestige, who are perceived to be better informed, although if they belong to the same cultural group. This is important because "data can only be understood when a complicated and culturally relevant conceptual framework is acquired." In other words, individuals can only fully comprehend the behaviour of others if their cultures are similar. Individuals learn how to behave in specific situations based on the following factors: the modes of behaviour passed down through generations (cultural behaviour), how they behaved in the past (learnt behaviour), the outcomes of other individual's behaviour (observed behaviour), and the meanings they ascribe to specific institutions, objects, and patterns of behaviour (meaning). For a person, the weighting given to each of these modes of learning will, to some degree, depend on the structure of the community in that they live, which is referred to as "cultural bias" (Fisher, 2004, p.436).

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design and Method**

In order to collect data, focus groups were selected because they allow for in-depth information to be gathered and allow participants to talk more freely about topics of interest. As one of several methods of qualitative data collection, interviewing via focus groups offers the most direct and research-centered contact between participant and researcher (Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Evans, 2018). George (2013) claimed that academic and applied researchers have utilized focus groups for a variety of purposes and in a variety of contexts. According to Krueger and Casey (2009:2 as cited in George, 2013. p1), "a focus group study is a carefully prepared series of talks that aimed at eliciting views about a certain topic in a permissive, nonthreatening atmosphere". In addition, according to Wilkinson (1999), the authors of a seminal text on focus groups indicated, "what is identified as a focus group today takes on numerous different forms", yet centrally it includes one or more group discussions in which participants focus collectively on an issue that is chosen by the researcher and presented to them in the form of a film, a collection of advertisements, a vignette to discuss, a "game" to play, or simply a specific set of questions. Gibbs (1997) stated that the primary goal of focus group research is to gather information based on respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions in a way that would not be possible via other approaches such as observation, one-on-one interviews, or questionnaire surveys. While these attitudes, sentiments, and beliefs may exist independently of a group or its social environment, they are more likely to be disclosed as a result of the social gathering and interaction associated with focus groups. Compared with individual interviews, which are used to extract an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and emotions, focus groups elicit a diversity of perspectives and emotional processes within a group setting. The researcher can exert more control over an individual interview than he or she can over a focus group in which participants may take the initiative.

In short, a focus group allows the researcher to elicit a greater quantity of data in a shorter length of time (Gibbs, 1997), whilst Morgan and Krueger (1993, as cited in Morgan, 1996) add that focus groups permit complicated behaviours and synergetic interactions to be examined through the "the group effect". What distinguishes focus group discussions from individual interviews is the fact that participants both

interrogate and explain themselves to one another (Morgan, 1996). Additionally, Kitzinger (1994, 1995 as cited in Gibbs, 1997) argued that interaction between participants is the essential feature of focus groups, since it elicits their information of the world, the language they use to discuss a topic, and their values and views about a specific situation. These interactions allow participants to pose questions to one another and to re-evaluate and reconsider their own interpretations of their unique experiences. They may also elicit information in a manner that enables researchers to ascertain both why a problem is salient, and what makes it significant. As a consequence, the gap between what individuals say and what they do may be easy to be understood (Gibbs, 1997).

Conradson (2013) stated that focus groups are beneficial for eliciting information on participants' varied perceptions of a given social or environmental problem. They enable researcher to go beyond quantitative indicators of support or opposition of a proposition and to start to understand why such opinions exist. Furthermore, they may provide insight into the discussions and arguments that occur between these divergent points of view and, when used correctly, help us to analyse how such understandings vary according to social groups (based on age, gender, profession and so forth). For these reasons, Morgan (1988, as cited in Conradson, 2013) argued that focus groups are especially well suited to exploring subjects in which complicated patterns of behaviour and motivation are evident or where different opinions are held. Furthermore, listening in on focus group interviews - or 'structured eavesdropping' - enables the researcher to become acquainted with the way research participants habitually speak, the particular idioms, terminology, and vocabulary they frequently employ, how they joke, tell stories, and construct arguments, and so forth. Not only do focus group interactions show common methods of speaking, but they also disclose shared experiences and shared ways of making sense of these experiences. The researcher gains insight into the prevalent beliefs, conceptions, and meanings that shape and inform participants speak of their experiences (Wilkinson, 1998).

Taking another perspective, the presence of other participants in a focus group may inhibit a person and have an effect on how a judgment is formulated or an answer is made, thus driving individuals to express more socially acceptable and stereotypical answers (Acocella, 2012). To avoid this the researcher distributed the participants in

the interviews according to their proximity and their relationship to each other in order to feel more comfortable in expressing their opinion. Moreover, Gibbs (1997) argues that focus groups may be challenging to organise. It may be difficult to get a representative sample, and focus groups may discourage certain participants, such as those who are not articulate or confident, as well as those who have communication difficulties or special needs. Additionally, some individuals may be discouraged from trusting others with sensitive or intimate material due to the approach of focus group discussion. Personal interviews or the use of workbooks in conjunction with focus groups may be a more appropriate technique in certain instances.

Focus groups are not completely secret or anonymous, since information is shared with the group participants (Gibbs, 1997). Hence, acceptance to participate in the study was challenging at first, especially from females because of the complexities of Saudi culture, which made it necessary for the researcher to talk and ask for help from his female friends via a snowball sampling approach. Emails were sent out to these contacts, underlining their rights to participate or withdraw without issue. Although many refused to participate, a small number of females agreed to be involved in the study in terms of the semi-structured interviews, Opdenakker (2006); Barriball and While (1994) and Jennings (2010) argue that semi-structured interviews promote participants to share their experiences and enable researchers to investigate the meanings, ideas, and terms that participants offer. Interviews may benefit from social signals. Social cues like the interviewee's intonation, voice and body language will offer the interviewer numerous additional pieces of information that may be added to the interviewee's verbal response to a question, which is especially useful when addressing sensitive issues. There is no notable time delay between questions and answers in face-to-face interviews; the interviewer and the interviewee may react directly to what the other does or says. The benefit of this synchronous communication is that the respondent's answer is more spontaneous, without extensive reflection. It also guarantees that the respondent is unable to receive help from others during the formulation of a reply (Opdenakker, 2006; Barriball & While, 1994).

Zojceska (2018) reported that as semi-structured interviews mix a structured and unstructured interviewing manner, they could provide the best of both worlds. A semi-structured interview is ideal for investigating perceptions, values, beliefs, and motives,

leading to a clearer understanding of the respondents' thoughts and attitudes than when conducting structured interviews. Structured interviews restrict the responses of respondents to the issues that are delineated by the researchers, which might not correspond to the respondents' own experience (Barriball & While, 1994; Hernandez et al., 1996). Bhasin (2019) argued that the aim of a qualitative research interview is to elicit information about an individual's experiences, perspectives, or beliefs about a certain subject or topic. Moreover, in qualitative research methods, interviews provide a more in-depth understanding of societal trends compared to the data gathered via quantitative techniques such as questionnaires. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, (2006) also stated that the aim of the qualitative research interview is to provide a body of knowledge which is conceptual and theoretical and is founded on the meanings which life experiences hold for those who take part in the study. Furthermore, given the sensitivity and importance of the research topic, the researcher has chosen the semi-structured interviews, which provides an opportunity for questions to follow up through the interview and provides the research with additional reliable information from the participants. Additionally, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to examine and explain inconsistencies in the participants' answers and help the participants remember some of the information during the interview.

