The impacts of tourism development at the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site (Saudi Arabia) on local communities

By

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the various impacts of heritage sites on economic development by examining existing heritage sites and their impact on the surrounding communities. To achieve this aim, data was gathered using a qualitative method. Semi-structured interviews were used as this allowed the researcher to examine a broad range of issues within the research question. The purpose of this paper is to discuss this topic in the context of Saudi Arabia. The research is the first of its kind in heritage tourism growth impacts on Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site (AlUla - Saudi Arabia). Based on semi-structured interviews to carry out an analysis of the local community surrounding Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site, it can be observed that the UNESCO listing has greatly influenced interest levels (both among visitors and the society) and how well the community now welcomes tourism growth and recognises its (economic) importance, as well as the creation of new employment and business opportunities.

The study's results offered many insights into the local community's perspectives and interpretations of the impact of tourism growth at the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site (AlUla, Saudi Arabia) on local communities. The addition of the Al-Hijr site on the UNESCO World Heritage List clearly changed the locals' level of interest in tourism. This had an impact when the Al-Hijr site was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008. Furthermore, the results showed that local government had faced several obstacles since tourism growth began. Infrastructure enhancements and additional promotion are expected by the community with steps taken to guard against excessive development and possible damage to the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site. Despite the positive effects of tourism growth at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Al-Hijr, the study found that the local community is concerned about cultural erosion.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that the dissertation is original and the result of my research in full, does not contain earlier published sections, and as such does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights; the used bibliographical references are clearly stated in the dissertation itself and the list of references.

_____, April 06, 2021

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

1. UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
2. WHS: World Heritage Site
3. RCU: Royal Commission for AlUla

1. Introduction

UNESCO World Heritage Sites are protected because of their significant value to humans and for continuous enjoyment of emerging generations (UNESCO, 2021a). Al Hijr which is found in Madinah province, Saudi Arabia, is among these sites and it became a World Heritage Site in 2008. The site is considered as the largest conserved site of the Nabataean civilisation south of Petra in Jordan, and the emergence of one of the ancient trade routes that link southern Arabia, Mesopotamia, Levant, as well as Egypt (UNESCO, 2021a). In recent times, the government of Saudi Arabia prioritised tourism as the main part of Vision 2030. Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision for the growth of tourism identifies Al Hijr as part of the key attractions (Vision-2030, 2016; Royal Commission for AlUla, 2021). Hence, the aim of this research is to look into the existing economic effects of the development of tourism at heritage sites on surrounding communities. In addition, it seeks to provide potential recommendations to facilitate further growth of the tourism sector, to continue to support local communities.

Literature reviews show the positive and negative effects of the addition of a site to the WHS list, including social (Alhasanat & Hyasat, 2011), cultural (Frey & Steiner, 2011; Akasheh, 2012), environmental (Caust & Vecco, 2017; Mustafa & Abu Tayeh, 2011; Akasheh, 2012), and economic aspects (Dans & González, 2018; UNESCO, 2020c; Bille, 2012). The local community, site, tourists, and the whole country where the site exists feel the effects of these areas. Positive effects emerge on the basis of economic gains obtained from tourists' visits and activities. Nevertheless, most of the negative effects are associated with management strategies and planning. The capacity of a site gets stressed when the number of tourists rises, and this leads to the degradation of the values of the site (Borges et al., 2011). Generally, various factors are behind the effects. Likewise, cultural changes could bring about a cultural revival (Van Zyl, 2005; Imon, 2008) or bring about negative effects by destroying the original

customs and traditions of the local communities (Alhasanat & Hyasat, 2011). However, it is argued by some that adding a site to the UNESCO World Heritage Site list has no impact on tourism or the economy. For example, this argument has been made for Dresden in Germany, noting the lack of impact from the World Heritage title (Frey & Steiner, 2011). Demand for tourism following World Heritage Site (WHS) listing in Italy is not high either (Ribaudo & Figini, 2017). In comparison, these destinations have more well-established tourism industries.

1.1 Tourism industry in Saudi Arabia

For some decades, Saudi Arabia's tourism was not given an attention, up until 2016. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) government focused on religious tourism but was not quite beneficial. Five heritage sites in the kingdom registered with UNESCO include Al-Hijr Archaeological Site (see Figure 1.1), At-Turaif District in ad-Dir'iyah, Historic Jeddah, Rock Art in the Hail Region as well as Al-Ahsa Oasis (UNESCO, 2021b). Registration with UNESCO is among the modest efforts by the kingdom in supporting the tourist sites in the past (the country started issuing tourist visas in 2019). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2018) said about 16 million individuals visited the country as religious or business tourists in 2017.

1.2 Saudi Vision (2030) and the birth of Saudi Tourism

Saudi Arabia started working on the diversification of its economy in 2016 by launching its national strategy, in preparation for a post-oil future where tourism is considered a critical sector (Vision-2030, 2016). The launching of the National Transformation Program, as a Vision Realization Programs (VRP) that involves twenty-four government agencies, was

towards the development needs of meeting the ambitious goals of Vision 2030. It outlines the development of governmental work and establishment of the necessary infrastructure for the achievement of Vision 2030 (Vision-2030, 2016).

One of the themes of the National Transformation Program is to "Develop the Tourism and National Heritage Sectors." The purpose of the theme is to market the country as a tourist destination on a regional and global level by developing advanced infrastructure, preparing the required regulations and legislation, and developing institutional capacities, thereby contributing to the creation of various job opportunities and making the tourism sector contribute more to the country's economy. Likewise, the theme helps to revive, preserve, promote, and classify Islamic, Arab and National heritage which are on the list of heritage sites recognised worldwide (Vision-2030, 2016). Below Table 1.1 shows the number of Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators for the Develop the Tourism and National Heritage Sectors theme.

Eighth Theme Major Indicators

Strategic Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	2020
Conserve & promote the kingdom's Islamic, Arab, and National heritage	Total number of national heritage sites open to visitors	241 (2017)	447
Develop the Tourism Sector	Ranking in Travel and Tourism Competitiveness index	63 (2017)	58 (2021)
	Total Value Added in the Tourism Sector	12.6 billion (2017)	17.5 billion

Table 1.1   The number of Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators for the Develop the Tourism and National Heritage Sectors Theme.   Source: (Vision-2030, 2016)

1.3 AlUla and Heritage Sites in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a country that is rich when it comes to heritage and traditions, thereby shaping its position as a historic trade hub, and the country where Islam was birthed. Recently, there has been a remarkable change in the country's culture, transforming from century-old customs to the modern way of living (Visit Saudi, 2020). The Kingdom wishes to pay more attention to the promotion of various tourism destinations, and to attract tourists, and Al Ula is among them. There are great historical, nature and heritage sites in Al Ula valley. Al Ula is located in a protected valley where there are various water sources. People have lived in this area for thousands of years through multiple civilisations, and it was a hub for trade routes. The marks of the civilisations are on Al Ula's rocks, its valleys as well as the forgotten cities (Blue Abaya, 2019).

The country established the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) in 2017, towards the centralisation of the development of the entire area into one administrative body. The aim of RCU is the transformation of the area into one of the global premiere destinations for history, nature and heritage. France is the major partner to achieve the transformation of Al Ula and the development looks forwards to a long-term plan for empowering the local community and boosting the local economy (Blue Abaya, 2019).

The Center for International Communication (2019) noted that the contribution of the RCU to the country's GDP growth by 2035, through these projects, will be SAR 120bn. The Royal Commission will embark on significant engagement with the local community in these projects, via the Hammayah programme towards the achievement of this vision. The Hammayah programme will involve the training of 2,500 residents to become advocates for AlUla's natural and human heritage. The RCU has been able to launch a second round of its successful global scholarship programme, including connecting qualified applicants with study

abroad opportunities in the U.S., the UK or France in disciplines related to the plans to develop AlUla (Center for International Communication, 2019).

1.4 The significance of the study

This study is the first of its kind in the context of community tourism development impacts on the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Al Hijr. It is also one of the first to use an in-depth qualitative study that yields an array of unique insights into the nature and direction of tourism development in the geographical setting of rural Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study will potentially be of value to a number of stakeholders and community members that have been affected, and will continue to be affected, by tourism development in the region.

Tucker and Emge (2010) note that heritage tourism growth can produce numerous economic benefits for a local community and likewise enhance a feeling of local pride as communities become further informed regarding its necessity and value. This study examines how surrounding communities located close to Al Hijr have enjoyed the development of tourism. Also, it looks into fresh opportunities for attaining sustainable growth, to continue supporting the local community members' economic needs, and ensuring that the site is not affected by any rapid growth in tourism. This study is original in geographical setting and scope, as aforementioned. It is expected that this study's results may assist in further improvement of tourism development opportunities for participants and other stakeholders within AlUla's tourism sector.

1.5 Research Question

How does Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage site affect economic development and the local community in AlUla - Saudi Arabia?

1.6 Study Aims and Objectives

This study aims to investigate the various impacts of heritage sites on economic development; examine existing heritage sites and their impact on the surrounding communities. It will additionally seek to offer possible recommendations to foster further growth of the tourism sector in a way that continues to support local communities.

The objectives that follow were formulated towards the assessment of the perceptions of residents in AlUla regarding tourism development around the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage site:

• To further understand the historical nature of tourism development at Al Hijr and the resulting impacts on the community.

• To critically analyse the current performance of tourism development at Al Hijr from the perspective of local business owners.

• To establish the community's current awareness and understanding of Al-Hijr's role in supporting the local economy.

• To identify further opportunities to sustainably develop tourism at Al Hijr.

Data collection was done using ae qualitative method. Qualitative research approaches describe complex phenomena (Sofaer, 1999). Study materials were collected through two means, primary and secondary. The researcher took field notes during semi-structured interviews and also analysed the literature review. The researcher was able to gain a deeper understanding of the topic through peer-reviewed academic studies and other online sources. The people interviewed for this research were asked their viewpoints and beliefs regarding tourism development based on their profound tourism development experience in the chosen settings. The research adopted in-depth, semi-structured interviews because the study is exploratory, and it is capable of creating perceptive insights when it comes to social phenomena (Hsu & Huang, 2008). Likewise, in-depth interviews are fit for exploring

phenomenological themes (Dunn, 2016; Hayllar & Griffin, 2005; Seidman, 2006). Hence, this approach provided the researcher with the opportunity to address the objectives of the study. The results of this research offer several insights into what the local community sees and perceive about the impacts of tourism development at the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site (AlUla - Saudi Arabia) on local communities. The study involved dividing the key themes into three sub-themes. First, the main benefits include how UNESCO listing brought a positive change in interest levels among tourists and the community, the manner of support from the community and their understanding of its value and the emergence of new jobs or business opportunities. The second theme is the main challenges, which include a requirement for improvement in infrastructure, more promotion, as well as possible damage or unsustainable growth. The third theme is related to cultural erosion, including the effects on the local community and dying customs.
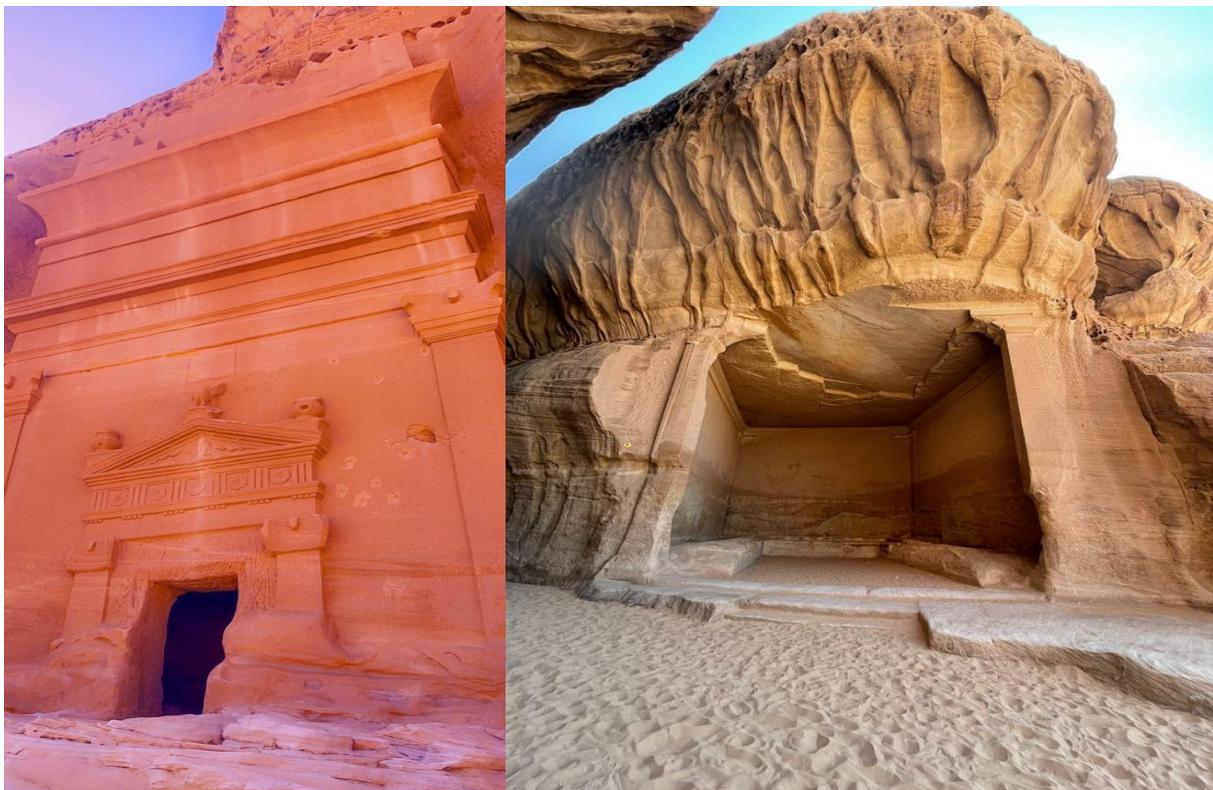
Figure 1.1   Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site.   Source: Author (2020)

There are five sections in this dissertation. Following this introduction, the second section offers a critical review of the key relevant study concepts (the impacts of tourism development at the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site (Saudi Arabia) on local communities). In the third section, there is a data description and illustration of the methodology. Section four discusses research results. Section five offers a conclusion, limitations of the study, and it suggests what is required in terms of further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The identification, protection, conservation, and presentation of attractions of outstanding universal value (OUV) make up the initial aim of inscribing UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHSs) (Buckley, 2018). The number of sites on the WHS listing has increased remarkably after UNESCO adopted the listing in 1972 and 190 countries have consented to it since it came into force in 1977 (Ribaudo & Figini, 2017). The number of sites in the list as of July 2020 is 1,121 in 167 countries (UNESCO, 2020a).

