Destination Branding Analytical Study Applied to Sultanate of Oman as a Tourism Destination

PhD Thesis 2018

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to my family, who provided me with unbounded support and encouragement, especially my children, Amal, Farh and Mohammed for their love, patience and motivation.

Acknowledgements

Declaration

This is to confirm that this thesis is the result of my own work, and has not previously been sumbitted for any other academic degree; any material used in this thesis is referenced.

Definitions of Terms

Destination branding: "the set of marketing activities that support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word, mark or other graphic symbol that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; [and] consistently conveys the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination and reduces the consumer search costs and perceived risks" Blain et al. (2005: 337).

Brand identity as message managed by stakeholder, it is a connection between position and personality that make unique product and services in the consumer mind (Upshaw, 1995; Janiszewska, 2013; Melewar et al., 2017).

Brand Image as perceptions and feeling about brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer mind (Keller, 1993: Zhang, 2015).

Perceptions: perception is the process by which the tourist selects, organises and understands information to create a meaningful picture (Sawagvudcharee, 2016).

Communication Market: is a conversation between a brand and its audience on the one hand and it is a collective term for all the communication functions used in marketing a product or services on the other hand (Gupta,2011).

Noise: is the barrier to communication which exists around the entire process (Wong, 2013).

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to develop a model for tourism destination branding using Oman as a case study by examining the Omani context and its characteristics from the perspective of both potential tourists (the demand side) and the Omani tourism providers (the supply side) while taking into consideration the impact of cross-cultural communication. Although several studies have recognised the importance of both sides of the market for effective destination branding, there is still a gap in knowledge in terms of providing a holistic model which could satisfy the brand expectations of destination personnel and tourists.

A mixed methods approach was applied to analysing the destination brand components of the Sultanate of Oman. The study adopted a quantitative questionnaire as a tool to identify the perceptions and attitudes of potential international tourists towards Oman. This was done because a large number of responses from potential tourists was required in order to identify differences in perceptions of potential tourists towards Oman's destination image. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect supply-side data, to explore the attributes involved in the projected image of Oman in developing its brand. In this way, government officials (managers and senior staff), tour operators and tourist guides were consulted.

The findings of these people show a positive relationship between word of mouth and brand image. Word of mouth and other sources such as social media represent the most significant information sources used by actual visitors. Education level influences the demand-side responses, particularly among those who have visited before. However, Oman also has a significant positive image in terms of safety and atmosphere, which should be incorporated into the brand. The Oman logo was also an issue because it has little meaning for non-Arab tourists; therefore, a clear understanding of the logo is a very important aspect of branding.

The findings also showed that limited strategy, cooperation and coordination among Omani planners and marketers have had an impact on branding and gaps between the supply and demand sides were identified as a result of limited promotion of the country's brand identity.

The model presented as a result of this study includes both supply- and demand-sides. The supply-side includes coordination and cooperation between supply-side members; it also defines the brand identity attributes offered by providers and highlights the importance of

understanding other aspects of destination branding such as brand naming, memorable logo elements and structure design, and highlighted the importance of brand position.

On the other hand, the demand side includes brand image and awareness. It considers variable influences on the image brand such as tourists' level of satisfaction, experience, word of mouth, and education.The study highlights the importance of communication marketing and identifies concerns such as customer feedback and noise; noise is distributed everywhere in the model, because it occurs in the brand message. The model will help Omani tourism marketers to develop their brand and understand the process of developing destination branding. Also, it can be applied to other destinations which need to develop their own tourism brand.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by identifying the contextual background. The research questions are then articulated along with the research aim and objectives. The method of research applied is highlighted and a brief remark on the research contribution is also provided. The chapter concludes with outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Research background

Tourism has become one of fastest developing industries in the world and a source of major economic development opportunities (Yusof and Ismail, 2015). Many developing countries consider tourism as a resource to enhance its economy and reduce poverty (Saner et al., 2015). As a result, branding is used as a strategic tool for a destination to be identified and differentiated from alternatives in the minds of the target market (Qu et al., 2011),

A brand in tourism is one of the most valuarble assets of a destination, contributing to its success (Sallam, 2016). It has been recognised for many years, addressed in a wide range of academic fields. Destination branding can be defined as a marketing-led strategy of economic development (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). Klijn et al. (2012) explained the reasons for using branding: it helps destinations to differentiate themselves and to influence tourists' choices and intentions. In other words, the main aim of branding is to differentiate a particular offering from that of its competitors (Sallam, 2016), and to assert its identity in communication with potential tourists (Schaar, 2013; Oliveira& Panyik, 2015). Despite the growth in destination marketing, the concept of destination branding has not yet been studied in depth (Cai, 2002; Ruzzier, 2012; Pike and Page, 2014).

The concept of tourism destination brand building has extended to places, countries, regions and cities (Risitano, 2005; Hanna& Rowley: 2008; Almeyda & George, 2017). This reflects the fact that destinations are increasingly at risk from challenges imposed by global, political and technological changes; they find themselves competing against a plethora of alternatives, some of which are priced very aggressively (Gilpin, 2011; Yudina et al., 2016). Destinations marketers need to establish a strategic vision and a market-orientated strategic planning process, adopting a market perspective toward their products and consumers (Osarenkhoe, 2008). In order to be successful in the long term and effectively position their tourism product in the marketplace (Warren & Dinnie,2017), destination managers and marketers need to

create an attractive image which will make Oman stand out from other competitors (Tsaur et al., 2016).

The main aim of destination branding is to enhance the uniqueness of a tourist destination, exhibit attractive images to the target markets and support the formation and development of positive images (Aziz et al., 2012). The transformation of the brand idea from products to service industries such as the tourism sector offers features for identifying and managing the destination (Mazilu, 2012; Pike and Page, 2014). Suitable examples of successful destination branding are New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, which have all developed powerful brands to encourage tourists to visit them; others, such as Turkey, have decided to rebrand themselves (Aziz et al., 2012). Therefore, Oman has determined to develop its brand to boost its tourism sector and improve its international image. It needs to develop a unique identity for attracting international tourists and differentiate it from its competitors. As mentioned earlier, Oman has different resources for destination branding, but development destination branding is a new experience for Omani authorities; this requires awareness of Omani stakeholders because most developing countries face challenges in choosing the right strategy for development, particularly in a sensitive sector such as tourism (Muhanna, 2006).

However, branding a destination is not an easy process (Manhas et al., 2012; Avraham& Ketter, 2016), as a result of the multi-dimensional nature of the destination itself and the unique product characteristics (Ukaj, 2014). The branding process requires the planners and marketers to carry out extensive information research into the tourism market to understand the consumers' needs (Almeyda & George,2017). Ritchie and Crouch (2003), Ekinci (2003) and Cai and Gartner (2009) argue that a destination is fixed by its name and geographical location; the various tangible and intangible attributes are involved in branding a destination. A destination caters for the needs of many different types of tourists.

The tourism marketing literature suggests that in order to develop a destination branding, understanding the process of tourists' view is necessary (Aaker, 1991; Cai, 2010; Pike and Page, 2014; Yusof and Ismail, 2015). A brand image is the most important component of destination branding; it should reflect the values and meaning expressed by potential visitors to that particular destination (Robbins and Polite, 2014; Yusof and Ismail, 2015). Building a unique destination experience creates brand awareness and a higher brand trust (Jesca et al., 2014).

According to Edgell (2016), the brand should be relevant to the target audience and communicate a particular message that can be better understood by tourists. If the brand (logo) message does not make sense to the target market, this means it has not achieved one of its purposes. Logo design describes the destination to the audience and differentiates its image from others. For example, "Fly the friendly skies" was a good branding slogan launched by United Airlines in 1956, evocative and easy to remember.

The Middle East Arab countries have a similar culture with shared values and beliefs, including language. Religion shapes the culture, attitudes and values of a society, and Islam is a unifying religion serving as the main link between the people of these countries (Hinnebusch, 2008; Kovjanic, 2014). However, the region is generally portrayed negatively, characterised by instability and insecurity and the rise of political Islamism; examples are the popular tourist destinations of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Libya, Syria, Morocco and Lebanon. The only destinations able to stabilise the tourism industry and to achieve growth are those of the Gulf countries, mainly Dubai (Al-Hamarneh, 2013).The importance of the Middle East for global stability derives from its immense oil reserves and its status as the epic centre of the Muslim culture. The majority of demands for tourism originate from the neighbouring countries (Kovjanic, 2014).

For most people around the world, the Middle East is a place associated with terrorism, yet the Omani Tourism Minister is not aware that his country has an image problem (Al-Hamarneh, 2013). Baker (2014) pointed out that terrorist activities have a major impact on the international tourism of a country and that they are the largest economic factor in the equation between terror and foreign tourism; he added that terrorism badly affects the tourism industry since it damages the destination image, instilling fear in the potential tourists (Baker, 2014).

1.2 Oman current brand

In 2009 the Oman brand was launched by the Authority of investment, Promotion and Export Development which represented through the logo. It is based on culture and heritage. It comprises the word Oman in Arabic calligraphic script, each letter representing distinct elements of Omani's nature and culture, namely, a dhow (ship), marine environment (turtles), mountains, and the frankincense as seen in figure (1.1).

Figure 1.1. Omani logo
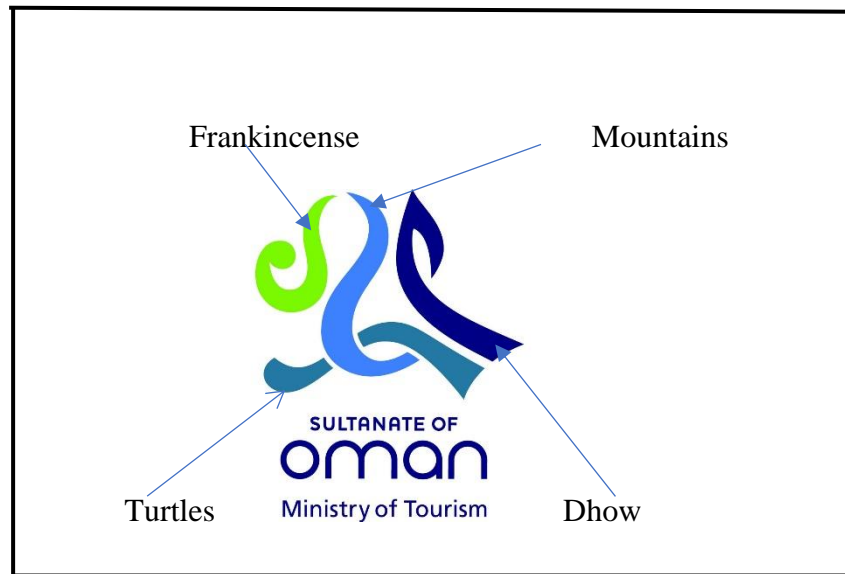
1. 3 Research gap and research questions

From the literature it is concluded that the development of a strong brand should involve the views of different stakeholders (Risitano, 2005; Yusof et al., 2014). Ashton (2014, 2015) argued that more research is required to explore the effectiveness of a destination brand from the perspectives of all stakeholders. The vast majority of tourism destination studies address the brand concept primarily from a demand-side perspective, examining tourism destinations from a consumer-perceived image approach (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2003; Pike, 2014; Dickinger and Lalicic, 2015; Roy and Hoque, 2015). However, fewer empirical studies analyse destination branding from the supply-side perspective (Konecnik and Go, 2008; Tsaur et al., 2016).

Brand identity development is a theoretical concept best understood from a supply-side perspective (Konecnik and Go, 2008: 2; Cai et al., 2009: 70; Suma and Bello, 2012: 89). Therefore, relevant aspects such as brand identity require further research (Konecnik and Go, 2008; El Aouni et al., 2013; Tsaur et al., 2016). This is why the message behind a destination brand should be a topic to highlight. Also, although there are many studies on tourism literature about brand, no specific literature has addressed the logo components and brand design process (Blain et al., 2005: 332).

The supply side of tourism destination branding has been all but neglected (Cai and Page, 2014). As previously noted, no extensive analysis has been conducted on developing

destination branding from both the supply and demand sides which make up a unique brand (Tsiotsou and Goldsmith, 2012; Yusof et al., 2014). In addition, according to Farmaki (2012) and Kim and Lehto (2013: 2), few studies have examined the projected and perceived images of destinations. This is discussed at the end of chapter three. Thus, the current study focuses on developing a model of destination branding incorporating both the supply-side and demand-side perspectives.

Marketing communication is the best way to develop brand destination (Singh, 2014). Kapferer (2008) and Tsiotsou and Goldsmith (2012) have highlighted the concept of noise in the communication process, which affects the message before it reaches the customer and causes interference between supply and demand sides.It is very important for destination marketers to be aware of any barriers to communication such as cultural noise which may prevent the message from being interpreted correctly before reaching the customer (Ferrell, 2008; Manchaiah and Zhao, 2012; Dębski, 2013; Singh, 2014).

1.3.1 Research questions

Q1-What are the Oman tourism suppliers' perceptions of the tangible and intangible attributes that can be used for developing the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination?

Q2-What are the perceptions of the intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by potential international tourists?

Q3-What communication gaps exist between the supply side and demand side regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity?

1.4 Research aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to develop a proposed model for tourism destination branding using Oman as a case study. This will be achieved by examining the Omani context and its characteristics from the perspectives of potential tourists (demand side) and the Omani tourism providers (supply side).

Research Objectives

1. To identify the tangible and intangible attributes that currently contribute to the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination (the supply side).

2. To identify the perceptions of the intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by potential international tourists (the demand side).

3. To analyse the potential communication gaps between supply and demand regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity effectively.

1.5 Research contribution

According to the literature, little research has been conducted on destination branding (Pike, 2005; Power, 2005; Wheeler et al., 2011; Moilanen and Rainisto, 2008; Fujita and Dinnie, 2010; Greaves and Skinner, 2010; Qu et al., 2011; Pike, 2015; Pham, 2015). Most of the current research related to tourism destination branding has been conducting in developed countries. In addition, little research has been carried out on destination branding in the Middle East. Therefore, the field of tourism needs a study to present information about a developing country and international tourist perceptions towards tourism in the Middle East, in particular after Arab Spring revolution. This study about Oman, a developing country, adds to the existing body of knowledge.

The literature review identified different models for developing destination branding, but each considered different angles and elements, and none explained the process of branding destinations as discussed in chapter three. Several studies on destination brand building focus only on demand-side perception (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Anholt, 2009; Morrison, 2013); others focus on the demand side but consider the difference between the images held by potential tourists and actual visitors to the destination (Yilmaz et al., 2009; Wang and Davidson, 2009; Lim, et al., 2014; Kong et al., 2015; Jani and Nguni, 2016). Yet others consider the supply-side perspective, particularly brand identity attributes, when developing brands (Konecnik and Go, 2008: 2; Cai et al., 2009: 70; Suma and Bello, 2012: 89). Few studies focused on developing destination branding from both supply- and demand-side perceptions (Tsiotsou and Goldsmith, 2012).

This study addresses the gap in the destination brand development literature by considering both supply- and demand-side perceptions in order to understand the process of destination branding. It contributes to knowledge by developing a model with innovative components that could be suitable for both developing and developed destinations. This model could be

applied to a city, region or country that needs to develop and position its brand. The findings suggest that it will be beneficial for destination managers and destination marketers in developing destination branding, because it can help them to understand the processes involved.

Academically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge through the destination brand concept, destination brand components, brand position, and communication (noise). Developing destination branding from both supply and demand sides has remained a less researched area because of the methodological difficulties in the data collection, analysis and comparison of these two types of perception. This study presents the relationship between the supply side and demand side to develop destination branding by considering market communication in the branding process.

1.6 Research approach

A mixed research approach is applied to analyse the destination brand components of the Sultanate of Oman, which makes use of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures. The Oman brand as perceived by potential and actual international tourists is assessed via a structured questionnaire (Chapter Five).

A qualitative approach is also selected, with semi-structured interviews conducted to collect data from key stakeholders involved in the Omani tourism management, e.g. the government officials, tour operators and guides (Chapter Six). The qualitative approach provides the researcher with in-depth information and understanding of the issue. Furthermore, it helps to develop a model for the Omani tourism brand incorporating the perceptions of the suppliers and potential tourists towards the tangible and intangible tourism attributes, which is the central aim of this study.

In the current study, the pragmatist's view is adopted, which includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches together with inductive and deductive logic. Its epistemology combines both the interpretivist and the positivist positions and its ontology combines both subjective and objective points of view to help interpret data (Creswell, 2014). First, the data are collected and analysed separately, then they are compared and combined; the aim of the comparison is to identify similarities and differences between supply side and demand side among the research participants, in order to determine the elements in the model. These comparisons and combinations are highlighted in the discussion in chapter seven.

A case study is one of the diverse strategies adopted in social science research. It is selected since it helps the researcher to gain deep understanding of the research phenomenon in order to realise the main aim of the study, which is to develop a model for the Omani tourism brand. This concept is discussed in detail in **Chapter Four.**

1.7 Brief information about Oman and case study selection: Why Oman?

1.7.1 Location of Sultanate of Oman

The Sultanate of Oman is located in the Middle East in the southeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Oman is the second largest country in size and population in the Arabian Peninsula after Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Information, 2006) and some 3, 5 millin people. It borders Saudi Arabia to the west, the United Arab Emirates to the northwest, the Republic of Yemen to the south, the Strait of Hormuz to the north and the Arabian Sea to the east (see Figure 1.2). The coastline extends 1,700 km from the Strait of Hormuz to Yemen. It overlooks three seas: the Arabian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea. With an area of 309, 500 sq.Oman's geographical location gives it an opportunity to become a significant tourism destination (Ministry of Information, 2006).

On 1 July 2017, the population of Oman amounted to 3,424,386. Oman has one of the highest growth rates among the Arab Gulf states, above the world average, characterised by a relatively low death rate. Life expectancy averages 73 years for men and 75 years for women (Etheredge, 2011). 30.1% of the population are in the age group 0-15 and 18.69% in the age group 15-64. People aged 64 and above constitute only 3.92% of the total Omani population (CIA, 2017).

Since 1970, the government has worked hard to integrate Oman more effectively into the global mainstream and to overcome the country's isolation. Increasing numbers of foreigners have come to live and work in the Sultanate and have undertaken employment in highly skilled jobs, helping to build the country's infrastructure (Barrett, 2011).

Most of the Omani people are Muslim, their religious character providing the foundation on which their society is based. Omani society is characterised as tribal, with loyalty always given to the tribe. Tribes are located in different places, and the people tend to be proud of the place of their birth or lengthy residence (Peterson, 2016).

Figure 1.2. Sultanate of Oman map

Source: https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/sultanate-of-oman-map-vector-2602739

1.7.2 Tourism

Tourism is one of the largest industries; the government of Oman has given it priority in its economic development policy, as it is considered as a sustainable source of income and employment. Through stimulating private-sector investments, the tourism industry has achieved an average annual growth rate of 23% (Abdullah et al., 2013: 5). Therefore, sustaining its development is a vital consideration, particularly since the country is comparatively new to tourism especially in relation to that in developed countries (Abdullah et al., 2013).

Since the establishment of the Ministry of Tourism in 2004, many developments have taken place.The country has launched freehold development in its infrastructure and superstructure, such as development in the transportand communication sectors, accommodation, entertainment and road building (Al Said, 2015). These elements will all promote Oman tourism (Jokilehto,2008).

The Ministry of Tourism look forward to promoting leisure tourism throughout Oman, focusing on the natural attractions, heritage and culture (Ministry of Oman Tourism, 2006). This is because Oman is one of the few countries in the Middle East that still maintains its culture and identity(Phillips& Hunt,2017). However, if it does not control tourism development, it will adversely impact its natural resources and its local residents' identity (UNESCO,2015). This is because the tourists from diverse countries with various backgrounds introduce different cultures. This in turn, may impact the local people's culture and attidutes (Soubert, 1995). Therefore, Oman needs to be careful when selecting its target markets and should plan its long-term tourism strategy to prevent any negative impact that tourism may cause (Pedersen, 2002).

Resorts have been developed to boost the national economy and encourage competition in the sector (Khan et al.,2015). Despite the global economic slump, Oman remains steadfast in its goals to drive the tourism and industrial sectors and to witness progress on its projects (Khan and Krishnamurthy, 2016). For example, the Salam Yiti Lifestyle Resort, Spa was developed through a joint project between the Oman government and an international company called Sama Dubai (Oman Market Report,2016). The resort is located in the captial city of Oman; it stretches over an area of 350 hectares. The project aims to offer facilities to attract international tourists; the location provides a perfect opportuinty with the beach front resort, hotels, a marine resort, a retail complex, a golf course, villas and towns along with apartments (Blanke & Chiesa,2013).

Tourism is one of a largest economic sector that can provide quantifiable trading opportunities for all countries, whatever their level of development. However, it is also a sector where there an unequal share of the benefits, which threatens the social, economic and environmental sustainability of tourism in developing countries (Muhanna, 2006; Yazdi, 2012). For many developing countries, tourism is the basic pillar of the development process and may be one of the leading economic activities in terms of job creation and foreign exchange earnings. In some developing countries, mainly islands and some small economies, it may be the only source of foreign currency and employment and thus the backbone of economic development (Dwyer et al., 2011).

As resources are steadily depleted in the Middle East, countries in the region are increasingly focusing their efforts on generating new sources of income and on diversifying their revenue base. The situation of Oman is no different from other Middle Eastern countries. A rough

estimate based on the country's oil reserves and its oil production in 2009 showed that Oman's oil reserves are gradually being depleted (Limbert, 2010:214). According to OPEC (2015), the proven oil reserves in Oman were 5.5 billion barrels (bbl) as of January 2015, which is small by Middle Eastern standards, compared to that of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Table (1.1) compares Oman oil reserves with those of the other Gulf countries.

Table 1. 1. Middle East proven crude oil reserves by country (m b)

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Saudi Arabia	264,516	265,405	265,405	265,405	266,578
Iran	151,170	154,580	157,300	157,300	157,300
Kuwait	101,500	101,500	101,500	101,500	101,500
United Arab Emirates	97,800	97,800	97,800	97,800	97,800
Qatar	25,382	25,382	25,382	25,382	25,382
Oman	**5,500**	**5,500**	**5,500**	**5,500**	**5,500**
Syrian Arab Republic	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500

(OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin 2015: 22).

Omani culture is rich and diversified when compared with other destinations in the Gulf region. The Sultanate is distinguished by traditional characteristics and is well known for its food, family relationships and kinship, greeting, ceremonial occasions and clothes, which together reflect the social life of Oman. The culture is influenced by the Islamic religion (Ministry of Information, 2006). In particular, Oman's people are famous for their generosity; hospitality is deeply ingrained in their culture and they are happy when people visit them. Even if they speak a different language, they try to understand their guests by signs and body language, and they provide them with a big Omani meal. The meal starts with dates and coffee or tea, followed by rice with meat or fish; incense (frankincense) is used at the end of the meal (Nowell,2009). All these aspects have shaped the Omani civilisation, making Oman unique among Arabic countries. However, social communication is still separated by gender, and the majority of people, including men, still dress in traditional fashion. In the other Gulf countries men wear the white *thobe* and it is difficult for visitors to differentiate their nationality. However, Omanis' traditional clothes distinguish them, men wearing colourful caps, as shown in the picture below (www.quora.com). They also wear *khanjar* as part of

their national dress, reflecting Oman's long history and its connections with East Africa and India (Nutz, 2013).

Sources:https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-differences-and-similarities-between-the-Gulf-states

https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/ars/13441566.0047.013/--omani-mens-national-dress-displaying-personal-taste?rgn=main;view=fulltext
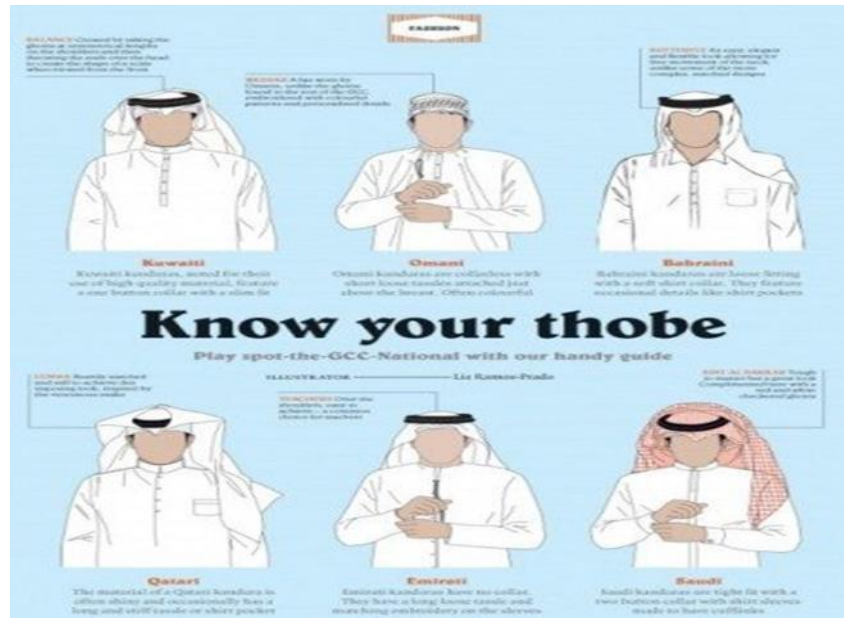
1.7.3 Oman economy

Oman economy a mainly rely on oil revenue resources which generate 84% of government resources. In 2015, the Oman's budget deficit to $6.5 due to the decline of the global oil prices. In addition, Oman has little foreign assets and is issuing debt to cover its deficit. Oman government strive toward tourism diversification through tourism and gas to reduce the oil contributions to 9% by 2020. However, Oman cannot balance its budget due to the Arab spring which is other challenge influence the Oman economy (CIA, 2017). This plan and strategy will take more time due this issue.

Government of Oman keen to diversifying its economy resources (CIA, 2017). The vision 2020 conference which was hold in Muscat in 1995, this strategy was a path for Oman future development and economy adjustments,it include financial stability, tourism public and private sectors, and human resources and improve the skills of the Omani workforce to meet the demand of global development (Ministry of Natioal Economy, 2005).

1.7.4 History

There is a long and interesting history behind many of Oman's tourist attractions**. Oman is the oldest independent in the Arab world**, it established in 1650 since expelling the Portugues. Archaeological discoveries have shown that the country was inhabited at least 5000 years ago; these early Omanis lived on farming and fishing (Ministry of Heritage and Culture, 2005). The Sumerians named Oman "Magan" which means mountains of copper. Magan was the principal extraction centre of copper, which was widely exported. Oman has a famous and unique underground irrigation system called the Falaj system (UNESCO, 2013).

Frankincense, which is produced in the Dhofar region, was an important aspect of ancient people's culture; it was used for everything from deodorant and toothpaste to food and drink flavouring. Frankincense was expensive in Europe and Asia, because it was in high demand. There is evidence of an early trading route through Yemen and Saudi Arabia and across Egypt to the rest of the Middle East and the rest of the world (UNESCO, 2010). From the early 16th century, when the Portuguese discovered the sea route round the Cape of Good Hope to India, they occupied Muscat for a century and a half in order to dominate the trade, until they were expelled by the Omanis in 1650 (Ministry of Information, 2005).

Subsequently, Oman went through a period of decline and its share of international commercial activities was limited. The Omanis remained largely isolated from the rest of the

world until 1970, when His Majesty, Sultan Qubaoos, came to power. His reign was the beginning of a bright new era that has renewed Oman's histroic glories and opened a new chapter of development, prosperity and social and economic progress. The country has undergone rapid and far-reaching economic and social development while maintaining its rich cultural heritage and natural environment (Kolli, 2013).

1.7.5 Climate of Oman

Oman's climate differs from one area to another. The country has two seasons: summer and winter. In the summer, it is hot and humid in the coastal areas, hot and dry in the desert and mountains and moderate in the southern area where the country`s second major city, Salalah, is located. Dhofar has unique summer weather: from June to August, it is cooler than any other part of country, because of the effect of the monsoon period. The summer in Oman is an opportunity to attract regional tourists from the Gulf countries, providing them with cooling relief during the period when their own countries are experiencing the hottest weather. The winter season has irregular although often heavy rain; therefore attractive for people from cold winter climate, only the Dhofar region expects rainfall between June and September (Ministry of Information, 2017).

1.7.6 Oman's environment

The environment has always been one of the major priorities (World Health Organization, 2010; 2015) to consider in the development of any country. Sultan Qaboos bin said realised the importance of natural resource. From the 1970s, the environmental focus was on implementing measures for managing and developing natural resources and preventing environmental pollution, but environmental issues have expanded to cover a whole range of sectors. Managing these and protecting the health of local residents are the main processes underpinning sustainable development that the Sultanate is committed to achieve.

The Omani government is committed to environmental protection; it has introduced a set of laws and regulations, such as those on the conservation of the environment and the prevention of pollution along with the regulation of water, waste chemicals, radioactivity and environmental permits (Samuel& Sarprasatha,2016).

The Ministry of Environment and Climate has implemented many of the protection projects, the installation of two central stations for monitoring pollutants from car exhausts, the

measurement of noise and air quality levels and the establishment of a mobile unit to monitor air (Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, 2014)

Developing Oman as an internationally competitive tourism destination should take international rules and regulations into account. In order to maintain a balance between essential development and the wellbeing of the environment and the local residents, the national environmental strategy is based on the principle of cooperation between all relevant government and private institutions, both nationally and internationally.

1.8 Reasons for choosing Oman as a case study

There are several reasons for choosing Oman as a case study. First, in addition to its distinctive culture (see section 1.7.2), Oman has a rich history although it is not as well-known as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). As mentioned in section 1.7.4, Oman is the oldest independent country in the Arab world, established in 1650 after the Omani people drove out the Portuguese (Katzman, 2018). However, many people do not know where Oman is located, although there are new countries which became independent as recently as the 1970s which are well known throughout the world, such as Qatar (Katzman, 2016) and the UAE (Abu Dhabi and Dubai) (Al Sadik, 2001). This makes Oman a particularly suitable area for research.

Second, Oman has a logo which it is not a success; it represents various sectors besides tourism, such as education, trade and information systems. As it is written in Arabic script, most international tourists cannot understand it. This is a good indication that the country has no destination branding, and needs a new brand to represent the tourism sector exclusively. It is important to understand and address the underlying elements of the current logo which make it an unsuccessful brand; this experience can give us useful insights into the development of a new model for tourism destination branding. This study will therefore help Oman to develop a new tourism brand.

Finally, Oman is very safe; in a newly released World Economic Forum (WEF) report (2017), Oman was ranked the fourth safest country in the world for visitors (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TTCR_2017_web_0401.pdf),with good relations with all countries worldwide. However, although for most people worldwide the Middle East is associated with terrorism, the Omani Tourism Minister appears to be unaware that his

country has an image problem (Al-Hamarneh, 2013).Tourists, in particular, are very concerned to avoid travel to dangerous destination (Amir et al., 2015). Therefore, Oman needs a study to present sufficient information regarding Omani tourism. These are all reasons for choosing Oman as a case study.

Also, it is differentiated by its natural resources; Oman surrounded by seas and ocean, mountains, desert, and is home to very friendly people (Al Azhar et al., 2016). It has all the components for destination branding, but developing a tourism brand is still a new experience among Omani stakeholders.