According to Bhasin (2019) and Jennings (2010), follow-up questions are one of the benefits when a semi-structured interview approach is used to acquire deeper detail or clarification from the respondents, based on their previous answers. Semi-structured interviews are ideally suited in a situation where some unconstrained questions need to be continued. Given the sensitivity of the research topic, such interviews are ideal when it is obligatory to ask unfettered fact-finding questions and explore what each participant is thinking (Adams, 2015). Therefore, the semi-structured interview offers interviewers some options in the wording of each question, and the utilization of further probing. Such probing might be an invaluable tool to ensure the data's reliability because it clarifies essential and relevant issues that the responders raise. Furthermore, it provides opportunities to discuss sensitive issues, may elicit valuable and complete data, enables the interviewer to examine and explain inconsistencies within respondents' accounts and might help respondents remember further information for memory-related questions (Barriball & While, 1994). Therefore, social desirability probing maximizes the possibility for interactive opportunities

between the interviewer and the respondent, which helps build a sense of connection. It also reduces the risk of responses that the respondent thinks are socially desirable to the interviewer (Barriball & While, 1994; Bhasin, 2019). In addition, the researcher chose semi-structured interviews as an appropriate approach because of the likelihood that some of the participants in the study may not have attended the international events that took place recently in Saudi Arabia, and that this method may clarify their beliefs and opinions about the subject of the research.

Furthermore, Corbin and Strauss (2008) claimed that semi-structured interviews are inclusive interviews in which participants need to respond to presented open-ended questions. However, opinions on the optimal duration of sessions range from 30 minutes to two and a half hours for a focus group. Masadeh (2012) states that the overall consensus favours somewhat longer groups, two hours, and two to three hours, as well as others who suggest one-and-a-half to two hours or one to two hours as preferable. Clearly, the aim is to use the minimal amount of time possible to get the largest amount of knowledge possible about the subject being addressed (Masadeh, 2012). Based on this, the interview questions were designed to be covered in a period of 45 minutes to an hour and a half. These interviews were relied on the semi-structured interview guide which schematically introduces questions or topics and requires exploration by the interviewer. As researchers had to use their interview time optimally, the interview guides contribute the basis for exploring multiple responses systemically and thoroughly, while keeping the interview's emphasis on the desired action line (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

### **3.2 Facilitating the Focus Group Sessions**

After the approval of a sufficient number of participants in the study, the necessary documents were submitted by the researcher, namely: The Human Ethics Low Risk Panel Approval Notice; a letter of introduction; information sheet; and consent form for participation in the study). These supporting documents contain the necessary information that the study participant must know before participating in the study and starting the interview. Moreover, these documents clarify that the project has had ethics approval from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at

Flinders University in South Australia. They also contain the data of the researcher and the research supervisor, the title of the main research, the objective of the study, benefits of the study, participant involvement and potential risks, withdrawal rights, confidentiality and privacy, instructions should they have queries or concerns, and finally the ethics committee approval. Additionally, they clarify that participation in the study is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw from the interview at any time, whether before or during the interview, and that they have the right not to answer any question that they find inappropriate and do not wish to answer, and that their personal information is completely confidential and will not be disclosed in the data analysis later. Moreover, if a participant notices any illegal activity in the project, they can contact the Executive Officer of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University via e-mail or by phone as indicated in the research project approval form. Bhasin (2019) argued that an interview has to be performed at a place where distractions are not present, and the interviewee also feels comfortable. The timing is likely to be in the evening. The respondent will feel relaxed and at ease at their home, so a productive interview is more likely. An online advertising letter was published by the researcher on social networking sites such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook for those wishing to volunteer and participate in the study.

In the online participation recruitment text (via email or post), the researcher introduced himself and the purpose and motivation of the research and its importance in the researcher's field of study. As part of the snowball sampling approach, the researcher also asked some friends to talk to their families and friends, to see if they were willing to participate. Adams (2015) reported that often researchers have to call the chosen individuals to ask for an appointment. Rather than making a "cold call," researchers must introduce themselves in advance by sending an email, explaining the importance of the person's advice and indicating that the research has the necessary approvals. This written record may be a way to add legality while saving time in clarifying and justifying the study. When researchers send this information in advance, it can make room for the next phone call to arrange the meeting. The table below shows the type of documents provided to the participants and the purpose of each one (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Ethics and Biosafety Application Requirements**

Type of Document	Purpose
Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of the study</li> <li>• Purpose of the study</li> <li>• Benefits of the study</li> <li>• Participant involvement and potential risks</li> <li>• Withdrawal Rights</li> <li>• Confidentiality and Privacy</li> <li>• Data Storage</li> <li>• Recognition of Contribution / Time / Travel costs</li> <li>• How will I receive feedback?</li> <li>• Ethics Committee Approval</li> <li>• Queries and Concerns</li> </ul>
Letter of Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An invitation to participate in the study</li> </ul>
Consent Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signature and consent to participate in the study</li> </ul>
Human Ethics Low Risk Panel Approval Notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarify that the project is ethically approved by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University in South Australia.</li> </ul>
An Online Advertising Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite people to participate in the study and conduct interviews. A copy of online advertising materials was written by the researcher as follows:                       “I am currently working on a project entitled “Community Perspectives on the Impact of Hosting international Musical Events in Saudi Arabia” (Flinders Project #4053). The purpose of this study is to investigate the possibility of the</li> </ul>

	<p>continuation of the Western events that have occurred and may occur in the future in Saudi Arabia. It examines the possibility of developing tourism in the Kingdom by hosting such events, investigates the extent of benefit from these events and any negative effects that may affect their continuity in the future. It also aims to find out how the local community has reacted to these events and their attitudes towards such events. Participation is entirely voluntary. If you would like to know more about the project or to enquire about participating, please email: <a href="mailto:hoth0008@flinders.edu.au">hoth0008@flinders.edu.au</a>). “</p>
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Once the researcher had obtained enough individuals to participate, he then provided them with a Code of Ethics. This approach is best done just before to their participating in a focus group or interview, or immediately prior to them completing your questionnaire. The Code of Ethics informs them with details about what the researcher will do with the information participants provide and demonstrates commitment to treating both them and the information with dignity and honesty (Dawson, 2009). Hence, appropriate communication of the investigation's aim, according to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), is one of the ethical concerns associated with research. This gets more complicated since the investigator may not be aware of the facts that will be revealed at the start of the research; therefore, the research objectives may change throughout the course of the study. As a result, verbal consent is advised for interviewees' participation in continuing interviews, and they may withdraw at any time. Additionally, they must be informed on ethical concepts such as secrecy and anonymity (Bhasin, 2019).

This research aimed to examine the impacts of hosting international events that are becoming increasingly commonplace in the context of tourism development in Saudi Arabia. It also aims to determine how members of the local community (that reside in settings that have hosted Western-focused events) have reacted to these events and their attitudes towards hosting them in the future. This study will contribute to contemporary tourism and events discourse by examining the following objectives:

- i. To determine local Saudis' perspectives towards international cultural (music) events;
- ii. To provide recommendations based on the perspectives of community members with regards to hosting international events in the future;
- iii. To determine the differences in perceptions to international events based on prior travel experiences.