The success of the implementation of the goals of the Convention at WHSs may depend on tourism as well as how the World Heritage community responds to the opportunities and threats it presents. The parties that could contribute remarkably to the achievement of the goals include tourism and the tourist/visitor industry, agencies and local communities (APEC, 2010). However, the actions and inactions of these parties have positive and negative effects on the aspects of tourism in WHSs.

These sites are recognised throughout the world, and they draw the attention of tourism players, especially tourists, tourism developers and tour operators. When potential tourists learn about these sites, they anticipate a unique experience as they are labelled OUV. This is one of the reasons why the countries where these sites are located invest in promoting them (Buckley, 2004).

Sometimes, people become highly interested in visiting particular sites nominated for World Heritage listing before listing. In contrast, the nomination of other sites comes with an expectation of an increase in tourism interest due to their inclusion. Whichever is the case, it is inevitable that identifying sites and including them on the World Heritage List draws

attention to their values, and increase visitation and the interest of the tourism industry.

There are several benefits accruable from people's identification of OUV sites and the inclusion of such sites on the World Heritage List. These benefits range from economic, environmental, to socio-cultural aspects. Tourism to these sites brings about economic benefits that helps achieve their conservation, which is one of the goals of including them on the list. Likewise, tourism aids the local or national economy, allowing people to make ends meet.

Specifically, according to UNESCO (as cited in Ribaudo & Figini 2017), nations and sites inscribed on the WHS list stand to enjoy five significant benefits. One, the government and people tend to be committed to preserving the sites because they see them as a legacy for future generations. Two, it is a speedy means of accessing funds to preserve and conserve relevant sites, and this includes access to emergency funds to deal with natural disasters or cater to various risks at sites. Three, it magnetises global cooperation by protecting the sites. Four, it brings about an operational framework for the implementation of an all-inclusive management plan. Five, it helps in generating a positive attitude to tourism as well as the rest of the economy.

However, despite the numerous benefits accruable from tourism to WHSs, there are certain negative impacts that challenge the achievement of these goals. These negative impacts come from various sources and factors, but all of them are related to tourist activities. Hence, the subjects of discussion here include what happens when a site becomes listed on the UNESCO world heritage list and the identification of the positive and negative impacts of such. It will discuss the roles of the players and the entities involved in the process of realising the goals of having a site on the WHS list.

2.1.1 What Happens after a site is inscribed on the WHS list?

When a site is inscribed on the WHS list, one of the things to consider is whether it will cause to change who visits the site. This is important to numerous stakeholders. It might be necessary for site managers to have more individuals to cater for the change in visitor numbers and nationalities, maybe with different languages and interests. It might bring different or new business opportunities for tour operators, while people residing in the locality, as well as regional economies, could enjoy increased tourist expenditure. It is also possible for policymakers interested in issues related to conservation to utilise tourism benefits as a means of justifying a heritage listing.

It is clear from the stipulations of Article 2 of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2008) that the aim of the World Heritage designation is not to serve as a tourism marketing tool. This is such that when signatory nations apply to the World Heritage Convention, one of the requirements is the provision of a periodic report that should include "visitor or tourism pressure" as a potential threat, as stated in the Operational Guidelines, Article II, 5 (UNESCO, 2008). Nevertheless, when this is considered from a tourism viewpoint, being identified as holding World Heritage designation serves to develop a global brand in natural and cultural tourism, which may lead to increase the number of tourists. Besides, tour operators might use World Heritage sites in advertising to this end.

Nations become prestigious when they are signed into the World Heritage Convention, and their sites inscribed on the World Heritage List. This usually helps in raising awareness among their citizens and governments towards the preservation of their heritage. When the awareness is more significant, it makes the people put in more efforts to protect and conserve their heritage properties (Jaafar, Noor & Rasoolimanesh, 2015). Apart from being aware of preservation,

players in the tourism industry will begin to plan on how to benefit from the newly open channels of earning income.

Despite that the main purpose of the inclusion on the list is conservation and protection, it is still expected that the sites will attract tourists from around the world. Hence, it is necessary to make the site favourable to accommodate tourists such that their visits will not jeopardise the original purpose. The development of sites to support activities requires funds. It is for this reason that the World Heritage Committee sometimes offer financial assistance and expert advice to nations after their sites are designated towards supporting preservation activities (UNESCO, 2020b).

Development of the areas around sites starts appearing following designation as a WHS. This includes the establishment of businesses and construction works (Frey & Steiner, 2011). For instance, as tourism prospered around the World Heritage Site in Petra, more investors from the wealthier parts of Jordan and from abroad were attracted. The real estate speculators began to buy land from the indigenous population and likewise put their money in the establishment of smaller hotels or restaurants (Akasheh, 2012). Further, individuals who owned land in the locality established businesses like coffee shops, restaurant and small accommodation, as well as travel tourism services such as camel rides to the desert, tourist guides, and more. Similarly, for some families, it became common to offer their own homes for bed and breakfast for tourists (Akasheh, 2012). Due to these developments, the construction industry boomed, and the road network was expanded.

The study of Ribaudo and Figini (2017) offered a comprehensive view of tourism demand trends at WHSs providing evidence of any increase in demand for some destinations after they were inscribed on the list. Out of the fifty-five (55) Italian sites on the list, the study involved the analysis of sixteen sites. The measurement of the growth rate was based on the number of

tourist arrivals in each of the 16 destinations. The study involved the computation of the average of the growth rates before and five years after a location was added to the list, as a robustness check. In general, six out of the sixteen sites (38 per cent) reported higher growth rates of arrivals five years after they were inscribed on the list, relative to five years before listing. Most of the sites – ten out of sixteen (62 per cent) reported lower growth rates following listing (Ribaudo & Figini, 2017).

According to authors, there is no clear pattern in the trend of demand for tourism following WHS listing. In over 50 percent of the destinations, increase in tourism arrivals and overnight stays within the five years following WHS listing were lower than in the five years prior to the listing. Nevertheless, a remarkable number of destinations experienced a positive trend following listing.

Finally, Ribaudo and Figini (2017) argue it is possible for the tourism effect of WHS listing to depend on the pressure that tourism puts on the area. Controlling the destination's carrying capacity as measured via the saturation index, they discovered weak proof that already developed destinations prior to the listing recorded lower market performances following the listing. There is need for hospitality and destination managers to take caution when it comes to the creation of anticipations regarding an enhancement in demand as a result of the listing. There is need to consider the possibility of WHS listing to favor the destination, but statistical proof that there will be acceleration of market growth rates is lacking, at least for most of destinations in countries with developed tourism such as Italy (Ribaudo & Figini, 2017).

The next section discusses the positive impacts of designating a site as WHS. Several studies noted that proper management of heritage sites could be a means to develop intercultural dialogue, enhance social inclusion, improve quality of the environment, shape the identity of an area, and provide social cohesion. Likewise, when it comes to the economy, it can enhance

an investment climate, create jobs and stimulate tourism development (Dümcke & Gnedovsky, 2013). That is, when governments invest in heritage, there could be the generation of return in the form of economic growth and social benefits. Several authors have revealed this in theoretical discourse and support them with many case studies.

2.2 Positive Impacts

It seems more nations are increasingly seeking World Heritage Listing for reasons that include the economic and status benefits that come with it. Most times, listing brings about an increase in tourism (Buckley, 2004). When more people visit WHSs, there is an opportunity to let them know about the cultural values, to amass public support and appreciation of the values domestically and internationally (Caust & Vecco, 2017). It also helps in augmenting funds and assistance available to protect and conserve the property (Leask & Fyall, 2006; UNESCO, 2008; APEC, 2010).

Based on the perspective of Frey and Steiner (2010), the positive impacts of the UNESCO List can be categorised into two parts: an increase in attention on a location, and the special protection provided. When it comes to increase in attention, the researchers noted that the list might be considered as a united international effort towards the protection of critical natural and cultural assets from destruction (Leask & Fyall, 2006). Such a benefit is capable of bringing together various experts to see how they can ensure that the outstanding universal values at the site are preserved. Some of these efforts may not even require nations to spend money as there are research bodies who secure funds on their own.

Experts can let people know the cultural and natural sites of critical importance that require protection. When a site is designated, there is always a notable media attention, which is crucial as it helps in propagating the information to a broad audience. It is always a thing of great

honour when a nation's site is included in the list, and this is given much attention by the media (Frey & Steiner, 2011). As the media showcases the outstanding features of their ways of life, history and culture, tourism is capable of bringing about a sense of pride and identity to communities (UNESCO, 2020a).

In the study of Xun and Milly (2002), the aim of establishing geoparks in China was explained in terms of conservation and development, and they provided an estimate of their socio-economic benefits based on tourism jobs, tourism revenue, tourism numbers and capital value of tourism projects (Xun & Ting, 2003). Interestingly, the designation of the sites can have additional benefits which includes the educational value of associating scientific knowledge with the tourist industry, and the opportunities for global scientific exchange (Hambrey Consulting, 2007). This corroborates the view that WHS designation is capable of attracting professionals.

Moreover, listing captures the attention of public decision-makers, as they become acquainted with the crucial nature of some cultural and natural sites in their country. They are the individuals with the authority to put things in place in the sites selected by UNESCO. Apart from writing the proposal to World Heritage Commission for inclusion on the List (Frey & Steiner, 2011), they can also use their influence to secure funds to ensure that the site is preserved, even in the face of tourist pressures.

The listing also attracts potential donors who are willing to contribute to the development and preservation of a site. Often, they provide money for artistic, religious or cultural purposes (Frey & Steiner, 2011). Such individuals could become zealous in offering more to objects on the site. It may not end with one or two donors; the increase in popularity of the site makings it attractive for others to become involved. Apart from individuals who can donate, there are for-profit

firms that could find means of taking advantage of a site's popularity. They can do this by sponsoring a particular site on the list or taking care of tourists while they are visiting.

2.2.1. Socio-economic Impacts

Through tourism, the financial support required to conserve a World Heritage Site can be provided. This can increase the authenticity of such a site and make it more desirable to visitors and also add value to the local tourism business (UNESCO, 2020c). As more visitors continue to visit a site, revenue will continue to increase. This is precisely what happened in the case of the old town of Stralsund and the monasteries on the island Reichenau in Germany, as the number of people who were visiting increased remarkably. Moreover, research shows that World Heritage status is capable of having a critical socio-economic effect. For example, a 2015 report released by the UK National Commission for UNESCO shows the generation of about £10.8 million from UNESCO projects in Scotland between April 2014 and March 2015 as a result of associating with UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020c). Nevertheless, some argue that designating a site does not influence tourism or the economy. Such an argument emerged in Dresden, stating that the World Heritage title did not have this effect (Frey & Steiner, 2011).

In general, apart from cultural capital, people consider tourism as the key economic stimulant of heritage economics. Other positive impacts of heritage-related investments as well as activities like museums and archaeological sites are the far-reaching stability of local economies and communities in offering tourism services and the possibility of developing secondary services and economies in regions (Dans & González, 2018). Hence, it shows that a community where WHSs are located can enjoy direct jobs from tourism. They can offer services such as tourist guides or establish hotels, bars and restaurants. There is likewise the generation of indirect employment via other industries like agriculture, creative industries (art,

music performance) and food production (UNESCO, 2020c). A typical example is the case of Petra. When it was designated as a World Heritage Site, the tribes of Petra in Jordan which were semi-nomads in history moved from the territories to concrete buildings. They enjoyed the benefits of tourism as they participated in the heritage industry, generating income from offering guided tours and the sales of souvenirs that have majorly been produced everywhere else but in Petra (Bille, 2012). There have been changes due to settlement and integration into government systems, as well as a flourishing tourism industry.

2.2.2 Improvement in Infrastructure

Sometimes, the inclusion of a heritage site on the list leads to improved infrastructures as the tourism industry wishes to benefit from having an accommodating environment for tourists to experience. Areas around a site which previously seemed underdeveloped due to nonexistent or inadequate infrastructures can receive attention such as this. This viewpoint was corroborated by Frey and Steiner (2011), noting that it helps in the improvement of medical care, education and local infrastructure such as communication equipment and roads. The government allocates more funds to ensure that the necessary facilities are in place and well managed. This is among the benefits enjoyed by the people in the locality who have probably been calling on them to attend to the infrastructures before the designation.

In the case of Petra, the local government became interested in the education sector as tourism grew. The government raised the level of education in the region towards involving the local community in tourism development. They established the Al-Hussein University in the region in 1999, and it helped in improving education levels, particularly among women, as they had access to higher learning. Before the establishment of the university in 1999, women could not attend other universities in the country because of the costs involved and distance (Farajat, 2012).

UNESCO (2020b) said in addition to the provision of jobs, tourism produces additional investment and spending capable of supporting various services which include health services, transportation services, energy distribution, garages, entertainment facilities and shops. It brings about infrastructural development like the establishment of hospitals, schools, roads, retail areas and airports. The local community stands to benefit from these, and they can support economic development by facilitating increasing trade as well as the improved flow of goods and services.

2.2.3. Enhancement of Development

It is common to hear people praising tourism for the harmonisation of conservation and development objectives within or close to protected areas (Borges et al., 2011). When considered from a conservation outlook, governments can raise funds for the protection of natural areas as tourism raises the awareness of the local community and tourists regarding biodiversity and conservation problems, preventing unsustainable practices among the local people.

While discussing the benefits of tourism from development outlook, Vadi and Schneider (2014) noted that the revenue gained from tourism could help in the reduction of poverty by stimulating business development and creating employment connected with biodiversity conservation and the enhancement of local services. Also, when the education system is improved, local people are empowered to encourage others towards the protection of the natural environment.

2.2.4. Marketing requirements

Heritage marketing is defined as establishing an expectation for potential tourists, while ensuring that visitor numbers and behaviors do not put the site and its heritage values at risk

(Misiura, 2006). There are certain factors that determine the necessity of marketing WHSs, including the political climate of a country as it has an impact on tourism promotion (Ryan & Silvanto, 2010). When there is political instability in a country, it affects tourism development and reduces visitations where a WHS is present.