In 1995 the Omani government published a policy document entitled "Vision2020", aiming to diversify the economy which currently depends primarily on the oil industry, which contributes 84% of its income (CIA, 2017). The strategy to reduce the dependence on oil by 2020 is focusing on tourism (Mansour, 2013). According to the Ministry of Tourism (2006), planning for tourism development in Oman is moving in the right direction. The Sultanate is taking into consideration long-term planning aiming to provide a selective tourism strategy with focuses on high-spending segments such as American and European travellers. However, appropriate implementation of tourism planning requires the participation of all stakeholders, especially the private sector. **Although Oman has all the components for destination branding, developing a tourism brand is still a new experience for Omani stakeholders.**

1.9 Thesis structure

Chapter One presents the introduction and explains the research area of concern; it provides background information, and discusses the rationale and contribution of the study, with the research aim, objectives and questions.

Chapter Two is the literature review, which started with a briefly explains the destination concept, and brand concepts, then provides an extensive and critical review of previous studies that related to research subjects; it discusses on the concept of destination branding, and destination brand components and all the relevant concepts.

Chapter Three continues the review of previous studies, on building destination branding and in-depth communication marketing. It highlights the research guide model, and then presents the research questions and identifies research gaps.

Chapter Four on the research methodology describes different philosophical approaches and research methods and justificaties the research methodology selected. It explains the research collection tools.

Chapter Five provides the analysis of the quantitative data (demand side); the statistical findings are discussed and answer research question number one. It is divided into three parts: visitors, non-visitors and the whole sample; it defines all the Oman image attributes as perceived from the demand side.

Chapter Six discusses the qualitative findings and answers research questions two and three. It presents the perceptions of the supply side. It defines the brand identity attributes, and attributes Oman offers visitors, and defines the tools Omani authorities use to communicate with their visitors, and the problems they face.

Chapter Seven discusses the findings of Chapters Five and Six and links them with the two literature review chapters, Two and Three. It then presents the model for developing the Omani brand as a tourism destination, and presents the answer of the research.

Chapter Eight concludes the study and provides an overview of the research process. It presents the research contributions, recommendations, research limitations and opportunities for further study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on the concept of destination branding in general because there are limited studies in the literature on destination branding in tourism; it discusses studies of the conceptualisation of destination branding and provides a definition. It then explains in detail the components of destination branding. The formation of the destination brand image together with its measurement is considered in detail. The chapter concludes with a gap identified in the literature which has generated the research questions in the present study.

2.2 Destination

Being the place where tourist consumption occurs, the destination is often seen by tourists as the outwardly facing element of tourism services or products (Page, 2006; Andrades and Dimanche, 2017). At a general level, the concept of the destination can be defined as representing a geographically defined entity such as a group of countries, an individual a country, region, city or another area which is economically dependent on the income from tourism (McCarthy, 2014; Guo and Sanposh, 2015; Zeytonli et al., 2015; Andrades and Dimanche, 2017; Wang and Zhang, 2017).

A tourist destination may contain one or more tourist attractions (Martin, 2012; Wang and Zhang, 2017), with many options available to potential visitors to choose from (Zeytonli et al., 2015). The destination and the tourist interact in the creation of the tourism experience (Agapito and Lacerda, 2014; Sanposh, 2015). Ermen and Gnoth (2007) explained that a destination is a place to which people travel, and a tourist destination is where most tourists choose to stay. On the other hand, Buhalis (2000) and Lyu (2017) observed that a tourist destination focuses on the quality of services designed to meet the needs of travellers. Similarly, Beritell (2009) defined a tourist destination as a geographical area consisting of all the services necessary for tourists, including infrastructure, accommodation, hospitality and entertainment.

This means that continents compete with each other, as do countries, regions and cities, via the differentiation of services and amenities (Vengesayi et al., 2013: 83) and the desires of the several travel market segments (Mishra, 2009). Oliveira& Panyik (2015) considered a

destination as a geographical area which is understood by its tourists; it is an attractive entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing. Destination management marketing is responsible for the strategic planning and marketing of the country and the different resources to undertake action towards achieving their strategic objectives (Mohamad, 2012; Melewar et al., 2017).

Most destinations are classified by identifying their general features or characteristics (Melewar et al., 2017). According to Adeyinka-Ojo et al., (2014: 158), to market a country, marketers need to consider a variety of attributes such as the culture, history, nature and the geographical position of a destination. To achieve this, destinations require marketing strategies; and the tourism stakeholders have established destination marketing organisations to manage and organise their own.

2.2.1 Destination competitive advantage

Acknowledgement of the complexity of the stakeholders involved in a tourism destination market highlights the difficulty of managing the nature of tourism, and explains the significance attached to it in an increasingly globalised and competitive market (Mejía, 2011; Anatoly, 2014; Wisner et al., 2014). The competitive advantage of a destination is defined by many authors as the ability of the destination to create a tourism experience and generate value tourism products that differentiate its resources and maintain its market position (Hong, 2008: 43; Dimoska and Trimcev, 2012; Modica and Uysal, 2016). Ritchie and Crouch (2003:2), cited in Dimoska and Trimcev (2012:282) defined competitiveness as "the ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract tourists while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations".

Bahar and Kozak (2005, cited in Kozak and Baloglu, 2010) argue that each destination has to compete with the others, to develop its economy, to attract investments and to offer sustainable tourism products and services. It is undoubtedly true that tourist destinations are accepted as elements of the tourism sector and, as is the case with any business or industry, they are also in competition with each other to obtain a higher proportion of the international tourism market (Ardahaey, 2011). In the context of a discussion on competitiveness, building an image is an essential feature as it can help differentiate between a variety destinations (Romaniuk and Ehrenberg, 2007; Janiszewska and Insch, 2012). It has been stated that, as a

result of the destination characteristics, and specifically the decision to travel, decisions are made according to a position in the mind of the prospective visitor. In this context, a strong image is fundamental in influencing tourists' decision making (Lopesi, 2011).

Competitive advantage is produced by using resources and capabilities to achieve either a distinctive product or a lower-cost structure (Gebauer et al., 2011). It can emerge from the creation of superior services to generate for customer value and to achieve cost and/or differentiation advantages, resulting in increased market share and profitability (Somuyiwa et al., 2013).

2.2.2 Destination marketing

Destination marketing refers to the marketing tools and techniques used to promote a destination to increase the number of tourists (Ajake, 2015). Kaurav et al. (2015) point out that it also includes attention to product packaging, promotion and effective distribution channels and sales. Destination marketing is an essential concept in tourism because most destinations have to compete on an international level (Soteriades, 2012). However, the tourism marketing could be complicated because the markets vary widely, and marketing destination requires promotion efforts to draw a positive and attractive image of the destination from the perception of potential visitors (Kaurav et al., 2015).

The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) plays an essential role in promoting tourism in the country, region or city (Pike & Page, 2014). Promotion is the best marketing activity used by destination management to attract potential tourists (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015). Successful delivery of the wider tourism attributes depends on a close working relationship and interactions between stakeholders, enabling the tourism management to provide an experience for the customer (Klein & Dodds, 2018). In the international tourism market, a destination is often associated with a unique tourism product (Gursoy & Chi, 2018), for example, New Zealand's association with clean and green adventure. A country like Oman is associated with culture and heritage.

The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is responsible for identifying tourism markets' needs and what their destinations have to present, including tourism attributes (Pike & Page, 2014). In order for destination marketing to be successful, it is necessary to have

partnerships between different stakeholders and a collaborative marketing strategy (Arbogast et al., 2017), to present a unified brand message (Klein & Dodds, 2018).

However, managing and marketing a destination is a difficult task, due to the range of stakeholders involved in the development of tourism products (Arbogast et al., 2017). The same authors suggest that destination marketers need to understand the unique characteristics of their tourism product and the motivations and behaviours of the target market, because their product is one of the main components of the tourist's experience, which tends to be different for each visitor (Arbogast et al., 2017) according to the purpose of their visit (Pike & Page, 2014). Also, tourism attributes are another issue facing destination marketing because most attributes are outside the marketer's control (Schaar, 2013).

2.3 Brand concept

Brands have been used to ensure the differentiation of products or services offered by various competitors (Dale, 2005; Pappu and Quester, 2017). Moilanen and Rainisto (2008) defined a brand as an impression of a product or service perceived in a consumer's mind. It is the total of tangible and intangible components that differentiate the product.A brand has many elements, such as its name, logo, sign, symbol, jingles, and so on (Keller et al., 2008). All of these elements contribute to the determination of the brand and shape its identity (Dale, 2005). Consequently, the product receives awareness, reputation and prominence in the marketplace, creating value for the organisation and resulting in financial profit (Ghodeswar, 2008).

Destination uses the brand to add value by promoting consumer's desire for a service or product and in turn the possibility of purchase (Ilicic and Webster, 2015; Kuchinka et al, 2018). The power brand plays a significant role in the contribution to consumers by reducing spent time and cost when faced with a set of identical products. Moreover, it helps customers to identify a product with less information processing and decision-making time because of the expected quality of the accumulated brand knowledge (Ghodeswar, 2008; Ilicic and Webster, 2015). Brands are considered the second most important asset for an organisation after the customers (Alhaddad, 2015). Strong brands can also protect consumers by serving as identifiers of the producers (Sago and Hinnenkamp, 2014).

The foundation of a brand is the brand name, along with other aspects such as the emotional associations linked with it to enhance the added value (Ghodeswar, 2008; Choi, 2017).

Building a relationship gives a long-term brand value and experiences designed to impress consumers with the product, and this is the best way to help a brand develop an emotional connection with its consumers (Gobe, 2013).

Haig (2005) argued that branding protects products or services from failure, while Levinson and Levinson (2007) suggest that marketers use branding, such as a brand name, to develop the perception or to create the impression that a brand has certain qualities or characteristics that make it unique. Therefore brands are the primary goal of many organisations (McLeish, 2010). Because they create more value for the audience, they allow for the creation of a wide range of benefits to the organisation, such as reduced risk, increased profits, collaboration with other parties as well as the opportunity for brand extension (Ghodeswar, 2008; Magagula and Lees, 2017) and increased market share and profitability (Jiang, 2014). Ghodeswar (2008) asserted that the consideration of a strong brand supports the new product and service launching. The brands provide long-term security and growth, higher sustainable profits, and increased asset values to both the organisations and customers because they achieve competitive differentiation, and more significant protection of demand (Ahmed and Fatawu, 2014; Pappu and Quester, 2017).

According to Seric (2014), a destination branding strategy is complex since it is related to the tourist's needs, and it should be differentiated in the international market; therefore applying the branding concept to the tourist business could differ from one product to another. **However, choosing the right branding strategy** is paramount for achieving substantial growth that ensures steady future development of the national income from tourism (Papathanassis et al., 2012). In this respect, Seric (2014) added that the right branding of a tourist product is the only means of commercialisation in the global market.

2.4 Place branding

Place branding can be country, region or nation branding. The concept is also closely related to destination branding and city branding, where the former involves the branding of a destination in terms of the whole tourism sector and the latter refers to the branding of a single city (Anhlot, 2009: Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017).

As place branding plays a vital role in increasing economic growth, it has become a growing activity of governments around the world (Andersson, 2015; Cleave et al., 2016). The concept refers to the various efforts exerted by a national or city authority to marketing

throughout the world; it also tends to produce global solidarity and repairs a negative reputation. Place branding could, therefore, be of great use, especially in less developed countries, leading to development and economic growth (Jaffea, 2015; Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017).

Anholt (2009) and Kladou et al. (2017: 427) defined place branding as building a branding process for a place based on positioning its identity and the formation of a unique image in the consumer's mind. It can be used to achieve a competitive advantage to enhance inward investment and tourism, and identification of residents within their country and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest (Oliveira& Panyik, 2015). Place branding is centred on the creation of a favourable image, or changing a negative image of or indifference towards the place (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015; Zhao et al., 2017).

However, branding a place is more complicated than branding products due to places constitute by a multitude of identities and activities constitutes(Zavattaro et al., 2015). Developing place branding involves highlighting the unique intangible and tangible attributes of a place which could be used to enhance its attractiveness (Lecompte, 2017). The perception of a place image formed before actually visiting the place is important in the branding process, creating a proposition that compels the customer to buy into the idea being presented (Cleave and Arku, 2015).

Place branding has to present an appealing image and spread a good reputation among stakeholders. The image of a place plays a serious role in decisions about where people choose to stay, work and invest (Henninger et al., 2016). However, choosing the appropriate elements to incorporate in the image is still a topical issue for place branding (Vuignier, 2016). Marketers use the image to promote places, crucial because it based on emotion and is a rationalised communication marketing tool (Bayraktar & Uslay, 2016). Therefore, there has been a major global shift toward choosing an appropriate marketing activity to encourage interest and investment in a specific place (Henninger et al., 2016).

According to Briciu (2013), both place branding and destination branding can be applied to a country, a city or region. However, **place branding** is a more holistic concept than destination branding. The difference between them is the **target group**. Place branding is related to **broader perspectives including** business, trade, investment, immigration and media issues, attracting people to live, work, study or visit, and bringing talented, mobile

people with wealth and investment potential. **Destination branding** is related solely to tourism activity (Briciu, 2013; Zenker et al., 2017). The next section will discuss destination branding.

2.5 Destination branding

Destination branding is the differentiation of a particular destination, by using its resources such as geographical position and political or social scale, with the aim of promoting and selling attributes associated with the tourism destination (Mariutti et al., 2013). It is important because it helps the destination to stand out from its competitors (Pike and Page, 2014).

Cai (2002:722) defined destination branding as the selection of a consistent brand element that identifies and distinguishes a destination through positive image building, while Qu et al. (2011) saw it as a way to communicate a destination's identity uniquely by differentiating it from competitors. The brand of a destination is a collection of both tangible and intangible attributes and added value that has features linked to the destination (Hanzaee and Saeedi, 2011: George, 2017). Destination branding is considered to be a modern concept applied to destinations using components of marketing activities to create an image, logo or symbol recognised by tourists (Al-Azzam, 2013; Farjam and Hongyi, 2015).

Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003) defined destination branding as the process of combining all the features associated with a place or region, including the products and services from various sectors such as agriculture, tourism, sports, arts, investment, technology and education, under one concept which expresses the unique brand identity and personality of the place and distinguishes it from its competitors.

Blain et al. (2005: 337) defined destination branding as "the set of marketing activities that support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word, mark or other graphic symbol that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; [and] consistently conveys the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination and reduces the consumer search costs and perceived risks".

Anhlot (2009) stated that a destination brand refers to the characteristics of a place that is attractive to visit. Garcia et al. (2012) asserted that a destination brand is essential for the practitioner, as the broadening tourism opportunities and travel locations have resulted in increased substitutability and lack of differenation amongst some destinations. Pike and Page

(2014) and Meza and Seric (2014) pointed out that branding is increasingly applied to locations. **Blian et al. (2005) argued, however**, that knowledge of destination branding remains limited and that practitioners often misunderstand the term as a result of the lack of research.

Aziz et al. (2012: 212) pointed out that destination branding aims to support and underpin the uniqueness of a tourist destination, offering a unique image to the target markets and creating experience. Furthermore, Pars and Gulsel (2011) observed that, in the tourism industry, the destination must offer high-quality services in order to be successful and to compete with others. **Then, after travelling,** the brand can implant reinforcement memories for forthcoming visits inspired by the memorable experience at the destination. This is the main purpose of a destination brand: to create a positive image.

Devising a unique brand is very important for any destination looking to differentiate tourism products reflecting the unique attributes that make the place attractive, and to contribute to its status being the destination of choice for tourists (Buhalis, 2000; Morgan et al., 2011; Pike and Page, 2014). A destination brand defined as a potent instrument is used to create emotional appeal; a brand image is crucial in the successful travel tourism market (Marzano and Scott, 2009; Giannopoulos et al., 2011; Schaar, 2013).**Thus,** the destination brand describes the unique regional features that support making a tourism destination more attractive (Schaar, 2013). According to this definition, the destination brand dimensions are identity and image. Destinations differentiate themselves according to their identity by selected brand elements, and positioning themselves according to the image communicated to and perceived by potential tourists (Martains, 2015).

Branding is used to highlight what makes the destination product or services unique, or distinct from other competitors (Konecnik and Go, 2008). The strength of competition between the destination brands reassures visitors about the services and product quality provided; it also contributes to the formation of options with several levels of quality that suit the needs of a variety of visitors (Lacar, 2009; Shao et al., 2016).

Destination branding is applied in tourism promotion (Oliveira& Panyik, 2015), and the tourism sector uses brand management to promote their destinations (Schaar, 2013). Many benefits are identified for destinations and travellers through effective destination branding procedures (Morrison& Panyik, 2015). These include lowering the cost of developing tourism

destinations, changing the types of tourists targeted; changing visitor behaviour and enhancing awareness and demand; the actions taken are aimed at persuading visitors to take note of a destination (Oliveira& Panyik, 2015). The characteristics of a brand can increase brand loyalty as visitors become more associated with it and feel a connection to the brand values, gaining emotional benefits (Steenkamp, 2014).

Destination branding is probably best described as the essence of a destination as perceived by potential tourists. **However**, it must also be recognisable to local people. Ideally, these two perspectives should be combined since they reinforce each other (Briciu, 2013: 10). Tourists choose a destination by the total attractions it offers, and its brand is perceived as the totality of attractions (Kasapi& Cela, 2017). **Therefore,** destination branding management and practices take into consideration the diverse groups of stakeholder interests and the nature of the host destination (Adeyinka-Ojo et al., 2014:158).

To foster the creation of a successful emotional link with visitors, the destination brand should be credible, distinguishable, and enthusing the supplier, and finally should resonate with the visitors (Manhas et al., 2016). The ability of a destination to market itself through positive image building will help it to distinguish itself from other similar destinations (Ekinci, 2003).The successful branding of destinations results from a combination of creative marketing supported by investment in the key services and facilities required to deliver the experience on offer (Ristano, 2005; Manhas et al,. 2016). **However,** Moilanen and Rainisto (2008) asserted that a strong national brand should also attract business and investment, and support the interests of export industries.

A number of researchers have claimed that destination branding deals with how tourists understand a destination (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2003; Keller, 2003; Oliveira & Panyik, 2015; Schaar, 2013). Destination marketers need to focus on the visitor's experience as a whole, and not just on experience with one particular service or product at the location (Schaar, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2015). Positive experiences can make tourists feel closer to a destination; thereby helping to develop a relationship and form an emotional attachment. Such emotional attachment is a vital contributor to achieving destination brand recognition, which is viewed as the most successful form of advertising (Keller, 2003). Keller also argued that brand recognition is created by establishing behavioural loyalty and attitudinal attachment formed

through extensive in-depth analysis of the characteristics of tourists, trying to understand their mind-sets and how best to appeal to them.

Ideally, the process of developing a destination image into a brand should include the members of a significant number of groups and institutions, including tourism authorities, tour operators, visitors, managers of cultural venues, hospitality managers and members of the local population (Morrison, 2013). Obtaining opinions is the best practical method to develop a destination image that can then be packaged and branded for different traveller segments. A clear understanding of stakeholders' perceptions will support destination managers in implementing a good plan for sustainable destination development (Kolb, 2006; Getz and Page, 2016).

It is essential for destination management to differentiate between destination branding and destination image functions (Cai, 2002; Ekinci, 2003; Roodurmun and Juwaheer, 2010). Destination branding is a process of strategic planning applied by marketers to gain a competitive advantage in the tourism market (Aziz et al., 2014). The image is the components of destination branding, and destination image is generated in the tourist's mind and affects their decision-making process (Aziz et al., 2014). **Therefore** branding is the second stage of building a unique destination image (Ekinci, 2003:22). Because of these information, destination image should be regarded as a pre-existing the concept for destination branders (Schaar, 2013).

Ekinci (2003) identified the aim as stimulating thinking on destination branding and outlining its relationship to the destination image. As the destination choice available to tourists widens, an effective destination-positioning strategy becomes necessary. A vital component of this positioning process is the creation and management of a distinctive and appealing destination image**. Thus,** considerable effort is exerted and large amounts of money spent on building a positive image to impact the decision making of consumers (Ekinci, 2003). According to Ekinci, (2003: 21), destination marketing should follow a three-stage process in developing a favourable destination image; Figure (2.1) below illustrates this process.

The image is the main elements for branding destination, Ekinci, (2003: 21) Stated that to develop the positive image should follow three stages as shown in figure (2.1), the process should be started with evaluating of destination image that includes establishing an emotional

bond with the tourist such as the brand name "I love New York". For this reason, branding is considered the emotional component of the destination image. The second stage is "branding"; destination marketer uses the brand to differentiate their destination that impacts tourist choice and decision making and motivate tourist to travel. Successful destination branding makes the relation between destination and consumer by satisfying needs. The third stage is brand personality; it used in term of matching or mismatching between the destination image and tourists self- image. Thus, a brand with the customer personality can be compared to a human personality with traits such as "pretty", "exciting" or "original".

Figure 2. 1. Destination image and destination branding
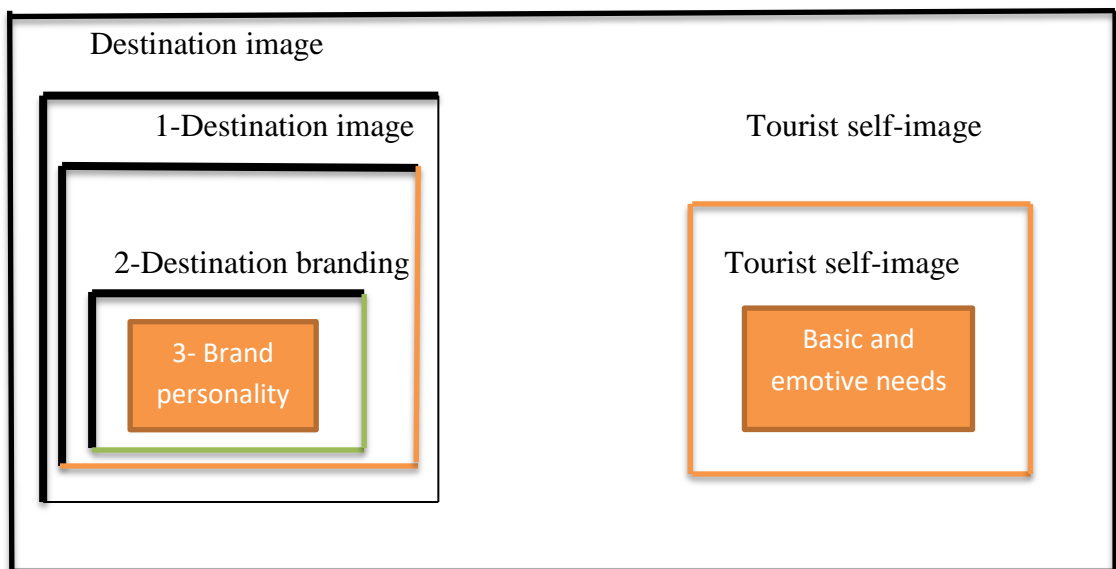
Source: Ekinci, (2003: 21)

2.5.1 Characteristics of a good destination branding

According to Morrison (2013: 298), based on successful experiences worldwide, effective destination brands have the following characteristics:

- Attractive: destination branding is a visual element that is designed to appeal to tourists and to meet their diverse needs, such as natural resources, culture and heritage, hospitality of people (Helgason, 2012; Gomez Aguilaretal., 2016). Building and developing a visual brand are essential for destinations because they lead to intense competition between the destinations and successful market (Sun et al., 2016; De Noronha et al.,2017).

- Communication destination, quality and experiences: an active destination brand puts across the types of experience and knowledge that tourists can undergo, promising a certain level of quality (Morrison, 2013; Breitsohl and Garrod, 2016). **For example,** the Canadian Tourism campaign "Keeps on exploring", is a destination branding approach excellent at communicating the experiences that tourists have in such a vast country (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009).

- Consistency with positioning: destination branding should be transferred to the required image that offers a choice (Morrison, 2013; Llodra-Riera et al., 2015). The purpose of positioning the destination brand is to create a distinctive place in the minds of potential customers. This mean a position strategy is a comparative assessment by the consumer between brands (Pike, 2017: 128). The unique brand position is similar to brand promise, because both focus on the difference between their brand and other brands, indicating benefits in a compelling ownership position, **for example** "Virginia is for lovers" (Pike,2004).

- Expressing the personality of destination: The tone projected by the destination brand fits well with the place character. Brand personality indicates the important human characteristics of tourism destinations, and tourists must understand the perceived destination image which describes the characteristics and qualities of a brand that make promises to consumers (Kilic and Sop, 2012); these are the present characteristics and qualities of a brand that give promises to consumers (Gnoth, 2007; Hosany et al., 2005). Diffenciate brand personality may help destination to create a consumer mind-set and build brand equity (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006). It is important brand have human personality traits to help them differentiate from other brand(Aaker, 1997: Ekinci and Hosany, 2006).

- Memorable: a good brand cannot be forgotten. Destination marketers need to differentiate their brand to convey the promise of a memorable travel experience that is distinctively associated with that destination to be successful (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009). In order to create memorable experiences, the developers and marketers of a destination try to anticipate the needs and desires of tourists and accordingly come up with tourism products and services to satisfy those requirements (Manhas et al., 2016).**Such as** "I Love New York" the memorable brand is important for tourism because helps in tourism experience and enhance tourists satisfication (Manhas et al.,2016).

- Simple: a destination brand should not be too complicated, as consumers may not be able to interpret its meaning. Simple brand associations are used to expand the meaning of a place and to highlight its natural resources (Pike, 2005). **For example**, the destination brands "I Love New York" and "100% Pure New Zealand" are the essence of simplicity.

Market testing: this is one of the most important ways to improve marketing activities. The phase of market testing often starts by introducing a new brand to tourists and then evaluating the changes (Komppula, 2011). The feedback process will help in learning how to determine the target market and how to refine it (Treen, 2012).

- Uniqueness: this is one of the most powerful tools to promote a brand in the competitive international market. Brand offerings should be differentiated and the best one that can attract the attention of visitors should be selected (Aziz el al., 2012).

2.5.2 Challenges of destination branding

Morgan et al. (2004: 7) and Pyke et al. (2016) were of the opinion that political issues, external environmental factors and stakeholder concerns should be addressed if a destination brand is to succeed. Political instability is a cause of negative brand image, and detracting from development in tourism and reducing the number of tourist arrivals (Yap and Saha, 2013). Tourism in the Middle East has been affected by political issues in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Libya and Tunisia.

It is Oskamand Boswijk's (2016) conviction that most issue tourism destinations have limited budgets, yet they are predicted to compete globally with other destinations and with other global brands. Failure to have enough funding for marketing and branding activities may render the brand obsolete (Cai, 2000; Tuominenetal., 2016). (Yap & Saha, 2013) argue that tourism policy marker of destination have influence the development of tourism, because they play important role in developing regulations to ensure tourists secuirty and stability through control mobility resources, and provision of environment and tourist protection. A good example for this (e.g Kenyan) government failed to develop it tourism and understanding the environment problems due to political corruption.

DMOs do not have total control over the mixture of products that are being branded and cannot manage the products or services at the destination (Morrison, 2013; Liu and Chou, 2016). In reality, other organisations are responsible for delivering what the destination brand promises. A diverse range of tourism stakeholders is involved in quality standards, which

vary extensively (Nicolai and Blichfeldt, 2012; Schaar, 2013; Tang and Abosedra, 2016; Rinaldi et al., 2016). Destination branding requires a team effort to make a useful contribution, where the team should include tourism stakeholders among others in the community. Tourists recruited to the team can also provide valuable information (Morrison, 2013).

For the essence of the brand destination to remain consistent across all travellers' contact points, a long-term commitment is required (Keller, 2000). Destination marketing must be included as a shared strategy based on the long-term vision of the stakeholders' collective contribution (Cox and Wary, 2011). Destination branding is similar to a race, in which the baton is passed over from one person to another until the finish line is reached. Correspondingly, the players at the DMO may be changed, but the destination branding process continues on its course (Baker, 2007).

2.5.3 Examples of successful destination branding

The destination branding "**Virginia is for lovers**" is an outstanding example of a state DMO making a long-term commitment to a destination branding approach (Morrison, 2013). In 1969 Virginia launched this slogan which has become a much imitated part of the national language (Morgan et al., 2004).

"100 Pure New Zealand" is another example of a strong brand, launched in 1999 as the country's first international marketing campaign. The New Zealand (NZ) brand is based on the reputation of its unique landscape and tourist experiences (Florek and Insch, 2008; Seth, 2006).

The name of the campaign was linked to the relationship between nature and the nation's image, whereby "pure" nature is portrayed as a metaphor for identity. Destination branding not only sold "100% pure nature" to the global market, but it also framed the perceptions, responses and experiences of the country (Seth, 2006). Also, it played on the label "100% pure new wool", one of NZ's chief exports and the popular image of more sheep than people in NZ.

In 1999, the Malaysian campign advertising **"Malaysia truly Asia"** created an identity with which customers can associate their experiences with the destination while vacationing in Malaysia (Othman et al., 2014). The effective "truly Asia" campaign positions Malaysia as a natural, cultural and historical holiday destination that caters for the diverse populace.

"Malaysia truly Asia" captures and defines the essence of the country's unique diversity (Afwiks, 2012).

The Indian government launched the **Incredible India Campaign** (IIC) in 2002. It was managed by Amitabh Kant, the Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Tourism (Kerrigan et al., 2012). IIC presents India in its most wonderful outlook, from nature, wildlife, greenery, mountains, beaches, eco-tourism, spirituality, historical monuments, medical tourism, deserts, etc.; the campaign started under the branded house or the umbrella branding structure, where the entire nation was branded under the incredible India label, with India as a mother brand for all the states (Harish, 2009). The idea behind this campaign was to demonstrate globally that India is a diverse country, a land of contrasts and a land with different combinations; it is not just one or two products but a multi-product country (Kerrigan et al., 2012).

2.6 Components of destination branding theory

According to Balakrishnan et al. (2011), two components of destination branding can be illustrated. The functional part focuses on tangible or practical attributes and benefits, often defined as measurable and providing value for consumers. The symbolic or emotional component consists of intangible attributes that cannot be observed but can be easier to control and manage (Manhas& Dogra, 2013).

2.6.1 Functional components

The functional components are related to the function/service of the brand which in turn is related to immediate practical needs; they are in fact associated with the tangible parts of the products (Balakrishnan et al., 2011). De Chernatony and McDonald (2012: 405) asserted that in terms of the functional aspects of brand evaluation and choice, consumers assess the rational benefits they receive from particular brands, along with the preconceptions related to the efficacy and quality of the products or services as part of the functional aspects.

Hankinson (2004, cited in Balakrishnan et al., 2011; Dogra, 2013) noted that the functional components are mainly tangible in nature and can be measurable; he also found that organic images (perceptions built over a long period of time) are strongly associated with the brand and that they are actually functional in nature. In tourism, the tangible aspects such as services and product attributes influence consumer satisfaction.They include accommodation, restaurants, transports and shopping facilities (Reid and Bojanic, 2009). **However**, most of

the tourism products are a combination of both tangible and intangible aspects (Albayrak et al., 2010), the latter associated with basic motivational aspects like the physiological and safety needs which involve a desire for problem removal or avoidance (Dogra, 2013).

2.6.2 Symbolic components

These are associated with intangible attributes and refer to the beliefs and meaning created in the minds of consumers by brand marketers through any marketing strategy elements (De Chernatony and DallOlmo Riley, 1998: 1077), such as brand personality and emotional assessment. This is a psychological effect which cannot be observed directly (Balakrishnan et al. 2011).

2.6.3 Experiential brand components

A third class is experiential brand components, which are similar to symbolic components but are related to higher-order needs and may involve customers' self-concept, intuitive likes and dislikes, the ability to convey exclusivity (including how one relates to the other customers) and the customers' lifestyle (Balakrishnan et al., 2011; Dogra, 2013). Experiential brand components are related to affective characteristics of the destination brand (Balakrishnan et al., 2011).