Thirty-one educated male and female Saudi citizens who have previously studied at a university or are currently studying at a university, inside or outside the Kingdom, volunteered to participate in this study. The participants were divided into 7 groups and each group contained 4-5 people. The participants were given complete freedom to choose the method of the interview, the place and time of the interview, and it was also up to them to participate in face-to-face or online via Zoom. 12 of the participants have never travelled outside Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. While 19 of the participants have previously travelled outside these areas or are currently outside Saudi Arabia for study or tourism, etc., The participants were divided into groups consisting of four to five people for each interview. Seven focus group interviews were conducted, three of which were face-to-face, and four were conducted via Zoom.

The research focuses on international events, and the extent of their positive and negative impact on the Saudi host society, and the objectives of this study required participants to share their opinions and beliefs on the Impact of Hosting international Musical Events in Saudi Arabia. However, in order to collect qualitative data that would explore the participants' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes concerning these events and their continuation, semi-structured interviews were chosen, because this leads to obtaining in-depth information through the interview and gives the room for the participants to speak more freely about issues of interest. Furthermore, according to Newcomer et al. (2015), semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable when more than a few of the open-ended questions need follow-up queries. As a result of this particular methodology, the objectives had met without considerable challenge.

International events are new in the region and did not exist before, which prompted this as the topic for this research. The participants were chosen to be educated and have previously studied at the University, or they are currently studying at the University because they may be at a comparable level of knowledge. The research

also chose to conduct interviews with these people based on their experiences. Some have never travelled outside the Kingdom and the Gulf countries, and some have previously travelled outside the Kingdom and the Gulf countries, or at present they are outside the Kingdom for study or tourism. This allows this study to compare and analyse the answers of these participants impartially.

The interview guide provides the core question and a variety of questions relevant to the core question, that in turn, is enhanced further through pilot testing of the interview guide (Creswell, 2007). The interview guide consists of the following questions:

1. Have you attended any of the recent international events in Saudi Arabia? If yes, how was your impression? If not, will you attend any of them in the future if the opportunity arises?
2. What are your views on the establishment of these international events in Saudi Arabia? And do you expect them to continue?
3. What are the positive and negative effects from your point of view of these international events?
4. Do you think that these events will serve the local economy in the future and provide new opportunities? If yes how? If not, why?
5. From your point of view, do you think that these events are appropriate for Saudi Arabia?

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The research design deals with the management of research activity and involves the collection of data to contribute to the achievement of the research objectives (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Data collection and analysis is another field where several researchers may be an asset to reducing or removing experimenter bias. Audits may be carried out to determine if mistakes have occurred in the data collection and entry procedures. Similarly, the involvement of several researchers may help in

ensuring that the right statistical analyses are performed and that the findings are correctly reported (Marczyk et al., 2005). The number of participants in the study was 31 people, 17 were males, and 13 were females, 19 of whom were aged between 25 and 34 years old, while 12 of the participants were aged between 18 and 24 years old.

The participants were divided into groups consisting of four to five people for each interview. Seven focus group interviews were conducted, 3 of which were face-to-face, and four were conducted via Zoom. The participants were asked to share their views on international events and the extent of their positive and negative impact on the Saudi host society. As the participants are all from Saudi Arabia and speak Arabic, all interviews were conducted in Arabic. All interviews were recorded by a laptop and a mobile phone, and then all the participants' answers in each interview were transcribed. After that, the researcher read the participants' answers and translated them into English. Three main headings were then selected from the data (Participant Performances at Festival and Events, Potential Cultural Impacts, and Long-term Concerns and Creating Positive Perceptions of Saudi Arabia). After the main topics were selected, the similar answers for each topic were selected and put together to facilitate the process of data analysis and a deeper understanding of the topics. Then, sub-headings were selected based on the answers related to each main topic.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Overview**

The general aim of this research was to examine the impacts of hosting international events that are becoming increasingly commonplace in the context of tourism development in Saudi Arabia. It also aims to determine how members of the local community (that reside in settings that have hosted Western-focused events) have reacted to these events and their attitudes towards hosting them in the future. This study was designed to: (1) to determine local Saudis' perspectives towards international cultural (music) events; (2) to provide recommendations based on the perspectives of community members with regards to hosting international events in the future; (3) to determine the differences in perceptions to international events based on prior travel experiences.

The results of this study present many ideas and perceptions by the Saudi Society (predominantly those aged under 35) towards hosting international musical events that have occurred recently in Saudi Arabia and are expected to continue to occur in the future. According to Shakeela and Weaver (2018), queries for residents' opinions and attitudes regarding the effects of local tourism indicate ambivalent relationships between tourism and host communities. While some may claim that expanding tourism and events helps the host nation significantly, others believe that it can have drawbacks as well. Andereck et al. (2005) assert that tourism is commonly considered as an essential economic basis because it brings benefits that can improve the quality of life, such as employment possibilities, economic variety, tax revenue, restaurants, festivals, natural and cultural attractions, and chances for outdoor leisure. However, there are fears that tourism may have a detrimental influence on people's quality of life. These issues may include greater crowding, parking, and traffic jams, increased criminal activity, increasing living expenses, conflict between visitors and residents, and changes in the way people live their lives.

It was evident in this study that the establishment of international music events in Saudi Arabia has negative social and cultural effects, such as the performances of the participants in these events, and this includes the inappropriate behaviour of some artists who performed in these concerts, the inappropriate behaviour of the audiences,

and the spread of alcohol and drugs within these events, which It is considered culturally and religiously unacceptable in Saudi culture. In addition, the study showed that there is a group of people in Saudi Arabia who still refuse to hold such musical events and consider that they are not appropriate for the culture of Saudi Society and may change the culture and principles of conservative Saudi Society. Also, this study showed that there is a fear of changing the behaviour of the local community over time, and the establishment of such events may affect the new generation, which is considered vulnerable to change. Nevertheless, it must also be acknowledged that the establishment of the international music events in Saudi Arabia may create positive perceptions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and may change the stereotyped image held by many people who have negative perceptions of the state. In addition, the results of the research showed that hosting such international events in Saudi Arabia, can improve tolerance and understanding of the cultures of other societies through the convergence of tourists from different countries with the (Saudi) host community in these events. In the same way, the research results also showed that through the mixing of Saudi Society with tourists from different countries, excellent opportunities might be available for members of the Saudi Society to learn different languages and be exposed to new cultures and interests.