For instance, when a revolution erupted in Egypt in 2011, numerous countries issued travel warnings and evacuated their citizens from the nation. It was such that multinational corporations started to evacuate their expatriate workers (CNN, 2011). This led to a decline in the total contributions of the country's tourism sector. The visitors' number fell from 14.7m in 2010 to 9.8m in 2011 (Oxford Business Group, 2019). Since then, the Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) in Egypt have been marketing the tourist sites, including WHSs in the country.

Several studies have emphasised the progressive consideration of WHS designation as a chance for a UNESCO property, as well as the host destination, to make it more visible worldwide, expand tourism, and attract travelers. Vice versa, negative impacts have suggested that the UNESCO brand on its own is not sufficient in attracting tourism flows toward a nation or the destination in a region hosting WHSs. Nevertheless, there is clarification in the literature that usually tourists have moderate awareness of the UNESCO brand, so is it not the designation in itself which might increase the number of tourists but the marketing efforts following the designation (Mariani & Guizzardi, 2019).

If it is indeed the case that it is marketing efforts that promote WHSs, it is necessary for the tourism industry to continue to remind potential tourists of the sites on offer by exposing them to media elements that will form organic images of the destination. The act of communicating with potential tourists by the individuals who supply a tourism product or distribution channels intermediaries is tourism promotion (Mill & Morrison, 1986). They need to promote destinations like WHSs to initiate or change purchasing behavior, or to remind tourists of an

extant destination. Therefore, they use the media elements, which are informative, persuasive, or reminding.

The necessity of marketing heritage sites can also be explained based on the principle of brand awareness. Through brand awareness, users can identify with a brand and possibly bring about a sense of trust and loyalty (Misiura, 2006). The WHS name can be considered as a brand, and this can create anticipation about what can be expected at such a destination. Potential tourists might perceive a WHS as a place to visit because it was inscribed on the WHS list due to its OUV.

2.3 Negative Impacts

Despite WHSs tourism bringing about economic benefits that help with the conservation of the sites, and boost the local or national economy, some factors seem to have a negative impact on the integrity of a site, put a site's OUV into jeopardy, and affect social and cultural aspects. These factors are based on the roles of the tourism players, and the negative impacts alter the site's sustainability. The actions and inactions of the players in and around a site present several effects, which is more profound in a situation where tourism has to do with non-renewable, and often fragile, heritage and natural resources.

In the view of Imon (2017), people who support tourism for development often have biased viewpoints in favor of the needs for tourism over heritage management concerns. It is possible for them to run down the social and cultural impact of a site and instead pay attention to the macro-economic aspect. This section discusses the negative effects of including a site on the WHS list.

2.3.1. Tourists' practices

Tourists can engage in practices that damage and affect the quality and value of a site. Such practices can encourage the exploitation of the resources by local inhabitants towards economic gains, thereby presenting a threat to natural resources. Tourists can litter a site, write or draw graffiti, walk-on archaeological features, pick up colored stones, pottery shards, as well as engage in illegal buying of ancient archaeological artefacts from local trafficking agents (Farajat, 2012).

For example, in the case of Petra, the local communities were involved in practices and activities which include the development of facilities and services related to tourism, uncontrolled tourism and business activity, thereby having negative effects on the site. There are several souvenir shops and restaurants, children in the locality sell trinkets and souvenirs all over the site, people hold events in sensitive areas; they camp, picnic, film, and use donkey transport, thereby harming the site's archaeological integrity, visitor experience and cultural heritage. Although these activities serve the tourist industry, they diminish the site's beauty and values, and eventually affect tourism (Farajat, 2012).

In 2011, the World Heritage Committee reported that Petra might soon be added to the endangered list if the way the site and the management of tourism was not modified to fulfil conservation goals (Akasheh, 2012). Governments need to make sound and effective decisions to ensure that the primary goal of inclusion on the World Heritage Sites list is attained as well as sustainable tourism development goals maintained.

Heritage sites could be damaged or experience unsustainable growth due to tourism activities. As explained by Mariani and Guizzardi (2019), the inclusion of heritage sites on the WHSs list achieves the identification, protection, conservation, and presentation of attractions of outstanding universal value (OUV). When it comes to the analytical purposes, this is critical because it shows that the paramount priority established by the Convention is towards the

protection of WHSs for future generations in the world based on what humans perceived then when the heritage property is to be inscribed. Nevertheless, according to UNESCO, the advantages of WHS designation has to do with a rise in tourism activities at the site, with critical spillover impacts on the economy of the locality (UNESCO 2008, as cited in Mariani & Guizzardi, 2019).

The sandstone in the parts of the façade of the Khazneh in World Heritage Site in Petra has been lost due to tour guides allowing people to sit. It has been revealed that half a cubic meter of sandstone has been lost over a few years. The rise in humidity level is also threatening Petra due to the massive number of tourists at the site, representing a barrier to preserving sandstone. The walls of carved tombs contain white deposits which show they are deteriorating, majorly the Treasury; as stated by Paradise (as cited in Mustafa & Abu Tayeh, 2011), the deposits should contain stearic acid-based and fat is retained when people lean against the wall with sweating hands, as revealed by tests. After monitoring two areas in Petra (the Khazneh and Theatre) in 10 years, it was discovered that as people touched, leaned and rubbed the surface of Khazneh it has receded by 40mm recession in less than ten years, while the stone masonry's markings continue to disappear such that fewer than 5 per cent of them are currently visible (Mustafa & Abu Tayeh, 2011).

Donkey rides are part of the activities deteriorating site features as animal hooves erode sandstone, but the remarkable point is that locals earn income from these. As people ride horse and camel on the site, the dust raised is encrusted on the Siq sides. The activities of the locals are having negative impacts on the site; they sell souvenirs and refreshments to the tourists, thereby disturbing the site's harmony. Some locals in the site break apart the sandstone, grind and pour it sand bottles and sell as souvenirs to tourists. Graffiti is likewise, visible on the rock-cut the city's Siq and tombs. They also litter the site despite the availability of littering cans (Mustafa & Abu Tayeh, 2011).

2.3.2. Negative Impacts of an Increase in Tourist Visit

When a site gets associated with the WHS, the approach of may change when it comes to tourism development. The approach to tourism development tends to have negative impacts when it is not undertaken in a proper or adequate manner. In 2009, one study regarding tourism-driven effects on twelve selected natural World Heritage Sites showed that tourism development in the sites was actioned differently. At some of the sites, the government planned adequately and sustainably for tourism development, while at others the government did not plan or put necessary regulatory control in place in sites that experienced rapid development. It is obvious that the absence of a sustainable plan and appropriate protection strategies could bring about a variety of problems as more tourists begin to visit (Redbanks Consulting & TBR, 2009).

Some of the problems that come with tourism to WHSs, especially where the number of tourists increases due to listing, include social impact, pollution and destruction or invasion of infrastructure development as a result of unrealised anticipations. These effects are some of those presented in Redbanks Consulting & TBR (2009), majorly due to the pressure on the sites as more people visit. When authorities do not plan for a possible increase in the number of tourists or if the increase happens rapidly, management systems and the capacity of site infrastructure will not be able to handle it. According to Borges et al. (2011), a site's values, which are responsible for its inclusion in the WHS, are threatened when more tourists begin to visit at a high rate, mostly when the managers fail to accommodate this change.

Some of the problems that emerge when more tourists visit a site are infrastructure development, water pollution, noise pollution, air pollution, and heavy traffic and congestion. Likewise, the area's diversity is affected seriously through physical changes as tourists trample, disturb, vandalise, and do more. Part of the indirect impacts of a rise in the number

of visitors to a site can include issues such the accidental release of invasive species in some situation (Borges et al., 2011).

For example, the number of visitors to the Galapagos Islands has increased, and this led to a variety of problems that presented threats to its OUV. The study of Borges et al. (2011) observed that the site is a perfect example of an indirect effect initiated by the increase in pressure from more visitations. One of the factors which led to more visitations to the islands is the availability of more entry points with several transport modes, particularly air transport. Through these entry points, access to the island became easier and quicker. Another factor is the opening of locations which previously did not allow access to visitors, because of the rise in the number of operators and activities. Likewise, tourism development led to a notable migration from mainland Ecuador as people sought to work in the area. The result was quite dramatic and unplanned urbanisation put pressure on the islands, and created a variety of social issues. In general, the Galapagos Islands was permanently altered, as the local flora and fauna of such sensitive ecosystems were at risk due to release of invasive species, poor waste management, pollution, and the changes to a number of the intangible features of the remote site (Redbanks Consulting & TBR, 2009).

The kind of peace and serenity in a site before being listed as a WHS may be destroyed through an increase in visitations (Caust & Vecco, 2017). This is one of the negative effects experienced in Bali and Thailand due to tourist visitations (Caust & Vecco, 2017). This could also compromise the original assets of the site, thereby lessening visitors' experience and failing to meet expectations. When tourists start finding the site less attractive, they may stop coming. This is quite possible where financial resources were limited from the outset, and there will be no means to renew or revitalise its environment when tourists stop visiting.

2.3.3. Impact on the Local People

The pressure on the local people to provide what tourists need could significantly affect the local culture. Due to this, they may feel required to provide a consistent and generic environment to meet visitors' expectations when it comes to the provision of services, facilities, activities and more in a site (Gonzalez-Tirados, 2011). With international tourism, there is a homogenisation of these elements, as well as the absorption or disappearance of individual differences in culture in order to meet these visitor expectations.

New tourist flows may critically affect and damage a site's cultural integrity, possibly leading to a compromise and corruption of the cultural values related to the site, values which contribute to the enhancement of the local community's social cohesion and identity (Daniel, 1996). According to Garrod and Fyall (2000), the consequence of degraded cultural values will harm tourism values.

For instance, there are different villages in Luang Prabang with each village having individual social structure and a temple with resident monks. A critical aspect of the existing traditions of Luang Prabang, and a significant tourist attraction, is the early morning ritual of almsgiving which involves monks coming out of the temple. When they come out, they receive rice cooked by the villagers. However, when the people started converting their residences to structures for tourists' use, the local communities' size began to reduce, and more non-locals started coming in, thereby leading to an upset in the villages' social structure jeopardising the traditional support system for the monks (Imon, 2017).

Hence, the monks consider the tourists' behaviour intrusive and are increasingly unhappy. Due to the tourists' intrusion on local customs, while the almsgiving ceremony is ongoing, the monks are not happy. It is such that they feel they are treated like animals in a zoo, as numerous tourists rush to take pictures of them during the ceremony. Numerous tourists desire

to have a deeper experience of the ritual, so they buy rice wrapped in leaves from street vendors who come from neighbouring villages, sit with the locals and offer the rice (alms) to the monks. Unfortunately, the rice sold to them is not as fresh (or even unhealthy to be consumed) as the one cooked and offered by the locals. Despite the acceptance of offerings from everyone being the tradition, the monks have said that the unfit food has been giving them unusual stomach problems (Imon, 2017). This shows that the presence of tourists is capable of altering cultural values and traditions.

Another impact of adding a site to the WHS list on local people has to do with what is called cultural commodification. Cultural commodification is a cultural heritage tourism phenomenon which usually means transforming local cultures and lifestyles into commodities towards sales to foreign audiences. Arthur and Mensah (2006) stated that cultural commodification is another contributory factor to the denigration of social customs, residents' alienation, as well as the development of place homogeneity. The approach of economising tourism and provide the needs of tourists could help in explaining sites' mythic reconstruction and the falsification of histories and identities (Caust & Vecco, 2017).

The case of Lijiang in China has to do with authenticity. The Chinese government approved the place as a tourist destination for foreigners in 1990 and the number of people visiting increased remarkably over the years until 1997 when a disastrous earthquake happened. The incident destroyed numerous non-traditional structures, which were re-built in the traditional styles, together with the restoration of several traditional streets, bridges and canals. This led to the site's addition to the WHS list the same year (Imon, 2017).

In 2008, a joint UNESCO and ICOMOS mission, whose aim was to look into the effects of development on the WHS and examine the effectuality of the existing remedial measures, was sent to the site. Specifically, it was to look into the effect of activities associated with tourism on the authenticity and integrity of both tangible and intangible heritage values of the site

(UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2008, as cited in Imon, 2017). The mission discovered that activities related to tourism were over-concentrated within the core area of Dayan Old Town, which was a challenge. Activities like retail almost entirely replaced the traditional activities on the streets and main squares, as traditional occupations were replaced by tourism businesses (Imon, 2017).

The mission discovered these developments compromised the authentic heritage values that served as an attraction to tourists. The activities meant to rebuild and redevelop the site affected architectural and urban authenticity. There was a massive displacement of the majority of the local population by non-local residents (Imon, 2017). Likewise, many of the indigenous people living in Lijiang speak Naxi language, but Mandarin became the common language due to more dependency on tourism. This is because many of the tourists understand or speak Mandarin. There were modification and commercialisation of numerous ethnic, cultural performances towards suiting tourists' needs (Xie, 2011).

2.4 Cultural Change

From the outset, culture has been a significant motivation behind tourism. McIntosh and Geoldner (1986) summarised travel's motivations into five basic desires; the cultural motivators is one of these five motivations (Hsieh, 2016). Moreover, when a site is inscribed on the list of WHS, there is a tendency for the locals in the environment to become motivated to showcase their cultural values and customs for various reasons, even if these customs are no longer practiced. On the other hand, if care is not taken, such cultural values and traditions could be eroded. This section discusses how cultural changes happen around heritage sites.

2.4.1. Cultural Revival

Those who are not well-informed in the tourism industry often ask the reason for the sudden interest in heritage tourism. In the view of Boniface and Fowler (1993) in Van Zyl (2005), it is about money and status for the individuals working in the Industry, and the customary escapism and or status for the tourists. Likewise, travel has been related to the desire to broaden awareness and self-recognition, via added knowledge and exposure to other cultures and social circumstances (Van Zyl, 2005).