In contrast, according to Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003) and Achieng et al. (2014), the destination brand components are brand identity, brand image, brand culture, brand essence, brand personality and brand character. These components are described below:

2.6.4 Brand identity

Destination branding plays an essential role in modern tourism, and building a strong brand identity is important in making a destination distinctive; the brand of a product or a service should be identifiable by its own unique attributes distinguishing it from other brands (Derton and Nandan, 2012; Klimenko and Klimenko, 2015). Identity provides direction, purpose and meaning to the brand as it leads the strategic vision of the brand (Asikhia and Binuyo, 2013). Kapfere (2012: 150) asserts that having a strong "identity means being your true self, driven by a personal aim that is both different from others and resistant to change". **However,** little research has explored the construction of brand identity (Tsaur et al., 2016).

Developing a brand identity refers to the overall proposal managers and employees make to customers (Shaker and Ahmed, 2014). A brand identity is the connection between brand position and brand personality in order to create a unique impression in customers' minds (Upsahow, 1995; Buil et al., 2016; Foroudi et al., 2017). It can be concluded that brand identity comes from the different perceptions of supply side and those of visitors regarding the tourism destination (Sawagvudcharee, 2016).

Brand identity is the internal desired image that the marketer wants to project to the potential consumer (Martins, 2015). Marketers create brand identity for their destination because it establishes the relationship between the tourist and destination (Yusof and Ismail, 2016). Brand identity includes tangible and intangible attributes that make the brand understandable and unique (Allahar, 2015).

Brand identity development is a theoretical concept best understood from the supply-side perspective (Konecnik and Go, 2008: 2; Cai et al., 2009: 70; Suma and Bello, 2012: 89). However, according to the literature review the application of branding techniques to places, and especially to tourism destinations, is inadequate because the most brand research was on a consumer product. **Also, while a large number of studies focus on demand-side perceptions or the image of the brand, few analyse destination branding from a supply-side view centred on brand identity. Particularly in the tourism destination-branding context, therefore, the supply-side perspective needs to be further studied (Konecnik and Go, 2008; El Aouni et al., 2013; Yusof& Ismail, 2016;Tsaur et al., 2016; Kolb, 2017).**

Carvalho (2015: 27). Described brand identity as "a set of brand associations that imply a promise from specific organisations to its customers". These associations clarify what the brand means to its customers (Buil et al., 2015). Brand identity is applied to drive all efforts to build the brand (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2012; Kolb, 2017). It originates from the supply side and is responsible for creating a distinctive product with unique features (Carvalho, 2015). Brand identity should be different from the competitors and developed in a way that is comprehensible to consumers (Buil et al., 2015). Through brand identity, an organisation seeks to transfer its individuality to all its target market (Dahlen et al., 2010; Cohen et al., 2014).

The brand projector should consider the brand name when building brand identity because it is the brand's basic difference and will create individual associations and feelings in the consumer's mind (Veselinova and Samonikov, 2017). A good brand name should be unique, and easy for people to pronounce. As the brand name may be used for a long time, it is essential to consider if it will be suitable if the organisation wants to communicate with international markets (Robertson, 1989; Kapferer, 2008).

2.6.4.1 Brand identity prism model

Kapferer (2012) introduced the brand identity prism (2.2) that can create a successful brand. Kapferer's model considers contemporary brand communication theory, linking the participants, that is sender and receiver. Thus, physical and personality dimensions have a role in defining the sender (the manager), while reflection and self-image facets determine the recipient (the consumer). Relationships and culture fill in the gap between the manager and the consumer. These factors make the brand different from competitors', and they determine what must be said about the brand and what can be changed over time (Zhiyan et al., 2013; von Wallpach et al., 2017).

On the part of the sender (manager), the brand's physical characteristics or physique consists of product features, the brand attributes and the quality and benefits of the brand. Physique also refers to the strength of the brand and how it is positioning itself externally (Kapferer, 2012). However, although it is not explicit in Kapferer's model, it is not unreasonable to extend the logic of the physique dimension to service brands via tangibles such as logo and other organisational nomenclature (Darren et al., 2011: 1065).

Personality describes how a brand develops its own character by communicating with its consumers, such as using a specific design, colours or typeface. Personality can be adjusted to match human personality traits (Kapferer, 2012; Baisya, 2013). Kapferer (2012) further states that personality is internal and intangible to an organisation, but equally important as it fulfils a psychological function.

The dimensions in the middle of the prism model are the relationship **mode and culture aspects**. The relationship **mode** is the type of relationship between the brand and the customer. It defines the mode of contact that in turn identifies the brand. It also represents the way the brand contributes to the consumer and his feelings (Kapferer, 2012). A brand should have its own culture. **Culture** is an internal dimension which sets the value establishing the

brand and is created primarily to differentiate it from competitors (Farhana, 2014). It is the straight connection between the brand and the organisation (Kapferer, 2012). **Both (relationship and culture)** dimensions help bridge the gap between the sender and the recipient (Kapferer, 2012; Baisya, 2013).

The receiver side is the final section of the prism, defined by the customer's reflected and self-images. **Reflection** describes the target group and communication tools. It is a reflection of the brand in the consumer's mind. It is the image of the consumer that the brand displays (Kapferer, 2012; Baisya, 2013). **However**, it is not an impression of the brand's target market group (Kapferer, 2012). The difference between **reflection and self-image** is that reflection is related to the manager while self-image is related to the customer. **Self-image** is the customer's self-view about the brand, referring to how the customer appears to feel about himself as belonging to the brand. A consumer uses the brand to build his own image. A self-image is an internal mirror that the target market holds up to itself (Kapferer, 2012; Baisya, 2013).The prism model helps the brand marketers and organisations managers to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their brand. Also, it widely used to assess the brand position in the market (Farhana, 2014). However, the prism model caused some issues regarding gaining depth of answer in the self-image, reflection, and relationship facts (Jordan & Quest, 2018).

Figure 2. 2. Brand identity prism model
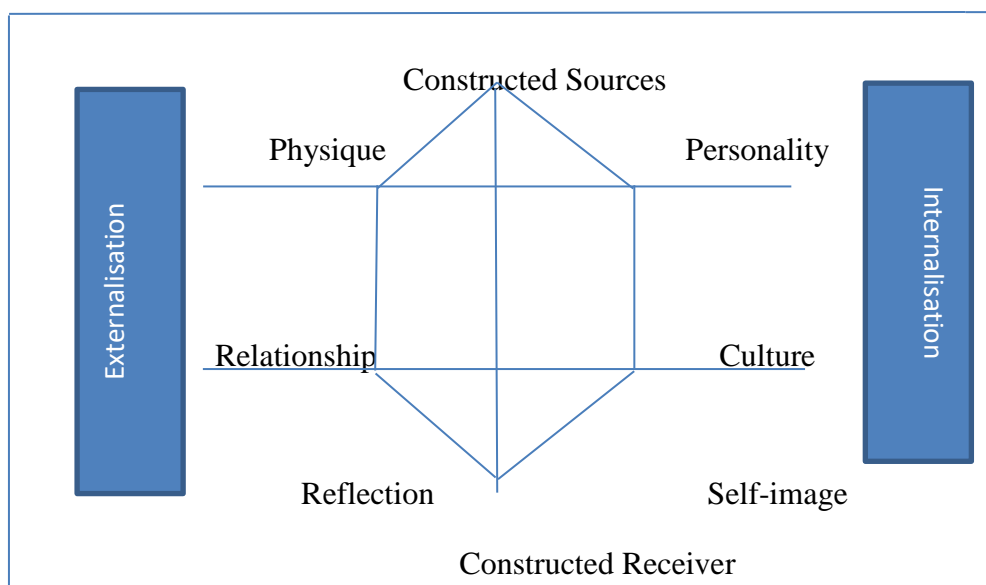
Sources: Kapferer, (2012: 158)

A destination brand identity should clearly emphasise its unique characteristics. **Aaker (1996, cited in Keller, 2008) described four brand characteristics or features: a person, a symbol, an organisation, and a product.** Tourists seek travel experience that deepens their understanding and gives a sense of place when visiting a destination. Experiential and symbolic benefits, therefore, play an important role as functional benefits in developing the brand identity. Furthermore, these characteristics can assist in clarifying the brand identity (Keller, 2008). Figure (2.3) illustrates brand identity.

From a product perspective, the product-connected elements will by nature have an essential impact on brand identity because they are linked to user requirements and product experience (Aaker, 2000). Product-related associations are directly implicated in the user's choice decision and experience (Kellter, 2008). They, in turn, are closely linked to the product character. Brand identity includes a single product type that can occur when an organisation tries to dominate and control a particular market by positioning its brand to users using the country of origin as the foundation for the credibility of the product (Keller, 2008: Cai et al., 2009). **From an organisational** viewpoint, a brand concentrates on the organisation rather than on the product or services. Investigating the specific characteristics of the brand as an organisation should involve the destination, its residents and their relationship with each other and with tourists (Buhalis, 2000; Cai et al., 2009; Adeyinka-Ojo et al., 2014).The **brand as organisational** perspective is concerned with aspects such as innovation and consumer care or concern, and the customer strategy could provide a link to consumers. Its use from an organisational viewpoint may result in a greater understanding of customer needs (Cai et al., 2009; Srinivasan, 2014).

A brand as a person means the human characteristic associated with the brand. A brand as a symbol provides structure and strength to the brand identity. The symbol is linked to awareness and image of the brand; the aim is to enhance the customer relationship and to reinforce the customer's recall and recognition (Manhas et al., 2016).

Figure 2. 3. The brand identity system


```
                        ┌──────────────┐
                        │   Extended   │
                        │  ┌────────┐  │
                        │  │  Core  │  │
                        └──┴────────┴──┘
```

| Brand as product: **Product scope** Product attributes Quality values Uses Country of origin | **Brand as organisation**: Attributes Innovation Consumer Concern Local vs global | **Brand as a person:** Personality Brand Customer Relationship | **Brand as a symbol:** Visual Imagery Metaphors Brand heritage |

| Value proposition: Functional benefits Emotional benefits | Credibility Support and other brands |

Brand-Customer-relationship

Source: (Aaker, 1996, p. 85)

Building strong brand identity is crucial for destination success; therefore destination marketers and planners need to understand the brand values by considering three features of a **brand: vision, mission and value** (Ghodeswar, 2008; Urde, 2013). These are the essence of the brand (Keller et al., 2008), and its core values (Ghodeswar, 2008; Urde, 2013). The corporate mission is valuable to the brand identity since it explains why organisations exist and what motivates them to function, besides making profit (Urde, 2013). The mission describes the fundamental reasons why the company exists, including its goal and philosophy (Nagelkerk, 2006). The mission is to transfer what the company is trying to accomplish in a particular area such as servicesor products. It also describes the short-term aspirations of the organisation (Nagelkerk, 2006).

Vision is one of the brand's backbones; in order for a brand to succeed it needs a clear vision giving a well-defined sense of direction (Urde, 2013). Pike and Page (2014) added that brand identity represents the vision of how the destination should be perceived in the market place

in future, with the aim of achieving differentiation. Vision describes the long-term organisational plan (Nagelkerk, 2006).

Values should determine an organisation's priorities and guiding principles for interactions among employees, customers, managers and other members of the community. They provide direction for employees' actions in transferring the mission and struggling to implement the vision (Mainwaring, 2011; Bravo et al., 2017).

2.6.4.2 Brand logo

The brand logo can refer to graphic or typeface elements ranging from word-driven through to image-driven and pictorial marks (Cesar-Machado et al., 2012:2). The logo is a symbolic representation of the brand message that creates memories, experience and emotional connections, and is a way to increase customer loyalty (Walsh et al., 2010; Kelly, 2017). It is the visual expression of what an organisation, product or service is about (Kaputa, 2012; Varbanova, 2013: 66) and is a central component of brand identity (Allen, 2007). Destination management practitioners use logos to help customers easily identify and select the brand (Haghigi et al., 2015).

Logos are part of branding a destination's process, used to communicate the destination's marketing identity to the internal and external target market (Hem and Iversen, 2004; Wagner and Peters, 2009; Walsh et al., 2010). Logos used to help brand projectors to enhance destination awarness through increased brand recognition and to differentiate it from competitors (Hem and Iversen, 2004; Daye, 2010). **However, although logos have an essential role in developing brand identity and image, no specific literature in tourism has addressed the logo components and design process (Blain et al., 2005: 332; Pike, 2016:256).**

The brand logo represents the name of the company (Brassington and Pettitt, 2006). Its visual elements can influence brand commitment and consumers' perceptions, so much so that committed consumers negatively react towards brand logo redesigns or change (Henderson et al., 2003). By attaching a brand logo to a diversity of communication tools, including in a wide variety of direct and indirect channels ranging from packaging to promotion, the brand can communicate successfully. This encourages destinations to place greater emphasis on their logo designs and visual components (Walsh et al., 2010; Park et al., 2013). Budakov

(2016) suggested that to be successful and unique, the logo should be memorable, appropriate and recognisable, hold meaning and evoke positive effects.

The logo is a vital part of any organisation's overall marketing strategy; destination marketers should consider the logo design when building a brand because it represents the brand's meaning and offers summary information about its marketing efforts (Cesar-Machado et al., 2013). Logos should have a recognisable design and familiar visual associations, and avoid unnecessary colours, elicit a consensually held meaning in the target market and prompt positive emotions, making them easier to understand (Rodriguez et al., 2013). The design of the logo is essential because many organisational communications are seen for only a brief period of time, such as when driving past outdoor advertising, walking by products on shelves, or flipping through advertisements in magazines (Guttman, 2014).

Logo has the ability to add value to the brand by increasing brand awareness; they can remind the audience of the functional benefits of the brand or the organisation's name. Organisations want their name to be recalled, so the brand logo acts as shorthand for the company (Bartkowiak and Kiuchi, 2012: 62). If managed correctly, the logo is a way to increase a company's reputation and serve as a competitive advantage (Pittard et al., 2007). One of the best examples is "I ♥NY", an icon recognised around the world (Kaputa, 2012).

Blain et al. (2005) claimed that developing a brand logo requires a majority of stakeholders to lead to an effective development process. Hem and Iversen (2004) defined the process of projecting the destination logo, where three groups are involved in the process, each group part of a successful logo development process. The first group, the logo owner who has the logo made, includes destination staff, stakeholders and other potential companies. The second group includes the logo developer, designer and consultants who are key to the process. The third group is the targeted recipients. Each of these three groups in the development of a destination logo is related to all stakeholders in the tourism industry; the logo owner makes decisions about the design based on the recipients' contribution through their perceptions that can be incorporated into the logo by the planners. Figure (2.4) illustrates the process.

Figure 2.4.The role of the three parts involved in destination logo development
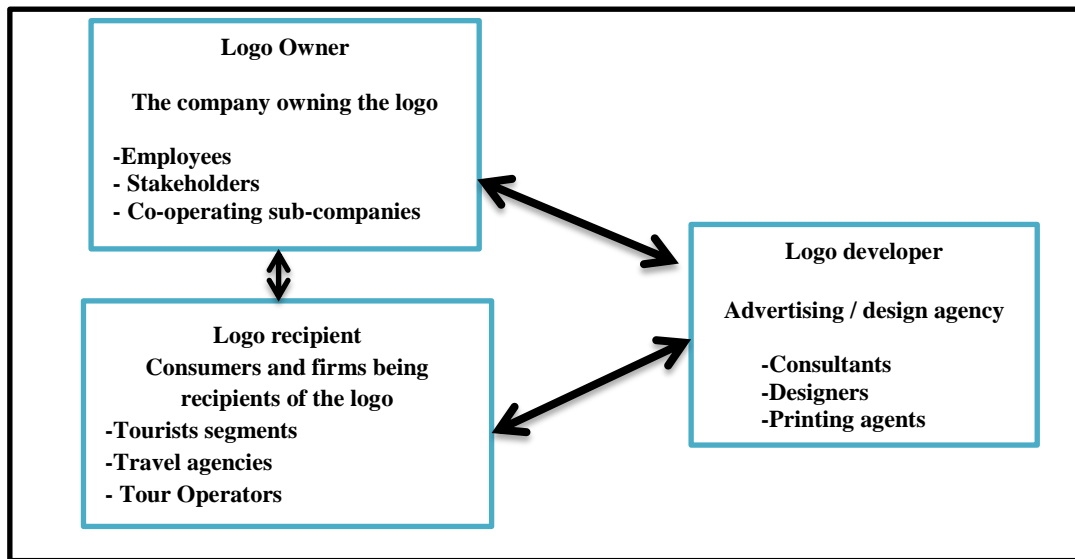
Source: Hem& Iversen (2004: 91)

2.6.5 Brand image

The brand image has become a vital concept to brand management, and it is the means through which a brand is perceived by the consumer (Keller, 2006; Ghodeswar, 2008; Ashton, 2014; Becken et al., 2017). It can be defined in terms of what the product means as seen symbolically by consumers. A brand image can be defined as the meaning associated with the product that the consumers identify. It consists of the impressions about the brand which consumers have gained from various sources (Pars and Gulsel, 2011; Becken et al., 2017).

The brand image plays a vital role in the development of a brand because it is one of the leading components of destination branding. It best understood from the receiver side (Wijaya, 2013; Fianto et al., 2014). It is the association, memory, expectations and feelings that are related to the destination (Fianto et al., 2014). The brand image is a representation of the consumer perceptions formed from external factors such as their past experience, family and friends, information sources and knowledge concerning the brand (Martins, 2015: 12; Keller, 2016). The results of trial and consumption by consumers about the brand lead to a specific experience that will indicate whether the consumer is loyal to the brand or is just an opportunist who will quickly switch to another brand (Kolter, 2008; Wijaya, 2013).

Lee et al. (2014) likewise defined the brand image as the sum of associations and components adding value and meaning to the brand. It is held in the mind of the consumer through the perceptions that arise via brand associations retained in the memory (Mohan and Sequeira, 2015). A brand image is the totality of beliefs, impressions, ideas, expectations and feeling regarding the brand and it may include elements such as product identity and mental associations (Ghodeswar, 2008; Keller, 2016). The product elements and the benefits that it provides are critical factors in the image of branded products. A strong brand image must evoke positive brand attributes, benefits and awareness, and a positive personality in the minds of consumers (Ghodeswar, 2008; Basaran, 2016). Similarly, Ragavan et al. (2014: 404) mentioned that tourists' evaluation of the destination experience influences their image of the destination.

A brand image refers to the framing of a memory about a brand, and it contains the results of the interpretations by consumers of messages concerning the attributes, benefits and advantages of a product the consumers uses, the atmosphere created or used in the communication, the users of the product, and the attitudes and character of the marketer (Wijaya, 2013). Tourists often travel to a destination that has a famous brand because they feel more comfortable with what they already know about a familiar brand (Aaker, 2002; Manhas et al., 2016). This type of tourists is called "repeater visitors" (Pereda, 2002). On the other hand, non-repeaters like to travel to new places to discover unique experiences (Pereda, 2002).

The image is a valuable element when considering destination selection processes, and it has contributed to an understanding of tourists' behaviour (Pike and Ryan, 2004; Awuah and Reinert, 2011; Chen and Phou, 2013; Haque and Khan, 2013; Chew et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2014; Mohan and Sequeira, 2015; Lee and Bai, 2016). Hakala et al. (2013) listed four reasons that explain why countries should manage and improve their image. The first is to appeal to tourists, since there are as many reasons why people visit principal destinations as there are inbound tourists. This is due to the appeal of the destination which meets the needs of different types of tourists and is reflected in holiday brochures and guidebooks (Ahmad and Thyagaraj, 2015). The second reason is to add value to products produced in the country. This is often a decisive factor that involves purchasing decisions (Kral and Tisovski, 2011; Basaran, 2016). Thirdly, foreign investment can be attracted, since countries are products whose image affects the choices of investors as buyers in other locations (Papadopoulos, 2014). The final reason is to attract talented residents who can contribute to the development

of a country; these groups will help marketers in the acquisition of more knowledge about of the place attributes which are significant for a particular group of residents, who will attract the relevant target audience (Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015).

The image of the destination can be considered as projected and/or perceived. The projected image of a tourist destination takes into consideration factors related to attractions and unique attributes, and is transferred to the audience market via different information sources. These include travel agents and tour operators who have close connections to the destination. Thus, the projected image includes attributes of great importance for the promotion of the destination, while the perceived image is related to the beliefs, ideas, perceptions and impressions regarding the place (Nedelea, 2016). However, Farmaki (2012) and Kim and Lehto (2013: 2) have stated that few studies have examined the projected and perceived images of destinations.

Generally, tourists' images of the tourism destination are built and developed by several influences (Martins, 2015; Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015). So, the image is projected by a tourist destination through promotional communication activity and via other communication methods to potential visitors (Ispas and Saragea, 2011; Martins, 2015; Nedelea, 2016). Communication tools such as advertising and word of mouth play an essential role in promotion of the destination brand because they create awareness of the destination as a possible place to visit (Nedelea, 2016).

Millar (2008) believed that marketers should consider destination image formation as one of the most effective aspects of tourism destination imagery since it enhances the positioning strategy. Therefore, they should understand the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the tourism destination. Echtner and Ritchie (2003) and Hobbs (2008) stated that images are created on the basis of wider background information, and they agree that people use background information about the world in creating their images of places.

Events to attract tourists, such as sporting events, exhibitions and cultural events can be used as a way to build an image and awareness in the mind of tourists who have never been visited the place before (Jayswal, 2008). Echtner and Ritchie (2003) suggested that a destination should be distinctive from other competitors, or that it must have a unique image in the mind of potential visitors. However, a destination promotion can be undermined because places encounter difficulties and crises due to external factors including natural disasters, wars, terror attacks, crime and political tension (Avraham, 2014: 62). Tourism industries involve

significant capital investment and they are highly dependent on images, perceptions, security and stability; to build up a destination and a brand takes many years of hard work and marketing (Marais et al., 2017). To destroy it, however, it is enough to make one wrong decision. The rise of political Islam and the ongoing instability are the major current and future challenges to tourism in the Arab world.

2.6.5.1 Destination image components

Images held by non-visitors and actual visitors are different (Gunn, 1988) and it is important to distinguish between them. However, although many studies have been conducted on tourism destination image, few have considered the difference between the image held by potential tourists and actual visitors to the destination (Yilmaz et al., 2009; Wang and Davidson, 2009; Lim et al., 2014; Kong et al., 2015; Jani and Nguni, 2016).

In the literature various components of the destination image are described. For example, Gunn (1988) illustrated two dimensions of **organic or induced images** related to the concept of a destination transmitted in information for tourists. An organic image is the consequence of communication, and includes all information drawn from different materials such as television, radio, books on geography or history, newspapers, magazines and local people. Furthermore, stories recounted by friends or family member returning from holiday affect the individual's impressions (Gunn, 1997). Meanwhile, an **induced image** is formed through the communication channels from the tourism organisation involved in targeting consumers (Lopes, 2011). Gunn (1988) explained that destination marketers and developers cannot make any change to organic images; however, they can influence or change induced images. This is because an organic image develops internally from actual experience (for visistors), while an induced image is developed externally by any tools of the communication market (non-visitors) (Pike and Ryan, 2004; Marino, 2008; Ahmad and Thyagaraj, 2015).

However, Pike and Ryan (2004), Tasci and Gartner (2007) and Agapito et al. (2013), among others, have observed that a destination brand image comprises three **components: cognitive, affective and conative.** They argue that the conative component consists of actions or intentions to revisit a destination and to recommend it to others to visit. Pike and Ryan (2004) stated that a destination image is first developed in the mind of the tourist (the cognitive component), and then an evaluation process is applied to the different alternatives of destinations or destination attributes available (the affective component). Finally, a decision

is made about which destination to visit (**the conative component**), and this may be considered as the likelihood of a brand purchase (Pike and Ryan, 2004: 7).

Many researchers have asserted that the image of a destination consists **of cognitive and affective components** (Balogue and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004). The cognitive aspects represent the knowledge about a destination based on tangible attributes, whereas the affective image relates to feelings towards the destination based on intangible attributes (Lin et al., 2007; Agapito et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, Balogue and McCleary (1999:871) developed another model of the determinants of tourism destination image formation process before visitation, as illustrated in Figure (2.5). The model describes the cognitive image is impacted by various factors such as the amount and types of information resources the age and level education of potential visitors. While, the affective image influenced by age, education, and socio-psychological travel motivation. Overall image includes both cognitive and affective image that people developed about tourist's destination.

Figure 2. 5. Model of determinants of tourism destination image
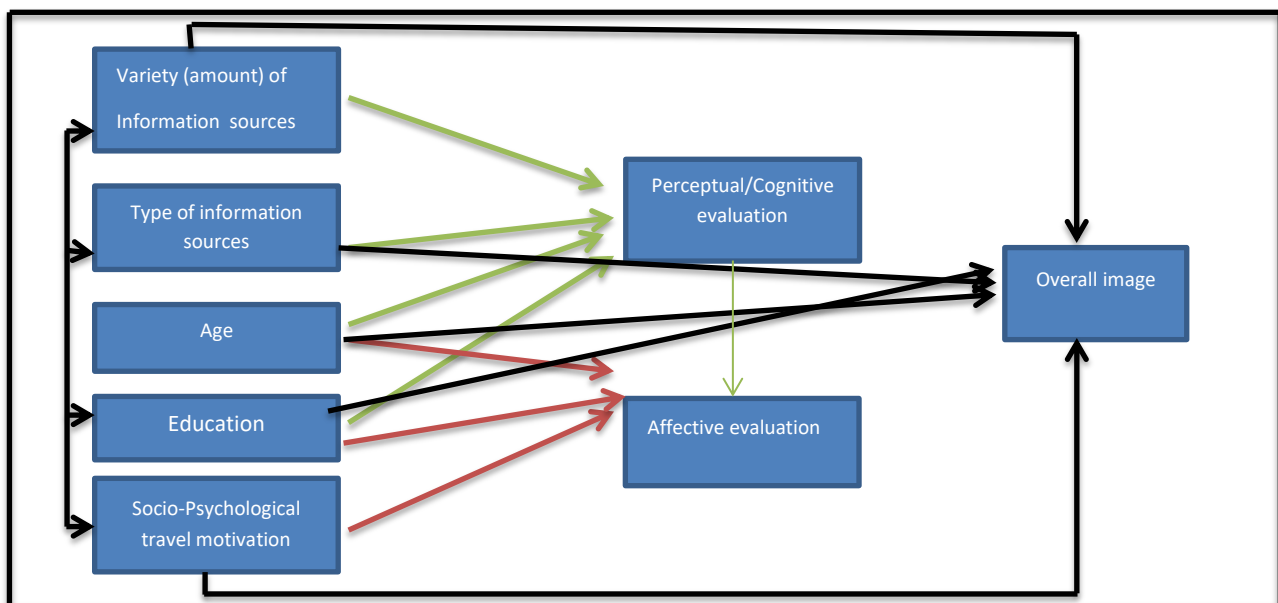
Source: Balogue& McCleary (1999, p. 871)

Echtner and Ritchie (1991) specified other components: the functional-psychological, attribute-holistic and common-unique. Figure (2.6) below illustrates these destination image components. The functional attributes can be checked or tested and are directly observable and measurable, such as prices and climate. The destination can also be rated on the basis of its physical characteristics, such as friendliness level, the safety of the destination and the quality of services (Jenkins, 1999; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Unique characteristics are functional characteristics (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003).

The holistic destination image component consists of certain imagery, such as indicating a general feeling and atmosphere of a destination (Esu, 2015). On the common-unique continuum, the attributes of the destination vary from common attributes that can be observed and/or felt in nearly all destinations, to the unique characteristics that are special to that destination, such as prices, accommodation, transport and climate. Unique attributes can be added to the competitive advantages of the destination in the differentiation of products (Di Marino, 2008).

Figure 2.6. Destination image components
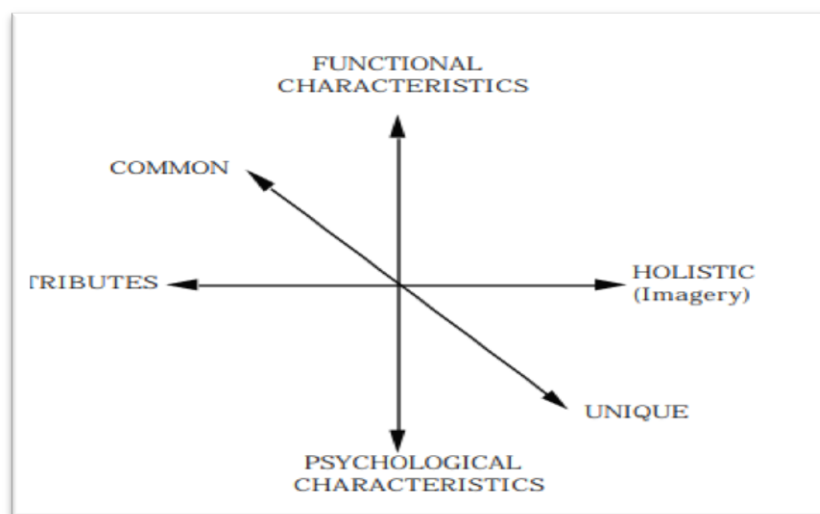
Source: Echtner and Ritchie (1991, p. 6)

2.6.5.2 Destination image formation

A destination brand image influences the tourist's intentions to visit the destination and to recommend it to their family and friends (Som et al., 2012; Ahmad and Thyagaraj, 2015). A destination image exerts a significant influence on the tourist's behaviour and their selection (Chunga et al., 2015). The perceptions held by potential tourists about an area may have a significant influence upon its viability as a tourist destination (Hunt, 1975). Jaafar et al. (2015), on the other hand, emphasised the importance of imagery in adding value and raising (or lowering) satisfaction levels during and after the destination experience, including through memories and souvenirs.

Kong et al. (2015) stressed destination marketers need to develop and create positive and accurate images so as to help potential tourists in their decision-making processes. There are multiple strategies to manage the image of the destination, but they require careful designed to succeed in contributing consistently (Marino, 2008; Qu et al., 2011). They are based on the communication marketing such advertising, product, pricing and distribution, and focus on the time and effort needed (Marino, 2008; Martins, 2015; Manhas et al., 2016).

The image tourists hold of a destination affects their future behaviour in visiting, revisiting or recommending it to others (Som et al., 2012; Lee and Bai, 2016). Marino (2008) and Martins (2015) stated that the decisions tourists make are related to the image and perceptions of the destination in their minds. Thus, an understanding of the image formation process is crucial since this will enable tourism destination marketers to influence and change the perceptions of potential visitors.

Studies conducted by Echtner and Ritchie (2003), Lopes (2011) and Loi et al. (2014) showed that there are many factors affecting the process of destination image formation. According to Balogue and McCleary (1999: 871, cited in Triantafillidou& Petala, 2016), an image is formed by both forces: personal and stimulus factors, as illustrated in Figure (2.7). Stimulus factors refer to the image itself (the information sources, amount, type and previous experience), whereas personal factors are related to the social and psychological characteristics of a person (psychology, values, motivations, personal-social, age and education).

Echtner and Ritchie (2003) and Hobbs (2008) stated that images are created on the basis of wider background information; they agree people actually use the background information they process about the world to create their place images.