The results of this study were divided into three main themes. The first theme is the participant performances at festivals and events; this includes inappropriate artist behaviour, inappropriate attendee behaviour and the spread of alcohol and drugs in these international events. Second, the potential cultural impacts and long-term concerns include incompatibility of many western events with Saudi culture and long-term cultural erosion and impacts on future generations. Eventually, the third theme is the creation of positive perceptions of Saudi Arabia, including whether hosting these events can help change perceptions amongst international visitors to Saudi Arabia and hosting these events can improve tolerance and understanding of other cultures. However, the research objectives were addressed by collecting enough data by the researcher through 7 focus groups interviews with 31 educated male and female Saudi citizens who have previously studied at a university or are currently studying at a university, either inside or outside the Kingdom. Three focus groups interviews were

face-to-face, and four interviews were conducted via Zoom. The table below illustrates the information of participants (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Summary of Participants**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Travelled Before?</b>
P1	Female	25-34	Yes
P2	Male	25-34	Yes
P3	Male	25-34	Yes
P4	Female	25-34	Yes
P5	Female	25-34	Yes
P6	Male	25-34	Yes
P7	Male	25-34	Yes
P8	Male	25-34	Yes
P9	Male	25-34	Yes
P10	Female	18-24	Yes
P11	Female	25-34	Yes
P12	Male	25-34	Yes
P13	Male	25-34	Yes
P14	Female	25-34	Yes
P15	Male	18-24	Yes
P16	Female	25-34	Yes
P17	Female	18-24	No
P18	Female	25-34	Yes
P19	Male	18-24	Yes
P20	Female	18-24	No
P21	Male	18-24	No
P22	Female	18-24	No
P23	Male	18-24	No
P24	Male	18-24	No
P25	Male	18-24	Yes
P26	Male	25-34	No

P27	Male	18-24	No
P28	Female	25-34	No
P29	Female	25-34	No
P30	Male	25-34	No
P31	Female	18-24	No

## 4.2 Participant Performances at Festivals and Events

### 4.2.1 Inappropriate Artist Behaviour

Several participants mentioned that some of the artists who were performing in the international music concerts that were held in Saudi Arabia recently, such as MDL Beast, engaged in inappropriate behaviour by the cultural norms of Saudi Society. This behaviour angered Saudi citizens on social networking sites such as Twitter. As examples, when P27 and P24 were asked about their opinion on the establishment of the international music events in Saudi Arabia, they stated that:

“I am with the establishment of these international events in Saudi Arabia, except for foreign musical events such as MDL Beast; these foreign musical events were terrible and did not represent the culture of Saudi Society... and foreign artists in these events were behaving inappropriately to the culture of the community... for example, one of the artists (his name is Russ) was carrying a women's underwear (bra) and waving it to the audience at a concert he was performing at ... the event faced a bad reaction on social media, as some said that this behaviour depicts unusual behaviour that is incompatible with the conservative customs and traditions of the Saudi people... some of the tweeters, after seeing the videos, refused to believe that such things happen inside Saudi Arabia... this hurts my heart, and I do not like to see society in this way as a Saudi” (P27).

“I think we need to hold such events, yet the artists must be chosen carefully, some of the behaviours of foreign artists in Western musical events were inappropriate to the culture of the community... one of the artists was carrying a women's bra and waving it to the audience at a concert he was performing at, what he did is inappropriate. I see this behaviour as a disrespectful for the

culture of Saudi Arabia, and such action may prevent some people from attending these events ” (P24).

Underscoring these viewpoints further, a number of respondents also mentioned that some foreign artists were under the influence of drugs and alcohol and that they were tolerating drugs and alcohol before the start of their concert. In addition to this, they also claimed that alcohol and drugs are a natural thing for some foreign artists, which help them to present their singing performance and coexist with the surrounding atmosphere:

“I heard from many that the organisers overlooked the spread of alcohol and drugs in these events for the foreign artists as this part of their culture in these such events ...and the behaviours of some foreign artists were inappropriate at some events as a result of drugs ” (P12).

The findings illustrates that the behaviour of some of the artists angered the Saudi society on social networking sites, it also shows that some of the artists were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the events they were performing. Some see that the actions and behaviours of these artists are disrespectful to the culture and principles of Saudi Society, which may lead to the refusal to hold these events in the future, and the refusal to attract international artists to hold concerts in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the organisers of these events must educate the artists about the culture of Saudi Society and how they should act during their concerts before they come to the Kingdom in order to avoid repeating these mistakes in the future.

#### **4.2.2 Inappropriate Attendee Behaviour**

According to Ribeiro et al. (2017), when regions become tourist destinations, tourism has an effect on the quality of life of their residents. As residents, pro-tourism growth behaviour is viewed as a precondition for sustainable tourism, which can only be achieved when peoples' viewpoints are acknowledged and included in tourism development initiatives. Thus, the fundamental principle of sustainable tourism is to address the basic needs and concerns of local inhabitants within the context of a tourist development plan. Additionally, new research indicates that pro- or anti-tourist

development behaviour may be assessed by examining the opinions of local inhabitants, which may serve as indications of the degree to which citizens' acceptance of tourism (Ribeiro et al., 2017). Hence, When the researcher asked the participants about their view of the establishment of the international events in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and whether they support the establishment of such events or not, the majority of the responses stated that they support the establishment of these events of all kinds, except for the musical events such as MDL Beast and activities that bear the character of loud music such as DJs. Most of the participants mentioned that the behaviour of the masses present for these events was unacceptable, such as wearing inappropriate clothes, large groups of people mixing together, and sexual harassment, which are behaviours that the Saudi people are not accustomed to. In response to these concerns, respondents stated that those responsible for organising these events must tighten control and put the necessary restrictions in place to deter the actions of groups who engage in some unacceptable behaviour in such musical events. Furthermore, several responses asserted that the reason for these inappropriate behaviours is due to the type of activity that leads people to behave in an immoral and unacceptable manner:

“When I went to the MDL Beast event in Jeddah, I saw things that did not represent the Saudi culture, such as inappropriate clothes (women's clothes, especially, were not worthy of the culture of Saudi Society, and many women did not wear the Saudi abaya, and I was very shocked and did not feel that I was in Saudi Arabia) ...people were wearing these inappropriate clothes because of the style of event that encourages or contributes to wearing such clothes. Unfortunately, there was no control or restrictions from the concerned authorities for this point ... the pattern of foreign musical events is not appropriate [for Saudi Arabia] and leads to a change in the people's behaviour present at the event. People's behaviour in previous musical events was terrible and did not represent us as Saudis, such as sexual Harassment and inappropriate dress, and I think these international musical events drive them to behave like that ” (P1).

Subsequently, when P17 was asked if she had attended an international musical event recently in Saudi Arabia and how her impression of the event was that she had recently attended, she replied and said:

“I attended one of the musical events in Al-Ula. My impression was beautiful, the event was well organised, and the arrangement was excellent, and I noticed a great acceptance from the community present in the event ... I also noticed that all the attendees enjoyed the event, which could be due to the type of music, which was quiet. However, if the event's style was different and noisy the experience might be different, and we might notice inappropriate behaviours from the audience, as we saw in the MDL Beast event ” (P17).

On the other hand, some participants mentioned that musical events such as MDL Beast and other foreign music events meet the needs of Saudi audience's demands to attend such events and that many have been given the opportunity to attend these events inside the Kingdom instead of travelling outside Saudi Arabia and attending them in other countries. Some said that the groups who misbehaved were few and did not represent the majority of people at the event, and that it is very natural to see such negative things in the beginning because these events are new in the Kingdom, and it is expected that some errors occur in the organisation and monitoring of the masses:

“I attended the MDL Beast music event; the event was genuinely good, the event's organisation was great, and the music variety in the event was incredibly good and met the needs of all the audiences... there were some inappropriate behaviours from a few people in the event I attended, and I do not see them representing a substantial number ... it is natural to see such negative things in the beginning because these events are new in the Kingdom ” (P14).