When a heritage site is inscribed, both tourism industry workers and the locals around the area are eager to develop that which attracts tourists to the site. Attractions and, to lesser extent activities, represent the tourism appeal of most destinations. Hence, they are the essence of the resource base of a destination. Gunn (1988) in Van Zyl (2005) noted that attractions energise the tourism system, the mirror side of market interests, the places where the individual and social anticipations from travel are achieved. In this case Gunn is referring to the intangibility of service (tourism) products because it is not easy to measure, touch, or evaluate the majority of services at the point of sale prior to the performance. According to Van Zyl (2005), it is necessary to know the attractions that are reflective of a site's intrinsic, distinguishing, and unique natural and cultural features, when evaluating the type of character to be communicated. Further, it is necessary to develop these attractions in an authentic manner, to reinforce its authentic character. The cultural attraction is an inherent feature that promotes the cultural heritage of a site. It has to do with the cultural values that help people to acquire knowledge regarding each other's ways of life and thought. According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), people are moved to tourist sites for cultural motivations like the performance of festivals, folklore, arts, pilgrimages and cultural events (Van Zyl, 2005). When a site is inscribed on the WHS list, people from across the world tend to find out its cultural values. When tourists find what is culturally appealing, the locals move to meet their needs, putting

together resources to showcase their cultural values.

Van Zyl (2005) said "we feed off other people's culture for our ends" meaning that there must be a radical difference between the tourists' culture and the site's culture values, to induce excitement and interest in viewing it. Hence, cultural attractions are revived in heritage sites, including tangible and intangible cultural resources. Whatever will relate the information about the culture to tourists is paid serious attention. As described by the National Park Service in Van Zyl (2005), tangible resources related to or representing peoples, cultures, and human activities and events include sites, historical documents, landscapes objects, animals, structures, plants and districts, as well as other natural resources which culture defines as ceremonial items, manufacturing and food.

In 1995, the town of Luang Prabang was listed as a WHS due to its set of traditional residential and religious architecture and European colonial-style buildings. All of the cultural resources are within a preserved townscape which represents the coordinated association between the built and natural environment, including several traditional Buddhist temples with resident monks (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2013). Similarly, as for the Historic Centre of Macao which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2005, the people and tourism industry were able to select, package and promote for tourism goals the individual cultural items like traditional festivals, thereby turning what used to be embedded in the traditional belief system into tourist spectacles (Imon, 2008).

2.4.2. Cultural Erosion

Based on Van Zyl (2005) experience, the assessment that comes before any development related to tourism other than the tourists' enjoyment and the maximum economic return are usually about the impacts related to the environment. They do not usually pay much attention to the intangible part of a community's culture, and its cultural values enshrined in features

such as family life, ideology, myth, folklore. According to Goodman and Marx (1978), such values are not inevitably tied to any belief or objective knowledge but rather are about collective preference which expresses the criteria used by the members of any culture to make critical choices of behaviour (Van Zyl, 2005).

Since values are a critical aspect of a society's culture as they are a reflection of its shared standard of what is acceptable or unacceptable, good or bad, outsiders' intrusion in any form can destabilise such values. In the view of Williams (1990), tourism development is a user and abuser of indigenous cultures. This means that tourism development leverages cultural values to attract people from across the world and sometimes abuse the same values, which lead to cultural erosion (Van Zyl, 2005).

In the case of Petra, its addition to the list of World Heritage Sites in 1985 compelled the Bedouin tribes who had settled in the area to leave the caves that served as their homes. Despite the growth of tourism, the people were still practicing goat pastoralism and rainfall farming of wheat and barley, and they lived in black tents of woven goat hair, many masonry structures in natural rock shelters, and empty Nabataean tombs. The people were relocated to a housing development built in the village called Umm Sayhoun, offering improved education and health care. However, they could not practice traditional pastoral and agricultural lands like before. As a result of this, numerous individuals did not move out of the caves and rock shelters, while the government of Jordan put in more efforts to move them by 1990, but there were still a very few tent camps in remote locations (Mustafa & Abu Tayeh, 2011).

When tourism development was expanded, the visible evidence of a cultural change includes a decline in traditional handicrafts. At first, when tourists showed interest in woven materials that few women had been making since the 1950s, it helped to revive arts, and the locals began to produce bags, spindle whorls and more to support their families. However, the expansion of tourism development turned things around (Mustafa & Abu Tayeh, 2011). In the study of

Hejazeen (2007), the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on five communities at five historical sites around Jordan were compared. In regards to Petra, it was discovered that several locals started drinking alcohol, children were dropping out of school, the locals started imitating tourism behaviors, and involving participation in sexual relationships with tourists (Alhasanat & Hyasat, 2011).

Swarbrooke (1999) as cited in Alhasanat and Hyasat (2011) noted that when it comes to the assessment of socio-cultural effects of tourism, the most controversial is sex tourism. Sex tourism is sometimes due to some tourists' immoral behaviour. This is one way that heritage tourism can erode cultural values among the residents. However, the argument surrounding this impact has to do with the identification of the degree to which local communities accept sex tourism. For instance, there is consistent consideration of sex with children as being entirely unacceptable (Alhasanat & Hyasat, 2011). In the case of Petra, Hejazeen (2007) noted that sexual encounters take place majorly between local men and foreign women. It was discovered that heads of households consider tourism not contradicting religious practice and traditions, but they observed possible threats that might affect the younger generations ahead (Alhasanat & Hyasat, 2011).

2.4.3. Authenticity

Due to the remarkable changes in historic environments, attention has been given to the concept of authenticity as striking a balance between conservation and development approaches. According to English Heritage (2008), authenticity refers to the features that are truly a reflection and embody the cultural heritage values of a place. When it comes to WHS, the attributes commonly used in defining their authenticity are stipulated by UNESCO (2015): form and design; use and function; location and setting; traditions; materials and substance; techniques and management systems; language and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit

and feeling; as well as other internal and external factors.

People have criticised the original authenticity criteria as being materialistic as its focus on setting, materiality, design and artisanship, and that it does not recognise non-materialistic, intangible, and spiritual processes used in a variety of non-Western cultural contexts to create and protect their cultural heritage (Silva, 2015), thereby leading to the expansion of the criteria for heritage to be authentic with consideration for WHS in Asia. Authenticity is a crucial issue related to heritage tourism, and the visitors' desired experience (Prideaux, 2003). This means when potential tourists are informed about a heritage site, they expect to see the actual features and values in their natural expressions. Nevertheless, the authenticity of some sites is altered by the tourism industry or the residents. MacCanneIl, 1973 (as cited in Prideaux, 2003) said the characterisation of heritage attractions could be based on the various extents to which they stage or contrive sites for tourists.

2.4.4. Commodification issues

Commodification has to do with various activities carried out, which leads to the modification of heritage sites. Some cultural events related to heritage sites are sometimes modified to make them more attractive to tourists. The tourism industry carries out the gradual conversion of heritage and cultural assets into a saleable product or experience due to perceived demand by tourists, what government perceive of demand, or the tourist industry's perceptions of demand. When it is perceived that tourists demand a heritage or cultural asset, this could bring about a supply-side response towards the provision of a commodified experience (Prideaux, 2003).

Commodification is detrimental, especially when it ends up eroding or heavily modifying the meaning of cultural artefacts, places and buildings (Greenwood, 1989, as cited in Prideaux, 2003). Nevertheless, another perspective considers the possibility of commodification being

beneficial where it is required to preserve a site or place that would otherwise become non-existent due to redevelopment. Trotter (2000) as cited in Prideaux (2003) claimed that heritage comes into existence when its production or manufacture is based on present- time concerns, interests and practices that leverage the fragmentary remnants of the past that remain in existence in the presence. Furthermore, Trotter (2000) noted that lamenting heritage commodification means ignoring and misunderstanding the nature of heritage, how it is produced and valued (Prideaux, 2003).

Concerns regarding the commodification of heritage are similar to concerns regarding the commodification of culture. In a situation where the purpose served by buildings and other heritage sites is more than being a site reserved for visitors, there is a reduction in the justification for commodification. However, in a case whereby the site is no longer utilised for its original purpose or any other commercial or administrative uses, it becomes necessary to give more priority to attracting visitors and consider approaches associated with market towards increasing visitor demand. Since heritage sites managers, who depend partly or totally on funds from entrance fees and associated commercial enterprises, find these economic pressures difficult to manage heritage sites, it becomes necessary to balance the demand for authenticity and preservation of the site's integrity with the necessity of offering a visitor experience capable of competing with other heritage sites, satisfying visitors' demand, and generating a certain level of cash flow. In such situations, commodification may be a necessity in or to ensure viability (Trotter, 2000, as cited in Prideaux, 2003).

UNESCO (2004) noted that since Luang Prabang was inscribed on the WHS list in 1995, the authenticity of numerous smaller temples has been compromised by well-intended but ill-informed efforts towards the beautification of the temples, usually to improve their attraction for tourists. It was also discovered that the authentic heritage values of the Old Town of Lijiang that had attracted the visitors to the town had been compromised for commercial

interests and to facilitate a large number of tourists visiting. In the process of rebuilding and redeveloping the sites, architectural and urban authenticity was affected (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2008). Improper planning of sites leads to the proliferation of developments, thereby altering their authenticity. This is what happened in sites like Iguazu National Park, Mosi-oa-Tunya / Victoria Falls and the Ngorongoro Crater. The authenticity of the Belize Barrier Reef System (BBRS) site was threatened due to infrastructural development around it (Redbanks Consulting & TBR, 2009).

2.4.5. Heritage Tourism and Religious Beliefs

Tourism development is majorly dependent on traditional culture, which includes religious beliefs. The misinterpretation of local religious and cultural heritage by the tourism industry will bring about negative attitudes towards the development (Uriely, Israeli, & Reichel, 2003). The tourism industry ignores religious aspects associated with tourism developments due to the unfashionable nature of spiritual meaning (Guillot, 2007). However, some religious communities consider tourism as an inappropriate activity, while some people also have religious beliefs that tend to challenge tourism development. In some Muslim communities, Islamic values are cultural values; hence, they take different measures to ensure that heritage tourism or Islamic tourism does not corrupt such values.

Some Muslim nations consider tourism development as a possible threat to Islamic cultural values and traditions. However, Muslim communities such as in Malaysia have welcomed Heritage tourism as four sites in the country are WHS, with five sites in the country on the tentative list as of 2019. Heritage tourism in Muslim nations also comes under the heading of Islamic tourism. Despite the scant study on the impacts of heritage tourism on Islamic society, the study of Suid, Nor, and Omar (2017) in the context of Malaysia provided the conservative religious concept of Islamic tourism which explains likely effects. Heritage tourism should

not jeopardise Islamic principles related to consumption experiences. This is such that some Islamic communities require hotels that accommodate tourists to comply with principles of Sharia, towards avoiding pollution.

Muslims must pray five times daily. Hence, commodification must not lead to the destruction of worship places. According to Suid, Nor, and Omar (2017), Islamic tourism and the hospitality industry need to provide adequate facilities for daily prayers. Since the prayer room is among the most critical facilities for Muslims, tourist facilities must include a split prayer room capable of accommodating a certain number of male and female guests. Another Islamic value or custom that heritage tourism should not affect in Muslim communities is halal food. Commodification should not hinder or eliminate the provision of such food as halal food is an obligatory requirement in Islam. However, since non- Muslims are also likely to be interested in visiting heritage sites in Muslim communities, these principles can put them off.

In several heritage sites across the world, tourists of different genders are free to mix and relate. However, in Islamic communities, this is not allowed. Suid, Nor, and Omar (2017) noted that Sharia forbids free mixing of the sexes to avoid the temptation that can bring about indecent acts, the arousal of desires, evil consequences and false practices. Islamic tourism and the hospitality industry in Islamic communities ensure gender segregation by separating male and female facilities like rooms, restaurants, gyms, and swimming pools. This ensures the protection of the authenticity of cultural values which is enshrined in Islamic beliefs. Further, some communities insist on the implementation of specific versions of Sharia principles regarding the segregation of sexes such that different sexes must not use the same cafes and restaurants, while staffs must serve only guests of their gender and unmarried couples must not occupy the same bedroom (Kovjanic, 2014, as cited in Suid, Nor, & Omar, 2017).

Activities related to gambling, improper dressing, serving and consumption of alcohol, and sexual permissiveness are against Islamic values and are not allowed permitted for tourists

(Suid, Nor, & Omar, 2017). Since cultural values are the main factors which attract tourists and such values are Islamic values in Muslim community, destination managers for heritage tourism must not compromise any of the rules and regulations to attract Muslim tourists. This means that commodification must uphold Islamic principles to preserve authenticity.

2.5 Conclusion

The positive and negative impacts of adding a site to the WHS list have social, cultural, environmental, and socioeconomic aspects. The impacts are felt by the local community, the site, tourists, and the entire nation where the site is located. Positive impacts are based on the economic gains accruable from tourists visits and activities. However, the majority of the negative impacts are related to management approaches and planning. When the number of tourists increases, a site's capacity is stressed, thereby degrading the site's values. Local communities are majorly affected when economic gains are preferenced over sustainability. Overall, different factors are responsible for the impacts over time; so, it may be invalid to say the impact of WHS listing on tourism arrivals is always negative or not present. Also, cultural changes may lead to revive the culture, or may affect it negatively it by obliterating local communities' original customs and traditions; if care is not taken, such cultural values and traditions could be eroded.

3. Methodology

3.1 Overview

Data was collected using a qualitative method. The use of qualitative research methods is to describe complex phenomena; track special or unanticipated events; illuminate different actor's experience and interpretation of events; express the outlooks of the people who are rarely heard; conduct pioneering explorations towards the development of theories, generation and testing of hypotheses; and try to explain phenomenon (Sofaer, 1999). Questions are close-ended when it comes to further quantitative research, meaning that their response options are specific; likewise, the questions are predetermined instead of leaving it to the researcher's discretion (Sofaer, 1999). Material collection for this study was via two means: primary and secondary. These include researcher's field notes during observations of semi-structured interviews, as well as literature review analysis. The researcher gained deeper comprehension of the topic via peer-reviewed academic studies as well as other online sources.

According to Decrop (1999), there is wide use of qualitative methods in market research which are widely accepted in the social sciences. Anthropologists and sociologists use them for travel and tourism research. It is possible to use quantitative terms to research and document the effects of tourism on indigenous populations at numerous levels. It is only possible to understand others like the changes in the meaning of objects and cultures through becoming aware of the fine grain of local experience (Lepp, 2008). The study chose semi-structured interviews because it provides comprehensive information. Also, in contrast to quantitative approaches, evaluate attitude more comprehensively and subtly (Lepp, 2007). This then ensured improved forecasts of behaviour.

The research objectives required interviewees to share their views and beliefs on tourism development based upon their extensive experience of tourism development in the chosen

settings. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used as a result of the exploratory nature of the study and its capacity to create perceptive insights into social phenomena (Hsu & Huang, 2008). Also, in-depth interviews are valued when the researcher needs to explore phenomenological themes (Dunn, 2016; Hayllar & Griffin, 2005; Seidman, 2006). As a result of the use of this particular methodology, the objectives were met without considerable challenge.