Figure 2. 7. General framework of destination image formation
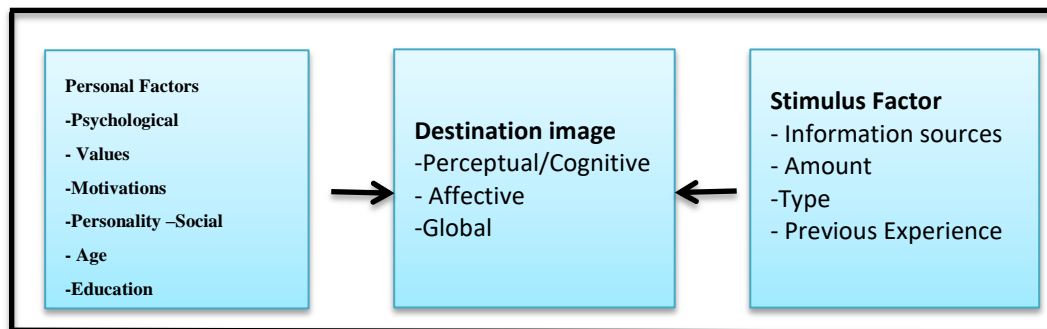
Source: Balogue and McCleary (1999: 871)

Lopesi (2011) described the same factors but with different names in discussing demand (push) and supply (pull) factors which influence image formation. Demand factors (on the tourist side) and supply factors (on the destination management side), are illustrated in Figure (2.8) below. The push (demand) factors are those that drive the visitors to visit a destination, and include desires, needs and motivations, perceptions and socio-economic factors that cause tourists to act to fulfil their needs, such as by taking a holiday away from work. Pull factors (supply side), on the other hand, are those associated with the destination in terms of its resources, characteristics and attractions, and information transmitted through the media channels such as newspaper, magazines, TV, radio, and guidebooks. The destination's image is, therefore, a reflection of the pull factors.

The tourist market should investigate the reasons that cause people to travel and what their intentions are for a particular vacation. These factors may be affected by the image formation processes, television programmes, education and/or newspapers. The media play an important role in forming and influencing individual attitudes and behaviour. Television may be considered a socialisation agent that is more powerful than a friend (Saunders and Goddard, 2002; Park, 2015). Destination images are formed from many different sources which the tourism industry has no control over (Ahmed, 1991). Khodadadi (2012) argues that images projected via the media have a unique meaning in society, whereas a destination

being associated with negative images could prevent potential visitors. Hung et al. (2012) pointed out that the processes involved in image formation are complex and various, and involve external factors such as recognition, motifs, attraction and beliefs, and internal factors including the time required to travel, the uniqueness of the destination and the cost perspective. Chiu et al. (2016) suggested that it is important for a destination marketer to understand the existing image of the destination and the impact of tourist experience on the image.

Figure 2. 8. Factors influencing the formation of the image of a tourism destination
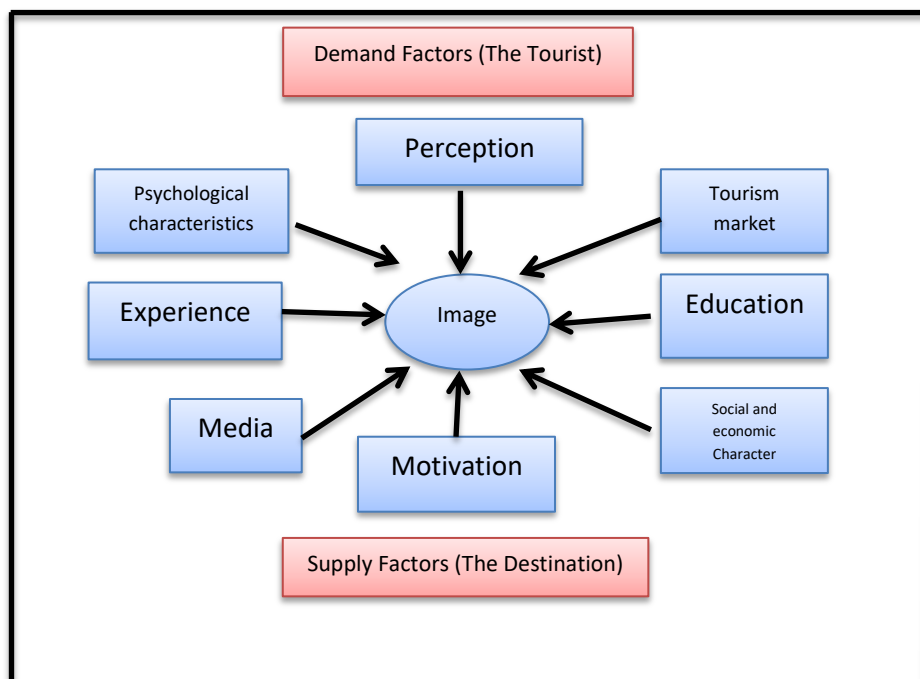
Source: (Lopesi, 2011, p. 309)

Gunn's (1972) destination image formation theory

Gunn (1972: 120) proposed a destination image formation process which includes seven stages of travel experience, as demonstrated in Figure (2.9). According to this model, the process begins with the perceived image, which is an organic image held in the minds of tourists based on information received from friends and family, television, newspapers and travel guides. **The next stage** involves the modification of the organic image by exposure to paid advertising and other promotional tools, leading to an induced image (non-visitors and commercial information). **The third step** is where prospective tourists are ready to decide upon which destination to visit (the decision to have a holiday and choose the destination).

Next is the visit to the destination itself, where tourists have the opportunity to experience its resources and attractions. The visitors then discuss their experiences, and the **sixth stage** is when the tourists return home with their images in mind and their experience; they then modify their perceived image in the final scene. The traveller's image is developed after their particular visit destination; they may repeat visit the destination and recommended their colleagues and family to visit it if they satisfied with specific attributes during their holiday. **Stages four to seven** are of course only apply to visitors to the destination, rather than to non-visitors. Jenkins (1999) however noted that images of a destination may change over a period of time, especially if tourists visit similar destinations.

Figure 2. 9. Destination image formation process
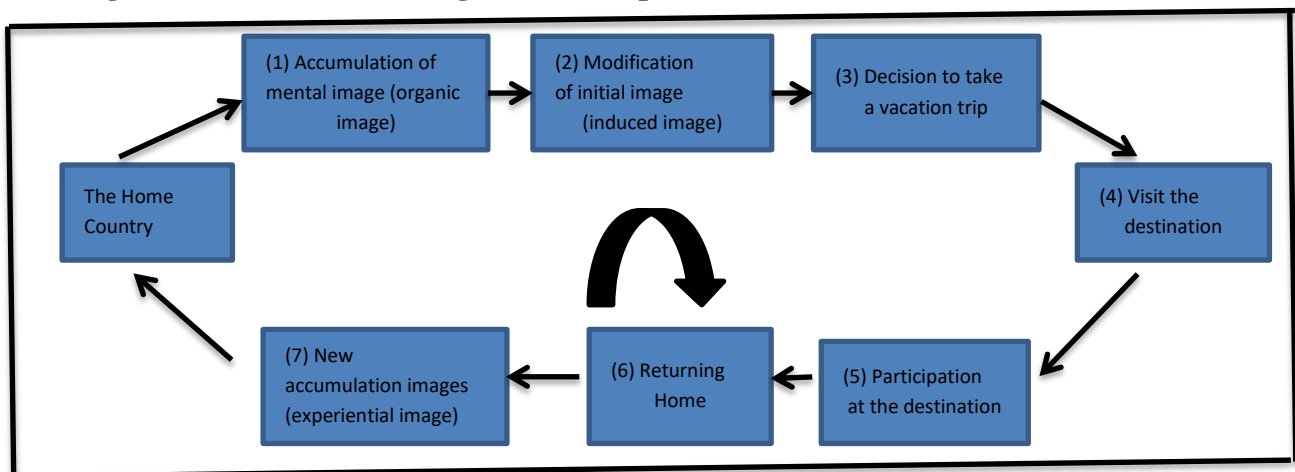
Source: (Gunn, 1972, p. 120)

2.6.5.3 Destination image measurement

A large number of studies (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Jenkins, 1999; Huh, 2006; Qu et al., 2011; Tibon, 2012; Ayyildiz and Turna, 2013; Toska et al., 2013) have discussed the measurement of the destination image that is related to the various image attributes. It is important to develop and design more accurate and sophisticated conceptual frameworks and methodologies that could be employed to assess the reliability and validity of measurements of the destination image (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Most tourism destination brand image studies have used structured measurement techniques (Jenkins, 1999; Marino, 2008). On the other hand, few have used unstructured or open-ended data collection using questionnaires. Most destination image research adopting a structured measurement technique has used semantic differential and/or Likert-scale in aiming to measure the complexity of the structure

of image (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Echtner and Ritchie (2003) suggested that combinations of both structured and unstructured techniques should be adopted to identify and understand the destination image.

Table 2.1 provides a summary of the tangible and intangible attributes of a destination image used as a measurement instrument in the quantitative chapter. Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and Jenkins (1999) reviewed previous studies of destination images. The table summarises the findings of several different studies (Huh, 2006; Qu et al., 2011; Tibon, 2012; Ayyildiz and Turna, 2013; Toska et al., 2013).

Table 2. 1. A summary of the most measured attributes of destination image

Attributes	Author's
Attractions	
Mountains ,Valley ,land scape	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991);(Qing Chi & Qu,2008)
Beach	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Gorgeous gardens and springs	Qing Chi & Qu,2008)
unspoiled Wilderness and fascinating wildlife	(Qing Chi & Qu,2008)
English Language spoken	Toska et al.(2013)
Appealing destination/Arousing	Qu et al., (2011)
Entertainment and events	
Camping	Tibon,(2012)
Festival/Fairs/theatres/concert	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Custom/tradition/culture	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991
Adventure	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991);Tibon,(2012)
Travel environment	
Safety/security	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Climate	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Unpolluted and unspoiled environment	Toska et al.(2013)
Hospitality/friendliness/Receptiveness	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Clean and tidy environment	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991) ;(Qing Chi & Qu,2008)
Quality of services	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Political stability	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Reputation/fashion/fame	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991);Toska et al.(2013)
Trust worthy people	Ayyildiz&Turna,(2013)
Historic attraction	
Historical/cultural/museum attraction	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Infrastructure	
Health services (i.e. hospitals, doctors etc.)	Toska et al.(2013)
Technological level	Ayyildiz&Turna,(2013)
Restaurants/Cushion/beverage services	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Shopping Facilities/advertising	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Sport facilities	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Accommodation	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Theme parks/National parks	Toska et al.(2013)
Accessibility	
Transportation (bus, metro, rental car)	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Information resources	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991);Toska et al.(2013)
Traffic/Crowdedness	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991);Toska et al.(2013)
Easy access to the area	Qu et al.(2011)
Availability of tour packages	Toska et al.(2013)
Relaxation	
Atmosphere	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Type of trips (outdoor/resort trip/city trip/heritage or cultural trip	(Huh,2006)
Price and value	
Reasonable price	Echtner&Ritichie,(1991)
Tax regime(benefit)	Toska et al.(2013)

Source: Echtner&Ritichie (1991,p.10); Huh,2006,p.21; Qing Chi & Qu,2008,p.629; Qu et al. 2011,P.171; Toska et al. 2013,p.3; Ayyildiz&Turna, 2013,p.86

2.6.6 Brand culture

Culture is an important element in tourism considered from by tourists when they are choosing the country to visit (Stipanovic, 2015). Therefore, researchers in international tourism marketing should consider a cultural approach when studying destination branding. Culture in tourism is a major global industry because it brings income and support for national identity, preserving cultural heritage and custom (Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Lee and Bai, 2016).

From Schroeder's (2009: 123) brand culture perspective, branding research has broadened to include cultural, sociological, and theoretical enquiries that complement and complicate the economic and managerial analysis of branding. In this respect, Schroeder (2009: 124) defined "the cultural codes of brands in terms of the influence of history, images, myths, art, and theatre on brand meaning and value in the marketplace".

Obviously, brand culture provides clues to the ways in which aesthetic values and historical culture inform and offer possibilities for the global reception of branded products and services (Zhiyan et al., 2013: 17). It relates to the human-made part of the environment, and characteristics of particular group of people defined by everything from behaviour and manner, language, dress styles, and religion, to food, architecture, handicrafts, art, music and gastronomy (Schroeder and Morling, 2004; Butler and Hinch, 2007; Everett and Aitchison, 2008;Csapo, 2012; Voyer et al., 2017). A culture includes a set of basic values, perceptions, desires and behaviours learned by a member of society from family and other important institutions (Bayraktar and Uslay, 2016: 232). Richards and Munsters (2010) suggested that successful tourism is not simply a matter of having better transport and hotels, but that it adds a particular national flavour in keeping with traditional ways of life, projecting a favourable image of the benefits to tourists of such goods and services.

Cayla and Arnould (2008) and Rodriguez Diaz and Espino Rodríguez (2016) pointed out that culture is used as an attractive product for motivating tourists for travel. Davis (2010: 101) asserted that it is important to understand culture when building a tourism destination brand because it describes the customs, behaviours and practices of a destination. For example, if one was to select a country to visit and ask colleagues to describe its culture, responses might

refer to food, crafts, music, fashion, festivals and museums. Hollensen (2011: 234-236) argued that a brand culture is influenced by legal, economic, political and technological forces. Therefore, understanding the importance of culture is essential for international marketers, especially in handling markets where customers speak different languages and have diverse religions. Hollensen also pointed out that those international marketers can plan in advance to manage certain points of difference. However, a more complicated issue that marketers properly need to address is the underlying attitudes and values of customers from different countries.

2.5.7 Brand essence

Brand essence has been widely used by many scholars (Yastrow, 2003; Ghodeswar, 2008; Solis, 2014) and by consultants as an important concept in branding. Solis (2014) defined brand essence as something that exists in our hearts, thoughts or feelings as opposed to a logo or trademark. Kapferer (2012) claimed that brand essence can communicate with customers. Many organisations use the term from a desire to summarise the brand's identity (Yeoman et al., 2005; Kapferer, 2008). As used by organisations, brand essence represents the destination's identity and is an encapsulation of the brand values. These values function as the core of brand communication, culture and personality (Kapferer, 2008). Brand essence refers to the quality and service characteristics of a destination as seen by the customer; in tourism destination branding it helps to reduce the design of a visual identity and communication strategy even though a place brand uniquely represents an experiential product. Therefore, destination brand essence involves the formulation of experience of the characteristics of a destination, experience that people can expect as tourists (Govers and Go, 2009; Santos, 2013).

Brand essence is one of the intangible attributes in delivering a unique experience (Wilson and Blumenthal, 2008). A destination can change the mood and manner with which it presents itself to different market segments, but the brand characteristics cannot change, just as an individual's personality essentially is always the same (Anholt, 2009). A destination brand is the enduring essence of the place that makes it different from all other destinations. A destination brand exists in the eyes of the beholder, and has to be credible and real; it cannot be manufactured. It is the way in which a destination nurtures, develops and presents its core characteristics to its main audiences (Govers and Go, 2009). Ghodeswar (2008) stated

that brand essence is based on emotional and self-expressive benefits providing a higher-order basis for relationships which can be less vulnerable to product-related changes and/or easily applicable to a new product. The criteria for establishing brand essence are explained in Figure (2.10) and described below.

Figure 2.10. Defining the brand essence of a connected consumer
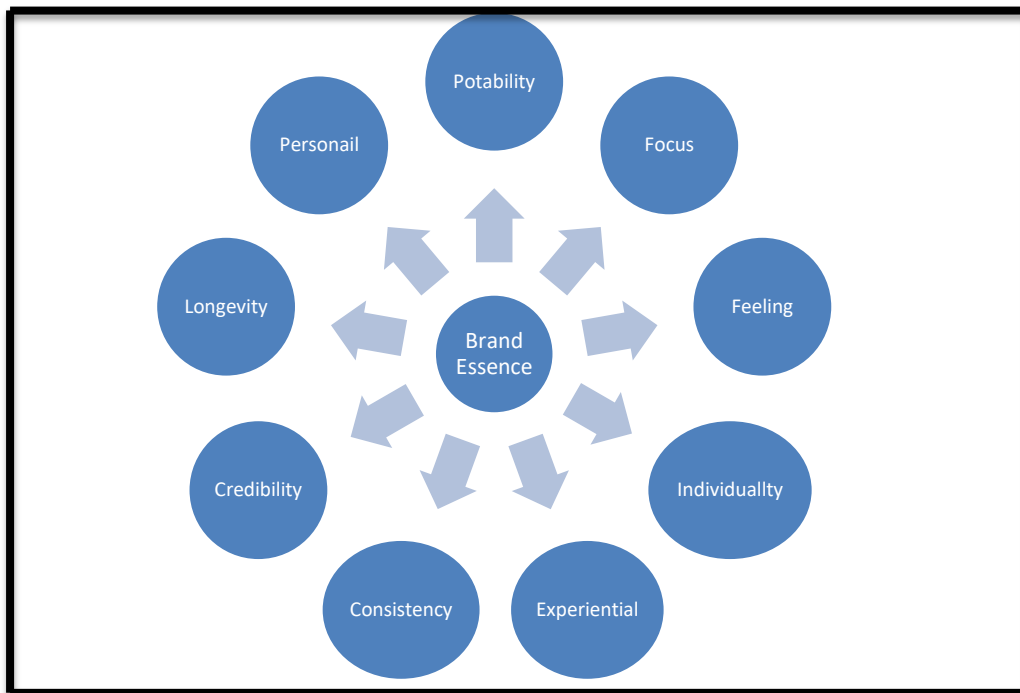
Source: Solis (2014) The Brian Solis Digital Reader

Focus. The emphasis is placed on finding one or two words that define the brand, deliver a unique experience and document what one wants to evoke (Kelley and Jugenheimer, 2010).

Feeling describes what the customers feel when they come into contact with a brand. It is the customer's emotional response and reaction towards the brand (Keller, 2001).

Individuality communicates the brand with the consumer, linking the two (Solis, 2014).

Experience is that of the consumer with a product or service. The increasingly influential role of experience in brand evaluation encourages brands to use advertising strategies different from the traditional ones to impress the customer and deeply influence his mind (Aronne and de Vasconcelos, 2009: 5; OztUrk, 2015).

Consistency ensures the brand structure allows it to be delivered as promised; it is as important to reinforce the brand essence through representative engagement.

Longevity of brand essence indicates that it is enduring and does not change, because it is implanted in the heart and soul. A destination can change the mood and manner by which it presents itself to different market segments, but the brand characteristics cannot change individual personality (Anholt, 2009).

Credibility in a destination brand exists in the eyes of the beholder. It has to be credible and real; it cannot be manufactured. It is the way in which a destination nurtures, develops and presents its core characteristics to its main audiences (Govers and Go, 2009).

Personal: the destination goes to great lengths to draw out and support people's personal interests. In addition, brand essence must carry meaning, something personal that people aspire to embrace and be part of.

Portable: brand essence must be transferred via a real-world social network. Portable devices, and particularly smartphones and tablet PCs, offer an opportunity for tourists to gain quick access to information, to book online tickets and to find out about local attractions using Wi-Fi hotspots and the mobile Internet (Robinson et al., 2013).

To further achieve clarity in a destination's positioning, it is advisable to create a short statement that distils the distinctive meaning that is the brand essence. For example, Las Vegas defined its brand essence as the ultimate destination for entertainment and gaming. Hong Kong positions itself as "Asia's world city", describing its unique factors such as financial services, transport, communications services, trade and tourism. New Zealand positions itself as a place which is an adventurous new land and culture on the edge of the Pacific Ocean. Australia launched a very powerful and memorable marketing campaign in the United States entitled "Come and say g'day". The campaign was so effective that it was later included in the Smithsonian Institute's collection of major influences on American culture during the 1980s. The marketers and the projector of the campaign defined Australia's brand essence as "civilized adventures in the friendliest place in the world" (Cai and Gartner, 2009:167).

2.5.8 Brand personality

Kapferer (2004, cited in Buil et al., 2015: 3) asserted that "brand personality reflects the set of human characteristics that are associated with a brand". These characteristics include consumer gender, age, socio-economic class and personality traits (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2003: Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015). Davis (2009) defined brand personality as a framework that helps an organisation shape the way consumers experience and senses its services or products.

A distinct brand personality plays a key role in the success of a brand. It leads tourists to perceive a personality and to develop a strong connection with the brand (Farhat Khan, 2011; Ghorbani and Mousavi, 2014). Consumers accept brands that fit their personal style or that even complement or build relationships with it (Aaker, 2012; Ghorbani and Mousavi, 2014). Organisations use a brand's personality because it provides a richer source of competitiveness over any other functional feature (Ghodeswar, 2008).

Hudson and Ritchie (2009: 220) observed that a brand personality has both a head and a heart. Its head is its logical features, while its heart is its emotional benefits and associations. Therefore, a well-established and strong destination brand is critically dependent on the extent to which the destination's brand personality interacts with the consumers on emotional and rational levels (Franzen et al., 2015). In other words, brand personality can be considered as reflected in the first reactions people tend to have towards a brand when they hear, taste, see or touch a certain product associated with a specific brand name (Chaykina et al., 2014). According to Farhana (2012), a distinctive brand personality can create a positive association in the consumer's memory which enhances the brand equity, such as from product attributes, benefits or attitudes, people and relationships, programmes and values, and customer orientation (Vallaster& de Chernatony , 2005). Ekinci and Hosany (2007: 127) added that a distinctive and emotionally attractive destination personality is presented to leverage the perceived image of a place and to influence the tourist's choices and behaviour.

Brand personality is concerned with the significant relationships to have in social activities, and it gives the brand a position to the forefront in the minds of visitors (Ghodeswar, 2008). Moreover, it makes the brand similar to a friend or to something that can be owned (Manhas et al., 2016). The relationship may be based upon the "brand as a person" or the type of person the brand represents. If one or both correspond to the consumer's notion of desirable

traits for the brand, the perception of brand value may be enhanced (Aaker, 1996 & 2009; Manhas et al., 2016). Aaker et al. (2001) observed that the personality associated with a brand tends to vary to some degree, not only because of different human needs and socialisation, but also because people have diverse perceptions.

However, the creation of brand personality always requires that the firm be active in communication; the brand personality has to be lively (Rajagopal, 2006: 58). According to Ahmad and Thyagaraj (2015: 42), "the effect of brand personality on the purchase intention of the consumers can be understood in the following three ways."

1. The brand personality communicates the functional benefits of a brand by which the brand is different from others; thereby it conclusively indicates the product-related practical benefits and brand attributes. The possible benefits become much more persuasive when brand personality expresses them, and it is easier to create a character which implies functional benefits than to communicate those benefits directly (Klipfel et al., 2014; Ahmad and Thyagaraj, 2015:42).

2. A brand personality tends to express the nature of the consumer, and thus the brand functions as a reflective symbol of the consumer's self. Consumers express their self-identity. This identity can be actual identity or an ideal person, where their personality is the selection of specific brands. The brands thereby function as a reflective symbol of the self of the consumer (Ahmad and Thyagaraj, 2015:42).

3. A brand personality helps a consumer to extend his personality by building a relationship with a particular brand and, consequently, consumers can benefit from the brand's characteristics even though they do not wish to become an individual brand personality (Klipfel et al., 2014).

2.6.8 Brand character

The brand's character plays a key role in international marketing, and the use of characters in marketing programmes is an effective approach that facilitates the relationship with the consumer of the brand (Hosany et al., 2013). The character of a brand and its personality should have the same meaning, so that the added value of a brand will tend increasingly to involve non-functional value. However, this will only work when blended with physical and

functional value to form an integrated brand personality (Sengupta, 2005). In the competitive marketplace, successful organisations rely on the brand character to attract consumers and to create awareness (Hosany et al., 2013). In tourism, it is common for destinations to use logos or slogans to represent themselves.The brand also helps destination to convey key product or service attributes or benefits. Keller et al. (2008:149) maintained that the brand character benefits the brand by building a strong identity and association because the characters are often colourful and rich in imagery. However, there are drawbacks in using brand characters, which can dominate other brand elements and actually dampen awareness (Keller et al., 2008:149).

Brand characters can bring some benefits. They tend to attract attention and can be useful for creating brand awareness. A brand character can help a brand cut through the marketplace clutter and can also help to communicate the benefits of a product. The human elements of characters can help to create perceptions of the brand as being fun and exciting. The characters must be updated over time so that their images and personalities remain relevant to the target market. As with products, brand characters have discernible lifecycles (Hosany et al., 2013).

The following section elaborates on the key brand concepts as well as their interrelationships.

2.7 Brand Equity

Brand equity is a collection of thoughts, emotions and attitudes that belong to a brand (Vashmehsarae et al., 2014). Consumers develop feelings and associations with brands and then become loyal to them due to their added value (in other words, brand equity) (Saisirisha and Katyayani, 2014). Brands have become assets which are valuable to destinations; and therefore understanding how to build, measure, and manage brand equity is of utmost importance (Makasi et al., 2014). Brand equity can be defined based on the interests of the consumer and the performance, purchase, intentions and choices of words associated with the brand (Vashmehsarae et al., 2014; Keller, 2016).

Aaker (1991, cited in Verma, 2006: 221) defined brand equity as a "set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand", where its name and symbol add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers. Dahlgaard-Park, (2015) observed that brand equity is a phrase used in the marketing industry to describe the

subjective value of a brand name in customers' minds, so that a brand name itself contains value rather than merely being a name. Brand equity assets add value for customers by providing help, information, interpretation, processing and storage. The customer is able to process brand information faster and to store greater quantities (Verma, 2006; Hutt and Speh, 2017).

The quality of and association with brand equity assets can boost confidence in purchasing decisions and provide users with satisfaction. Brand equity assets can also provide value to organisations regarding their ability to charge a premium, to leverage brands into extensions and to channel support for new products (Verma, 2006). Brands are valued according to the kind of assets and liabilities they represent (Dahlgaard-Park, 2015). Strong tourism brands such as the previously mentioned "I love New York" and "100% Pure New Zealand" can be considered valuable assets to their owner countries. These countries are able to generate wealth not because of traditional assets but because of their brands.

Strong brand equity enhances customer loyalty to the tourism industry because it tends to allow travellers to benefit from premium prices (Nam et al., 2011). Makasi et al. (2014) identified price premiums as a basic indicator of loyalty. Kirenz (2010) argued that a price premium is an antecedent to brand purchase, and is defined as the amount a customer will pay for the brand in comparison with another brand offering similar benefits. The premium may be high or low, positive or negative depending on the brands involved in the comparison (Aker, 1996; Makasi et al., 2014).

2.7.1 Brand equity dimensions

According to Dahlgaard-Park (2015), brand equity comprises four dimensions: brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand perceived quality, and brand associations.

2.7.1.1 Brand loyalty

Ain Nawaz and Usman (2011: 214) defined brand loyalty as behavioural responses, expressed over time by decision making concerning one or more alternative brands out of a set of brands. It is a function of various psychological processes. Brand loyalty can be defined as consumers' willingness to repurchase a product or service of the same brand (Hsieh and Wei, 2017). Gommans et al. (2001) contended that, in traditional consumer marketing, the advantages enjoyed by a brand with strong customer loyalty include the ability

to maintain premium pricing, greater bargaining power with channels of distribution, reduced selling costs, strong barrier to potential new entries into the product or service category, and synergistic advantages of brand extension to related product or service categories (Hsieh and Wei, 2017).

In contexts of increasing unpredictability and reduced product distinction. It has been shown that the development and preservation of consumer brand loyalty is central to the development of the marketing strategy (Ain Nawaz and Usman, 2011; Hsieh and Wei, 2017). Loyalty is one of the ways a consumer can express his satisfaction with a product or service. It is usually defined behaviourally and is measured regarding the many choices of a specific brand, which might be nurtured in childhood and extended over a lifetime (Sondoh et al., 2007; Mohanty and Kumar, 2017). Khajehzadeh (2016) maintained that monitoring customer satisfaction in tourism can provide invaluable feedback for the detection of problems that cause dissatisfaction with a vacation that will have a negative impact on the likelihood of future visits.

According to Ain Nawaz and Usman (2011), an organisation that has a large group of brand loyalists will have a large market share and in turn higher levels of return on investment. Malik et al. (2013: 168) believed that brand loyalty is very essential for an organisation since it increases sales volumes and enables it to charge premium prices and to retain customers. Such loyalty will be beneficial for an organisation because, ultimately, the customers agree to purchase at a premium (Rasheed, 2015: 150; Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh, 2016).

According to Tsiotsou and Goldsmith, (2012), consumer confidence in a brand is the key to forming brand loyalty, and the process of building confidence in the image of a particular brand is based on experience of ownership and usage. Walter et al. (2013) stated that the consumer's experience will have a direct impact on the evaluation of the brand, which is formed as a consequence of testing and satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has a significant and strong direct impact on loyalty and word-of-mouth communication (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011; Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh, 2016). However, although satisfaction is a necessary component, it is not sufficient alone for loyalty (Tsiotsou and Goldsmith, 2012: 188; Kubacki, 2014: 105).

2.7.1.2 Brand knowledge

This can be defined in terms of the individual meanings associated with a brand stored in the tourist's memory (Khah et al., 2014). Brand knowledge is based upon constant communication with tourists that supports their comprehension of products or services (Gensler et al., 2013; Govers and Go, 2016). It is also the key to creating brand equity (Ravens, 2013). The consumer's brand knowledge is related to the cognitive representation and understanding of the brand and its benefits (Keller, 2003, 2016; Ravens, 2013; Cwalina et al., 2015). However, a more explicit multi-dimensional account of brand knowledge is needed (Keller, 2016).

Brand knowledge arises from awareness and images that correlate diverse information such as attributes, benefits, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and experiences associated with a brand which directly affect the consumer's responses (Alimen and Cerit 2009; Kashif et al., 2015).

2.7.1.3 Brand awareness

Aaker (1991:63) explained that awareness and recall of a brand name is like a special file folder in the memory which can be filled with name-related facts and feelings. Without such a file, the facts and feelings become misfiled, and cannot be readily accessed when needed (Aaker, 2009; Perkins, 2015).

Brand awareness, or brand recall, is concerned with the strength of a brand's trace in the consumer's memory, as reflected in the consumer's ability to identity the brand under different sorts of conditions and situations (Keller, 2016). The major modes for creating brand awareness involve the use of advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, sponsorship, the Internet and integrated brand communication (Kehinde, 2011; Karmokar, 2014; Govers and Go, 2016).

Brand awareness is a significant reflection of how consumers recognise a brand, and involves the strength of the brand presence in the mind of consumers and the means whereby this knowledge can be easily retrieved from the mind or memory (Tuominen, 1999; Chigora and Zvavahera, 2015). It is thus the capacity of consumers to recognise or remember a brand. There is a link between the brand and the product class, but this link does not have to be

strong (Osman and Subhani, 2010; Florea, 2015). According to Aakar (2009), there are three stages of brand awareness:

1. The first stage of brand awareness is brand recognition. It exists when consumers can recognise a specific brand among other "aided recalls" (Koniewski, 2012; Heinberg et al., 2016) when a set of brand names from a given product class is shown. The task is then to identify the names recognised (Thoma and Williams, 2013).

2. Brand recall is the second stage. The role of brand recall can also be vital for regularly purchased products such as coffee, detergents and headache remedies, for which brand decisions are usually made prior to going to the store. Furthermore, in some categories, such as cereals, there are so many recognised alternatives that the shopper can easily be overwhelmed.

3. Top of the mind: this is the brand name that first comes to mind when a consumer is confronted with the name of a product classification (Aaker, 1991).

Awareness is a very important brand advantage, but it cannot sell the product, especially when it is not new (Aaker, 1999; Heinberg et al., 2016). According to Sallam (2016), brand awareness affects the choices of consumers and thereby their choice of a brand. Brand awareness has the strongest effect on purchase decisions and on the habitual behaviour associated with low-involvement products. Brand name, and the recognition of the brand, has an impact on the consumer's choice (Malik et al., 2013; Qi and Dandan, 2013).