“The Kingdom has provided us with an excellent opportunity to attend these international events, which often take place outside Saudi Arabia, and now they are happening here in our country ” (P31).

The results above show a difference in the opinions in terms of the behaviour of those attending these events and the pattern of these events. Some argued that the

pattern of some musical events such as MDL Beast and activities that bear the character of loud music such as DJs had negative impacts on the behaviour of the local community present for these events, such as wearing inappropriate clothes, sexual harassment and physical assaults that Saudi Society was not accustomed to before. On other hands, a few individuals believe that the establishment of these events has nothing to do with changing the behaviour of society members, and the bad behaviour was from a few people, and they do not represent the majority, and it is normal for there to be some mistakes because these events are new in the Kingdom.

Nevertheless, the organisers of these events must consider the opinions of the local community in the development of tourism and the establishment of such global events in Saudi Arabia, taking into account to correct issues that may prejudice the support of the local community. As Kim and Walker (2012); Kim et al. (2015) asserted that to get community support, event planners must first have a better grasp of locals' perceptions of both the positive and negative aspects of events. It is said that tourism's progress, or even its demise, is dependent upon the attitudes and perspectives of host communities (Sharpley, 2014; Gursoy et al., 2002).

#### **4.2.3 The Use of Alcohol and Drugs**

Some of the study participants reported that they witnessed some abuses from the audience, which include the spread of alcohol and drug abuse in the sites of the international music events in particular, and this was not accustomed to the conservative Saudi Society, which considers alcohol and drugs taboo, whether used secretly or in the open, and others also mentioned that the unethical behaviour of some audiences was due to the excessive use of drugs and alcohol, with assaults on others by beating (the attendees of the musical event and the residents in the surrounding areas of the event), and some participants also mentioned that the organisers of the musical events were fully aware of the issue of the spread of alcohol and drugs in the locations of these events, but they overlooked it:

“ We saw many negative behaviours from the masses who attended these international events, such as drinking alcohol and using drugs... Also, in the musical event that I attended in the city of (Ad-Diriyah), some people were under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and I saw some fall to the ground because of drug abuse and alcohol consumption ” (P24).

“ I see that these events have changed the behaviour of the young people in Saudi Arabia and I have a friend in the Riyadh region who was beaten after a musical event by people who were present in a musical event near to his house... My friend went out of his house and was on his way to the supermarket to buy some things. He was surprised by the presence of some people [leaving the event] near his car, and when he asked them to leave, the young men started beating and assaulting him ” (P 11).

Consequently, many of the participants expressed their fear of attending these musical events in the future because of these abuses. For instance, when P12 was asked if he would like to attend foreign musical events in the future or not, he said:

“ I will not attend the Western music events in the future because of the bad things that occurred in the previous events [i.e. inappropriate behaviours such as sexual harassment and physical assaults] that were caused by those present in musical events such as MDL Beast ... there was ease in the spread of drugs and alcohol in the event, which was shown to us by the social media ...I also heard from many that the organisers ignored the spread of alcohol and drugs in these events“.

(P 10) of the main issues were alcohol, drugs and sexual harassment in these international musical events ... they may affect the attendance of a large segment of society in the future to these events and spread the fear of attending “.

Indeed, many participants also agreed that bad behaviours and alcohol and drugs abuse at the music events were by young people who aged between 25-18. This finding also parallels those of Jaensch et al. (2018) in their study that indicates that according to current knowledge on drug and alcohol use at outdoor music festivals,

young individuals aged 25 and under are more likely to engage in excessive and hazardous levels of alcohol consumption, as well as risky behaviours such as violence (Jaensch et al., 2018). There are several influencing elements that contribute to alcohol use at outdoor music festivals, one of which is that most young people who attend these events see alcohol consumption as the social norm. The research corroborates this observation, indicating that alcohol intake is more prevalent and intense in social settings (Hutton & Jaensch, 2015).

This finding proves that there was a spread of alcohol and drug abuse in the sites of musical events that were held in Saudi Arabia, which may have led to physical attacks on others, whether those attending these events or those living near the sites of the events. Also, the spread of alcohol and drugs and their abuse in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is considered taboo and rarely occurs in public places. This is in line with the assertion of Dilkes-Frayne (2016) who stated that festivals are often highly anticipated occasions that are seen as a break from daily life and may provide a chance for alcohol and drug usage. Furthermore, at events such as music festivals, anti-social behaviour is prevalent because of excessive drink and drug intake, which leads in inebriated, boisterous, and delinquent behaviour. These negative features might threaten the local society's positive perception of the influence of hosting an event. More importantly, this negative attitude may have a detrimental effect on an event's image and reduce community support (Yürük et al., 2017; Pavlukovi et al., 2017). Moreover, McCrae et al. (2019) argued that illicit drug use is widespread among electronic dance music event participants worldwide, and previous study has proven that festivals participants have a greater risk profile than the general population as a consequence of their use of such substances, which can result in significant physical and psychological damage.

## 4.3 Potential Cultural Impacts and Long-term Concerns

### 4.3.1 Incompatibility of Many Western Events with Saudi Culture

Saudi Arabia has historically been one of the most religiously conservative nations on the planet (Al Alhareth et al., 2015; Alshammari et al., 2019), with severe societal prohibitions pertaining to the entertainment sectors (e.g., musical, comical or sporting). Participating in leisure and entertainment activities was culturally undesirable due to the Islamic religion and way of life (Alkhudair, 2018; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010 as cited in Alshammari et al. 2019). Thus, a number of the respondents have argued that many Saudi citizens are still rejects some activities, such as international musical events. They see those events as not fitting into Saudi culture, because the pattern of these events may change the traditional clothing of the local community and their attitudes. Also, they may change the values and principles of society that, to some point, still refuse the mixing of men and women in public places, that may result in sexual harassment and actions contrary to the culture of Saudi Society:

“ The Saudi fans who support Western artists will imitate them in behaviour and by wearing similar clothes ...I see that these events have changed the culture of some of the Saudi Society, and a lot of people have become more flexible with mixing between men and women...I am not with that, and I refuse to mix, and I think that there is a large segment of society that still refuses to mix between men and women in public places because mixing may lead to sexual harassment and bad behaviour ” (P6).

“ Saudi Society is considered a conservative society and may reject international musical events because of their customs and traditions, not only because of religion ” (P2).

In several instances, it was reported that these international events may generate an intellectual clash between the religiously conservative society and the society that accepts these events. Likewise, as some respondents have mentioned, there was a large segment of the local community wholly opposed to the idea of holding such events in Saudi Arabia, as was reflected on social media sites after the establishment of these events. Consequently, many of those on Twitter denounced the establishment

of these events that do not fit the culture of Saudi Society, and some also expressed their fear of the possible effect on the culture of Saudi Society:

“ These events may lead people to lose their cultural identity, and many people oppose these activities, especially religiously conservative people, as we saw this through the Twitter platform ...these events may generate a conflict between two groups in the Kingdom (a supporter group and an opposition group for these Western events). In addition, I think many people go to this event without obtaining the approval of their families who adhere to the customs and tradition ” (P1).