This study aims to investigate the various impacts of heritage sites on economic development; examine existing heritage sites and their impact on the surrounding communities. Additionally, it seeks to offer recommendations to foster further growth of the tourism sector in a way that continues to support local communities.

The objectives below were formulated towards the assessment of the perceptions of residents in AlUla regarding tourism development around the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage site:

- To further understand the historical nature of tourism development at Al Hijr and the resulting impacts on the community.

- To critically analyse the current performance of tourism development at Al Hijr from the perspective of local business owners.

- To establish the community's current awareness and understanding of Al-Hijr's role in supporting the local economy.

- To identify further opportunities to sustainably develop tourism at Al Hijr.

3.2 Research Method

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews due to their appropriateness in exploring the respondents' perceptions and opinions about complex and sometimes sensitive issues. They also allow further probing to obtain more information and clarify answers. It was

necessary to have a level of freedom to probe towards exploring the viewpoints of respondents, clarifying interesting and pertinent issues, draw out information and look into sensitive topics within each interview.

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), research design deals with the organisation of research activity, and it includes data collection, in a manner that will help in achieving the research goals. To answer the research questions of knowing the influence of tourism development at the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site (Saudi Arabia) on local communities, the semi-structured interviews were chosen as the relevant qualitative research approach.

There could be a combination of both the structured and unstructured interview styles in semi-structured interviews; hence, combined they provide the best approach (Zoiceska, 2018). Semi-structured interviews are likewise ideal in a situation where a researcher should carry out a formative program-evaluation and desires one-on-one interviews with leading workers. For a researcher's examination of a remote territory with obscure but likely remarkable issues, and the interviewers requiring utmost liberty to identify beneficial leads and pursue them, then the semi-structured interviews are applicable (Adams, 2015).

It is appropriate to use the semi-structured interview to explore attitudes, values, beliefs and motives, thereby leading to improved comprehension of respondents' thoughts and attitudes on certain issues, relative to when structured interviews are used. In comparison, the answers provided by respondents are constrained by structured interviews, may lack correlation with their experiences (Barriball & While, 1994; Hemandez, Cohen & Garcia, 1996).

Hence, interviewers can choose the wording for the questions asked in the semi-structured interview and likewise in using probes. When it comes to probing, it can be a critical tool to ensure data is reliable: allows researchers to clarify respondents' expressions; helps in exploring sensitive issues; capable of eliciting worthwhile and complete information; allows

interviewer's exploration and clarification of inconsistencies within the accounts of respondents; and helps in recalling information for questions related to memory (Barriball & While, 1994). Likewise, probing helps in maximising the possibility for interactive chances between the respondent and interviewer, thereby establishing a sense of rapport and reducing the risk of socially expedient answers (Barriball & While, 1994; Bhasin, 2019).

Among the benefits of utilising a semi-structured interview approach is follow-up questions as they help to obtain in-depth information based on respondent's initial response (Bhasin, 2019; Jennings, 2010). Semi-structured interviews are suitable for several crucial tasks, especially when it is necessary to follow up certain open-ended questions (Adams, 2015). These are fit when there is a need to ask fact- finding, open-ended questions and to obtain the thought of every participant.

Semi-structured interviews offer the most direct interaction which focuses on the research between researcher and participant. Participants are allowed to share their experiences and researchers can look into what participants' ideas and expressions mean (Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Evans, 2018). Several researchers have used the semi- structured interview to collect data about tourism development in UNESCO World Heritage sites (Gilmore, Carson & Ascenção, 2007; Mustafa & Abu Tayeh, 2011; Ryan, Zhang & Zeng, 2011; Mustafa & Balaawi, 2013).

Social cues like voice, intonation, body language, and more help in interviews. They can allow the interviewee to provide further information for addition to the interviewee's verbal answer to a question, specifically beneficial towards the discussion of sensitive issues (Opdenakker, 2006; Barriball & While, 1994; Jennings, 2010).

When participating in face to face interviews there is now delay a between the question being asked and answer being given - direct reaction to the words or actions of the interviewer and

interviewee is possible. This is synchronous communication, and its merits include interviewee's spontaneous answer, without reflecting for an extended period; and the inability of the respondent to obtain assistance from others in the formulation of a response (Opdenakker, 2006; Barriball & While, 1994).

3.3 Participants/ sample / subjects

The individuals who could be ideal for semi-structured interviews can run the range of the people connected with the program being evaluated. Adams (2015) categorised them into three broad groups: program recipients, interested parties, and administration. Program recipients could be beneficiaries, members, customers, clients, constituents, audience, or other groups. As for interested parties, they may include contributors, suppliers, or any other stakeholders not direct recipients or program administrators, as well as other close stakeholders who could be affected in ancillary ways.

Hence, for this study, the people recruited include hotel managers and owners, restaurant and cafe owners, as well as travel agency managers. This is due to the fact that they are involved in tourism development around the heritage site in AlUla. The government of Saudi Arabia focused broadly on AlUla in recent years working to make it a distinctive tourist destination in the region, based on its unique heritage sites. Hence, this study chose AlUla. Moreover, the researcher lived and worked in Madinah Province and AlUla is one of the small towns in this province. So, the researcher is familiar with the local culture and Arabic language.

According to Adams (2015), after the identification of the target group or groups for semi-structured interviews from the outset, researchers need to select respondents out of the target group. A large group would require researchers to select from at random. For groups that are not so large and if the available resources are adequate, it could be possible to interview nearly

everyone, such as every key administrator as well as every member of the program board. In situations where there is no adequate time and resources to carry out numerous semi-structured interviews, it remains crucial to obtain several individuals' viewpoints.

In this study, the researcher compiled a comprehensive list of all participants through an extensive Google search of tourism businesses in the region and appropriate business directories. Since there are several businesses related to tourism in the region, participants were selected at random from a list of all appropriate tourism businesses in the region. The email addresses and phone numbers of the participants were obtained, and they were contacted via email and via an introductory telephone call.

The identification of respondents should come first followed by setting up of appointments prior to the arrival of interviewers at the site. Many times, top managers help in setting up interviews when the workers in a firm are involved, which can assist in simplifying the process. In situations involving the drawing of a sample from a roster containing the workers in an organisation, the managers will be provided with the names of the selected individuals, instead of allowing the managers to individually select which staff members are interviewed (Adams, 2015). However, in this study, the research participants are hotel managers and owners, restaurant and cafe owners, as well as travel agency managers. Therefore, their staff members were not involved, thereby made the process of identifying, contacting, and interviewing simplified.

Occasionally, researchers must telephone the selected individuals to ask a time for an appointment. Instead of making a "cold call", researchers need to introduce themselves beforehand by sending a letter, highlighting the importance of the person's advice as well as pointing out that a person in authority has approved the plans. This could be a means of adding legality and saving time in explaining and justifying the research. When researchers send a

letter in advance, it can make way for the phone call that follows, facilitating the arrangement of a meeting (Adams, 2015).

In this study, recruits were selected at random from a list of potential participants which contains contact details. Recruits were contacted either via email or telephone, depending on their primary contact method provided. In most cases, the researcher visited hotels to present the relevant Information Sheet, Letter of Introduction and Consent Form for consideration and gave them enough time to individuals to decide whether or not they wished to participate in the project.

There should be no distractions where an interview is carried out. Likewise, it must take place at a location where the respondent will feel comfortable. Most times, the majority of respondents preferred to be interviewed at home in the evening. When done at home, the respondent feels relaxed, thereby ensuring a fruitful interview (Bhasin, 2019). In the current study, participants were allowed to choose the place at which they prefer to be interviewed. The researcher carried out four interviews at cafes, three at participants' homes and nine at respondents' workplaces.

Semi-structured interviews are comprehensive, in that the respondents need to answer pre-set open-ended questions. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews are used widely as a format for interviews, either with individuals or groups (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). With these kinds of interviews, researchers conduct the interview only once, with individuals or a group, and mostly cover the length from 30 minutes to over an hour (Gray, 2009; Bhasin, 2019). Based on a semi-structured interview guide, interviews are carried out by the interviewer presenting questions or topics schematically, allowing for exploration of the question(s) (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In this case the researcher designed the questions to be covered within 30 minutes. The average time used for the interviews was about 20 minutes.

Researchers must use their interview time optimally, and this is possible through the use of interview guides, to explore numerous responses in a more systematic and thorough manner, as well as to maintain the focus of the interview on the desired line of action (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The design of the questions was aimed at exploring the effect of tourism development at the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site on local communities. All respondents were asked the first question: "How long have you lived and worked in the local area?" This question aimed to look into the participants' experience from the time they have been living and working in the tourism sector. The first question was followed by an outline of questions regarding the changes that have occurred in the Al Ula area since Al-Hijr became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008; the changes that have occurred in the tourism sector since the time they started their career in the industry; how their businesses have changed and impacted their lives and families. The interview questions seek to know what the participants think about the importance of Al-Hijr in attracting tourists; whether the local community are supporting more tourism development; what they believe concerning the awareness of the local community about the importance of Al-Hijr in supporting the community. The interview questions likewise seek to know what the participants think are the main strengths and weaknesses of the region as a tourist destination; what they think should be done for more promotion of tourism in the region. In the last section of the interview, the question was about participants' concerns about the future development of tourism in AlUla.

In the word of DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), appropriate communication of the purpose of the investigation is one of ethical issues related to research. This becomes further complex as it is possible that the investigator does not first know the data to be uncovered; hence, the aims could be modified during the research process. Therefore, verbal consent is recommended for interviewees' participation in on-going interviews, and they can disengage

from the research study whenever they feel like. Likewise, it is necessary to inform them about ethical principles like confidentiality and anonymity (Bhasin, 2019).

The study was ethically approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee in South Australia. The Letter of Introduction and an Information Sheet received by the interviewees explained that participation is entirely voluntary, and they are free to withdraw from the project at any time, or they are welcome to decide not to answer some questions. The information in the study will be confidential, and the researcher would analyse the data without personal identifiers. Otherwise, if the participants note any unethical action throughout the study, they may contact the Executive Officer of the Committee via telephone or email that were provided on the Consent Form.

For researchers to attain more effective capturing of the interview data, the recording of the interviews is considered an ideal thing to do. When there is permission to use voice- recorder, it ensured that the content of each interview has similar replication available (soft copy), thereby facilitating analysis (Barriball & While, 1994). The merit of a tape recorder is the accuracy of the interview report relative to writing out notes (Opdenakker, 2006). Researchers often use a tape recorder to record interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). They often use audio taping because it offers a comprehensive understanding of respondents' and interviewers' performance. The validation of the accuracy and completeness of the information retrieved is possible through access to the nuances of the interactions between respondent and interviewer (Barriball & While, 1994). Recording the interview makes it easier to focus on the interview content and verbal prompts, allowing a transcriptionist to produce a "verbatim transcript".

The researcher informed the participants that the interview would be recorded, as in the consent forms sent to them. Sixteen (16) comprehensive interviews were carried out in AlUla

- Saudi Arabia between January and February 2020. The interviewer is Abdulmohsen Alahmadi is fluent in colloquial Arabic. The interviews lasted an average of 20 minutes. Interviews were tape-recorded, with the permission of the respondents. Only two respondents refused the interviews while others were willing to participate in the study. The researcher translated the interviews into English after completion.

3.4 Data analysis

The interviews of the sixteen (16) persons lasted between 15-30 minutes. The researcher wrote the interviews on the designated form that contained 12 questions regarding the effects of the tourism development that emerged following the addition of Al-Hijr into UNESCO World Heritage site list in 2008. The twelve questions that were asked to the participants were as follows:

1) How long have you lived and worked in the local area?

2) Why did you start or find work in a tourism business here?

3) How has Al Ula changed in the ten years since Al-Hijr became a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

4) How has the tourism sector specifically changed here over the past 10 years?

5) How has your business changed over time? Has it grown or expanded? How has this impacted on you and your family?

6) In your opinion, how important is Al-Hijr in attracting tourists to the region?

7) Do you feel that the local community support further tourism development here? If so, why? If not, why not?

8) Do you believe that the local community is aware of the importance of Al-Hijr in supporting the economy?

9) What do you feel are the region's main strengths as a tourist destination?

10) What do you feel are the region's main weaknesses as a tourist destination?

11) What do you feel could be done to further promote tourism in the region?

12) Do you have any concerns about the future development or growth of tourism here?

After recording the interviews, the answers were transcribed. The researcher read the transcriptions, which were then translated into English. Three (3) category headings were identified from the data (main benefits, main challenges and concern about cultural erosion). The sixteen (16) respondents were males due to the majority of the workers in the tourism sector in AlUla being males. Nine (9) of them were between 20 and 30 years old, six (6) between 30 and 40 years old, and one (1) was between 40 and 50 years old.

After the translation of the interviews into English, they were analysed via the transcription, together with a repeated rereading of interviews. This approach helped to understand the descriptions of the respondents deeply. Due to repeated exposure to the data, key themes were understood deeply. This made coding iterative, as exposure to data aided the identification of data and themes with every interview.

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis to explore the effect of tourism development at the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site on the local community. Braun & Clarke (2006) in Evans (2018) noted that thematic analysis is widely used. Its popularity is in part a reflection of its independence from any specific theoretical approach or epistemology persuasion. Hence, it is beneficial to researchers working within either realist or constructionist paradigms of social sciences. The thematic analysis produced a deeper understanding of the information

obtained from the semi-structured interviews. Boyatzis explains several techniques to synthesise qualitative data, via coding, into a structured thematic analysis (Allan, 2017).

Thematic analysis is aimed at the identification of themes (critical or interesting data patterns) and using these themes towards addressing the research question or being able to make comment regarding an issue. This goes beyond data summarisation; thematic analysis helps in interpreting data and retrieving the sense in data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). When it comes to examining the effect of heritage sites on the surrounding communities, thematic analysis is beneficial as it facilitates the examination of the meanings attached to the effect of tourism development at the Al- Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site on the local community.