2.7.1.4 Brand association

Brand associations serve as a link between nodes in the tourist's mind. In other words, they consist of knowledge that is organised as a network of connections. The network structure consists of information sources as nodes, such as a brand, an attribute or a situation, where connections between the nodes represent associations (Aaker, 1991; Odia and Isibor, 2014).

According to Qu et al. (2011), brand associations can be classified in three major categories: attributes benefits and attitudes. Attributes include both product-related and non-product-related featurees such as price, brand personality, emotion and experience. The benefits relate to the satisfaction of the basic needs and motivations, while attitudes refer to overall evaluations of the brand. The most powerful brand associations are those that deal with the intangible or abstract characteristics of the product (Keller, 2016; Dahlgaard-Park, 2015).

Brand associations can assist with spontaneous information recall, and become the basis of differentiation and extension. Strong associations can help strengthen the brand and brand equity. As with perceptions of quality, a brand association can also increase the satisfaction of tourists with their experience (Aaker, 1991; Kepferer, 2004; Martins, 2015).

2.7.1.5 Perceived quality

Perceived quality is the customer's judgement about a product's or services overall excellence or superiority, and thus is different from objective quality (Saisirisha and Katyayani, 2014). Perceived quality is good for the consumer because it differentiates itself from other brands, creating a reason for customers to buy (Vashmehsarae et al., 2014). Perceived quality is considered a core customer-based factor in brand equity because it is associated with the willingness to choose the brand and stay by it (Makasi et al., 2014).

3.8 Brand position

The brand is developed based on the position that a destination seeks to hold in the marketplace. Visitors attach significant importance to brand position, which has an impact on their travel decision-making processes when choosing their destination (Naidoo, 2012). The effective positioning of its brand helps the destination to compete more successfully and attract more visitors (Uysal, 2012; Vasavada and Kour, 2016).

Acccording to Lovelock (1991, cited in Pike, 2015: 227), brand positioning is "the process of establishing and maintaining a distinctive place in the market for an organisation and/or its individual product offerings". The aim of positioning is to create a distinctive place in the mind of potential tourists, by evoking images of the destination (Kozak and Baloglu, 2010). The task of positioning a tourist destination consists of three steps: identifying and selecting a competitor destination, determining effective communication tools, and identifying the target market (Pike, 2004). Identifying the target market involves the selection of the part of the market that the organisation will pursue with its value proposition (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). The choice of target market is a core strategic decision (Middleton et al., 2009).

The organisation can differentiate its brand according to its positioning, and emphasising its unique characteristics (Kaser, 2012). Dahlen et al. (2010) stated that the position of a destination product is used to modify the tangible and intangible attributes of a marketing offering about the competition. Successful positioning requires an understanding of which

attributes are demand-side considerations or needs (Kaczynski and Crompton, 2004). The services offered should be distinctive on the basis of these attributes, and these differences communicated to consumers (Kaczynski and Crompton, 2004). Establishing unique tourist destination products has become common in marketing and so brand image and the positioning of products and services is more important in the international market than their actual characteristics (Loncaric, 2014). The marketer needs to determine the unique target market needs.

2.9 Brand trust

Delgado-Ballester (2004) described trust as relating to the ability to act without evaluating costs and benefits. In addition, Ahmed et al. (2014) asserted that brand trust concerns a promise made by a brand to its customers that it will fulfil their expectations and deliver positive results. Therefore, trust is an important element in marketing.

Trust considered as the confidence that one will find what desired, rather than what feared (Delgado-Ballester and Munucra-Aleman, 2005: 188). Nevertheless, brand trust is expected to have a significant impact on consumer confidence and in the maintenance and development of brand loyalty. Additionally, if brand trust is considered in terms of expectancy, it is based on the consumer's belief that the brand has specific characteristics that make it honest and responsible (Delgado-Ballester and Munucra-Aleman, 2005). .

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001, cited in Ivanova et al., 2016: 225) defined brand trust as the willingness of the average consumer to depend on on the ability of the brand to perform its function. Similarly, to Lau and Lee (1999, cited in Parker, 2015), brand trust is the consumer's readiness to rely on the brand in the face of risk because of the expectations that the brand will provide positive outcomes. Moreover, the extensive literature on brand reveals that confident expectations and risk are critical components of the definition of trust (Delgado-Ballester and Munucra-Aleman, 2005).

According to Delgado-Ballester and Munucra-Aleman (2005), trust in a brand is determined by an understanding of the consumer's previous experience. Abubakar (2016) highlighted that previous experience and information can increase or decrease the level of trust. Furthermore, Ahmed et al. (2014) asserted that brand experience is considered to be more crucial than product experience, because brand experience is held in the consumer's long-term memory and has a deeper meaning, therefore contributing to brand trust. The consumer

is likely to trust a brand from indirect experience such as the impact of relatives, colleagues and friends or social norms and values (Delgado-Ballester and Munucra-Aleman, 2005).

Trust is the desired quality and is an essential developing relationship between a brand and consumers. Trust is a total of the feeling of security relies on the belief that the company's behaviour will be guided and motivated by positive intentions towards the customer's interests (Kiyani et al., 2012). It is also based on the extent to which a buyer believes that the seller will keep their promises (Wang, 2009; Arfaeian and Chaipoopirutana, 2014). Trust, however, should be distinguished from related concepts like confidence and predictability (Delgado-Ballester and Munucra-Aleman, 2005; Zarantonello, 2015).

This leads to a positive association with the brand and brand loyalty, which in turn represents a positive relationship with brand equity (Abubakar, 2016). Numerous academics have researched the link between trust and consumer brand loyalty (Roman, 2003; Kassim and Asiah Abdullah, 2010; Patterson and Patterson, 2016; Moriuchi and Takahashi, 2016). Trust and loyalty can result in brand attachment. The amount of brand attachment a consumer has to a brand reflects their current purchase activities and future purchase intentions (Dennis et al., 2016). Creating this attachment and relationship with consumers will save brands the cost of finding and acquiring new consumers. Similarly, creating a relationship with a brand saves the consumer time, effort and the cost of seeking a new brand in which to trust (Bidmon, 2017).

2.10 Summary

There is a growing need for theory concerning the nature of the tourism destination brand. However, research into branding in tourism destination marketing is still limited in terms of the number of published studies. Investigations in this area are beginning to emerge but there are still few empirical studies on this topic. Little information was found in earlier studies on destination branding in the Middle East, The branding techniques are used for places to create distinctive approaches that enhance their economic development. Much of the competition in tourism focuses on the tourist's ability to recognise and remember a particular destination as being unique. Because of this, the development and use of a strong destination brand is critical when making plans. Many tourists select their holiday destination from their memory or recognition of a destination brand. That is why the message behind a destination brand should be a topic to highlight.

The literature review has highlighted different points of view on the concept of destination branding and its components. Brand identity is the main components of destination branding which affects how a brand is perceived, and therefore it requires select unique elements to present brand identity. The literature reviews the concepts related to the brand identity and there is still no specific tourism research on logo elements (Blain et al., 2005: 332: Pike, 2016: 256).

The literature reveals that the destination should differentiate itself from competitors through positive images and a position in the minds of potential visitors. Also, it is highlighted that a destination marketer should understand the existing image of the destination and the impact of tourist experience on it; various factors influence image formation. The literature highlighted the difference between visitors' perceptions, although few studies pay attention to differences between the perceptions of actual and potential visitors. Finally, the review discussed the concepts of brand equity and its dimensions, brand knowledge components and brand trust.

CHAPTER THREE: MODELS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1Introduction

The process of building a destination brand begins with a clear understanding of what tourist's desire from a specific products or services. Different models of destination branding and components of building brands have been investigated in previous studies. The most important of these models are considered in this chapter. Destination branding practitioners use various techniques to develop brands such as marketing communication, discussed in detail below. This chapter also provides the research guide model. Finally, it returns to the research objectives and questions and the research gap.

3.2 Destination branding building

The destination brand building process starts with a clear understanding of what tourist's desire or specific products or services. This understanding translated into a promise, which is the foundation of the brand and tells tourists what they will receive (Lu et al., 2015). Although destination marketers can apply different strategies and spend a lot of time in developing a destination brand, it will not be certain that the destination will be able to attract visitors and meet their expectations (Buhalis, 2000). Many destinations strive to build a strong and unique brand but they are often unable to differentiate themselves from competitors (Naidoo, 2012; Manhas et al., 2016). Destination brand building is a complex task, due to the characteristics of intangibility product (Kaphare, 2008; Naidoo, 2012).

Understanding the destination branding process fully requires a review of the brand elements. These elements include brand personality, brand character and the brand associations. A review of the elements of the destination brand should also consider the threats and opportunities associated with the current brand as well as an illustrates of the logos, names, signs and symbols (Cai, 2002; Kolter 2000; Hanlan et al., 2005; Hanna and Rowley, 2011; Aaker, 2012; Milicevic et al., 2017; Kladou et al., 2017; George, 2017).

The tourism literature asserts that the destination branding process is not an easy task. **Various stakeholders should be involved in the process of branding, such as government authorities, local people and tourism agents to expand it as destination branding (Risitano, 2005; Yusof et al., 2014; Hoque, 2016).** Thus, developing destination branding is

more than developing slogans and logos, which is what most destinations do. A brand should represent something unique and different about a destination (Yusof et al., 2014).

Developing a destination brand is a long-term investment which might bring many positive outcomes, such as the attraction of businesses, investment, skilled employees, local people and tourists to the target area (Morgan et al., 2011). However, there are differences between strategy for developing destination branding and developing the company brand product. Since countries, cities and tourist resorts are multi-dimensional entities, they are more complicated and complex than products, and so the process of developing and sustaining a place brand needs specific marketing solutions (Morgan et al., 2011; Salehi and Farahbakhsh, 2014; Berrozpe et al., 2017).

Lu (2014) and Natarajan et al. (2017) suggested that developing a brand should start from internal before it is communicated to the target market. Internal stakeholders should be provided with clear brand knowledge in order to communicate the brand to the public. A successful branding strategy and model for a city or region examines the needs of internal stakeholders such as local businesses, government and residents. Kemp et al., 2012 in his model focuses on the **elements of marketing strategy** and embedding market activities which impact the process of developing destination, they believe marketing strategy helps marketers and managers develop their brand, also known as the 4Ps of promotion, place of distribution, price and product (Kemp et al., 2012; McCamley and Gilmore, 2017).

Figure (3.1) explains the process of building a destination brand. The model emphasises the importance of selected marketing elements of advertising intensity, distribution intensity, and pricing perceptions to represent destination branding, marketing activity enhances the creation of positive attitudes in local inhabitants a destination brand so that they eventually become committed to the destination branding effort.

Advertising intensity, or brand communication, should be the first step when developing the brand, because it helps to build trust with customers via the consistency of implementation. It also generates brand awareness and refines attitudes toward the brand. Advertising can be used to indicate that the product has quality, which will encourage customers to choose the brand.

Distribution intensity helps to reduce consumer time in the search for a product; it can increase brand awareness, and high distribution intensity may create high brand equity and refine customer attitudes (Abril and Rodriguez-Cánovas, 2016).

Pricing perceptions are correlated with brand value; therefore marketers need to increase perceived value and quality (Ferreira and Coelho, 2015). Brand commitment refer to the emotional physical connection that the customer has toward the brand. The model also suggests that in developing a destination brand residents should be associated with the brand because this leads to satisfaction and positive word of mouth (Ferreira and Coelho, 2015).

Figure 3.1. Destination brand building

Marketing Max Variables
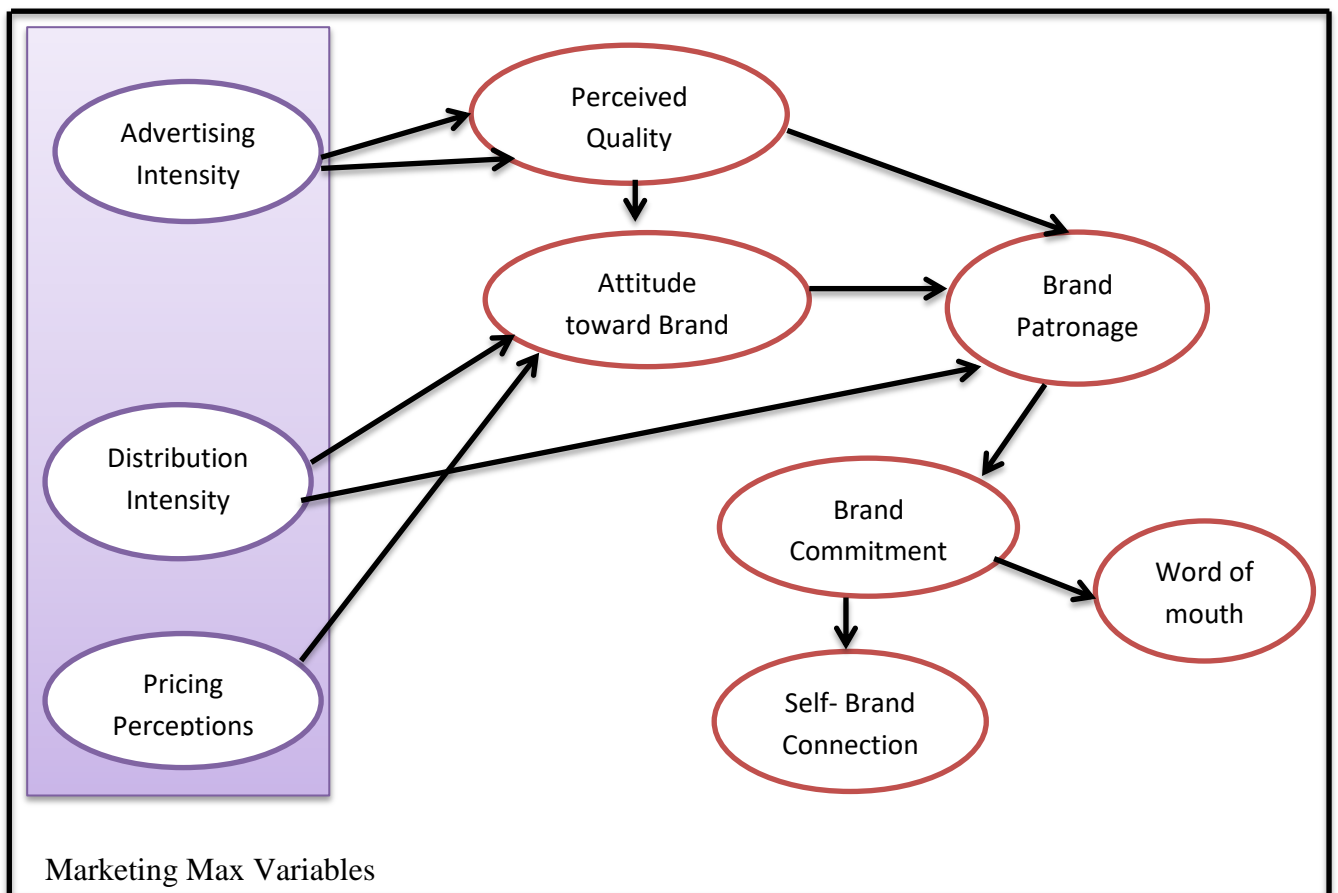
Source: (Kemp et al., 2012: 123)

3.2.1 Building the Destination Branding Pyramid

Keller's (2001) model considers a brand as a pyramid with the building blocks of brand salience, brand performance, consumer judgements and consumer brand resonance integrated to build a strong brand which plays a main role in supporting the strategic development of destination branding. The model explains the process of development branding as an easy way to help marketers understand the branding process; marketers need to answer all the questions to reach the top of pyramid. Figure (3.2) is adopted from Keller (2001:7) and highlights the four steps required to build a strong brand, and the various levels necessary to build brand resonance in terms of a sustainable relationship between the consumer and the brand.

Figure 3. 2. Building destination branding pyramid
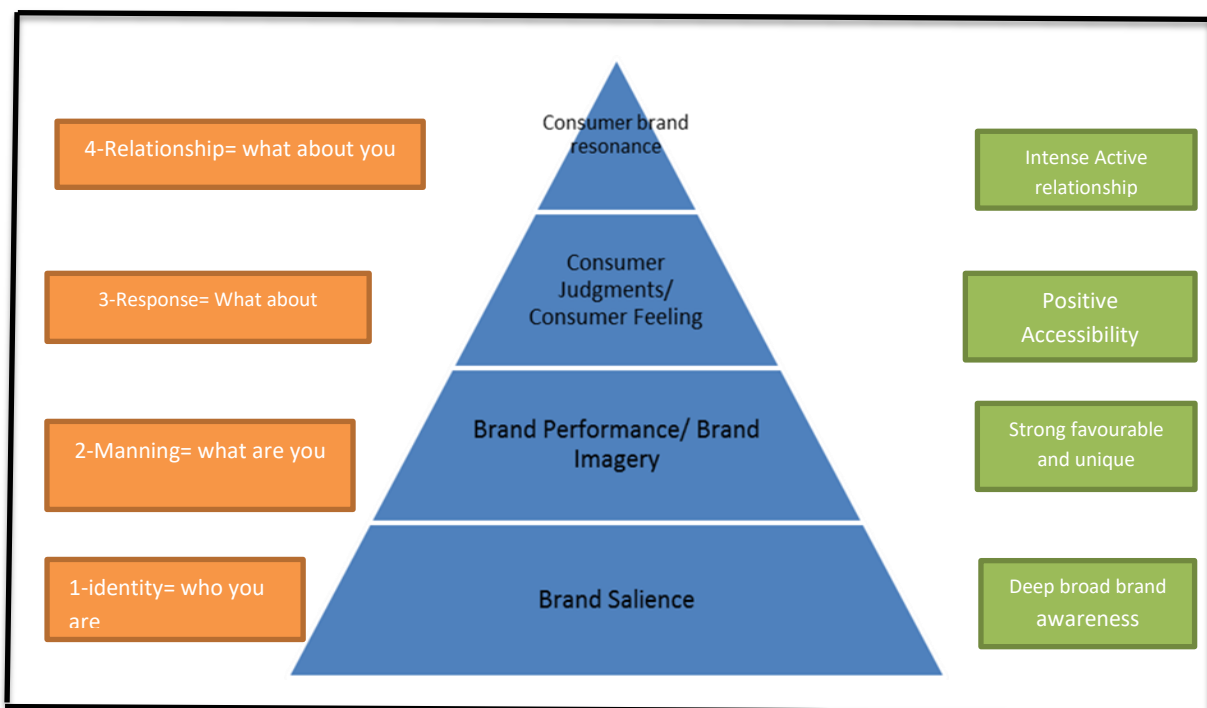
Source: Keller (2001, p.7)

The first layer of the pyramid is establishing the identity of the brand, which refers to the associations about a brand in the consumer's mind (Gartner and Cai, 2009: 112). Keller (2001) suggested a single brand building process for this phase, termed brand salience. In order to actively create brand salience, a destination needs to use promotional activities such as advertising, as this will generate and increase brand awareness among potential tourists.

The second stage is empowering the brand. Here Keller (2003) presents two building blocks: **brand performance and brand imagery**. **Brand performance** concerns delivering the products or services that meet customer needs, which is essential for success in the branding process. For brand performance, the model identifies five areas that need to be communicated: primary ingredients and supplementary features; product reliability, durability and serviceability; service effectiveness, efficiency and empathy; style and design; and price. **Brand imagery** involves sensory or perceptual representations of memories, ideas and feelings. Moreover, it can even involve a recovery of past experiences and can refer to the more intangible aspects of the brand (Keller, 2003).

The third level is **brand judgement** and the feelings associated with it. Brand judgement refers to the opinions and evaluations of the brand by customers, derived from their associations with the brand's performance and image. Any types of judgement of the brand by customers are possible, such as evaluations of brand quality, the credibility of the brand, or its superiority (Keller, 2008). Brand feelings concern the more emotional reactions of customers, such as warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval and self-respect (Keller, 2008).

The final stage of brand development is the creation of a relationship between consumers and the brand, which is called **brand resonance**. Resonance can be characterised by intensity or activity, the former referring to the strength of the psychological relationship that the customer has with the brand and the latter to the customer's behaviour and level of loyalty.

3. 2. 2 Cai model (2002)

This model by Cai (2002) is the most well-known in the destination branding process. It focuses on both the brand identity and brand image that constitute the destination marketer's and tourist's perceptions. The branding process starts with choosing one or more of the brand components. These components identify the destination and initiate the formation of strong brand associations which reflect elements as perceptual features characterising the destination, affective aspects involving personal values and meanings related to the benefits desired from the attributes, and attitudes as components of an image which represents the overall impressions. Figure (3.3) describes this process.

The model is based on a combination of brand elements, brand identity and brand image. The branding process starts by choosing brand attributes to project the image through each of the

3As: attributes, affects and attitudes. These help marketers to define the gap between the perceived and projected images. The evaluation then provides input for building a desired image which is compatible with the brand identity through marketing communication and managing secondary associations, which include the relationship with the destination as perceived by visitors, not produced by DMOs' direct marketing programmes usually beyond their control (the 3Ms in the model).

To develop brand image, marketer needs to identify the most relevant associations and to strengthen their links to the brand (Cai, 2002). **The four elements outside the circle specify the contextual preconditions (4Cs) of the destination branding process: the existing induced image, the destination size and composition, positioning and the target market, and the existing organic image.** Thus, the model focuses on building the destination identity through establishing dynamic links between the brand element mix, image building, brand association (3As), and marketing activities (3Ms). In addition, the model indicates that spreading activation should take place under the four conditions of 4Cs (Cai, 2002).

Figure 3. 3. Model of destination branding development
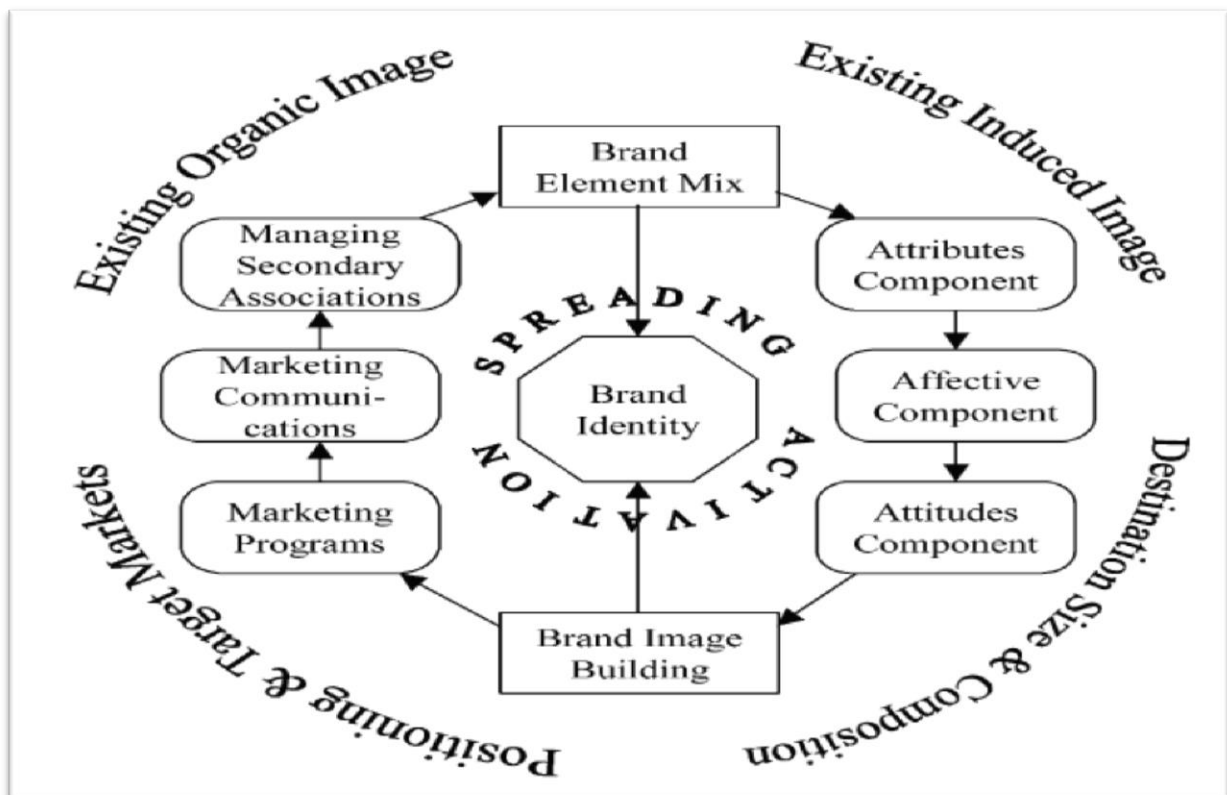
Source: Cai (2000, p.725)

In addition, Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003:34) suggested **steps** to follow when developing a destination brand:

- Understanding and evaluating how tourists perceive the destination and then developing the brand attributes based on their perceptions.

- Creating and developing a vision and mission statement can help destination branding efforts.

- Generating a brand with attractive elements that distinguish it from others in the market.

- Encouraging the memorability of the brand via the set of strong connections people make with a place, which form their expectations.

- Delivering the expectations of the brand in order to increase its value and generate customer loyalty.

- Managing the brand through appropriate positioning to stimulate and affect the perceptions of consumers so as to claim a position in their minds.

- Leveraging the brand through co-branding and product (services and experiences) extensions.

- Controlling brand effectiveness.

Other authors, such as Pike (2014), Dickinger and Lalicic (2015), Roy and Hoque (2015) and Tsaur et al. (2016) agree with Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003) that, in developing destinations brand, destination marketers should focus on the tourists perceptions.

Morgan et al., (2004: 52) claim that destination manangers and marketers should apply the following strategic technique, using a SWOT analysis to determine its chief strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats**.**Then certain industries, personalities, natural landmarks and historical events are chosen that could provide a basis for strong branding and storytelling. Also, the development of a country's brand requires the establishment of an umbrella concept that should cover all dimensions of the branding, among which are the possible associations of the destination with pleasure, quality, security, honesty or progress, among others. Morgan et al., (2004). Added that developing a brand requires a suitable budget for marketing activities in order to attract potential visitors. The country also has to

establish a control system to make sure that its products are reliable. Hankinson (2004) added that a successful process of destination branding needs investment in infrastructure, good relationships between different stakeholders, the selection of an appropriate target market and consideration given to the quality of services. Furthermore, Anholt (2009) suggested that the destination branding process should start by assessing what the assets of the destination are and focusing on how best to present these to each customer, group or market segment. A destination should understand core market segments when developing a brand because their perceptions will define the characteristics of the brand.

3.2.3 Tsiotsou and Goldsmith's model

A conceptual model of destination branding was proposed by Tsiotsou and Goldsmith (2012). The model consists of two main categories of **supply-side and demand-side perceptions**. The process of developing a destination brand has three stages. The destination management should start by developing a brand identity based on both tangible and intangible attributes. Internal **noise** is another factor which should be considered when developing a destination brand, **and all stakeholders should be involved in the process of developing the destination brand because they provide all the services the tourists will need.** Local people should also understand the purpose of the brand. Destination marketing should incorporate the different perceptions of stakeholders about the brand identity, and the destination manager can use these different perceptions to reach a consensus-based collaborative strategy. The perceptions of stakeholders will help the marketer to solve all the problems before tourists visit the destination; see Figure (3.4).

In the second stage marketers select the appropriate channel to communicate with customers. The brand image of the destination will be formed by communication tools and resources such as the media and the word-of-mouth of residents.

The third stage concerns the demand side of marketing, with a focus on the perceptions of tourists. The process is based on knowledge of the brand; it consists of brand image and brand awareness which are the sources of brand equity. A strong brand identity and appropriate communication channels help to raise awareness of the brand, leading to a positive image and good word-of-mouth. This may support the destination, either because these visitors intend to repeat their visit or by creating a positive image in potential tourists' mind. All this relationship helps to build brand equity

Figure 3.4. Destination brand creation and development
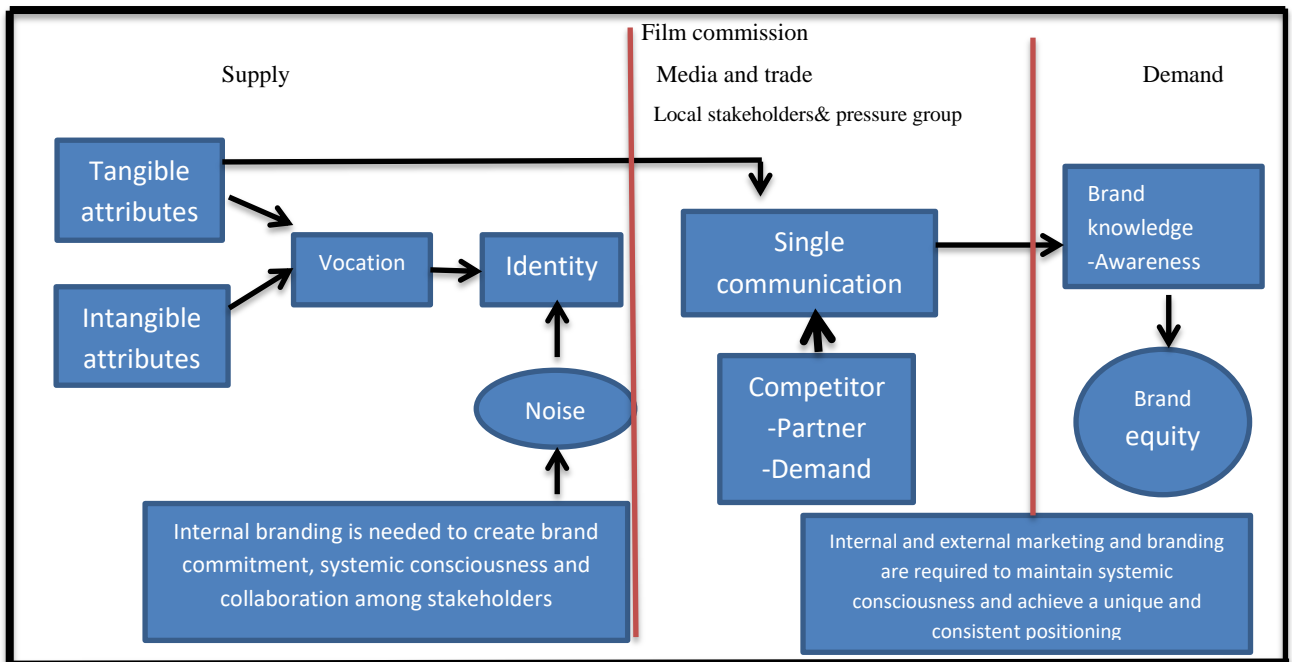
Sources: (del-Chiappa, 2008) cited in Tsiotsou& Goldsmith (2012, p. 53)

3.2.4 Morrison's model

Morrison (2013) developed a conceptual model of destination branding in which starts with situation analysis. This may include analysis of the destination, competitors and the market as well as of the destination's image, local residents and past marketing programmes. The second stage is an analysis of the perceptions of past and potential visitors to assess the destination's image. **Destination managers need to understand the perceptions held about the attractions and characteristics of the destination and to gain information about the position of the image of the destination in order to design marketing communication programmes**.

In the final stage, the marketer needs to define a brand strategy, including the branding objectives, brand positioning, the relationship to the destination's market segmentation approaches, brand identity development, brand launch, and brand monitoring and maintenance. The destination projector need to evaluate the effectiveness of the destination branding in terms of whether or not it achieves its objectives and the marketers need to determine if the destination has impacted the target markets as intended. Figure (3.5) clarifies the process of developing a brand destination.