“ I think that there is still a large segment of people who refuse to hold such international musical events in Saudi Arabia, and their opinions must be taken into consideration in order to avoid the intellectual clash that may occur between members of society ” (P15).

“ I see that the recent international musical events have already caused an intellectual clash within Saudi Society between opponents and supporters of such events ” (P20).

As it is clear from the findings above that there is still a large segment of people who still refuse to support the running of some of these musical activities, especially foreign ones, which they see as not commensurate with the culture of Saudi Society, as there is still a large number of people who refuse the mixing of men and women in public places. This view is a little different to the statement of Alshammari and Kim (2019), who said that Saudi Arabians are becoming more receptive to non-traditional hobbies and interests, such as attending concerts and soccer matches and sitting close to women in public settings. Additionally, as a result of non-traditional economic growth options, the government and local community have grown more agile and less constricted in their development of entertainment sectors. This will help the growth of festivals in Saudi Arabia in the future. This is congruent with the Saudi Government's Vision 2030, which encourages non-traditional festivals that offer current music and performances, theatre, sports, parks, and shopping (Alshammari et al., 2019; Mumuni & Mansour, 2014).

### **4.3.2 Long-term Cultural Erosion and Impacts on Future Generations**

Referring to Sharpley (1994, as cited in Brunt & Courtney, 1999), cultural influences are those that result in a gradual, longer-term shift in a society's values, beliefs, and cultural practises. The extent to which the social and cultural influences impact or are felt by host communities may vary according to a variety of variables, including the quantity and kind of tourists, the nature of tourism growth in the area, and the pace of development (Brunt & Courtney, 1999). Schlenker et al. (2005, p.67) wrote that there is a growing recognition among event organisers and scholars of the importance of measuring the sociocultural impacts of festivals and events, as local resident dissatisfaction jeopardises the event's long-term viability, even if the event is economically viable. Similarly, Cohen (1984, as cited in Gjerard, 2005) views tourism's social impacts as a crucial area of study.

However, Mbaiwa (2005) asserts that sociocultural impacts of tourism emerge from interactions between 'hosts,' or local people, and 'guests,' or tourists. As Glasson et al. (1995, as cited in Mbaiwa, 2005) describe, sociocultural influences refer to the 'people impacts' of tourism, with a focus on changes in the everyday quality of life of residents in tourist places, and cultural impacts, which are concerned with changes in traditional ideas and values, norms and identities as a result of tourism. The wider the disparity between residents and tourists, the greater the impact of tourism on the town. This creates a conundrum for destination decision-makers in terms of the sort of tourism they are attempting to promote. The issue gets considerably more difficult when the decision-making process is extended to include the visitors' views and the advantages accruing to them (Spanou & Elena, 2006). Additionally, according to Pavlukovi et al. (2017), social effects refer to the beneficial or harmful changes in social and cultural circumstances that occur as a direct or indirect outcome of a society-hosted activity project or programme.

In the context of the researcher interviews, numerous participants expressed their concern about changing the behaviour of the local community, wearing clothes inappropriate to the culture of Saudi Society, changing hairstyles and changing religious beliefs, over time, due to the establishment of these foreign activities in Saudi Arabia. This is especially so for the youth category who are considered vulnerable to change, and who may be influenced by the artists who hold these concerts by imitating

them in clothing, hairstyles and the way they behave. When P11 was asked about her opinion if these musical events will affect the culture of the local community or not, she answered:

“ Yes, events may affect the new generation, especially from the religious and cultural point of view. With the lack of parental supervision, some may see them as the culture of Saudi Arabia. For example, if a young man sees a man and a girl dancing together in these international musical events, he thinks that this is our culture and that there is no mistake... this is not our Saudi culture we refuse this behaviour...The emergence of such activities may increase the difficulty of raising children and the new generation, and I do not wish to spread these activities in all regions of the Kingdom...(The negative events that occurred in foreign musical events were awful, and I had never seen such anarchy before in Saudi Arabia, and educational material must be introduced in schools about people’s behaviour and how they should attend such events in the future)... It is easy to influence the new generation (young people) ” (P11).

“ Any foreign activity or a different cultural character will add to the host community and change it culturally, positively and negatively ... these events may change the culture of the young society and may change the clothes and appearances of the new generation in the future. These events significantly encourage young people to abandon their culture of wearing clothes and hairstyles that do not fit Saudi Society. ...I see that values, principles and culture may change due to these events, and young people are more vulnerable to change ” (P16).

“ These international events will affect the culture of Saudi Society, especially in terms of traditional clothes, which will change due to these events and hairstyles ..., some Saudi audiences may imitate foreign celebrities who were in Saudi Arabia and are expected to come in the future with these events ” (P7).

However, several participants answered that the establishment of these foreign musical events will not negatively affect Saudi Society's culture and will not have a

role in changing the behaviour, customs, and traditions of society now or in the future. Some mentioned that the culture of Saudi society has been strong and coherent since antiquity and no activity will affect it, whether hosting international events or any interaction with foreign tourists; some assert that these events will add to the culture of some in a positive way instead:

“ It will not affect society's culture, and the culture of Saudi Society is powerful and coherent. If some attend these events wearing non-traditional clothes, this does not mean that in social events such as marriages, family gatherings and Eid celebration, they will also wear them. These events are often an event for one day only, and I do not see that some will be affected by attending these events ” (P9).

“ I do not think that these events have any role in changing society's culture or the behaviour of the local community... I believe that the culture of the Saudi Society has been solid and well-established for a long time, and I see that hosting such events will add to some a new culture in a positive way through direct contact with tourists from different countries ” (P25).

“ I see that the Saudi state and the organisers of the events aim to preserve the Saudi identity and Saudi culture; even with the mixing of Saudi Society with foreign cultures, the culture will not change negatively...I believe that these events will develop the ideas of Saudi Society through mixing with other societies ” (P22).

The above findings show that there is a difference in the opinions regarding whether or not holding these international music festivals will change the culture of Saudi Society over time. There are those who believe that the continuation of these events will lead to a change in the culture and behaviour of Saudi Society and even religious beliefs, especially future generations who are considered to be vulnerable to change. On the other hand, others believe that the culture of Saudi Society is strong and well-established, and the establishment of such events now or in the future will not affect it; on the contrary, the establishment of these events will add a new culture for some in a positive way.

## **4.4 Creating Positive Perceptions of Saudi Arabia**

### **4.4.1 Hosting events helps change perceptions amongst international visitors to Saudi Arabia.**

Most of the participants agreed that hosting these international music events will change the stereotype of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that is ingrained in the minds of many people in the world, which is that Saudi Arabia is just a desert and there are no places suitable for tourism, with many negative aspects that have been reported by the media for a long time. Many participants believe that these events will attract many foreign tourists to come to Saudi Arabia and attend these events and then move within the country and discover the true beauty of Saudi Arabia:

“ In my opinion, hosting such events will change the stereotype of the Kingdom the majority of people in Western countries think that Saudi Arabia is only a desert and that there are no tourist places and attractive areas. Moreover, it is nice to host these events in Saudi Arabia because they attract celebrities from the world's countries. After the arrival of these celebrities, the Kingdom will be highlighted by the masses of celebrities who follow them through social media. As a result, the attractive places in the Kingdom will be exposed to millions of people ... also imagine the number of people who will come to the Kingdom because of their love for music and the artist who is holding the event. In addition, after the event, some of these people will certainly travel inside Saudi Arabia and visit the tourist places in the Kingdom and learn about the true culture of the Saudi society. Then they will transfer their experiences through social media and talk with their friends and family, also through their movements, and they will transfer their experiences through social media by taking pictures and videos for everything they see in Saudi Arabia, which will certainly change the stereotype of many people ” (P9).