4. Findings

4.1 Overview

The findings of this research provide several insights into the local community's views and perceptions as regards the effects of tourism development at the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site (AlUla - Saudi Arabia) on local communities. There have been little research aimed at the impact of tourism development around heritage sites on local communities in the Middle East. The purpose of this article is to tackle this issue in the Saudi context. Based on expectation and in line with the viewpoints of Barriball and While (1994); Hemandez, Cohen and Garcia (1996), the use of semi-structured interview towards exploring attitudes, values, beliefs and motives is necessary, leading to the improvement of the understanding of the thoughts and perspectives of respondents on certain issues relative to when structured interviews are utilised. The respondents either study or work in the tourism field. However, two experts in the region do not work in the tourism field among the respondents. Hence, they usually see tourism development differently based on the respondents' quick personal success.

A number of the study participants admitted their inability to observe much positive effect when tourism development emerged in the region. Nevertheless, these viewpoints failed to show proof of an adverse effect. They rather laid emphasis on the fact that some members were clearly unaware of the positive effects of tourism, as it is difficult to observe these effects when tourism development emerged. Despite the site joining the list in 2008, the Saudi tourist visa and the tourism activities in the region began in 2018. However, the researcher was able to address the study's objectives by collecting enough data through all 16 interviews. The table below shows the information of participants (Table 1).

Table 4.1   Summary of Participants

Participant #	Age group	Nationality / Gender	Position/Business type
1	30-35	Saudi / Male	Museum Director in AlUla
2	25-30	Saudi / Male	Front Desk Supervisor and Tourist Guide
3	25-30	Saudi / Male	Administrative in the tourism sector
4	25-30	Saudi / Male	Tourist Guide in AlUla
5	25-30	Saudi / Male	Tourist Guide in AlUla
6	30-35	Saudi / Male	A researcher in the tourism field
7	30-35	Saudi / Male	A teacher and an expert in the region
8	30-35	Egyptian / Male	Rental car officer
9	20-25	Saudi / Male	Front Desk Supervisor in a hotel
10	25-30	Saudi / Male	Front Desk Supervisor in a hotel
11	40-45	Saudi / Male	An expert in AlUla region
12	25-30	Saudi / Male	Tourist Guide
13	30-35	Saudi / Male	A trainer in the tourism field
14	35-40	Saudi / Male	A hotel's Owner in Al Ula
15	25-30	Saudi / Male	A hotel's Owner in Al Ula
16	25-30	Saudi / Male	Front Desk Supervisor in a hotel

The key themes divided in these findings are revealed as three themes. Firstly, the main benefits include how the UNESCO listing positively changed interest levels (both amongst tourists and the community); how the community now supports tourism development and understands its value and the emergence of new jobs/business opportunities. The second theme is the main challenges: infrastructure improvements required, further promotion required and potential

damage/unsustainable growth. Eventually, the third theme is concerned about cultural erosion which contains the impacts on local community and disappearance of customs.

4.2 Main benefits

4.2.1 The UNESCO listing changed interest levels and the contribution of the local authority after the site listed.

According to Leask and Fyall (2006) and APEC (2010), it appears that more nations continue to seek World Heritage Listing due to the attached economic and status benefits such as assistance available to protect and conserve the sites. Most times, listing leads to a rise in tourism (Buckley, 2004). More visitations to WHSs help people to know about the values, and promotes public support and appreciation of these values domestically and internationally (Caust & Vecco, 2017). The effect of this was noted when the Al-Hijr site joined the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008. Where the opinions of most of the participants indicated that the number of tourists is increasing, and the demand for the region and the work on developing the infrastructure has become noticeable in the last ten years. However, it can be said through respondents' responses that Al-Hijr has gone through two development stages during the twelve years since it joined the list, the first phase from 2008 to 2016 after joining the list, then the second phase after the launch of Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016 and the establishment of the Royal Commission for AlUla in 2017. Tourism is considered the essential pillar of the Vision 2030 programs towards reaching its goals by setting long-term strategies and goals to make AlUla a great tourist attraction by 2030.

Although most of the respondents' responses indicated a noticeable change after the site joined the list in 2008, some of the responses indicated that the rapid change was more noticable after the year 2017, after the establishment of the Royal Commission for AlUla. Hence, the UNESCO brand is not solely able to attract tourism flows to a nation or places hosting WHSs.

However, the literature makes it clear that tourists are often moderately aware of the UNESCO brand, so it should be considered that the number of tourists does not increase only due to the designation but also in addition to the marketing efforts that follow the designation (Mariani & Guizzardi, 2019). This confirms the importance of government's role and its work on developing heritage sites by treating the infrastructure in the area appropriately, and having appropriate marketing. In Al-Hijr case, it is clear that joining the UNESCO World Heritage List was not sufficient to attract tourists to the region unless the local authority has taken steps to develop the area around the site.

Most of the participants in this study agreed that tourism development was divided into two phases; the first phase began in 2008 when Al-Hijr joined the list. The second phase began with the inauguration of the Saudi Vision 2030, and that was in 2016, followed by the establishment of the Royal Commission for AlUla in 2017. P3 observed that before the announcement of the addition of Al-Hijr to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008, the Saudi government interest in the region was very ordinary. However, after the announcement in 2008, the government took a noticeable step. The Ministry of Tourism sent cadres of employees to the site to make it a tourist attraction site.

Several respondents mentioned that Al-Hijr site is the first to attract government interest in the area, contributing to the attraction of foreign tourists. P5 stated that adding the site to the UNESCO gave it a positive reputation among many tourists. This also led the local government to pay greater attention to the facilities and infrastructure in AlUla. When P11 was asked about how has AlUla changed in the last ten years since Al-Hajar became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, he provided a good overview of what happened in the previous few years:

'In the beginning, especially when tourism started in AlUla region in 2008, eyes began to turn to Al-Hijr specifically as a tourist attraction site. The people of the region did

not consider it a tourist site, and the interest in it was very little. However, after the Ministry of Tourism took over the matter, the local people began to visit and were more interested in the tourism field. Tourists started coming from outside of Saudi Arabia, and there was a big turnout. People were delighted when the region joined UNESCO in 2008, leading to a more organised tourism. Tourist groups in the region started increasing until the Royal Commission put in efforts and the matter became more organised'.

However, P2 and P16 stated that Al-Hijr joining the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008 did not have a significant impact. Changes were noticed only after the launching of the Saudi Vision 2030 in April 2016, and the change became radically noticeable. P3 and P9 mentioned that in the first few years after the accession, there was not much development in the region. However, after the establishment of the Royal Commission for AlUla in 2017, there was a massive interest in tourism field and heritage in the region, as this interest led to the revival of the market and creation of new jobs and more activities, in addition to increasing the number of visitors to the region. P16 felt that there was a modest effort from the former minister of Tourism to promote tourism in the region before 2016:

> 'Since Al-Hijr became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2008 to 2015, there were only some shy attempts to bring changes, when Prince Sultan bin Salman was the head of the Ministry of Tourism. Some tourist groups were coming, and most of them were employees of companies, whether foreigners or Saudis. The remarkable change was in 2016 after Saudi Vision 2030 was launched and the establishment of the Royal Commission for Al Ula in 2017'.

There is no doubt that the government's interest has become more focused after adding Al-Hijr to the list. Since 2016, there have been festivals and tourism activities held annually to attract

visitors from other regions. Many of the respondents in this study emphasise that the tourism sector in AlUla was limited to visiting the archaeological and historical sites in the area. However, in recent years the government's efforts have included various activities and events, including desert and entertainment activities such as hot air-ballooning, or The Winter at Tantora Festival and concerts. The interest in public and tourist services has increased significantly. This led to the establishment of hotels and resorts at a high level, providing jobs for the local community, and sending some local community members to study overseas in many fields such as tourism, culture, and the arts.

P11 mentioned that the tourism sector has changed during the past ten years and has become one of the fastest-growing sectors in AlUla, and no more growth has been observed in other sectors. The local community has turned a great deal to work in the field, and most of their work is directed to private businesses that serve tourists. P10 and P15 also shared similar views as they observed that the AlUla area has changed radically in the last four or five years from what it was before. The general trend was not towards tourism, but things changed when the government increased interest in tourism. As it began to develop remarkably, a variety of festivals and activities emerged, and there was a significant development. P15 observed that "AlUla" was known to have only "Al-Hijr" site. However, after the Royal Commission for Al Ula decided to do many tourism activities such as The Winter at Tantora Festival and development of the Elephant Rock area, the number of tourists and tourism activity increased in general.

The majority of participants revealed that the addition of the Al Hajar area to the UNESCO World Heritage List was able to attract international tourists to AlUla. In the past, most of the visitors came to the area from inside Saudi Arabia, and they might spend only one or two nights. The situation has changed in recent years, and AlUla has become a well-known destination for heritage and historical tourism. The listing of the site and the development of

tourism in the area led to an increase in tourist arrival numbers. AlUla became the best tourist attraction area in Saudi Arabia when it comes to marketing. When the interviewer asked the participants about how has AlUla changed in the last ten years since Al-Hajar became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, P15 and P6 shared similar perspective about the positive change in the region after the recognition and how the local authority promoted Al-Hijr as a tourist attraction site:

'AlUla has become a marketing destination for Saudi tourism. There are advertisements with pictures of the Al-Hajar site in AlUla in many international cities such as London, Paris and New York. This has positively reflected on members of the local community in AlUla in general. It can be said that the radical change came after the establishment of the Royal Commission for AlUla, as there was a change in the past, but somewhat slow. There was no interest in the area before Al-Hajar joined the UNESCO World Heritage List, as it was an average area'. (P15)

'Tourism change and development in the region became noticeable after Al-Hijr accession to the UNESCO list. In the past, the site's visit is limited to the local community only, but now visitors come from outside the country, as the site accession to the World Heritage List gave a high value'. (P6)

Some participants reported that tourism development in AlUla led to the development of the public transportation system in the past ten years. The following comments made by P14 do seem to assure the positive change by improving the region's infrastructure through the establishment of AlUla Airport in 2011. In addition to taking care of heritage sites, through the provision of security guards to protect sites from vandalism.

'Many changes have occurred in the region during the last ten years. The first of the changes in the establishment of AlUla Airport; it was quite challenging to reach the

area in the past. Likewise, the numbers of visitors were very few, and no one knew what AlUla region was, even the people of Saudi Arabia themselves. Therefore, public transportation developed a lot during this period. Also, communications developed remarkably, as there were no communications in some areas of AlUla in the past. These are the changes that I remember now, but in general, the change was radical'. (P14)

'The government interest in the region contributed to the provision of security guards for the archaeological areas. In the past, archaeological and heritage sites were subjected to vandalism'. (P14)

This changed due to AlUla becoming prestigious when the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List. Such achievement assists in making people and governments aware of the need to preserve their heritage and sustain its prestige. As more people become aware of greatness, they are motivated to work harder towards protecting and conserving their heritage properties. There will be awareness of the need for preservation and the people in the tourism industry will come up with concrete plans on the approach that will make them and the country able to enjoy the newly open channels of earning income.

4.2.2 The local community support to the tourism development

Supporting the local community for tourism development and their understanding of the economic value of this development is one of the most critical factors in helping the acceleration of tourism development, and assisting local governments reach their set goals. Tourism development helps foster feelings of belonging to the local community, to the homeland, and to heritage in the region. Most of the participants agreed that many members of the local community in AlUla support the development of tourism in the region and are aware of the importance of Al-Hijr in support of the national economy. This support was represented

in commercial investment by building many hotels and shops to accommodate the increasing number of tourists and keep pace with the tourism development in the region.

Several comments from the interview sessions thus revealed some rejection of the growth of tourism in the region. Many community members were unaware of the importance of tourism development in the area in terms of support for the economy of AlUla and the country in general. At present, the local community is changing culturally, and the people are accepting tourism and treating it as a basic source of income for the region, through the emergence of new jobs and business opportunities. When the researcher asked the participants whether if they do feel that the local community supports more tourism development in AlUla or not, P6 and P11 made a good overview in terms to the support of the local community to the tourism development in AlUla:

> 'Tourism is like any other sector. At the beginning, it faced rejection from some members of the society, in that it would change the culture of the region and change the character of the local people. However, after the changes towards the new vision (Saudi Vision 2030), the society started accepting tourism and began to recognise, and treat it as a basic source of income for the region, and provide job opportunities for citizens. This brought about support from the region, government, individuals and all members of society for this sector'. (P6)

> 'I noticed that the local community support tourism development; they are fully involved in it. They are melded in the tourism field. When tourism started (and it is known that humans by their nature is an enemy of everything new), they became involved directly without any resistance or reaction to this new field that entered the region and even contributed a lot to it. It appears that this is because of the education level as most of the older adults in the region were teachers who were affiliated with

the Ministry of Education. As it is known that antiquities and museums were affiliated with them, they had previously worked in them. Also, many of Al Ula residents are interested in the monuments that exist in the region, such as ancient farming tools and old education tools. You find many people in Al Ula keeping some artefacts because of their love for this field'. (P11)

Jaafar, Noor and Rasoolimanesh (2015) noted that when the awareness is more significant, it makes the people put in more efforts to protect and conserve their heritage properties. Also, when the education system is improved, local people are empowered to encourage others towards the protection of the natural environment (Vadi and Schneider, 2014). Some participants indicated that the tourism development in Al-Hijr site helped in raising awareness among citizens and foreigners about the archaeological values and other tourist sites in AlUla, which helps protect and conserve these sites. The effects also include an economic dimension, as the tourism sector's success contributes to the economic growth of the Kingdom, which shows its impact on increasing national income. P6 observed that the society's attitude has changed in terms of preserving the environment or preserving public property, unlike what was happening in the past five years. P7 also felt that the local community engage in tourism development and offers much support to tourism development by welcoming the tourist and showing them the local hospitality. Moreover, some of AlUla residents went abroad with educational missions by the Royal Commission of Al Ula to learn the best ways to help them develop the area tourism.

The community members have touched on this situation, and felt the financial wealth coming to them from tourism, further realising that the income from tourism serves the state in general. The greater focus may now be on self-service, but they may realise the importance of tourism as a national income source. This interest led to an increase in awareness of the environment and public properties. Many local community members are eager to complete their university

studies and obtain scholarships to study in high ranking international universities through scholarship programs provided to the local community in AlUla. However, P2 and P8 mentioned that society is aware of the importance of tourism development regarding support for the national economy, but the local community is lacking in opportunity for work. The local government has sought to attract some individuals from outside AlUla to develop the region's tourism sector. These two young workers' comments seems to show that some local community members suffer a lack of jobs, and the local authority does not consider the local people first:

'The local community supports tourism development in the region. However, there is no priority for the people of AlUla in the tourism sector, and jobs are limited to those coming from outside of AlUla. Society wants to support this sector, but it does not get the opportunity. Most of the significant job positions in the field are restricted to those who came from outside the local community. If they get their chance, it is only for changing ideas, because the society here is somewhat rural'. (P8)

'The local community is aware of the importance of Al-Hijr site in supporting the economy, but the community needs to get opportunity to work in this field'. (P2)

However, despite these evident concerns, it must be mentioned that many of the local community members do not have much experience to work in significant leadership and management positions in the tourism sector at present. Therefore, the region needs to attract experts from outside the region or from outside Saudi Arabia in the early years of tourism development, and setting appropriate strategies. In addition to educating members of the local community through offering scholarships to the best universities will help them engage in tourism development and lead the sector in the near future.