Figure 3. 5. Steps involved in destination branding

1- Destination analysis	Competitive analysis	Market analysis	Destination image analysis	Resident analysis

2- Tourism sector stakeholder consultation and inputs ← Analysis of past destination marketing programs

3- Unique selling proposition identification

Brand strategy development →	Brand identity development
Brand lunch and introduction →	Brand implementation
Brand monitoring and maintenance →	Brand evaluation

Source: (Morrison, 2013, p. 301)

From the literature, it is concluded that some models on destination brand building approaching tourism from different angles are presented. Most studies have suggested that the perceptions of consumers are essential in the development of destination branding (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2003; Pike, 2014; Dickinger and Lalicic, 2015; Roy and Hoque, 2015). But the application of branding techniques to places especially to tourism destinations is not adequate because of few studies on the analysis of destination branding from the supply side.

However, little extensive analysis has been conducted on developing destination branding from both the supply and demand sides. This conclusion also a shared by (Risitano, 2005; Yusof et al., 2014; Hoque, 2016) who believe that the development of a strong brand should involve the views of different stakeholders (Risitano, 2005; Yusof et al., 2014; Hoque, 2016).

3. 3 Marketing communication

Marketing communication as a process includes sales, purchases, messages and feedback between the seller and buyers, and is known as marketing communication (Soba and Aydin, 2013). It involves interactive communication in which the marketer first transfers information to the market, then gathering, collecting, interpreting and putting this information to use (Tian& Borges, 2011: 112). It includes facial expressions, body language attitude and gestures (Gupta, 2011; Sullivan, 2012: 27).

According to Gupta (2011), communication in marketing is a conversation between a brand and its audience, on the one hand, and a collective term for all the communication functions used in the marketing of a product or service on the other. The aim of communication is to present the brand to the audience, and the impact of this can be maximised in terms of raising awareness and prompting better recall, both of which have an impact on consumer purchase intentions (Chinomona, 2016), so that the consumer is interested in buying a brand which he know (Panda, 2004; Soba and Aydin, 2013).

Marketing communications are the message of destination to inform, persuade and remind people directly or indirectly about their brand (Keller, 2009). It also focuses on the efficacy of producing desired effects (Fill, 2009; Yildiz, 2017). The message contained therein is created with specific intentions, goals and aims in mind (Egan, 2014; Njoku, 2017). Delivering the brand from destination to consumer requires communication marketing tools (Zhang et al., 2016). Before choosing the communications tools, the tourism marketer and destination developers need to understand how tourists choose their destination and make their decision. This helps destination marketers to develop an effective marketing strategy and successful market, and manage the tourism brand (Cohen et al., 2014). The online tourism communication market influences tourists' travel choices, becoming the most popular communication activity used by tourists (Zhang et al., 2016).

Successful communication marketing depends on the "promotional mix", which is combination of marketing tools such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations that are useful to sellers when communicating their offerings (Ay et al., 2010; Campbell, 2015; Todorova, 2015). Zhang et al. (2016) argued that destination marketers explain and promote the national brand proposition through marketing communication. The aim is to persuade customers to travel by stating that the destination's offering has the attractive attributes to meet the potential tourist's needs in relation to rival offerings (Cohen

et al., 2014). Zhang et al. (2016) also suggested that a country may be known by brand names, but that it still needs to use marketing communication to convey the essence of its attributes and to engage with its audience.

Brand communication programmes represent part of the marketing communication strategy for the destination, and play an important role in creating positive associations with a brand (Fill, 2009; Soba and Aydin, 2013). Therefore, they play a role in managing warm relationships with customers and creating positive attitudes reflected, for example, in brand loyalty (Chinomona, 2016).

Marketing communication explains to the audience what the organisation and its brand stand for, and it is a way to link brands to other people, places, events, experiences and feelings (Keller, 2009, 2016). Thus, it is vital for destinations to communicate with present and potential tourists (Manhas et al., 2016), and this communication contributes to brand building if it is based on the unique brand identity (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000; Kapferer, 2012).

Stiff and Mongeau (2016) pointed out that the content of the message that is transmitted refers to the central part of the communication. Furthermore, the complexity of the message language can determine the success or failure of the communication, due to misunderstood content or appearance; simple words and clear structure in the content can overcome the problem of explaining a complex issue (Lunenburg, 2010; Fischhoff, 2012; Njoku, 2017).

Aubert et al. (2013) stressed that the quality of communication, which refers to the content being received and understood by the other party in the relationship, marks the desirable outcome of communication. It is also associated with the development and maintenance of personal relationships. However, Bandyopadhyay (2013) commented that the appropriate choice of communication channel is most likely to result in effective communication and efficiency for both senders and receivers of messages, providing perceived quality in the communication processes.

3.3.1 Communication process model

Communicating the brand identity of the destination is vital (Ghodeswar, 2008). The brand communicates with the tourists by sending messages that are received and interpreted by them (Egan, 2014). This communication process is described in Figure (3.6).

Figure 3. 6. The basic communication model
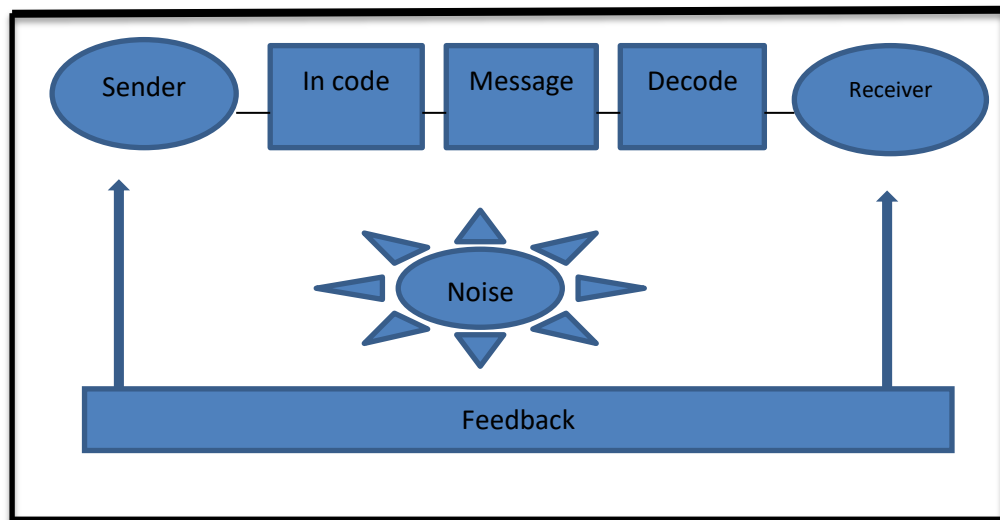
Source: (Egan, 2014:30)

The communication process describes how marketers can deliver a meaning or idea to customers (Gronroos, 2004). The process include different elements which include the two major parties of sender and receiver, communication tools, messages, media, communication functions such as encoding, decoding and feedback, and noise.

To communicate effectively, marketers should have an accurate understanding of how these elements can be combined to communicate value to the audience (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). The sender is the one who initiates communication, creating a marketing message and transmitting it to a receiver through some sort of medium (Fletcher, 2002). This message will be understood and may lead to positive feedback such as buying a product, developing increased awareness about the product or improving the country's image (Mendez, 2009). The sender of communication is the communicator, who brings to the interaction a field of experience or frame of reference which includes the sum of one's experiences during one's life, includes language and culture (Wong, 2013). The receiver is the targeted recipient, the

consumer, retailer or audience for which the message is intended. In marketing communication, the marketer needs to select the appropriate way to represent the idea sent to the consumer (Foulger, 2004).

The encoder translates the idea or the meaning of an idea, and encoding is the conversion of the message containing the sender's ideas and thoughts, usually in the form of words or signs. One way of conveying a message that the receiver will hear as intended is to use concrete words and pictures, as observed in newspaper advertisements, television and billboards. However, this depends on the message channel that is selected to transmit the communication.

The transmission of a message requires a channel, which may be a voice, the radio, a newspaper or other form of communication. Facial expressions or gestures can also serve as channels (Lamb et al., 2015), while decoding is the interpretation of the language and symbols sent through a channel. The customer understands the symbolic format that is transmitted, associating it with words or images (Lamb et al., 2015). Feedback is an action of the receiver of the information, sent back to the marketer; it could be immediate, delayed, or may not occur at all (Lamb et al., 2015).

Noise has a negative effect on the communication process and is a barrier to communication which exists throughout the entire process; it can be minimised through feedback and group engagement (Wong, 2013). Lamb et al. (2015) pointed out that noise is anything that interferes with, distorts, or slows down the transmission of information. It can include the occurrence of unplanned static events or distortion during the communication process which results in the receiver getting a different message from that sent by the sender (Rugimbana and Nwankwo, 2003). It is important to note that noise can occur at the sender's or receiver's end of the channel. Also, it can be anything that might distract attention from the original meaning of the message between the sender and the receiver (Wong, 2013). Noise must not be ignored (Yildiz, 2017). Thus, anything that hinders the receiver's ability to differentiate signals from background perturbations constitutes noise (Willy and Richards, 1977). In the international marketing context, noise might occur due to a bad telephone connection, failure to express a quotation in the inquirer's currency, or lack of understanding of the recipient's context such as their language (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2006).

Wong (2015) identified four dimensions of noise, which may be internal or external: physical, physiological, psychological and semantic. Physical noise (also called external

noise) is interference which impedes the physical transmission of the signal or message, such as the noise of a car passing by, illegible handwriting, blurred images or words, the wrong words or grammatical errors. Physical noise involves any stimuli outside the receiver's domain that makes the message difficult to hear (West and Turner, 2008). Physiological noise is created by the sender or receiver where there is a visual impairment, hearing problem or loss of memory (Wong, 2015). It also refers to biological influences affecting a sender or receiver that interfere with the message's transmission or reception (West and Turner, 2008). Psychological noise (internal noise) refers to the communicator's biases and feelings towards a message (West and Turner, 2008:13). It involves mental interference by the listener or receiver, such as with preconceived ideas (Wong, 2015). Finally, semantic noise is a communication barrier whereby the communicator and the audience have different modes of thinking to derive meaning, such as the use of technical language (Wong, 2015).

Tourism destinations marketers need to deliver and receive the correct message to ensure the target audience has the same information. If the communication level is inconsistent this leads to the message not being understood and establishes gaps between the audience and the destination marketers (Surugiu, 2015). Also, the lack of consistency can occure by failed brand positioning, where destination do not communicate the same brand charchteristices that the stands for (Kuchinka et al, 2018).

3.3.2 The process of communicating brand identity with brand image

According to Kapferer (2012) model the concept of communication as bridge links the brand identity with the brand image, the brand should determine its audience before projecting its image (Kapferer, 2012; Urde and Greyser, 2015; Burmann et al., 2017). Brand identity is the first and essential step in the branding process as it provides strategic direction and purpose for a brand. Brand identity represents how marketers want others to perceive the brand. For this reason, it is one of the key elements for brand equity (Aaker, 1996). It is the brand identity that specifies the brand's meaning, aim and self-image; therefore, it is important that it is shaped before brand communication (Urde and Greyser, 2015).

The image is the essential component in developing a brand. Although it might be developed thought out the lifespan of a brand; the identity is rooted deeply in the corporate brand's vision, essence and core values; it is difficult to change once established (Kolter, 2008). Brand image (receiver side) is the summary of the messages sent from the brand's identity

(sender side), and its perception depends on how the customer interprets the message (Kapferer, 2012).

Brand identity precedes brand image and is locates on the sender's side. How a brand is perceived by its customers is essential to success. To drive a positive brand association that customers know and trust requires message elements. The brand perception, or in other words the brand image, is therefore always on the receiver's side (Keller, 2004; Kapferer, 2008; Dall'Olmo Riley, 2009; Maharaj and Cowden, 2015). See Figure (3.7).

This model discusses the communication process where the marketers represent the sender and the customer the receiver (Kaferer, 2012). It also displays the relationship between brand identity and brand image. Brand identity (sender) is what message destination marketers send out to the visitors and brand image (receiver) is the perspective the visitors have about the brand (Ashton, 2014).

Kaferer (2012) explained the concept of **"noise",** defining it as a strange factor influencing the communication process and a barrier to the sent message before it reaches the receiver. Overall, noise may speak in the brand's name, and thus produce meanings (Kaferer, 2012; Yildiz, 2017) which may have a positive or negative impact. This could be a positive effect on the process of communication if the message interpreted is better than that which exists in reality. Alternatively, it could have a negative impact if the message is understand as worse than that in reality. Kapferer (2012) offers three explanations as to why noise appears. First, it can happen when the destination marketers have no idea what the brand identity is, driving managers to focus on their competitors and to imitate their marketing communication. Secondly, **noise** becomes disruptive when management concentrates on meeting the tourist's expectations rather than communicating the destination identity. Finally, it occurs when destinations have fantasised a brand identity and communicated it as the public would like it to be, rather than as it actually is (Kapferer, 2012). Therefore, destination marketers should be aware of how to handle noise in order not to negatively influence tourists' brand image.

Figure 3.7. Brand identity and brand image

Sender	Messages	Receiver
Brand identity	Signals transmitted - Products - People -Places -Communication	Brand image
Other sources of inspiration: -Mimicry - Opportunism -idealism		Competition and noise
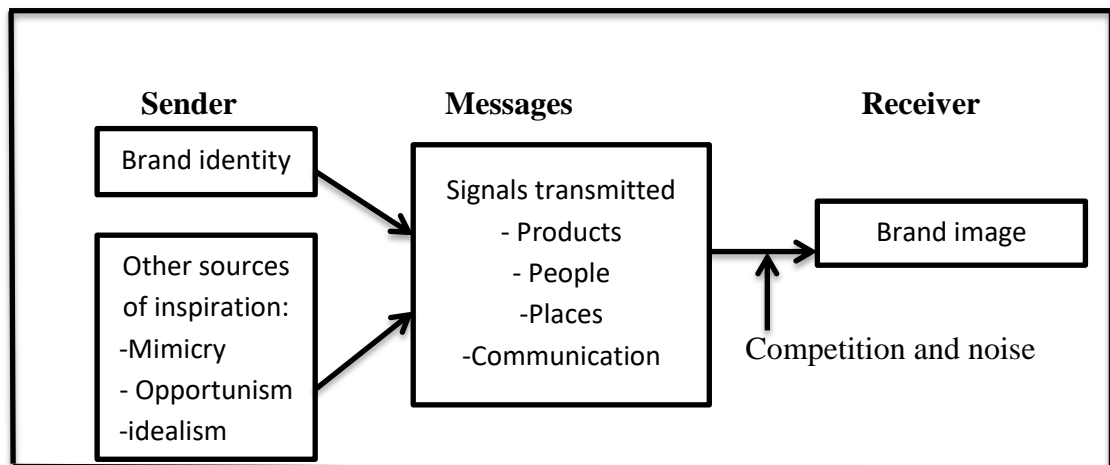
Source: Kapferer (2012:174)

3.3.3 Culture and marketing communication

The consumer's intention is impacted by culture (Pandey and Srivastava, 2013). Culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by a human as a member of society (Thompson and Tonneau, 2001). Other cultural factors have been recognised as having effects on international marketing communications and the success of marketing advertising campaigns (Guang and Trotter, 2012; Schnalke and Mason, 2014). Cultural noise influences consumer perceptions and may change the intended meaning of the message content (Fielding, 2006), hindering successful communication between people of different cultures. Different types of cultural obstacles exist, such as anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, stereotyping and prejudice, and language and non-verbal misinterpretation (Button and Rossera, 1990; Keles, 2013).

Culture is an invisible barrier which may lead to miscommunication and misinterpretation of messages (Guang and Trotter, 2012; Gill Sudhiir, 2016). There are many different cultures throughout the world, which --may affect the marketing and promotion of the destination internationally.For developing successful destination branding the marketers need to examine the image of their country in the minds of people across the globe (Kim et al., 2017).

Anxiety is a feeling that most people have, for example feeling nervous in particular different environments. Language can be an obstacle to intercultural communication. This is also a common problem even when people use the same language, such as when different vocabularies are used or where the same words have different meanings. This can lead to

misunderstanding, misinterpretation and misperception (Ying and Ying, 2012; Keles, 2013). Langugage is also a problem in marketing conmmunication, such a when the transmitter's language is foreign to the receiver, or when the latter does not understand the terms used by the sender (Swanepoel and De Beer, 2012).

Singh (2006) suggested that culture not only influences the selection of products and choices made by consumers but it also affects the structure of their consumption and communication regarding products and their decision making. Consumers from different cultures have different communication and working styles. It may not be easy to interpret the communication of someone from another culture, even when it occurs in a language we understand, since all aspects of culture influence communication style regardless of the language in which it is expressed (Guang and Trotter, 2012).

3.3.4 Integrated marketing communication

The concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC) is an approach for reaching consumers at each point at which they come into contact with a brand (Kehinde, 2011; Valos et al., 2016). Percy (2014: 3) defined IMC as "the planning and execution of all types of advertising-like and promotion-like messages selected for a brand, service, or company, in order to meet a common set of communication objectives, or more particularly, to support a single positioning". From this definition, IMC is a strategically coordinated plan to communicate a consistent message to consumers. Rather than looking at the marketing communication effort as individual functions, such as advertising, social media and sales promotion, etc. IMC looks instead at the effort as a holistic, integrated phenomenon (Boone and Kurtz, 2007; Patti et al., 2017). IMC tries to see the message from the consumer's perception, strategically considering where and under what circumstance one might be facing a brand, providing relevant and customised messaging through a variety of channels (Kehinde, 2011). In addition, IMC is used to determine how greater value can be transferred by the organisation to customers, helping it to develop closer relationships with them (Lu et al., 2015; Eberechukwu and Chukwuma, 2016).In addition, it aims to achieve impressive sales and to build a strong brand image in the customer's memory so that positive word-of-mouth is shared with others, expanding brand awareness (Naeem et al., 2013; Eberechukwu and Chukwuma, 2016).

IMC is designed to help organisations achieve their objectives.This avoids the need to create separate messages for each medium without regard to what is expressed through other

channels (Kehinde, 2011; Valos et al., 2016). Eberechukwu and Chukwuma (2016: 576) identified three components of IMC:

- Consumers: consideration should be given to how they receive information as well as to how the delivery of that information affects the form and content of messages.

- Communication channels: the effectiveness of each potential channel is taken into accoount in IMC strategy.

- Results. This aspect considers how the level of intricacy in IMC strategies leads marketers to measure results by designing new ways.

3.3.5 Impact of marketing communication tools on brand building

Marketing communication helps customers to understand what a brand stands for and its value (Fill, 2006). The way in which marketing tools are used to build brands is determined strategically by the role that the brand is expected to play in achieving an organisation's goals (Fill, 2009).

Fill (2005) argued that marketing communication tools can play several roles in brand development by informing, updating, and reminding customer about the brand. Whatever the role, financial resources are the major determinant in all organisations (Owen et al., 2001). If the budget is high, advertising will be the main tool with which brand name associations are shaped, in addition to the use of personal selling. However, if limited financial resources are available, other tools such as sales promotion, public relations or direct marketing will be used (Tsikirayi et al., 2013).

Studies have shown that advertising helps in building a succesful brand (Makasi, 2014: (Alhaddad, 2015). Advertising has a central role to play not only in developing the overall brand image but also in building upon the brand identity (Yeshin, 2006). In addition, advertising has an effect on brand recall, increasing customer awareness of the brand (Alhaddad, 2015: Karam and Saydam, 2015). Awareness is created through marketing communications, and particularly advertising which is considered as the main communications tool for products and services in consumer markets (Keller, 2009; Fill and Hughes, 2013). Schulz (2012) argued that repetitive advertising increases the chance that a brand will feature in lists of customer choices, facilitating the customer's selection of the brand. The impact of advertising is based on both the amount of money invested as perceived

by customers, and the types of message transmitted (Ghodeswar, 2008; Schulz, 2012; Salelaw and Singh, 2015).Many authors have illustrated how brand messages transmitted through advertising help in developing mental pictures of the company's trademark in the customer's mind (Dall'Olmo Riley, 2009: Keller, 2009; Marla et al., 2015). .

Personal selling is considered to be an influential factor in shaping customer perceptions of brands (Ghauri and Maqsood, 2011). It contributes to the development of customer perceptions of service quality through the seller's attitude, behaviour and knowledge. These factors play a crucial role in the development of a brand image for services (Singh and Pattanayak, 2014). Thus, personal selling is a very important tool in shaping opinions and in determining brand associations (Keller and Lehmann, 2006).

Various studies have found that sales promotions, and particularly price promotions, have an inverse relationship with brand equity compared to other communication tools (Palazón-Vidal and Delgado-Ballester, 2005; Okyere et al., 2011). Selvakumar et al. (2011) indicated that the customer percieves a negative relationship between brand equity and the need to use incentives for sales that affect the established level of prices. Sales promotions are a way to differentiate a brand from other competitors in a short-term boost to sales (Villarejo-Ramos and Sánchez-Franco, 2005).

Public relations tools can establish brand awareness through recall and recognition. Public relations are concerned with the management of communications between a company and its stakeholders (Dozier, 2005), and can help organisations to achieve their aims by forming relationships with strategic members of the public (Kitchen and Moss, 2016). These tools are important in promoting ideas, community relations, and relationships with customers. PR is an ongoing strategic effort to communicate and develop relationships with the public (Khodarahmi, 2009).

Direct marketing is a tool which allows the organisation to reach its audience, boosting their awareness and interest by sharing information about goods or services, to promote them to shape brand image and to build loyalty towards the brand (Fill, 2009). Once customers are aware of the brand, a strong and positive brand image can be formed by direct marketing (Keller, 2001; Fill, 2009). Direct marketing targets customers by delivering personalised messages in order to obtain an immediate response and to build relationships with them (Masterman and Wood, 2006; Kotler and Armstrong, 2010).

The internet can be an effective tool in building a brand. Chaffey et al. (2013) asserted that it offers new opportunities to build a strong brand, and can create or support the association with and involvement of the target core market. According to Kotler et al. (2011) and Kotler and Keller (2012), marketing communication is also a way to build brand equity. As explained in Figure (3.8), marketing communication contributes to brand equity by creating brand awareness and images of, responses and connections to, and relationships with the brand.

To achieve effective communication about their products and brand values, organisations should very carefully determine the objectives of marketing communication select the communication channels and decide on the marketing mix to be used.

Figure 3.8. Integrating marketing communications to build brand equity
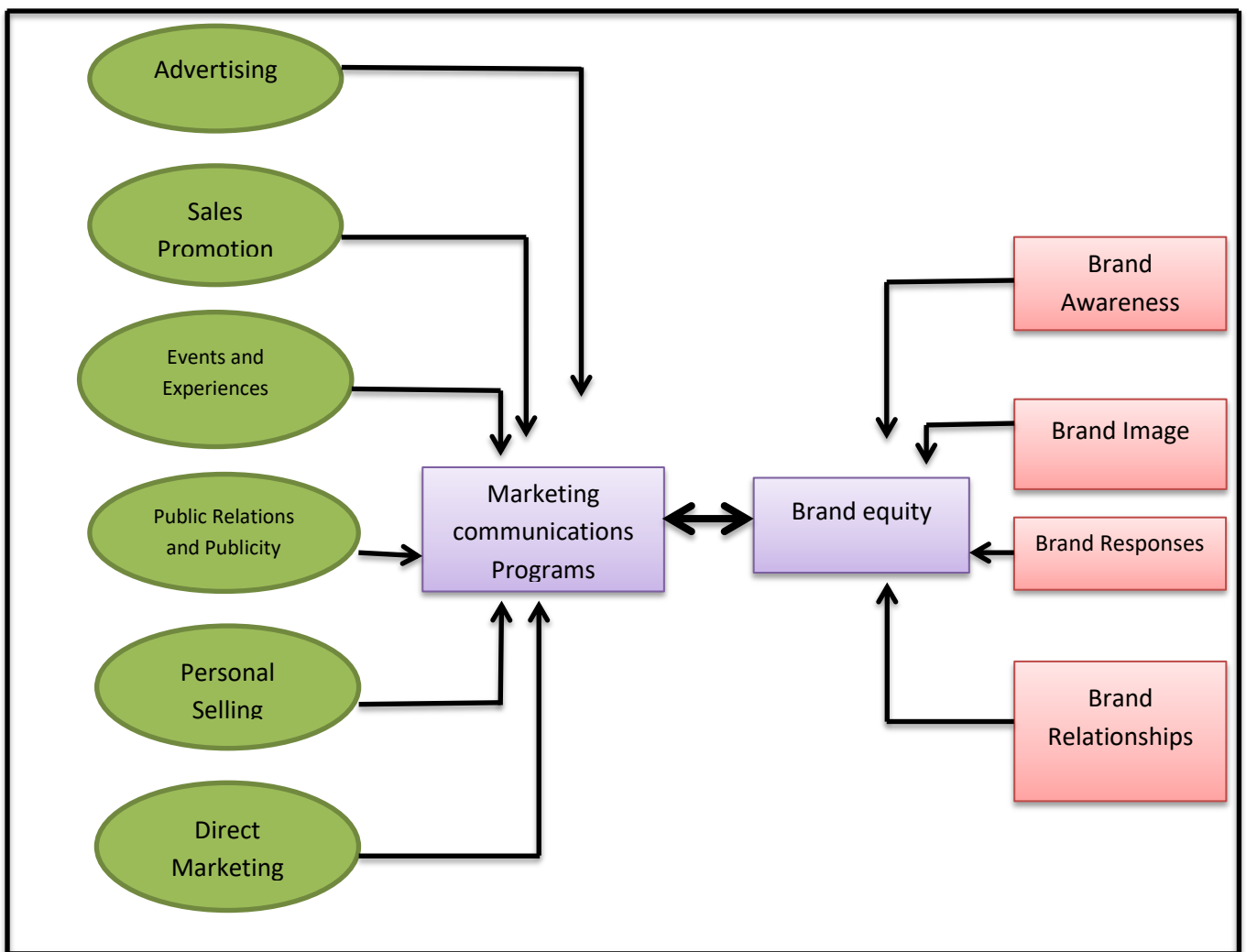
Sources: (Kotler et al., 2011; Kotler & Keller, 2012, p.254)

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3.4 Research model guide

Figure (3.9) serves as a guide for collecting the relevant data for this study; it attempts to gather all the elements and factors required for developing destination branding. The guide model is based on extracts from the literature pinpointing the major impacts in the related areas. It is based on the views of Cai (2002: 70); Kapferer (2012: 80); and Tsiotsou and Goldsmith (2012: 73). These views are presented and discussed in the literature review. The guide model also adopts Tsiotsou and Goldsmith's (2012: 73) ideas on developing destination branding in tourism.

The guide model aims to explain the relationship between the supply perspectives and the demand perspectives on developing a destination brand. It will help researchers to develop a theory for an Oman brand as a tourism destination, which is the main aim of this study.

Figure 3.9. The research model guide for this study
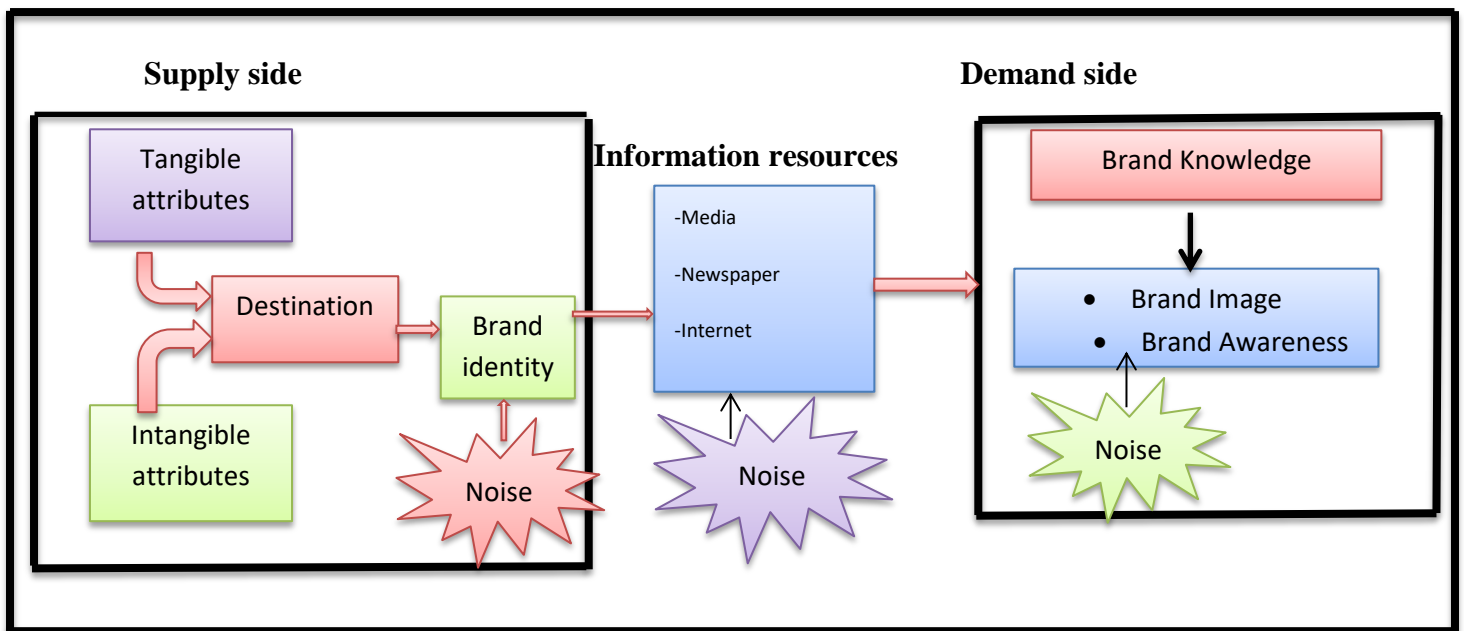
The supply side comprises a brand identity based on the tangible and intangible attributes. The supplier (destination marketers) projects a destination brand identity through all the tangible, intangible attributes that differentiate the destination from other destinations. The demand (tourist) perceives the image of the place, which is formed and stored in the mind (Qu et al., 2011). The marketers create a brand identity for their product and a brand image that a consumer perceives (Tsaur et al., 2016). A brand identity is one of the major

components of building brand equity. For developing a destination brand, the creation of a brand identity should not be confined to the visual aspects; instead, it should include the emotional relationship between the destination and the potential market. A brand identity represents how the brand wants to be perceived; it leads to the brand image and is situated on the supply part (Norgan et al., 2002). A brand identity should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits (Aaker, 1996). It also pays particular attention to noise. Noise is one of the communication process components. It is anything that distorts the message (i.e. different perceptions of the message, language barriers, interruptions, emotions and attitudes) (Gronroos, 2004; Minkiewicz et al., 2007; Ghodeswar, 2008). It is important to identify the communications gaps between two sides because noise is a complicating factor that may influence the quality of reception and/or its feedback (Fill, 2005; Egan, 2014). This may be due to the fact that the number, content and attraction of other messages both within and outside the channel distract the receiver (Egan, 2014).

The demand side focuses on brand knowledge which comprises brand awareness and brand image. Brand image is a significant factor in determining the emotional influence that brand has on consumers as a result of their perspective of brand attributes (Kehinde, 2011; Ebrahim et al., 2016). Many studies emphasised that image is an independent variable representation of how tourists feel about a destination, influencing visitors intention and behaviour such as destination choice, repeater behaviour and tourist satisfaction (Tasci and Gartner, 2007; Lopesi, 2011; Seyidov and Adomaitiene, 2016; Madden et al., 2016). Both holistic image and specific destination attributes were found to impact consumer behaviour related to before, during, and after visiting the destination (Echtner and Ritichie, 1991, 2003).