“ a number of foreign celebrities came to Saudi Arabia to attend MDL Beast events and others, and after the spread of Covid-19, they were forced to stay

in Saudi Arabia and during their stay in Saudi Arabia, they travelled to some areas in the Kingdom such as Jazan, Abha and Al Bahah and transmitted their experiences via YouTube and Snapchat, and the responses of the followers were positive after View photos and videos of these tourist places “ (P10).

Supporting these viewpoints further, Henderson (2017) claimed that Saudi Arabia offers a diverse range of tourist attractions and an enormous potential that can take the Kingdom to higher levels in the global tourism rankings. Additionally, Saudi Arabia is a nation rich in history and endowed with an abundance of natural resources. The country has a considerable number of natural resources amongst all nations and has unique scenic places, which are widely lauded by travellers. These locations include the Red Sea shoreline and the Arab Gulf, the region's desert, and the region's magnificent mountains to the north and south (Mufeed & Gulzar, 2014).

Many participants also argued that the primary goal of holding these global events in Saudi Arabia is to change the stereotype, change the bad reputation that sticks in the minds of many people around the world about Saudi Arabia, and show the Saudi culture to the world, a goal that was not only economic:

“ Social media and news have shown a bad image of Saudi Arabia in the past years. So, these events may change the stereotyped image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ...and I believe that these events mainly happened to improve Saudi Arabia's reputation and change the stereotype, I do not think these events happened to encourage the economy “ (P3).

“ Holding such events attracts audiences from all countries of the world. Therefore, I believe that these events will improve the stereotyped image of the Kingdom due to the arrival of foreign visitors to attend such events and transfer their experience to the countries from which they came “ (P23).

These results reveal that through the arrival of tourists from different countries around the world to attend these international musical events in Saudi Arabia, the stereotype ingrained in the minds of some about the Kingdom will change. Moreover, it is expected that these tourists will travel within Saudi Arabia to discover the tourist and

heritage places that characterize the country. In addition to this, the arrival of celebrities from all over the world to Saudi Arabia to attend these events will also greatly help in marketing the Kingdom as a tourist destination through social media and conveying their experiences. This finding is consistent with that of Galdini (2007) who stated that tourism has an influence on place identities when seeking to comprehend the link between tourism and place identity. Likewise, tourism helps in the establishment or reconstruction of place identities. Likewise, Pavlukovi et al. (2017) stated that festivals have the ability to strengthen social and cultural identity while also promoting community cooperation. Additionally, festivals may assist in lengthening the tourist season, fostering and building destination image, and promoting culture, arts, history, and environmental conservation, as well as community development. Further, festivals and events help to establish the formation of a positive community image, serve as animators for static attractions, and serve as catalysts for greater socioeconomic growth, and drawing tourists, investors, and sponsors (Yolal et al., 2016). Furthermore, music events provide a major contribution to tourism development. Depending on the qualities, kind, and scale of the event, they work as an effective catalyst for the destination's image (Duarte et al., 2018). A destination's image is formed by a number of traits or distinctive features that attract tourists, ranging from activities and experiences to unique landscapes (Lew, 1987). Hence, visitors' opinions of a music festival are connected to the destination's permanent tourist resources, such as monuments, hotels, restaurants, and entertainment, all of which add to the destination's overall image. As a consequence, visitors to host places have a confidence that they may discover certain features. Likewise, promoting events that are a good fit for a place whether due to their distinctiveness, location, or the image they convey to visitors may allow the transfer of value produced by the event's brand to the destination's image. Additionally, a positive festival experience is likely to result in more loyal visitors returning and promoting the event to others, resulting in higher income and a more positive image for the host area (Duarte et al., 2018).

#### **4.4.2 Hosting events improves tolerance and understanding of other cultures.**

According to Derrett (2003), the relationship between festivals and events and a place's prosperity, identity, tourism image, and marketing techniques exemplifies the

functions festivals and events play in the tourism system as attractions, markers, or points of interest. In addition, as a result of the growth of events, a substantial number of people from diverse areas go to destinations in search of engagement or participation possibilities. Events become the primary reason they visit certain destinations, having a noticeable influence on those locations' appeal (Simeon & Buonincontri, 2011). Music festivals are an essential field of research since they have been shown to promote social change and have a favourable effect on participants' psychological and social well-being. This impact is a consequence of the unique chances for active connection between attendees and music that music festivals provide, enabling attendees to be responsive to experiences that promote personal development and self-discovery (Alonso-Vazquez, 2015). Thus, several participants mentioned that Saudi Society needs to mix with people from other countries more, because in the past it was a closed society with many restrictions, and holding these musical events may provide an opportunity to mix with people coming to attend them, and to learn about some cultures through them, which increases society's awareness. Furthermore, some believe that the mixing of Saudi Society with foreigners will develop the acceptance of their religious and cultural differences:

“ Through our mixing with other cultures, the local community's ideas will develop, and languages will grow for some through speaking and mixing with foreigners. Also, the awareness of the community will increase, and they will have more ability to accept the views of society. Also, commitment to the regulations will be gained by the Saudi people through mixing with foreign culture. Additionally, through our mixing with other cultures, I think we will accept their religious and cultural differences ” (P28).

McGrath (2015) claimed that music is a powerful instrument that has an impact on many people's behaviours and pursuits. According to a study undertaken by Hallam and MacDonald (2013; MacDonald et al., 2009 as cited in McGrath, 2015), music is beneficial on both a social and personal level, it improves communication, generates shared emotional responses, and aids in the establishment of group identity on a social level. Similarly, it is beneficial on an individual level because it elicits a range of psychological, mood, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses. Music holistically integrates a multitude of human traits, enabling for expression and

generating emotions. Additionally, people may utilise music to shift their moods, promote individuality and inspire (McGrath, 2015). Hargreaves et al. (2002) describe how people increasingly use music to build and express their separate identities, present themselves in a certain way to others, make comments about their ideas and attitudes, and transmit their worldviews. In addition, music has the ability to create a common ground and to bring people together. When people participate in the same event and feel the same emotion, they may experience a shared connection of collective effervescence. Indeed, individuality will be decreased as the group's personality eventually supplants the individuals, and a collective identity will emerge (McGrath, 2015). Hence, several participants mentioned that mixing with tourists coming to attend these events and visit tourist places in Saudi Arabia will provide an excellent opportunity for community members to learn different languages and gain new cultures. Through mixing with people from different cultures, new interests may be created for some members of the community and may add to some the culture of listening to new types of music:

“ We need to mingle with other cultures, and these foreign activities allow us to mix with different cultures from different countries of the world. I believe that these events may contribute to society's ideas through our mixing with foreigners ...These events may also help the Saudi community learn other languages such as English, Italian, and others. For example, I am one of the residents of the city of Al-Ula. I noticed that after the establishment of foreign musical and sports events in the city, the culture of the community developed, and their English language developed hugely due to their mixing with foreign tourists ” (P17).