Previously, the local community members did not fully capture the critical nature of the tourism field. Therefore, it is natural that the society did not previously care or realise the importance of tourism development in supporting the local economy. On the other hand, many of them changed their minds after witnessing the positives of development and its economic impact, and the necessity of bringing experts from outside the region to work on the development of tourism and educating members of the community so that they can lead the region shortly.

Moreover, some participants reported that job opportunities resulting from the development of the tourism sector require new educational fields and university departments to cover the emerging jobs in the market. Tourism development leads to the support of educational movement in the region and the provision of scholarships for the local community.

'Before the government launched the Saudi Vision (2030), the local community was not interested in tourism. However, currently with the empowerment and involvement of the local community, there is greater interest and more participants, and now there is a special scholarship for members of the local community to work on developing the region. Now, the community has become very cooperative, understanding and enthusiastic about the development'. (P1)

4.2.3 The emergence of new jobs and business opportunities

There is no doubt that tourism can reduce the unemployment problem, and that tourism development attracts local and international investors, creating opportunities and jobs for the local community. Tourism raises the standard of living for communities; improves their lifestyle, and the desire to improve living conditions, change, professional mobility and work in more than one career period. Participants see that tourism has a positive role in the economic

development of AlUla, as tourism development helps in attracting local, regional and global investment towards the tourist areas that are being developed.

Whenever a site is added to the list of WHS, the community where such site is located is able to enjoy direct jobs from tourism (UNESCO, 2020c). The local community around the Petra heritage site enjoyed the benefits of tourism as they participated in the heritage industry, generating income from offering guided tours and the sales of souvenirs (Bille, 2012). Apart from that, there is the generation of indirect employment through other industries which include agriculture, food production, creative industries and retail. The impact of tourism seems to be evident in AlUla, as it is known that the tourism sector is the only thriving sector in the region, and this helps to create business opportunities and jobs. Some participants mentioned that in the past, most of the local community members in AlUla used to go to work in the agricultural sector, as it was the only sector in which there were job opportunities in the area. The situation has changed a lot in previous years, and many of the people have turned to work in the tourism sector.

The development of tourism in AlUla has led to the creation of more opportunities, such as sending some members of the community outside Saudi Arabia to study several university courses such as tourism, culture, and the arts. The responses of many participants indicated that the situation has changed from the past in terms of job opportunities. Previously, they were nothing more than limited jobs and very routine office administration roles. However, after the great interest that emerged when the Saudi Vision 2030 was launched, there has been the renewal in the diversity of work and tasks in the tourism sector, in terms of business opportunities and the provision of scholarship opportunities abroad for those interested in working in the tourism sector in the region. P3 says there is no doubt that educating the local community by providing training courses for them, through which they can develop the area, is a good thing to do to promote tourism in the region.

Most of the participants agreed on the positive role of tourism in creating new job opportunities, especially for the younger generation. The market expansion has created many opportunities to provide additional income sources. Many residents could host tourists in their homes and obtain additional income from renting their own homes. In addition to the large number of residents working as tourist guides, this indicates the high demand and high turnout of tourists visiting the region. This helped to create and diversify job opportunities in AlUla. The following comments made by P4 and P5 illustrated that the tourism development has benefited them a great deal by using technology and creating job opportunities:

> 'In the past, it was difficult to find a single tourist guide in the region but at the moment, the increasing number of tourists has increased the demand for tourist guides, and many residents of the region are working as tourist guides '. (P4)

> 'The technological development has benefited us a lot in this field, such as the "Airbnb" App, where we were able to provide our housing units to host tourists, in addition to offering them tourist guides. Therefore, the income for the local people increased with a large number of visitors '. (P5)

The recovery of the tourism sector and tourism development is economically essential when looking at AlUla region and the lack of job opportunities. P14 and P16 mentioned that they went to work in the tourism sector because it is the only available opportunity in the region. The remaining fields, such as the agricultural sector do not have enough job opportunities.

> 'I am working in the tourism field because there are two sectors with job opportunities in AlUla: the tourism sector and the agricultural sector. I chose to work in the tourism sector because I speak English and I had a lot of foreign people during my days in the college. Hence, I liked the tourism field and saw it as an open and handy field'. (P14)

'It is the only sector that provides many and varied job opportunities. Job opportunities in the public sector here are few, and work is limited to either hotels or retail stores '. (P16)

This gives a good impression on the importance of tourism development in remote areas to support the local community; by attracting local, regional and global investment towards the tourist sites that are being developed. As well as the emergence of new jobs and business opportunities.

4.3 Main challenges

4.3.1 Infrastructure improvements required

In addition to the provision of jobs, tourism produces additional investment and spending capable of supporting various services including transportation services and health services (UNESCO, 2020b). The inscription of a site on the WHS list sometimes helps with the improvement of infrastructures based on the desire to make the environment attractive and accommodating, especially for the tourism industry. It is when the environment is fit to accommodate tourists that more people will be willing to visit the site, especially if those who have visited provide good reviews. Hence, even if the areas surrounding a site appear underdeveloped because of inexistent or bad infrastructures before the inscription into the WHS list, the government and tourism industry pay close attention to ensure the best possible experience for visitors.

Further, the government will be willing to bring changes to medical care, education as well as local infrastructure which include areas such as communication equipment and roads (Frey & Steiner, 2011). The government will be willing to allocate more funds towards ensuring that the required facilities are in place and well managed. This represents one of the things the locals stand to enjoy as they might have been advocating for these improvements before the

designation. Governments and organisations face some challenges when tourism development starts. One of those challenges has to do with the enhancement of infrastructure. Tourism infrastructure, which includes parks facilities, accommodation and transport networks, is an integral part of the tourism industry. Infrastructure development helps to ensure tourists' easy and appropriate access to tourism resources. Likewise, it contributes to the ongoing sustainability of businesses in the tourism industry.

The conversations observed in these interviews show that several participants were dissatisfied with the poor infrastructure in the region which is in need of greater attention. Part of the problems that emerge when more tourists visit a site is infrastructure development (Borges et al., 2011). Although some participants are optimistic about the development currently underway in infrastructure, there are still some concerns that the infrastructure development will be only around tourist attractions and related sites. When the interviewer asked the participants about the greatest weak points in the region, most of them mentioned that the poor infrastructure which is need of development. They said there is an urgent need for more furnished units to host the increasing number of visitors, in addition to a diversity in accommodation options and prices to target the largest possible number of visitors.

> 'The weaknesses in AlUla revolve around the infrastructure. Even with the emergence of tourism development, the infrastructure in Al Ula is considered unwell. This could be considered one of the most common problems or challenges that Al Ula will face in the next ten years. How to build an infrastructure that makes it easier for tourists to come and gives them the basics things of life to make them have the best experience'. (P6)

The development of health services that accompany tourism development is considered by some participants as one of the essential positive effects of tourism development on the local

community. The local government should consider it and likewise work on it. P2 mentioned that the infrastructure in general and the roads leading to AlUla in particular need to be developed. In addition to the lack of health units in AlUla and the absence of a health centre in the Al-Hijr area, communication networks also need to be developed, as the network is weak in Al-Hajar area, and there are very few shops. P3 says that what is wrong with AlUla is that it is an emerging region when it comes to tourism, meaning that it is new in this field and it is yet to gain great ground for development. There is need to pay more attention and strengthen the infrastructure in general, hotels and markets in particular. There is a need to have tourism activities throughout the year and not limit them to the wintertime at Tantora season for three months.

The researcher realised the importance of improving the infrastructure in Al-Hijr having visited AlUla a number of times. There is a need to raise the levels of the hotels as a result of high demand during the Winter at Tantora Festival season. In addition to the weakness of the communication networks in the region, which constitutes a significant challenge, the local government needs to work on the improvement of the infrastructure in Al-Hijr site in particular and AlUla in general.

4.3.2 Further promotion required

When a site is added to the WHS list, it secures the UNESCO brand. This means that the addition makes the site prestigious as it is believed that it was added because of its OUV. Nevertheless, tourists oftentimes are only moderately aware of the UNESCO brand. Hence, the designation in itself might not bring about a rise in the number of visits and it will require marketing effort from the government and the tourism industry after the designation, to further promote the site.

Since marketing efforts help in promoting WHSs, there is a need to capture the hearts of potential tourists through media promotion, for the formation of organic images of the destination. Tourism promotion will communicate with potential tourists about the values of a site, creating an intention to visit. This is also applicable to Al-Hijr site. Heritage marketing is defined as the delivery of what tourists' demand, while preserving heritage sites against wear and tear; meaning that tourists have a desire to participate in tourism at the site, but not in a way that might jeopardise the sites' value (Misiura, 2006). One of the main challenges facing the local government is the need to work on more suitable marketing for the destination. It is imperative to mention the need for marketing in promoting a destination for tourism. Likewise, it is necessary to integrate with the private sector in tourism to development projects, including marketing programs to support tourism in the region.

Marketing services have become an essential requirement for informing tourists regarding the options available to them. There is clarification in the literature that usually tourists have moderate awareness of the UNESCO brand, so it is not the designation in itself that might increase the number of tourists, but the marketing efforts following the designation (Mariani & Guizzardi, 2019). Modern marketing efforts lead to a qualitative leap and brings about changes in all of the country's sectors. It helps tourism by highlighting the features of a destination to potential tourists. Through marketing efforts, Saudi Arabia can highlight Al-Hijr site and AlUla region as a location where tourists can experience past civilisations. This will help in displaying the potential of its heritage, history and tourism through new and traditional media, as well as organising rich and varied tourism events aimed to all members of society.

On the basis of the viewpoints of some respondents, the local government has put in effort to work on marketing the AlUla area as a unique tourist destination in the previous five years, a place of past civilisations as well as an area full of antiquities. According to Misiura (2006), the need to market heritage sites can be explained by the principle of brand awareness.

Obviously, people consider the WHS name as a brand, and this creates certain expectations. The inscription of a site into the WHS list could make potential tourists to perceive it as a place to visit because of its OUV.

P8 stated that the situation had changed many during the previous years, and there is a difference observed in the marketing of the Al-Hijr to attract potential tourists. It was evident that in the past, many of Saudi citizens do not even know about the tourist attractions in AlUla. After establishing the Royal Commission for AlUla and marketing efforts were made, AlUla became a distinctive tourist destination in Saudi Arabia when it comes to heritage tourism.

On the other hand, some participants mentioned the importance of increasing Al-HIjr region's marketing locally and abroad, as it is necessary to offer more marketing support for the destination. It is also important that marketing is not limited to the season of the Winter at Tantora Festival, but marketing must be throughout the year. There is a high demand for further promotion.

> 'The destination has been known recently, and extensive marketing campaigns have been developed for it. This period is still considered the first marketing period. Its popularity has been shallow in over the past few moments among domestic and foreign visitors, and this may be the factor of weakness, signalling the need for an increase in marketing campaigns'. (P5)

Also, some participants mentioned the importance of marketing and working on introducing other destinations in AlUla, and not only focus on Al-Hijr site. According to P2, AlUla is considered as the most famous place when it comes to heritage tourism in Saudi Arabia. Al-Hijr is the main attraction in AlUla at present. Still, there is the historical area in the region dating back 200 years, and to the interest in them is currently not as high as the interest in Al-Hijr site.

P14 mentioned that tourism products and services should be presented and accessible to enrich visitors' tourism experiences. It can sometimes be difficult for tourists to access appropriate information for the destination. The marketing programs for the region are very few and can be unclear, and the lack of sufficient information for the visitor in terms of public transportation, events and activities related to the tourism sector is a problem

4.3.3 Unsustainable growth and potential damage

Al-Hijr is considered the gateway to tourism in Saudi Arabia due to the importance of the relationship between tourism and heritage sites in showcasing the culture of different civilisations and providing information to tourists visiting these areas. The tourism industry is directly linked to the history and civilisation of different societies, as it is concerned with the value of cultural heritage and works to highlight its features. In addition, there are efforts to conserve heritage sites through the application of sustainable practice, and searching for diversity in the values that characterise the different societies and countries that make up the different sites, and finding ways to protect them.

Indeed, several respondents revealed that one of the biggest challenges that the local authorities face in Saudi Arabia is the extent of its ability to work sustainably on tourism development in the Al-Hijr region. It is necessary to pay attention to sustainable heritage tourism as one of the critical tourism values that benefit the country's tourism sector.

Based on the suggestions of Borges et al. (2011), When authorities do not plan for a possible increase in the number of tourists or if the increase happens rapidly, management systems and the capacity of site infrastructure will not be able to handle the increase. This is one of the negative effects experienced in Bali and Thailand due to tourist visitations (Caust & Vecco, 2017). Related to this, some participants mentioned their fear that the tourism development in

Al-Hijr area will not be sustainable in a way that supports the region economically, socially and environmentally in the future. The fear is based on their belief that the local government will only increase the number of visitors and raise the economic return, but will not pay the necessary attention to conserving the heritage areas in AlUla in general and in Al-Hijr site in particular.

> 'The fears exist, and one of the most important is my fear that this region will not consider doing things sustainably. Sustainability in tourism is an essential thing, and it is very beneficial to enjoy its merits in the coming years'. (P6)

> 'My concern is about raising the number of visitors and then become too large to accommodate the area; this can lead to the destruction of Al Hijr heritage site'. (P4)

Alternatively, the view of P13 was optimistic in terms of sustainability in the region as he mentioned that the local authority pays attention to a sustainable tourism development in AlUla. Sustainability in tourism development represents a significant challenge for the local government. However, the local community's understanding of the importance of sustainability will help overcome difficulties and work on the sustainable development of tourism.

4.4 Concern about cultural erosion

4.4.1 The disappearance of customs and mixing of different people

There is no doubt that there are many social and cultural impacts (negative and positive) resulting from tourism development on local communities. The positive, cultural and social effects of tourism on societies include those related to learning about the culture, languages,

customs and traditions of others. This also includes openness to the broader scope of humanity, to the civilisations of other people and acceptance of others in general.