Karmokar (2014) states that in developing a successful brand, the marketer needs to develop a high level of brand awareness which is necessary for the formation of the brand image (Yusof and Ismail, 2016). Brand awareness plays an important role in consumers' choice as it can affect perceptions and attitudes and encourage loyalty (Keller et al., 2008). A strong destination branding insulates itself from the competition threat by creating a positive image, brand message, emotional responses besides recognition, differentiation, consistency and expectation (Tuominen, 1999; Schaar, 2013; Chigora and Zvavahera, 2015).

The image may define by either its supply side, brand identity; or its demand side, which is a perceived image. In order to establish strong destination branding, understanding the process of image perception by the demand side and the projection of the supply side is necessary (Cai, 2002; Qu et al., 2011; Yusof and Ismail, 2014; Almeyda & George, 2017). Managers and planners create a brand identity for their product, and a brand image that the consumer perceives (Tsaur et al., 2016). Tourism destination marketing is responsible for presenting an attractive image to the potential visitor's mind in the tourist markets; this image is often formed by the media, tour operators, trust and connectivity, and position and branding. However, the development of a brand may be obstructed by many barriers such as terrorism, visa procedures and other political issues. The model pinpoints elements that are the core of the fieldwork; they are illustrated in the coming chapters.

3.5 Research questions

The stakeholders on the supply side include sellers such as tourism operators, governments, destination marketers and local people, while the demand side stakeholders are tourists, investors and new residents. **It is important that the development of destination branding should be supported by the stakeholders** (Cai et al., 2009; Avinash, 2011).

From the literature it is concluded that the development of a strong brand should involve the views of different stakeholders (Risitano, 2005; Yusof et al., 2014; Hoque, 2016). Ashton (2014, 2015) argued that **more research is required to explore the effectiveness of a destination brand from the perspectives of all stakeholders**.

It is very important for destination marketers to consider perceptions on both the demand and supply sides. As previously noted, **no extensive analysis has been conducted on developing destination branding from both the supply and demand sides** which make up a unique brand (Tsiotsou and Goldsmith, 2012). In addition, there are few studies have examined the projected and perceived images of destinations (Farmaki, 2012; Kim and Lehto, 2013: 2).

Likewise, research into the application of branding techniques to places, and especially to tourism destinations, is not adequate (Cai, 2002: 721; Hosany et al.,2006: 2; Blim, and Blim, 2014: 123). This is why the message behind a destination brand should be a topic to highlight.

The present study fills this gap by considering the relationship between the supply side and demand side of the tourism market in the development of a brand destination by tourism providers in Oman, where the demand side includes potential international tourists and actual visitors. Also, it identifies attributes of the Oman brand identity which are offered to visitors and considers the brand position and target market strategy. It considers the Oman logo components.

3.5.1 Supply side and destination brand identity

The supply side of the market includes people who supply the services for a destination's visitors and manage the destination (Marais et al., 2017). Brand identity development is a theoretical concept largely understood from a supply-side perspective, although **a large number of studies focus on the demand-side perception or image of the brand whereas fewer studies analyse destination branding from the supply side**. Therefore, relevant aspects such as brand identity require further research (Konecnik and Go, 2008: 2; Cai et al., 2009: 70; Suma and Bello, 2012: 89; Yusof & Ismail, 2016; 330).

Cai (2002) argued that brand identity is critical for the success of a destination brand. A strong brand identity that is positively experienced and understood by consumers promotes the development of trust, which differentiates the brand from its competitors (Tsaur et al., 2016). It is thought that the selection of the brand attributes which represent brand identity is crucial (Cai, 2002; Risitano, 2005; Wheeler et al., 2011; Tsaur et al., 2016). **Also, although there are many studies in the tourism literature about brand, little specific literature has addressed the logo components and brand design process (Blain et al., 2005: 332: 332: Pike, 2016: 256).** Therefore, the development of a destination brand identity is an important issue for destination marketers.

Research question 1: What are the Oman authorities' perceptions of the tangible and intangible attributes that can be used for developing the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination?

Research objective 1: To identify the tangible and intangible attributes that currently contribute to the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination.

3.5.2 Demand side (perception of potential tourists)

The destination branding process involves various stakeholders, including potential international tourists. Research has demonstrated the importance of a destination's image for the success of tourism destination development. Many studies have examined tourism destination images, focusing on measurement and components (Echtner, and Ritchie, 1993; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Jenkins, 1999; Kapferer, 2012; Marino, 2008; Lopes, 2011). However, less attention has been paid to comparisons between the projected and the perceived images of destinations (Andreu et al., 2000; Farmaki, 2012; Kim and Lehto, 2013; Nedelea, 2016; Mano and da Costa, 2015). In addition, although many studies have been conducted on the tourism destination image, **there are few studies on the difference between the images held by potential tourists and actual visitors to the destination (Yilmaz et al., 2009; Wang and Davidson, 2009; Lim, et al., 2014; Kong et al., 2015; Jani and Nguni, 2016).**

Potential international tourists are influenced by image when they make travel decisions, and therefore destination marketers should identify the brand image that will be most attractive and advantageous (Keller, 2003). **Researchers have suggested that the perceptions of consumers are important in the development of destination branding (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2003; Pike, 2014; Dickinger and Lalicic, 2015; Roy and Hoque, 2015).** Tsaur et al. (2016) added that **few studies** have considered the relationship between the **images perceived** by visitors and other stakeholders. To fill this gap, this study conducts a comparison of supply-side projected images and demand-side perceived images, and also considers the different perceptions of actual and potential visitors. It analyses the image of Oman components.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of the intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by potential international tourists?

Research Objective 2: To identify the perceptions of intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by potential international tourists (the demand side).

3.5.3 Communication marketing

Marketing communication is the best way to build brand destination. Dębski (2013: 263) defined marketing communication, such as between a brand and its audience, as a collective term for all acts of communication used in the marketing of goods and services. According to Kapferer (2008: 22) and Lovelock and Patterson (2015: 220), communicating about the brand to customers is essential for a destination's su#ccess since it is through communication that the value proposition which the firm is offering is explained and promoted. In addition, Kapferer (2008) and Tsiotsou and Goldsmith (2012) have highlighted the concept of **noise** in the communication process, which affects the message before it reaches the customer and causes a gap between supply and demand sides. It is very important for international marketers to be aware of any barriers to communication such as cultural noise which may prevent the message from being interpreted correctly before reaching the customer (Ferrell, 2008; Manchaiah and Zhao, 2012; Dębski, 2013; Singh, 2014).

This gap is filled by considering the communication market as one of the leading components for developing brand destination and identifying noise (gaps) from the perceptions of both demand and supply sides.

Research Question 3: What communication gaps can occur between supply side and demand side regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity?

Research Objective 3: To analyse the potential communication gaps between supply and demand regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity effectively.

Table 3.1. Research aim, objectives and questions, literature citations and gaps in the literature

Research questions	Research objectives	Literature Citations	Literature gap
Q) What are the Oman authority perceptions the tangible and intangible attributes that can be used for developing the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination?	O 1- To identify the tangible and intangible attributes that currently contribute to the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination.	(Risitano,2005; Wagner, & Peters, 2009;Yusof et al.,2014 ;Ashton,2014;2015; Hoque, 2016)	More research is required to explore the effectiveness of the destination brand from the different stakeholders' perspectives
		Tsiotsou and Goldsmith 2012	No more studies on developing destination branding from both the supply and demand sides.
		(Konecnik &Go, 2008; Wheeler et al.,2011; Yusof & Ismail, 2016;Tsaur et al., 2016)	Few studies consider supply-side perspective (brand identity) for developing a destination brand.
		Blain etal., (2005; 332)	Little literature on tourism covers brand logo components
Q2-What are the perceptions of intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by the potential International tourists?	O2- To identify the perceptions of intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by the potential International tourists (the demand side).	(Andreu etal., 2000;Farmaki,2012;Kim& Lehto,2013; Mano& da Costa, 2015; Nedelea,2016)	Few studies examine projected and perceived images of the destination.
		(Kaplanidou and Vogt, (2003); Pike, 2014; Roy& Hoque, 2015; Dickinger& Lalicic, 2015)	The perceptions of visitors are important for developing destination branding.
		(Yilmaz etal.,2009;Wang& Davidson,2009;Lim, etal.,2014;Kong etal.,2015;Jani& Nguni, 2016)	Few studies have focused on the different images held by potential tourists and actual visitors
Q3-What communication gaps can occur between a supply side and demand side regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity?	O3-To analyse the potential communication gaps between supply and demand regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity effectively.	Kapferer, 2008;Ferrell, 2008; Tsiotsou& Goldsmith 2012;Manchaiah& Zhao,2012; Dębski,2013;Singh, 2014).	It is essential for an international marketer to be aware of any factors influencing the process of communicating with the customer. This factor causes a gap between supply and demand sides before the message reaches the customer.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has introduced and discussed the guide model that will be used in this study. The model is based on previous models and theories of destination branding development. Some elements are discussed in more detail than others due to their importance and usefulness in serving the aims of the fieldwork. As discussed in the literature review, several models of the development of destination branding highlight the diverse elements of tourism destination branding. Cai et al. (2009), Selby (2004), Del Chiappa and Bregoli (2012), Tsiotsou and Goldsmith (2012), Yusof et al. (2014) and Kiralova and Pavlíceka (2015) have asserted that a destination brand should be built based on both the supply and demand sides of the market, while Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003), Anhlot (2009), Pike (2014) and Roy and Hoque (2015) stressed that marketers should consider the perceptions of visitors (the demand side) in developing destination branding.

Konecnik and Go (2008) even go on to say that few studies from the supply side perspective focused on brand identity development, particularly in the tourism destination branding context. However, none of the models cited above gives details of how to build and develop a brand for a specific destination. This chapter also reviews the communication market concept.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the methodology, planning and implementation phases for the research study. Following the research model guide this study adopts a mixed method to examine both demand and supply sides, in order to define the current research components and tools. It starts by defining the research paradigms, the epistemological and theoretical perspectives of the research, and justifying the selection of the research paradigm. This is followed by a detailed definition of the research approaches.

4.2 Research philosophy

Understanding research philosophy is essential for knowing how to approach a research project (Denscombe, 2014; Shannon-Baker, 2016). The research philosophy is the initial stage which considers how the data about a phenomenon should be collected, analysed and applied (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). The adoption of a suitable research philosophy helps the researcher to identify a strategy and choose the methods to conduct a study (Saunders et al., 2015). It supports the researcher in identifiying the research design (Jackson, 2013). Thus, the researcher should choose the ontology and epistomolgy to fit the research aim and objectives and the appropriate data collection method (Pasian, 2015).

According to Collis and Hussey (2009: 55), the research philosophy is the use of reason and argument in seeking truth and knowledge, especially of ultimate reality or of general causes and principles. The research philosophy is also known as the research paradigm (Mkansi and Acheampong, 2012). Paradigms refer to the beliefs, assumptions, values and practices shared by a research community (Lyons and Coyle, 2016). Different research paradigms result from their views on the nature of the world and how knowledge can be acquired (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006), based on ontology (reality), epistmology(knowledge) and metholodgy (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Ontology is the philosophy of the nature of reality a researcher investigates (Collins, 2010: 37). Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that studies the theory of knowledge with regard to its method: the nature of the method, the sources and the limitations of human knowledge (DeRose, 2005). Methodology is a system of principles, practices and procedures applied to a specific branch of knowledge (Peffers et al., 2007).

Research paradigms have been classified into four main philosophies: positivism, interpretivism, realism and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2015).

4.2.1 Positivism

Positivism is a research paradigm that is widely used in the social sciences (Aliyu et al., 2014). Hunt (2002: 7) defined positivism as "a systematically related set of statements, including some law-like generalization, which is empirically testable". The postivist paradigm is the basis for the quantitative method and is applied in studies of human behaviour and science (Aliyu et al., 2014). It is based on precise objective measures that are analysed by the use of statistical tests (Smith et al., 2015). This philosophy is based analytical interpretation of quantifiable data through an objective approach and the research findings are usually observable and quantifiable (Collins, 2010).

Postivism is based on deductive logic with precise empirical observations of individual behaviour and a large population sample size to collect data (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Aliyu et al., 2014) to deliver reliable results (Cherkaoui, 2014). It is commonly used to test theories to increase the understanding of phenomena (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The positivism philosophy is used by the demand side; it is justified in the next section.

4.2.2 The pragmatic paradigm

Pragmatism is a paradigm for social research (Feilzer, 2010; Sekaran& Bougie,2016). It was defined by Morgan (2007, cited in Shannon-Baker, 2016: 319) as a way to summarise reserchers' beliefs about their effots to create knowledge. It is characterised by an emphasis on communication and shared meaning, in order to create practical solutions to social problems (Shannon-Baker, 2016).

According to Creswell (2014), pragmatism is a philosophical foundation for the mixed method approach and plays an important role in conducting research and interpreting results. It can be applied to yield a better result (Saunders et al., 2015).

The pragmatic approach entails both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to collect information and make inquiry into complex phenomena of social and natural contexts (Creswell and Clark, 2011). Therefore, it is an attempt to reconcile objectivism and subjectivism, facts and values and different contextual experiences (Saunders et al., 2015). To the pragmatist, the mandate is not to find truth or reality, the existence of which are

perpetually in dispute, but to facilitate human problem solving and to gain the kind of understanding necessary to deal with problems as they arise (Pansiri, 2005: 196). The pragmatists believe that reality is constantly changing and that we learn best through applying our experiences and thoughts to problems as they arise (Spector, 2015; Hinojosa, 2017: 1).

4.2.3 Realism

According to Saunders et al. (2015), realism is a philosophical concept that claims to provide an account of the nature of scientific practice. Eastwood et al. (2014) defined realism as the view that entities exist independently of the theories we postulate about them. Realist ontology assumes that there are real-world objects apart from human knowledge. In other words, there is an objective reality (Zachariadis et al.,2013;Eastwood et al., 2014). Realism as a philosophical paradigm has elements that belong to both positivism and constructivism (Krauss, 2005; Sobh and Perry, 2005).

4.2.4 Interpretivism

The interpretivist paradigm can be called an "anti-positivist" because it was developed as a reaction to positivism. It is also referred to as constructivism because it emphasises the ability of people to construct meaning (Mack, 2011: 7).

Interpretivism as a theoretical framework for qualitative research understands the world as one that is constructed, interpreted and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and with a wider social system (Antwi and Hamza, 2015: 219). Researchers involved with the interpretive paradigm are naturalistic since it applies to real-world situations as they unfold naturally (Tuli, 2011: 100). However, the relationship between the researcher and the subjects is linked interactively to the findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

According to Tuli (2011: 100), an interpretive paradigm aims to produce an understanding of the phenomena affecting the social context. It focuses on defining the meaning of human experience and actions (Levers, 2013: 3). Obviously, interpretive research is often described as qualitative to distinguish it from the quantitative character defining traditional research. There is some truth to this, but it can be misleading in two respects: first, there are ways of using numbers in interpretive paradigm research, just as there are ways within traditional research of using non-quantitative data. Secondly, the difference between interpretive and traditional research is in the assumptions rather than the kind of data the researchers work

with (Tuli ,2011; Sekaran& Bougie,2016). The interpretive researcher tries to study and understand a phenomenon through individual interpretations (Sutton& Austin, 2015).

Methodologically, the method must be hermeneutic and dialectic; it is mainly a qualitative method, and the data collection interview techniques are mostly semi-structured or unstructured (Harwell, 2011). This philosphy is used for the supply side. Table (4.1) compares the research paradigms in social sciences research.

Table 4. 1. A summarised comparison of the research paradigms

	Positivism	Pragmatism	Realism	Interpretative
Ontology	Emphasises that a researcher is external, objective and independent of that study.	Researcher is external, multiple and the objective is to choose the best answer to the research questions	Researcher is objective and he exists independently of the human mind but he interprets out of the social context	Things are socially constructed leading to subjective reasoning which may change with multiple realities
Epistemology	Things are observed to prove credibility to facts, focusing on causality and law generalisations thereby reducing phenomena to the simplest elements	Either subjective or objective; can provide facts to a research questions, focus on practical applications to issues by merging views to help interpret data	Belief that observing an event proves the credibility of facts.	Toward subjective meanings of social phenomena, examining details and realities behind them with motivating actions
Approach	Quantitative	Uses both qualitative and quantitative	Approach depends on the research matter.	Qualitative
Method	Mono-method but can use eclectic in certain cases.	Mixed or multiple methods	Method to use is based on the research problem or situation.	Mixed or multiple methods

Source: (Ihuah and Eaton, 2013: 938)

4.2.5 Study Position

In light of the research objectives, the research questions and the above discussion, the research aim is to analyse the process of developing the Oman tourism brand by examining the perspectives of potential tourists, and those of the Omani tourism providers. Therefore, the nature of the research aim requires both positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Thus, the pragmatic approach is the best choice because it allows for adopting a mixed method to analyse the phenomenon of the Omani brand thoroughly. Besides, it is necessary to support the inductive approach with deductive thinking to tackle a real-world problem such as the present study. Positivism was needed for the demand side because this study aims to identify the perceptions of potential international tourists about Oman from a large number of respondents, for which quantified data is essential.

Interpretivism is required for the supply side because it helps to understand the views of the Omani tourism providers. Also, it is the most appropriate philosophy to capture the meaning of the phenomenon from people with experience and practice in understanding the reality of the data subjects. The combination of positivism and interpretivism in one paradigm provides a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomena. The choice of research philosophy is justified in Figure (4.1).

Figure 4.1. Research epistemology and justification
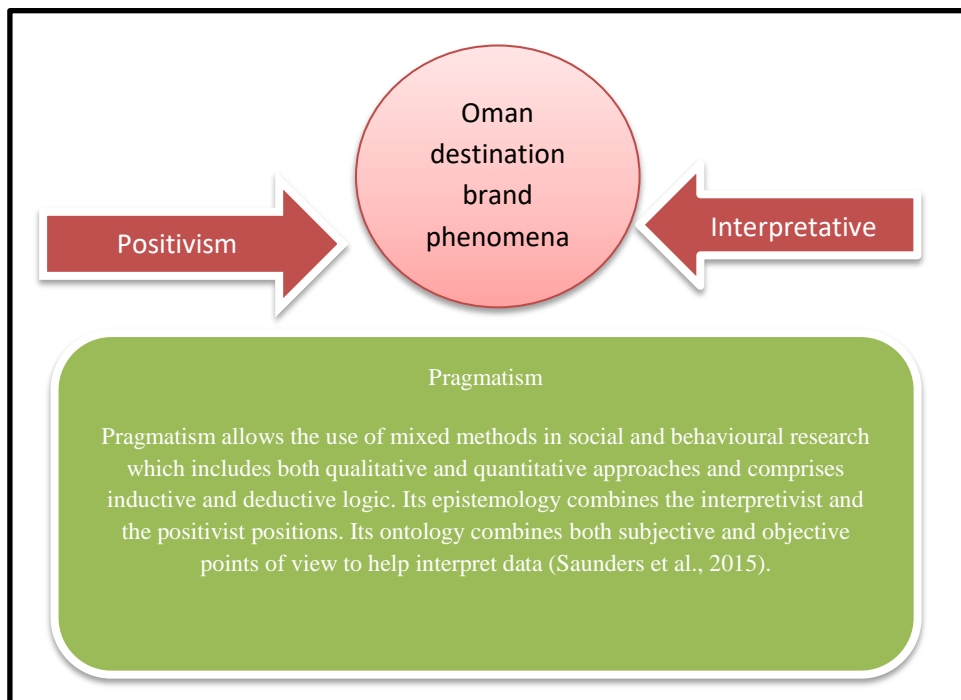
4.3 The Research Approach

Creswell (2013) describes the research approach as plans and steps through which the researcher moves from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. There are three approaches, deductive, inductive and abductive, which impact the research design (Raji Khosla et al., 2012).

4.3.1 Deductive approach

Deductive reasoning works from the more general to the more specific (Wilson, 2008: 44; Shinder and Cross, 2008: 83). Wilson (2008: 44) and Trochim et al. (2015) added that the approach makes use of quantitative measures to develop or test a theory or hypothesis against specific data. It aims for generalisation and requires control over data to allow the testing of a hypothesis.

4.3.2 Inductive approach

Inductive reasoning works the other way, moving from specific observations to broader generalisations and theories (Wilson, 2008: 44; Bhatta, 2013; Bergaus, 2015). It uses a qualitative method to develop theory as a result of data analysis and it focuses on small samples (Pfeiffer, 2008: 43).By its very nature, it is more open-ended and exploratory, particularly in the beginning (Wilson, 2008: 44).

The fundamental differences between deductive and inductive approaches (Pathirage et al., 2008: 5) are displayed in Table (4.2).

Table 4. 2. Differences between deductive and inductive approaches

Deduction	Induction	Study position
Moving from theory to data	Moving from data to theory	This study does not aim to test the theory; it focuses on the relevant literature and theory. It used a research guide which includes the important variables for both demand and supply sides to develop a new theory.
Common with nature sciences and social	Common with social sciences	This study in tourism branding belongs to social science.
A highly structured approach	Flexible structure to permit changes	It used the survey to collect a large number of respondents from the demand side and understand different perceptions from different nationalities. Also, semi-structured interviews were used for the supply side; the researcher was able to change the questions to get the most comprehensive answers.
Explains Causal relationships between variables	Understanding meanings humans attach to events	This study needs better understanding of the perceptions of both demand and supply sides.
Selects samples of sufficient size to generalise conclusions	Less concern with the need to generate	This study generalises to the theory.

Source: Saunders et al., (2007); Pathirage et al. (2008: 5)

4.3.3 Abductive Approach

The abductive approach is fruitful if the researcher's objective is to discover new things or generate new concepts and develop theoretical models, rather than to confirming existing theories (Dubois and Gadde, 2002: 559). DePoy and Gitlin (2015: 7) state that using both deductive and inductive methods is more useful than using either alone, although it depends principally on the experience and intuition of the researcher (Wheeldon and Ahlberg, 2011:117). Abduction is the process of generating ideas (qualitative data) and evaluating hypotheses (quantitative) but in this study evaluates questions (Magnani, 2011).

Wheeldon and Ahlberg (2011:117) added that the abductive approach uses a mixed method through the intersubjectivity of researchers; their understanding is based on sharing meaning. This approach to reasoning encourages testing intuitions theoretically and empirically. In this respect, Dubois and Gadde (2002) and Eastwood et al. (2014) assert that an abductive approach constantly moves from the empirical to the theoretical dimensions of analysis. Table (4.3) compares of the three research approaches.

Table 4. 3. A summarised comparison of the research approaches

Research approach	Starting point	Objective	Findings
Deductive	Beings with a theoretical framework that conclusions from inductive or abductive reasoning.	Tasting theory	Deductively drawn through confirming or falsifying prior hypotheses constitute findings; statistical generalisability
Inductive	Empirical observations	Developing theory	Inductively drawn based on empirical observation constituting findings: Analytical generalisability
Abductive	May start with the real life observation and/ or with pre-perceptions and theoretical knowledge	Developing theory through developing an understanding of a new phenomenon	Abductively drawn through suggesting hypotheses and the application of these hypotheses to the empirical research constitutes findings; Relatively generalisable.

Source: (Kovacs and Spens, 2005, p. 137)

4.3.4 Study Position

Based on the social nature of the research aim and objectives that focus on the perceptions and views of demand and supply side, mixed method abductive approach is used in this study. It comprises both the inductive and deductive philosophical approaches as part of a mixed method, in order to achieve a comprehensive inquiry (Magnani, 2011). Analysis of a large amount of quantitative data helps the researcher to identify the perceptions of potential international tourists (demand side) and their characteristics. Understanding the meaning from the views of the supply side to generate the themes will help to develop a new theory.

4.4 Research Strategy

Research strategy is important in helping the researcher to answer the research questions and meet the objectives (Saunders et al., 2015). The importance of the research strategy is measured by the extent to which it serves the research purpose, objectives and research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2015). This research uses a case study to investigate the tourism brand of Oman in detail and understand Omani authorities' perceptions and opinion. This can help to generate new theory (Lokke and Sorensen, 2014). The research design combines different rational decision-making choices, which relate to the overall intention of the research through exploratory, descriptive and explanatory methods (Babbie, 2015).

4.4.1 Case Study Research

The case study strategy refers to an analysis of people, events, decisions, periods, projects, institutions or other systems which are studied holistically from diverse kinds of perceptions by one or more methods (Crowe et al., 2011; Thomas, 2011). It is useful when the researcher has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). Moreover, a case study has the benefit of gaining a full picture of the phenomenon from which to obtain analytical insight (Thomas and Myers, 2015). This study focuses on the developed model for tourism destination branding using Oman as a single case study. Therefore, it is better to identify and explore different perceptions and opinions of stakeholders about this phenomenon. The study considers supply and demand sides, to explore Omani tourism providers' opinions, and identify and understand the potential tourists' perceptions about Oman. It also identifies the communication gaps between the two sides. For these reasons, the case study strategy was selected.

Case study strategy has been extensively used in tourism research (Ritchie et al., 2005; McCool and Bosak, 2015). The use of case studies is considered appropriate, in order to seek a deep understanding of the complex social phenomena (Rowley, 2002). In addition, Denscombe (2014) believes that case studies focus on one or a few instances of particular phenomena, providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experience or processes occurring in that particular instance. Therefore, the case study is a useful tool in the process of theory development (Lokke and Sorensen, 2014). A case study strategy is used in tourism destination branding because of the need to understand complex social phenomena (Adeyinka-Ojo et al., 2014).

A case study strategy enables the researcher to apply different kinds of research methods depending on the context and the research needs, including single or multiple methods (Yin, 1994). Yin (2003) notes that data for case studies can be collected from many sources, the most common being documents, interviews and questionnaires (Yin, 1994; Ihuah and Eaton, 2013: 940).

Case studies can consider either single or multiple case designs. Single cases are used to confirm or challenge a theory or to represent a unique or extreme case (Tysiachniouk, 2012). They support the researcher in conducting in-depth investigations of the phenomenon through rich description and understanding (Mir and Jain, 2017). Multiple case designs are allow the researcher to obtain data from different sources and to draw conclusions (Adeyinka-Ojo et al.

2014). A case study is a strategy for carrying out research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 2011).

According to Mills et al. (2010:838) and Ishak and Bakar (2014), there are different reasons for using a single case study: first, when a single case represents a critical situation used in testing well-formulated theory to determine whether the theory's propositions are correct; secondly, when the case represents an extreme or unique situation; thirdly, a representative or typical case is used when the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation; fourthly, a revelatory case is used where there is opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation; and finally, when the same single case has to be studied at two or more different points in time.

This study is a single case as described in the classification of Tysiachniouk (2012). The case study consists of three units of analysis: the government of Oman, tourism organisations and potential international tourists. These units have, in turn, sub-units, which are the tourism officials, senior managers, managers and tourists (non-visit, visit); see Figure (4.2).

Based on the discussion above, for this study a single case study approach was adopted with the mixed method approach, in order to obtain in-depth information, understand the research phenomenon and identify potential tourists' perceptions. It is the best choice because it helps the researcher to develop theory (Yin, 2003). Also, as discussed above, a single case study can be adopted when the case is representative or typical.

Figure 4. 2. A Single- Case Design
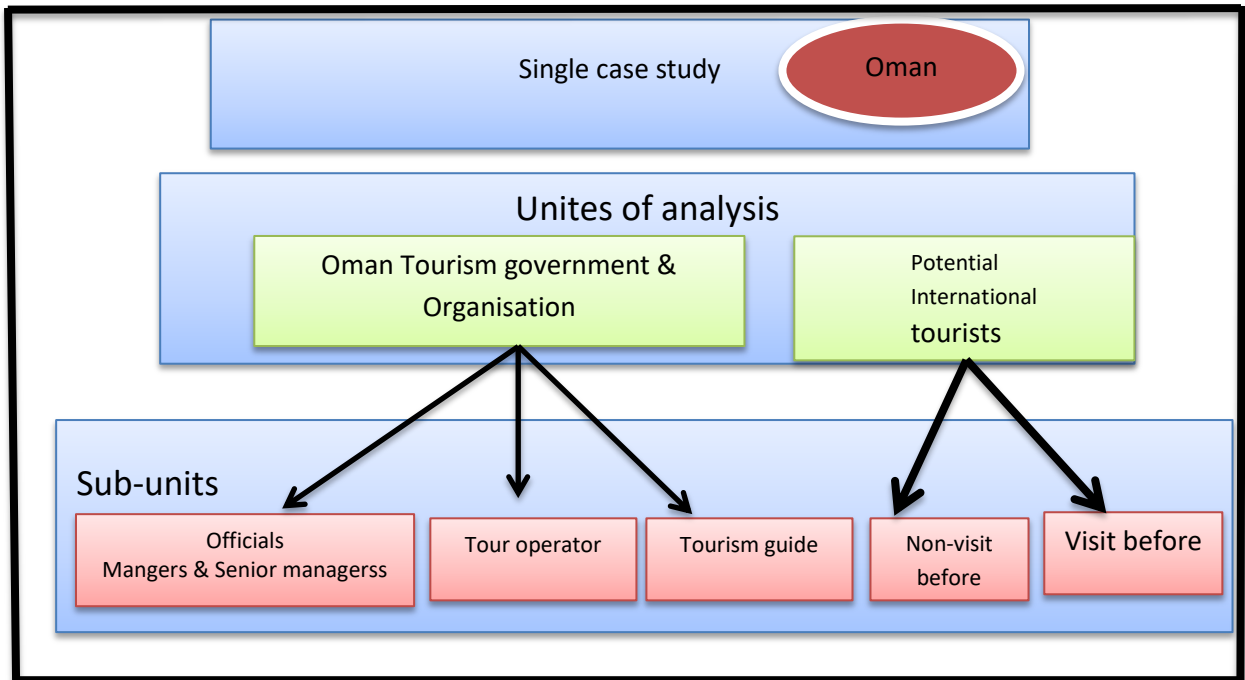
4.5 Research methodology

Methods are techniques of data collection used to obtain results from the research and its analysis (Creswell, 2013). Research methodology is a broad process involving collecting, analysing and interpreting data (William, 2002: 65). William (2002: 65) also asserts there are **three common methods**: quantitative, qualitative and mixed. The researcher anticipates the types of data needed to respond to the **research question**. This study, as a mentioned above, fits within the pragmatism paradigm selected **mixed method** to collect the data. Table (4.4) exhibits the differences among qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods.

Table 4. 4. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach

Typically	Quantitative methods	Qualitative Methods	Mixed method
Uses philosophical assumptions	Positivist Knowledge claims	Interpretivist knowledge claims	Pragmatic knowledge claims
Employs strategies of enquiry	Survey and experiments	Phenomenology, ground theory, ethnography, case study, interviews	Sequential concurrent and transformative
Employs methods	Closed questions predetermined approaches.	Open- ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image data	Both open- and closed- questions, both emerging and predetermined approaches and both quantitative and qualitative data and data analysis.
Uses practices of research as a researcher	Tests or verifies theories or explanations. Identifies explanations. Identifies variables to study. Relates variables in questions or hypotheses. Uses standards of validity and reliability. Observes and measures information numerically. Uses unbiased approaches. Employs statistical procedures.	Collects participant meanings. Brings personal values to the study. Studies the context or setting of participants. Validates the accuracy of the findings, makes interpretations of the data, and creates an agenda for the change of reform. Collaborates with the participants.	Collects both qualitative and quantitative data. Develops a rationale for mixing. Integrates the data at different stages of inquiry. Presents visual pictures of the procedures in the study. Employs the practices of both qualitative and quantitative research.