“ People's choice of clothes and food will change with these events due to mixing Saudi Society with other societies in a good way. In addition, these events may create for some members of the society new interests and love for new types of music in a positive way ” (P25).

These observations show that it is necessary to hold these international musical events in Saudi Arabia because they provide an excellent opportunity for the Saudi Society to mix with other societies and learn about their cultures, which increases the awareness of the local community and the acceptance of the cultural and religious

differences of others. Also, by mixing with others, some will be able to learn different languages and cultures.

This finding is in line with Besculides et al. (2002) who stated that festivals foster cultural interchange and understanding among and between residents and visitors by offering a venue for hosts and guests to foster tolerance and understanding via exposure to the host culture. Therefore, introducing one's own culture to others strengthens ties to the society, enhancing one's feeling of identification, pride, cohesiveness, and support. In addition, the collaborative character of socio-cultural activities reinforces the connection between culture and the development of social capital (Yolal et al., 2016)

Adding further emphasis to these points, Ballantyne et al. (2014) argue that the music festivals atmosphere may foster good psychological results as participants develop or reflect on their capability to comprehend themselves, develop new expressions of self-identity, and learn about music. Additionally, research on the cultural/educational advantages of festivals indicates that they provide unparalleled chances for cultural and educational growth in communities. Festivals facilitate interaction between residents and visitors and serve as an educational and training venue for people. Festivals may also serve as a means of communication amongst individuals of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and serve as a foundation for society. Typically, community people perceive festivals as a pleasant communal event that celebrates and reflects the town's culture and history, rather than as a money-making tourist attraction. Festivals may give guests with additional opportunities for comprehensive immersion in local culture, intellectual, sensory, and emotional stimulations, that might enhance their engagement and fulfilment (Yolal et al., 2016).

#### **4.5 Summary of key findings**

Understandably, the establishment of these foreign musical events in Saudi Arabia is necessary and may bring many cultural, economic, social and scientific benefits to the state, as the majority of the participants assert. In addition, these events will support the tourism image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and will attract many tourists from around the world. Furthermore, holding these events will improve the infrastructure

and facilities in the cities hosting these events. Nevertheless, there are some negatives aspects that have been mentioned by the participants, which events planners should pay attention to, and this includes the inappropriate behaviour of some artists who participated in the previous events, and the inappropriate behaviour of the audiences attending these events, such as sexual harassment and excessive use of drugs and alcohol. It is also clear that some international musical events are not commensurate with the culture of the conservative Saudi Society, and there are some people who still refuse to hold them in Saudi Arabia because of their fear of changing the culture, behaviour, principles, and values of Saudi Society with time, especially the new generation. These negatives may affect the support of the local community, which is necessary for the continuity of holding such events in the future.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The aim of the research was to investigate the impacts of hosting international music events that are becoming increasingly commonplace in the context of tourism development in Saudi Arabia. It also aims to determine how members of the local community have reacted to these events and their attitudes towards hosting them in the future. Additionally, the three following objectives were examined and developed to address the study aim, as follows:

- i. To determine local Saudis' perspectives towards international cultural (music) events;
- ii. To provide recommendations based on the perspectives of community members with regards to hosting international events in the future;
- iii. To determine the differences in perceptions to international events based on prior travel experiences.

Focus groups were selected to collect data because they allow for the collection of detailed information and enable participants to speak freely about their interests. From 27 April to 28 May 2021, focus group interviews were done in-person at Flinders University and via online using the Zoom App. Thirty-one educated male and female Saudi citizens had volunteered to participate in this study.

Based on focus group interviews conducted for the research, it can be observed that some of the artists who performed in the international music concerts that happened in previous years in Saudi Arabia had behaved inappropriately, which enraged people on Saudi social networking sites. Also, some of them were under the influence of alcohol at the time of their performing events, which may seem disrespectful to the Saudi community's culture and principles. Furthermore, the pattern of some musical events, such as MDL Beast, and activities associated with loud music, such as DJs, had a detrimental effect on the behaviour of those who attended in these events, including inappropriate clothing, sexual harassment, and physical assaults, which Saudi Society was not accustomed to previously. Moreover, as is evident in the study results, a sizable proportion of the population of Saudi continues to oppose some

musical activities, which they see as incompatible with Saudi Society's culture, and a sizable segment continues to oppose mixing men and women in public areas. However, there are different viewpoints on whether or not these international music events may change the culture of Saudi Arabia over time. Others feel that the continuance of these occurrences will result in a shift in Saudi society's culture, behaviour, and religious views. On the other hand, some feel that Saudi Society's culture is strong and well-established, and the establishment of these events will not have a negative effect on it.

However, despite that, the results illustrated that the establishment of these international music events in Saudi Arabia is vital to foster positive perceptions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and alter the stereotyped image of many individuals who have had negative perceptions of the country for years. In addition, the results show that through the arrival of visitors from various countries around the world to attend these international musical events, Saudi Society will have an excellent opportunity to interact with other societies and learn about their cultures, which will increase local awareness and acceptance of others' cultural and religious differences. Additionally, through interacting with others, some will pick up new languages and cultures.

## **5.1 Recommendations**

The establishment of such international musical events in Saudi Arabia is considered a tremendous positive shift for the region as a future tourist destination, and the researcher's recommendations are as follows:

- 1- The tourism and events sector is considered emerging in Saudi Arabia, and I believe that it is in dire need of attracting international experts in this field from outside the country and employing them alongside Saudi citizens to transfer expertise to them, which may reduce making mistakes in the future.
- 2- The management of crowds in the Two Holy Mosques has been distinguished during the past years in dealing directly with the entry and exit of visitors with ease and safety, so the Entertainment Authority and the organisers of these events can

benefit from their experiences in managing crowds in such global events by handing them over to manage these events or Training some Saudi youth on how to manage crowds in such events in order to avoid accidents and poor organisation.

3- It was noted that some of these events were held near residential areas, and this may disturb many of those who live nearby, so holding these events in a place away from residential areas should be considered, for easy access and to respect the privacy of residents. This may lead to the provision of areas suitable for required infrastructure and to improve crowd management.

## **5.2 Study Limitations**

This study faced some challenges, consisting of conducting focus groups interviews with the females and males. In addition, due to cultural and religious reasons, many women refused to participate in the study because the researcher and some of the participants in the focus groups were men. The researcher also faced some challenges in conducting online interviews with participants from Saudi Arabia due to the time difference between Saudi Arabia and Australia, where the researcher had to conduct most of the interviews late at night. Furthermore, since the participants in each interview numbered 4-5 participants, the researcher faced some challenges in matching the timings of the individual participants, as some preferred to conduct interviews at times that did not suit others, which made it necessary for the researcher to change the dates of some interviews and conduct some of them online. Finally, there are few studies in the field of tourism and events related to Saudi Arabia, especially in recent years.

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