In the words of Van Zyl (2005), tourism development uses cultural values to attract people globally, but sometimes misuses these values, thereby leading to cultural erosion. Some participants expressed concern about cultural erosion in the region due to tourism development and the increasing number of visiting international tourists. This change leads to a loss of authenticity in the local community. In addition, there is fear of the influx of some western ideas into the community, such as the mixing of genders and the spread of prohibitions such as alcohol. Some participants suggest that cultural awareness and openness to the civilisations of other people raises the level of individual knowledge, increases their self-confidence, urges them to accept others, and enables them to build social relationships.

Prideaux (2003) opined that authenticity is critical as regards heritage tourism, and what visitors desire to experience. That is, knowledge of the features of a heritage site makes potential tourists anticipate how the actual features look like and see values in their natural expressions. Unfortunately, some sites' authenticity is altered by the activities of the tourism industry, or even the local residents. The comments of P7 and P14 expressed their fear of the disappearance of customs in the local community with tourism development in the region. Their concern is about the impact on the authenticity that characterises the Saudi society.

Participants see the Saudi's culture as a sacred thing that cannot be compromised, and AlUla region has not been affected much, as a Saudi Arabian community, as it still conserves the old customs and traditions of society. P7 stated that tourists must adapt to the customs and traditions of the country as this is a sign of respect and acceptance of the other. Authenticity is what defines the locals in AlUla.

'There are fears of the disappearance of customs and traditions with tourism development, such as residents' behaviours and gender mixing. I also have some concerns that the people of AlUla will be affected negatively by tourism and then bring about complete changes to the region's authenticity and its people'.

When the researcher asked the participants about whether the local community supports more tourism development or not in AlUla, P14 mentioned that there is a section of the local community that does not accept the openness and development in the region, as they are concerned about the negative impact of tourism development on the local community due to their fear of the unknown. He observed that a large percentage supports this development, and a small percentage does not accept this development now taking place, the elderly in particular, due to their fear of the unknown. However, some realised the importance of tourism development in the region after they feel the benefits for them, and began to support its growth and even contributed directly to it. The largest percentage of the local community supports tourism development, but a small percentage may not yet be informed significantly about the matter.

Some participants fear that openness will lead to what is known as intellectual invasion, as their society is exposed to some foreign ideas that may have negative repercussions for them. The most prominent of these influences is the mixing of genders as there is still a part of the local community that prefers to separate genders from each other. Some express their profound rejection of the idea of women joining the labour market, following the example of Western women. They argue that the conservative nature of society does not accept the entry of women, except in very limited professions. Unacceptable behaviours can accompany tourism, and may be considered a risk to their customs and traditions. Examples include the spread of alcoholic beverages and drugs, illegal marriage, and other social behaviour types that are not accepted in their society. The comment made by P15 illustrated his concern about gender mixing:

'There is some concern about gender mixing, and I stand against this because it is continually increasing. I prefer that it remains the same as before. I want tourism to grow here but in an ethical way that suits the local community and its culture'.

Although several respondents concerned about the disappearance of customs, the comments made by P11 illustrated that anything new is accompanied by anxiety; if the region opens to tourism, and the fear that the local community will not be able to cope with the tourism situation. The area is still somewhat rural, and communities are tight-knit, with a traditional family focus and tribal structure. However, he observed that the local community became involved directly without any resistance or reaction to this new field that entered the region and even contributed a lot.

4.4.2 Other Impacts on the local community

Tourism activity plays a significant role in influencing social and cultural phenomena in any tourist area. It influences values, customs and traditions. Tourism sometimes leads to a cultural collision between tourists and members of the local community, and a kind of negative confrontation between the two cultures occurs. This is the result of the significant difference between the two cultures. Participants stated that tourism leads to the entry of strange cultures into the local community that may be inconsistent with the values, customs and traditions of the community. Tourists carry with them their customs and traditional behaviours, and often do not have the tendency to change their customs for a temporary stay at a tourist destination.

Some participants fear that tourism development in the region may lead to moral changes in the host community, resulting in much undesirable ethical behaviour such as crime, begging and gambling. Some residents are likely to be negatively affected by the social actions of tourists from different backgrounds. When the researcher asked about their concerns regarding tourism development in the region, some participants mentioned that some tourists lack respect

for Islamic values, customs and traditions. For example, clothes are sometimes the subject of this conflict because of its incompatibility with the Islamic religion. Some local people find it difficult to accept these strange practices that often make them angry.

P3 and P11 shared similar views and illustrated that the local community's interest in the past was limited to knowing these archaeological areas. As a result of attracting tourists from outside the region to AlUla, the local community faced some difficulty, such as lack of acceptance and fear of rising prices for essential services in the area. Still, with time they expect that acceptance of foreign tourists will improve.

Some of the participants expressed their optimism about the tourism development in Al-Hijr region, despite the adherence of the local people to their customs and traditions. P15, a hotel owner respondent, illustrated that the customs of the local community are one of the weaknesses, but not a significant obstacle to tourism development. It is natural for people who come from the desert to be surprised at a foreigner's arrival to the region. However, P8 and P15 indicated that the local community was affected negatively by tourism development as they were not allowed to visit all tourist sites at any time. This is because they are available only to tourists.

> 'Al-Hijr site has been closed for a long time, and the authority does not allow anyone to enter Al-Hijr due to the ongoing restoration and development process in the area. They just open it during the festival season, which is reflecting negatively on the region and tourism in general'. (P8)

> 'One of the things that must be done to promote tourism in the region is to open the all tourist sites for everyone, including the local people. For example, in Elephant Rock, they allow the people of AlUla to visit it only at specific times during weekdays '. (P15)

4.5 Conclusion

It is clear that the addition of Al-Hijr site to the UNESCO World Heritage List changed the level of interest of the locals when it comes to tourism. They have been able to weigh-up the benefits of the site's status in recent years, and then offered support. The government's remarkable interest has turned things around, and it seems that further concerted efforts will prove helpful in promoting the site. Moreover, the area is being developed and the locals continue to get a greater understanding of its potential. Securing scholarships to study courses related to tourism will increase participation in the tourism industry as well as convincing the locals about the need to preserve the heritage and sustainably maintain its value. Likewise, allowing the locals to access every part of the site will ensure their participation and full support.

By the time the government improves the infrastructures around the site, the people will maintain them as they know the importance of having them. The marketing efforts should be broadened to cover all aspects of the site to attract potential tourists. If the government continues to focus only on certain aspects and values of the site, it will only appeal to narrow section of potential visitors, instead of giving everyone the opportunity to understand the benefits of visiting. Cultural values of a particular place majorly drive tourism. If people do not see something different from what they used to, then tourism destinations across the world would appear to lack unique or interesting features. Potential tourists are motivated to visit by the thrill of meeting different people with a strikingly different way of life. Hence, it is clear that the tourism industry in Saudi needs to showcase the cultural and religious values of the Al-Hijr region, so that when tourists decide to visit the region there will be an intention to respect such values. This would eliminate the locals' fear of a corruption of their values due to tourism, and then ensure maximum cooperation.

5. Conclusion

The study attempted to address the research question (How does Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage site affect economic development and the local community in AlUla - Saudi Arabia?) by researching the different impacts of heritage sites on economic development, analysing current heritage sites and their effect on the surrounding communities. To achieve this aim, data was gathered using a qualitative method. Using qualitative analysis techniques is to explain dynamic phenomena and articulate the perspectives of people who are barely heard (Sofaer, 1999). This is used to understand a range of scenarios, such as shifts in the sense of artefacts and cultures and is only achievable by being mindful of fine-grained local knowledge (Lepp, 2008). This study chose semi-structured interviews because they provide comprehensive information. Also, in contrast to quantitative approaches, evaluate attitude more comprehensively and subtly (Lepp, 2007).

The following objectives were established to determine citizens' views of tourism growth around the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage site in AlUla:

- To further understand the historical nature of tourism development at Al Hijr and the resulting impacts on the community.
- To critically analyse the current performance of tourism development at Al Hijr from the perspective of local business owners.
- To establish the community's current awareness and understanding of Al-Hijr's role in supporting the local economy.
- To identify further opportunities to sustainably develop tourism at Al Hijr.

Based on semi-structured interviews to analyse the local community surrounding Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site, it can be observed that the UNESCO listing has greatly influenced interest levels (both among visitors and the society) and how well the community now welcomes tourism growth and recognises its (economic) importance, as well as the creation of new employment and business opportunities. According to Buckley (2004), listing usually results in a rise in tourism. When more people visit WHS, it offers an opportunity to teach them about the values of the location, and attract public interest and respect for the values, both domestically and abroad (Caust & Vecco, 2017). Placing the Al-Hijr site on the UNESCO World Heritage List clearly changed the locals' level of interest in tourism. This had an impact when the Al-Hijr site was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008. The majority of participants in the study stated that the number of visitors is growing and the demand for tourism and infrastructure growth in the region has risen in the last ten years.

The study's results offered many insights into the local community's perspectives and interpretations of the impact of tourism growth at the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site (AlUla, Saudi Arabia) on local communities. Several studies have been undertaken to analyse the effect of tourism growth around heritage sites on local communities in the Middle East. The purpose of this article was to discuss this topic in the context of Saudi Arabia. The research was the first of its kind in heritage tourism growth impacts on Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site (AlUla - Saudi Arabia). It was also among the first to undertake an in-depth qualitative analysis, which yielded a wealth of unique insights into the essence and development of tourism growth in the geographical setting of rural Saudi Arabia. It made suggestions to promote further development of the tourism industry while also helping local communities. The study's results could help a variety of stakeholders and community members who have been, and will continue to be impacted by tourism growth in AlUla.

The study found that Al-Hijr has gone through two growth phases in the twelve years after it entered the list, the first from 2008 to 2016, then the second after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016, and creating the Royal Commission for AlUla in 2017. Tourism is considered the essential pillar of the Vision 2030, with programs aimed at reaching its goals, by setting long-term strategies and targets to make AlUla a great tourist attraction by 2030 (Vision-2030, 2016 & Royal Commission for AlUla, 2021). The literature review clarifies that tourists are, at most, only slightly aware of the UNESCO brand; therefore, the increase in tourist number is not only due to the recognition, but also as a result of the marketing efforts that accompany the designation (Mariani & Guizzardi, 2019). This highlights the importance of the government's role, and work on developing heritage sites by developing the area's infrastructure and introducing adequate marketing. In the case of Al-Hijr, it is apparent that inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List was unlikely to draw visitors to the region unless the local government took steps to develop the area around the site.

Furthermore, the results showed that local government has faced several obstacles since tourism growth began. Infrastructure enhancements and additional promotion are expected, while protecting against excessive development and possible damage to the Al-Hijr UNESCO World Heritage Site. Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the region's weak attention to infrastructure during the interviews. Infrastructure construction is one of the issues that arise as more visitors visit a place (Borges et al., 2011).

Despite the positive effects of tourism growth at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Al-Hijr, the study found that the local society is concerned about cultural change. According to Van Zyl (2005), tourism growth uses cultural values to draw tourists from all over the world and often misuses those values, resulting in a cultural loss. Some participants shared concern about the cultural loss in the area due to tourism growth and a rise in the number of foreign visitors visiting the region. These changes can result in a lack of authenticity in the local culture.

According to Prideaux (2003), authenticity is important in heritage tourism. Unfortunately, the practices of the tourist industry or even inhabitants may alter the credibility of certain places.

While some respondents expressed worry about the loss of customs, a few participants' responses demonstrated that anything new is followed by concern; if the area opens to tourists, there is concern that the local community will be unable to cope with the tourism situation. The area is still somewhat rural, and families are tight-knit, with traditional family values and tribal structure. However, they observed that the local community became involved directly without any resistance or reaction to this new field that entered the region and even contributed a lot.

5.1 Recommendations

The researcher intended to interview more people for this investigation into the different effects of heritage sites on economic development. As a result of time, distance and funding limitations, only sixteen participants were involved. Because the sample is small, it may not offer a complete impression of the local community in AlUla. Hence, apart from the suggested increase in the number of participants in future studies, the researcher's recommendations are as follows: -

• Integrated administration over the Al-Hijr area is necessary, to ensure that efforts are not watered-down within a number of ministries or government offices, and to enhance operations like maintenance, visitor safety and services, law enforcement, preservation as well as management.

• There is a need to form a special committee of antiquities experts from the Saudi Heritage Commission to supervise and review the activities carried out in the area such that no damage is done to the site, thereby preserving Al-Hijr's integrity as one of the World Heritage sites.

- There is a need to focus on domestic visitors when marketing the destination. It was observed that the COVID-19 crisis and the travel ban for a period of nearly a year in most countries of the world greatly paralysed the tourism sector in the region. Many Saudi Arabians who go abroad every year (about over four million) would have been attracted to AlUla if they had carried out internal marketing. This will both safeguard against any future internal crisis, but will also help to support the domestic economy, and keep money circulating within Saudi Arabia.

5.2 The Limitations of the study

The study encountered certain challenges which could be considered study limitations. These limitations could impact the results and not entirely reflect heritage sites' effect on economic development and the surrounding communities in AlUla. One of the study limitations is that tourism development in AlUla is just emerging, and it will take some years for the picture to become clearer. Over the coming years the views of the local community may change as tourism in the region becomes more developed. These developments could be both good and bad, which are difficult to anticipate now since tourism development in the region is just evolving.

Additionally, there are only a few studies measuring the effect of tourism development around UNESCO heritage sites in the Middle East. Hence, not all past studies reveal the effect of tourism development of heritage sites on local communities. Further, participants were interviewed from January to February, which is the period of the highest visitor rates for tourists to AlUla, and this could affect the participants' opinions. Hence, for future research, the sampling time could be expanded and not limited to the festive season or the time when the number of tourists increases. Likewise, only men were interviewed because there are few female workers in the tourism sector in AlUla, as women rarely work in the hotel or coffee

shop business, with the majority work in entertainment activities. Hence, it is recommended that future studies include females when possible.

Finally, some participants lacked full trust in the interviewer as a researcher, as they considered the researcher a member of the Saudi Arabia government. Hence, it limited the study findings because they were unable to provide full details in their responses, or were reluctant to say more positive things. Despite doing what is expected as regards research ethics, two or three people were uncomfortable answering some questions.

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