

A scoping Study

TOURISM AND THE GREEN ECONOMY

Towards An Integrated Approach to Sustainable Tourism Development in the Sultanate of Oman”

السياحة والاقتصاد الاخضر
نحو نهج متكامل للتنمية السياحية المستدامة في سلطنة عمان

BRIEFING NOTE

1 RATIONALE

The tourism sector in the Sultanate has been identified as one of the priority sectors for economic diversification and employment creation. Tourism is receiving a growing interest in the strategic sectorial plan 2016 -2020 and also in the vision 2040. The sustainable development of tourism sector is crucial to ensure that this sector achieves its goals for the prosperity of the Omani economy and society. In 2014 the sector recorded 2 million tourists in terms of arrival and contributed around 2% to the GDP (NCSI, 2015). Oman's unique natural and culture heritage, pristine beaches, political safety and stability, warm and welcoming people, makes Oman the most sought after tourism destination in the GCC; attracting a segment of quality tourists seeking unique natural and cultural experiences. Oman's commitment to sustainable development is long standing; and the tourism sector is no exception to that. The tourism sector activities and operations take place in Oman's most fragile and unique environment, yet its success and sustainability is dependent on the sustainable management of these unique resources. Tourism is known to be one of the sectors that generates significant amount of waste and consumes significant amounts of water and energy. If these impacts are not management sustainably – the tourism development trajectory will be one of self-destruction. While tourism is initially adopted as a sector leading to socio-economic development of local communities – it could, if not carefully and sustainably managed, lead to alienating the very communities it was supposed to serve and prosper. It is therefore timely to develop and manage measures of sustainable development for the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman in an integrated approach.

The paradigm of integration is crucial for the study of sustainable tourism. In this study this paradigm will concern integration across the three pillars of sustainability namely, environment, economy and socio-cultural domain. Here integration will be approached from a destination perspective looking at how all components addressed above can be managed in a way that creates a sustainable destination where all environmental resources are managed carefully, where the community is involved and benefiting economically and where the culture is communicated responsibly to the tourists. The project will be paying special attention to specific indicators that are relevant to three pillars of sustainability: water and energy consumption, solid waste management, employment of the local community and encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives. The goal of the project is to conduct a critical assessment of the existing environment enabling the implementation of sustainability in the tourism sector. The researchers intend to review policies, laws, regulations, incentives and challenges that govern the implementation of sustainable principles. This phase of the project will focus on the public sector via comprehensive stakeholders and opinion leaders' consultations, including but not limited to Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Affairs, Ministry of Municipality and Water Resources, Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Supreme Council for Planning, Ministry of Manpower and other authorities of relevance to the issue of sustainability in the tourism sector. The stakeholder consultations will be looking into the issues of awareness, implementation, impediments, and challenges. The research will also identify and document the regulatory framework that incentivises or necessitates the implementation of the principles of sustainability.

2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The research project has the following objectives:

- To clarify overlapping concepts and terminology related to sustainable tourism development
- To identify the existing rules and regulations in Oman facilitating and determining the implementation of sustainable tourism across the three pillars of sustainability (economy, environment and social- cultural domain);
- To consult the various stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities of implementing sustainable tourism;
- To recommend a set of indicators to measure sustainability across its main pillars;
- To recommend a policy framework for sustainable tourism development;

This research will address the following questions:

1. What is the current scope of sustainable tourism development in Oman?
2. What existing policies and regulations are in place to ensure the implementation of sustainable tourism practices across the sector and their level of compliance?
3. What are the current sustainable practices in the tourism sector in Oman
4. What challenges are currently impeding the implementation of sustainable tourism?
5. What incentives and enforcement measures are currently in place?

The research team will be conducting both primary and secondary research to address the above research questions. It will gather and analyse existing documentation relating to international, regional or national commitment concerned with sustainability and the green economy, laws, regulations and policies affecting and encouraging the implementation of sustainable tourism development across its three main pillars. The primary research encompasses face to face stakeholders' consultation sessions.

The project will also be using case studies from Oman and internationally to illustrate the points.

A national workshop will be organised. The objectives of the workshop are to present the results of the study, to endorse its final recommendations and to decide on the way forward.

3 RESEARCH TEAM

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