Source: Creswell, (2009:17)

4.6. Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods are known as the third "methodological movement" (Cameron, 2009; Creswell, 2014). A mixed method is the one whereby a researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or languages, integrating them into a single study. It can give researchers greater understanding of the research problem than separate methods (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004;; Cameron, 2009; Cunha and Manuela, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2015; Riazi, 2016).

Driscoll et al. (2007) assert that mixed method designs can provide pragmatic advantages both inductive and deductive research when exploring complex research questions. Mixed methods can overcome the limitations of single methods (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers

prefer the mixed method approach because it provides a full picture and deeper understanding of the research phenomenon through both traditional qualitative and quantitative research methods (Johnson et al., 2007; Wilson, 2013).

4.6.1 Types of mixed mothods Design

Creswell (2014: 219) identified three basic mixed method strategy designs, as shown in Figure (4.5).

1- A convergent parallel mixed method is a form of mixed method design whereby a researcher merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In this design, the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data and analyses each separately, integrating the derived information into the interpretation of the overall results. The purpose of this design is to best understand or to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem by obtaining different but complementary data (Curry et al., 2013; Creswell, 2014).

2- An explanatory sequential mixed method is one whereby a researcher first conducts quantitative research, analysing the results and then elaborating on them, explaining them in more detail through the qualitative research methodology. It is considered explanatory because the initial quantitative data produces further qualitative data. However, it presents challenges represented by identifying the quantitative results to further explore, and by the unequal sample sizes of each phase of the study (Curry et al., 2013; Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2015).

3- Exploratory sequential mixed method procedures: the researcher first begins with the qualitative research method and then explores the views of the participants. The data are then analysed and the information obtained is used to build a second stage. However, the challenges to design reside in focusing on the appropriate qualitative findings to use and the sample selection for both phases of research. **Figure (4.3)** reveals the mixed method design. **In the context of this study, a convergent parallel mixed method** is applied to examine two perspectives (supply and demand sides) of the potential tourists; together with explanatory and exploratory procedures on qualitative data from Omani tourism providers to develop a new theory as the main aim of this study.

Figure 4. 3. Basic Mixed Method Design

Convergent parallel mixed methods (**Study Position)**

Quantitative method Data collection **and** analysis (Demand side)

Qualitative method Data collection and analysis (Supply side)

Compare or relate

Interpretation

Explanatory sequential mixed method

Quantitative data collection and analysis

Follow up with

Qualitative data collection and analysis

Interpretation

Exploratory sequential mixed method

Qualitative data collection and analysis

Builds to

Quantitative data collection and analysis

Interpretation

Source: Creswell (2014:220) &Saunders et al (2015:170)

4.6.2 Choice of research method

The decision to apply a mixed research method should be based on a number of reasons such as the research aim and questions, and the type of data the study needs (Saunders et al., 2015). This study applied a convergent parallel mixed method. After the data was collected and analysed separately, the findings of the two methods were compared; their interpretation is presented in chapter seven. Figure (4.4) displays how mixed methods were applied in this study.

This study is guided by:

The aim of this study is to develop a model for tourism destination branding using Oman as a case study. This will be achieved by examining the Omani context and its characteristics

from the perspectives of potential tourists **(demand side)** and the Omani tourism providers **(supply side).**

The study questions:

Q1- What are the Oman tourism **suppliers' perceptions** of the tangible and intangible attributes that can be used for developing the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination?

Q2- What are the **perceptions** of the intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by **potential international tourists**?

Q3- What communication **gaps exist between the supply side and demand side** regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity?

This study chose quantitative for the demand side because it needs a large number of respondents to identify their perceptions toward Oman as a tourism destination; this cannot be achieved by any other method.

On the other hand, this study needs more in-depth information from specific groups of people who have experience, and more detail related to the Omani brand, therefore semi-structured interviews were selected to extract data from the supply side. This cannot be achieved by questionnaire or any other method.

Figure 4. 4. Mixed method research in this study
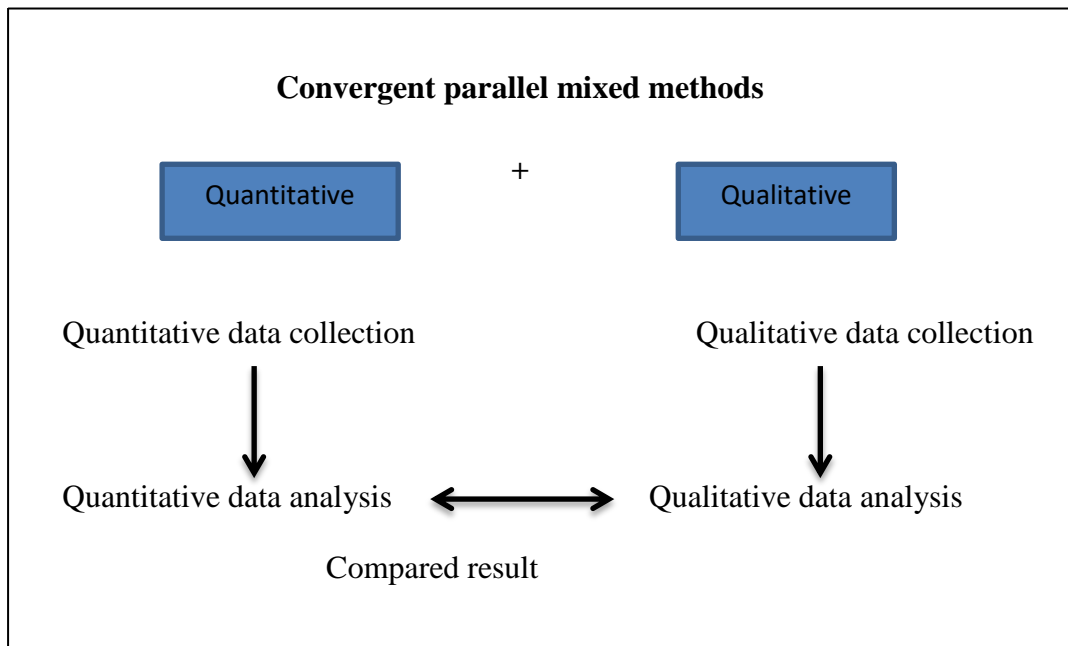
4.7 Quantitative Research Method

Quantitative research methods attempt to maximise objectivity, reliability and generalisability of the findings and are typically interested in prediction (Harwell, 2011). This research method is linked with figures and statistics and referred to as positivist and deductive (Pelto, 2017). As mentioned above, the purpose of the applied quantitative research method is to identify the demand-side perceptions, opinions, and behaviour toward Oman as a tourism destination brand and generalise results from a large sample (Nardi, 2018).

Quantitative research is about quantifying relationships between variables, which are features like weight, performance, time and treatment. They measure a sample of subjects which can be tissues, cells, animals or humans (Hopkins, 2008). The other reason for using quantitative research in this study is to determine the relationship between a factor (a dependent or outcome variable) and another one (an independent variable) in a population (Creswell, 2013).The relationship between variables can be expressed by using statistics such as correlations, relative frequencies, or differences between means (Hopkins, 2008).

Quantitative research, including surveys and customer questionnaires, can help organisations to improve their products and services by enabling them to make informed decisions. Quantitative research is about asking people's opinions in a structured manner so that a

researcher can obtain facts and statistics to guide him/her to get reliable statistical results; it is important to survey people in reasonably large numbers and to make sure that they are a representative sample of the target market (Kothari, 2012; Saunders et al., 2015; Nardi, 2018). This study needs to identify a large number of different perceptions from the demand side, which can not be achieved by qualitative methods.

However, quantitative research does not study phenomena in a natural setting or discuss the meanings things have for different people, as doe's qualitative research. The larger the sample of people researched, the more statistically accurate the results will be (Ramona, 2011).

4.7.1 Data collection tools

The selection of data collection tools depends on the type of research design, resource availability and the time available for the study (Denscombe, 2014; Suresh, 2015). It must be based on clearly identified objectives to ensure that the tools are appropriate to the objectives (Denscombe, 2014). As the current study is concerned to develop a model for tourism destination branding using Oman as a case study, a questionnaire was used to collect demand-side data, and semi-structured interviews for the supply side.

4.7.2 Survey

The questionnaire is a common instrument for collecting data beyond the physical reach of the observer (Keating, 2012; Curry et al., 2009; Malec, 2018). It is widely used for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher and often being comparatively straight forward to analyse data (Cohen et al., 2013; Nardi, 2018). It can reach a large sample of the target population in order to obtain their views, perspectives, perceptions, experiences and feelings about Oman as a holiday destination. However, questionnaires should not be too long or complicated and they should make it easy for the respondents to give answers that reflect their true opinions (Malhotra, 2006).

This study adopted a self-completion questionnaire as a tool to identify the perceptions and attitudes of potential international tourists towards Oman as a tourism destination, because it needs different perceptions, from different nationalities (except Omani people), different ages and geographical areas such school staff, universities, cities, etc. Also, it is easy to access a

large number of potential tourist's responses with rich data. This made it difficult to adopt interviews or focus groups for the demand side.

The survey design was similar to that of the measurement system developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). The constructs of image attributes gathered from previous studies (Chapter Two) were used in asking potential tourists to express their perceived images of Oman, rating each of the image attributes. Some closed questions gave respondents the opportunity to add any extra information. The questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to complete. It was structured in 2 parts (people visit and non-visit before). The full questionnaire is attached in Appendix (2).

Table (4.5). Questionnaire constructs

Research objective	O2- To identify the perceptions of intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by the potential International tourists (the demand side).	
Construct	Questionnaire constructs and related measurement items	Sources adopted
Tourist travel experience	**Q1-(Have you visited the Sultanate of Oman before?)** This is a general question, whose purpose is to identify respondents' perspectives and distinguished between organic image and induced image in terms of experience.	(Gunn, 1972; Lopes, 2011).
1-Post-visit perceptions (experiential images)		
Brand image:	**Cognitive image of Oman (tangible attributes):** Q2-How many times, previously, have you visited Oman? Q3-What was the main reason for your visit? Q4-What influenced you to visit Oman for your last trip? Q5-Which places did you visited in Oman? Q9-Compared to other destinations that you visited, how do you compare Oman's to these destinations?	Heung et al., 2001; Woodside &Martin, 2007: Han et al., 2015: Koubaa, 2008; Aziz et al.,2012; Han et al.,2015
	-Affective image (intangible attributes): Q6-How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you experienced while visiting Oman? Q7- Did your trip to Oman meet your expectations? Q8-Which of the following would give a positive emotion to you in relation to Oman? Q11-Would you recommend Oman to your friends or relatives	Echtner& Ritichie (1999, 1993: Halliburton &Poenaru, 2010; Atakora, 2014: Valle, et al., 2006; Hsu& Cai, 2009; Ahmed, 2014; Hobbs& Lassoued, 2015: Haarhoff &Gany, 2017).
2-Evaluation of Oman's image from both visitors' and non-visitors' perceptions		
Brand awareness: (The awareness of the Oman brand (logo).	**Q12-What does this logo suggests to you?** -Nature. -Desert. -Mountain. -Sun. - Water. - Other, please specific……. **Q13-Which of the following attributes do you think are associated with the Omani logo?** -Simple. -Attractive. -Memorable. -Conceptual. -Funny. -Safety. Popular. Versatile. -Other, please specific	(Rodriguez et al., 2013:Mindrut et al., 2015; Kelly, 2017)
Brand image	**(The questions concerned the images or characteristics, which are most readily associated with Oman in potential tourists mind).** Q14-Thinking of Oman as a tourist destination, please state if you agree or not with the following statements. (Include 37 attributes on a scale). Q15- What are the main reasons you would visit Oman? Q 17-What would be the main concerns that would deter you from choosing Oman as a holiday destination? Q 18-What image comes to your mind when hearing about Oman?	Baloglu and McCleary,1999; Echtner and Ritchie 1993; Jenkins 1999; Huh, 2006; Lopes,2011;Qu et al. 2011; Tibon, 2012; Ayyildiz and Turna, 2013; Toska et al. 2013).
	Comparison of Oman with other Arab Countries. **Respondents were invited to answer the these questions if they could:** Do you believe that Oman differs from other Arab countries? -In your own opinion, what is Oman's key differentiator as a tourist destination, relative to other Arab countries?	Porter,1985; Rondeau et al., 2000; Koufteros et al., 2002; Miller et al., 2008;Gebauer et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2011)
Moderating Variables	Age, gender, employment status, level of education and nationality.	(Lopes, 2011)

4.7.3 Survey questionnaire design

Creswell (2014) observes that there are questions for a survey instrument to satisfy if it is to meet the minimum methodological guidelines (see Table (4.6) below).

Table 4. 6. Checklist for the survey method

(Creswell checklist questions)	Common
Is the purpose of the survey design clearly stated?	Yes. A self- completion questionnaire as a tool to examine the image of Oman in the international market.
Is the reason for choosing the design mentioned?	Yes, this research seeks to understand the demand-side attitudes toward Oman as a tourism destination. The survey was the best way to identify the perceptions of potential international tourists. It helps the study to collect a large number of responses in a short time at a low cost.
Is the nature of the survey identified?	Yes, to identify and understand the attitudes and perceptions of potential tourists toward Oman as a tourism destination. The survey adopted a similar approach to that of the measurement system developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993); it examines the attributes based on the components of the image. The attributes were selected after reviewing past studies (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Jenkins, 1999; Huh, 2006; Qu et al., 2011; Tibon, 2012; Ayyildiz and Turna, 2013; Toska et al., 2013); see Table (2.3). The researcher reviewed these studies on destination image measurement to examine the image of Oman.
Is the population together with its size mentioned?	Yes, this study adopted a self-completion questionnaire as a tool to identify the perceptions and attitudes of potential international tourists towards Oman as a tourism destination. Itneeds a large number of respondents and was therefore the best way to collect information from general people in the street, office, shop and coffee shop, etc. It gives the researcher a chance to meet respondents, who can ask any question they do not understand. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants from different academic institutions in the UK: the University of Salford, Manchester University, Teesside University, Liverpool University, Temple Primary School, Abraham Moss Community School (High Phase), the Libyan Society in Manchester; and Nero and Costa coffee shops. The population was from nineteen nationalities, more males than females, most of them educated (master degree) and in employment.
Will the population be stratified? If so, how?	For the quantitative data, non-probability sampling techniques are used to achieve the research objectives. Convenience sampling techniques are chosen because of their accessibility.
How many people will be involved in the sample? On what basis was this size chosen?	The population of this study was 430 respondents, comprising two groups: include two groups 38 had visited Oman and 392 had not. The minimum sample size required here was calculated using the following formula (Saunders et al., 2015: 281:283): Actual Sample Size= (Minimum sample size)*100 -------------------------------------- Estimated response rate expressed in %.
What will be the procedure for sampling these individuals (e.g. random, Non-random)?	The researcher asked all respondents to complete the survey. The sample of the respondents based on convenience is chosen for this study because of the virtue of its accessibility.
What instrument will be used in the survey? Who developed the instrument?	Self-completion questionnaire. The survey adopted a similar approach to that of the measurement system developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993); it examines the attributes based on the components of the image. The attributes were selected after reviewing past studies (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Jenkins, 1999; Huh, 2006; Qu et al., 2011; Tibon, 2012; Ayyildiz and Turna, 2013; Toska et al., 2013); see Table (2.3). The researcher reviewed these studies on destination image measurement to examine the image of Oman.
What are the content areas addressed in the survey? The scales?	This study adopted two types of validity, internal and external validity. Internal validity comprised content and criterion validity. For external validity the Pearson test was applied for discernment validity. The study also employed Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency reliability, where the values are 0.963.
What procedure will be used to pilot or field test the survey?	The survey was tested by PhD students. A pilot study helped the researcher to check the time required to complete the questionnaire, and to provide the researcher with feedback..
What is the timeline for administering the survey?	This survey needs 10-13minutes to complete..
What are the variables of the study?	All survey questions are analysed. Questions that serve as key variables, these variables are cited in research questions (brand image components).
How do these variables cross-reference with the research questions and items on the survey?	In this study the researcher made sure that the survey questions met the research objective of examining the demand-side perceptions. Survey is a good tool for examining potential tourists' attitudes but the problem is some respondents do not answer all questions. These questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because of missing data.

Source: Creswell (2014:156,157)

4.7.4 Sampling and population

Sampling means considering a part of a whole population (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers need to adopt a more meaningful term for the sample, in this case the "target population" (Saunders et al., 2016). In this study, the target population for the quantitative method is potential international tourists, while for the qualitative method it is Omani tourism providers involved in the branding process and responsible for marketing Omani tourism.

4.7.4.1 Sampling techniques

A sample is a social group of the chosen population or individual units of analysis that form the basis for sampling (Wilmot, 2005). It refers to all the elements from which the information is gathered in order to solve a particular research problem (Suresh et al., 2011; Fowler, 2013). When conducting research, it is important to select respondents who are a true representation of the population (Wilmot, 2005; Hinton, 2014). There are three factors researchers need to consider when using samples: the nature of the research questions, the time available (qualitative research is less time consuming than quantitative research), and the characteristics of the population from which the sample is taken (Suresh et al., 2011; Saunders et al., 2015; Ahmed et al., 2016). The sample size for quantitative research is based on a large number of respondents, and the emphasis is on generating statistical data. The qualitative research sample size is based on a relatively smaller number of respondents (Troilo, 2015). There are two main kinds of sampling technique in social research: probability or representative sampling, and non-probability sampling (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Saunders et al., 2015).

4.7.4.2 Probability sampling

This is usually used in surveys where the researcher needs to draw conclusions from the sample about a population; thus, it is most often used in quantitative research (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Saunders et al., 2015). It accepts that each element of the population has a chance of being selected (Saunders et al., 2015). Probability sampling forms include simple random, systematic, stratified and cluster sampling, all of which are generally employed for quantitative-based studies (Saunders et al., 2016).

* Random sampling: Each member of the population is equally likely to be chosen. It is characterised by its ease of use and accurate representation of the larger population (Gravetter and Forzano, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2015).

* Systematic sampling is frequently chosen for its simplicity and good quality. It is very easy to construct and can be performed manually; moreover, it can provide researchers with a degree of control and a sense of the process. It less costly and more time-efficient (Black, 2010). However, if the sample is taken over time, it will be biased as not all members have an equal chance of being selected, and this may lead to under-representation of a particular pattern (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Black, 2010; Saunders et al., 2015).

* Stratified sampling is used when the researcher wants to highlight a specific sub-group within the population. This technique is useful because it ensures the presence of the key sub-groups within the sample (Saunders et al., 2015).

*Cluster sampling is a technique whereby clusters of participants that represent the population are identified and included in the sample; it is easy to use (Jackson, 2012). However, instead of selecting all the subjects from the entire population at the outset, the researcher takes several steps in gathering the sample population. It is used when economically justified, such as when reduced costs can be used to overcome losses in precision (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Jackson, 2012; Stamatis, 2012).

4.7.4.3 Non-probability sampling

Non-probability sampling is often cheaper, less resource-intensive and is used in situations where probability sampling techniques are either infeasible or unnecessary (Juan et al., 2015). Non-probability sampling does not involve random selection, and is generally employed in qualitative exploratory research (Babbie, 2001; Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Guetterman, 2015; Saunders et al., 2015). This technique contains convenience, judgemental, quota, and snowball sampling (Guetterman, 2015).

* Quota sampling
This is similar to random stratified sampling in that both select units from the strata chosen (Gray, 2014). It can be defined as a sampling method for gathering representative data from a group (Jackson, 2012), where the aim is to represent the major characteristics of the population by sampling a proportional amount of each. However, the quota frame in each

category must be accurate; this is difficult to realise because it may be hard to find up-to-date information on certain topics (Babbie, 2001; Saunders et al., 2015).

* Purposive sampling

This is known as judgement, selective or subjective sampling. The researcher selects the sample based on his or her judgement about some appropriate characteristics required by the sampling members (de Leeuw et al., 2008). However, as this sampling is not random, it may be open to selection bias and error. The aim of purposive sampling is to focus on the particular characteristics of a population that are of interest to the researcher and that best enable him/her to answer the research questions (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Saunders et al., 2015).

*Snowball sampling

This is a common method used when it is difficult to identify all the elements included within the population (Saunders et al, 2015) or the study sample is limited to a very small sub-group of the population (Suresh, 2015). Studies that involve the application of this particular sampling technique claim that it can be completed within a short time (Bryman and Teevan, 2005). However, the researcher has little control over the sampling method, and it is not possible to determine the actual pattern of the population distribution (Salganik and Heckathorn, 2004). It is used when the researcher is unable to identify the appropriate participants to be interviewed. Its call snowball sampling because the process that starts first from small state and build itself becomes bigger and bigger (Woodley& Lockard,2016).

* Self-selection sampling

This is a popular sampling technique in many areas of science that require human subjects, as well as human trials within the pharmaceutical industry. It is an effective sampling strategy in experimental research settings (Bryman and Teevan, 2005).

* Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling relies on data collection from people who are conveniently available (Woodley& Lockard, 2016). The researcher uses the means available to study a particular subject. A convenience sampling procedure allows the researcher to be opportunistic, basing his research on defined sampling criteria (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). Numerous researchers prefer this sampling technique because it is fast, inexpensive and easy and the subjects are readily available (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Suresh, 2015). The advantage is the high

accessibility to respondents; thus, it is the sampling technique that best meets the research needs for large and various respondents. Data collection can be facilitated in a short time. However, many researchers did not encourage to adopted convenience method because inability to generalise research finding.

4.7.4.4 Sample selection process

The selected samples must be representative in order to allow the researcher to generalise the research findings and results. In order to address what or who to sample, it is important to consider the aim of the study. For this study two non-probability sampling techniques is selected because it based on mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative): convenience and purposive sampling.

The focus of the study is to develop a model for tourism destination branding using Oman as a case study, requiring sufficient representation and a balance of knowledge and experience. Specifically, this study collected primary data related to customers' perceptions of Oman as a tourism destination.

For the quantitative study, **convenience sampling** was chosen instead of random sampling because of time constraints and accessibility, enabling the researcher to survey a large number of respondents from different nationalities in a short time. This included stopping people in the street or surveying friends and colleagues (Babbie, 2001); that is the researcher can use any subject available to participate in the research study. In fact, the researcher distributed the questionnaire in public places such as coffee shops, schools and university offices. Convenience sampling is usually used in market studies because of it easy for the researcher to obtain large amounts of data very quickly (Ebrahim et al., 2016). Therefore, this method was the most appropriate sampling technique for this study.

4.7. 4.5 Sample size

Determining the appropriate sample size is a very important a step because it has been concluded that the larger the sample size can improve generalisation of study findings, and help minimise sampling error (Wang and Park, 2016).

For the quantitative method, the suggested sample size was 500 respondents (Gillbert, 1988; Saunders et al., 2015; Sherrie, 2015). This provides a 95% confidence interval with a margin

of error of ±5%. The minimum sample size required for a population between 500,000 and 1,000,000 is 384 (Saunders et al., 2015: 281).

4.7. 4.6 Response rate for the questionnaire

In the research context, "population" refers to all the members of any defined group to which the research results apply (Mishra, 2009).

The questionnaire was distributed to the participants from different academic institutions in the UK: the University of Salford, Manchester University, Teesside University, Liverpool University, Temple Primary School, Abraham Moss Community School (High Phase), the Libyan Society in Manchester; and Nero and Costa coffee shops. It was distributed manually over 24 days in May 2016, to individual respondents who were monitored by the respondent while they completed it.

The sample includes people with various backgrounds and nationalities. 600 questionnaires were distributed among the potential international tourists. 430 usable questionnaires were completed and returned. 112 questionnaires had been not returned. 58 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because of a large amount of missing data. This represents at72% response rate; see Table (4.7).

Table 4. 7. Response rate of the questionnaire

Questionnaire	Distributed	Returned	Response rate
Measure the image of Oman in international market	600	430	72%

4.7.4.7 Justification for selecting international potential tourists

The present study has chosen potential international tourists to represent a broader range of visitors to Oman from different regions, backgrounds and nationalities. Furthermore, international tourists may have different preferences for Oman's attributes; they may also have various perceptions of Oman's image and diverse expectations of a certain destination. In tourism destination, attributes may be perceived differently by tourists of different cultures coming from different countries. Thus, their evaluation of the important attributes of Oman's image might be more valuable than that of one particular group of tourists. Similar studies

have examined international tourists (Sonmezand Graefe, 1998; Chon, 1990; Henkel et al., 2006; Baromey, 2008; Philemon, 2015).

4.7.5 Pre-testing (piloting) the questionnaire

When the questionnaire was developed, great care was taken to ensure that the wording of the questionnaire was clear, simple and easy to comprehend without compromising the objectives of the study. However, an essential step that was taken before data collection was the pilot study. Piloting study allows the researcher to identify any poorly worded questions, questions that might be considered offensive or questions that might have revealed the researcher's bias (Wimmer and Dominick, 2010). It also examined whether the expected time required to complete the questionnaire of ten minutes was sufficient and to ensure that the respondents had no difficulty in understanding the questions. The ultimate objective was to promote the reliability and validity of the study. A pilot study enables the researcher to develop, adapt, or check the techniques' feasibility, determine the reliability of the measures and/or specify the size of the final sample. The pilot study should follow the same sampling procedure and techniques as the large study (Hopkins, 2010; Thabane et al., 2010).

The survey used in this project was pilot-tested on 20 PhD students from the University of Salford Business School, since they are potential tourists and provide feedback. The questionnaire was self-administered. Only 11 questionnaires were returned, with no negative comments; the participants agreed that it took no more than ten minutes to complete. The researcher was satisfied with this number because all the 11 respondents agreed that the questions were clear and the time was reasonable. One student found the last column in question 14 (I don't know) unimportant, especially at the end of the table (see Appendix 1). The researcher agreed with this comment because there is "neither" in the scale. The data collection process began after the questionnaire was finalised.

4.7.6 Validity and reliability

The use of validity and reliability is common in quantitative methodology for good and convincing results (Golafshani, 2003).

4.7.6.1 Validity

The data collection instrument is valid if it measures what it is intended to measure (Sullivan, 2011; Zohrabi, 2013). In relation to research strategy, there are two types of validity: internal and external. External validity indicates the extent of generalisation of the findings. It was achieved through examining discernment and convergent validity (Chapter Five). Internal validity demonstrates how a study's design excludes errors (Zohrabi, 2013).

According to Creswell (2014), there are three types of internal validity for surveys:

1- Content validity, which is concerned with the extent to which the measurement scale appears to measure the characteristics that it is supposed to measure.
2- Criterion validity, which is the ability of the questions to make accurate predictions.
3- Construct validity, which is a measure that refers to the extent to which the questions measure the presence of the constructs that the researcher intended to measure within the intended interpretation of the variables.

In this study, all three forms of validity were determined in order to confirm the validity of the research. The survey adopted a similar approach to that of the measurement system developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993); it examines the attributes based on the components of the image. The attributes were selected after reviewing past studies (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Jenkins, 1999; Huh, 2006; Qu et al., 2011; Tibon, 2012; Ayyildiz and Turna, 2013; Toska et al., 2013); see Table (2.3). The researcher reviewed these studies on destination image measurement to examine the image of Oman. The supervisor assessed the relevance of the content in the questionnaire and interview questions and gave his feedback to the researcher. Table (4.5) displays a checklist for the survey method.

4.7.6. 2 Reliability

Andrew et al. (2011) defined reliability as the extent to which a research instrument yields findings that are consistent each time it is administered to the same subjects. To achieve a high level of reliability, the researcher employed a mixed method approach (qualitative and

quantitative research methods) in data collection. In addition, the study used Cronbach's alpha to assess reliability for survey measurements.

There are several approaches to assessing reliability of scale (Drost, 2011; Saunders et al., 2015), such as test-re-test, which is obtained by correlating data collected with those derived from the same questionnaire under near-equivalent conditions; internal consistency; and alternative form. They are used to assess the consistency of a measure from one time to another. Internal consistency involves correlating the responses to questions in the questionnaire with one another as it involves the consistency of responses to a set of questions that are combined as a scale. In addition, alternative form entails comparing responses to alternative forms of the same question or groups of questions,

This study used internal consistency as an approach to assess reliability because the other two approaches are difficult to adopt; for example, in the test-re-test approach people find it difficult to answer the same questionnaire twice (Saunders et al., 2015). Internal consistency reliability was used to assess the level of correlation between items of measurement (Saunders et al., 2015).

This study employed Cronbach's alpha, widely used to measure internal consistency, by examining the construct of the questionnaire as part of factor analysis (see Chapter Five). According to Wong (2013), the lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70 but it can be lowered to 0.6 in exploratory research. Table (4.8) summarises the results of internal reliability of the scales using Cronbach's alpha, where the values are 0.963. This is above 0.7, implying that the findings are reliable and the constructs (items) in the scale consistent and can be referred for further study.

Table 4. 8. Reliability statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.963	430

4.7.7 Quantitative data analysis and statistical methods

As already mentioned, the questionnaire covered two groups: people who have visited Oman before and people who have never been. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 was used to analyse the quantitative data. The chapter on analysis is divided into three parts: people who have visited Oman, the comparison between visitors and non-visitors, and the whole sample. The descriptive statistical analysis of the data in terms of frequencies and percentages summarises the demographics of the study population, in a simple way.

This study applied parametric tests to identify the difference between the two groups: T-test and ANOVA test. Factor analysis was used to identify demand-side perceptions. Maximum likelihood was used to estimate the factor loading and to improve the resolution.

Cross-tabulation was used to discover if there is any relation between variables such as Oman brand and education level, or physical atmosphere. The Pearson Correlation test was used to measure the external validity.

Table 4. 9 Summarise the tests used for quantitative analysis

Test name	Use for
Descriptive statistical	To describe the collected data in terms of frequencies and percentages.
T- test and ANOVA test	To identify differences between visitors and non-visitors.
Factor analysis	To identify the demand- side characteristics.
Maximum likelihood	To estimate the factor loading and to improve the resolution.
Cross- tabulation	To discover any relationships between variables.
Pearson Correlation	To identify the strength of the correlation between variables.

4.8 Qualitative research method

A qualitative study can be defined as an investigative process of understanding a human or social issue or problem (Abdulai and Ansah, 2014; Creswell, 2014). The aim of the qualitative research method is to develop concepts that can help us to understand people's perceptions and attitudes in particular situations (Kelly, 2010). Qualitative techniques were conducted for the supply side in order to produces detailed descriptions of Omani tourism providers' feelings, opinions and experiences (Creswell, 2014), and discover themes from which to develop theory.

Creswell (2014) states that in a qualitative study a theory may come into sight through the data collection and consequent data analysis stage, or be incorporated in later stages as a way

of comparing and contrasting results with other theories. Qualitative researchers view knowledge as constructed, in that it is established through the meanings attached to the phenomena studied (Atieno, 2009; Harwell, 2011; Morris, 2011). The process of qualitative research involves questions and procedures where data is collected from the interviwees and analysis inductively builds theory (Al-Busaidi, 2008; Kelly, 2010; Creswell, 2013).

4.8. 1 Semi-Structured interviews

In order to achieve the research aim and objectives, it was essential to interview informed Omani providers who have more experience and knowledge about Oman's tourism brand. Before conducting the interviews the researcher discussed the research aim and objectives and the importance of the study to the Omani tourism sector, to encourage interviewees to give more detail related to the Oman brand.

Semi-structured interviews support the researcher to:

- Gain a better understanding of the research context and to find out the central themes that need to be focused on.
- Develop the theory which is the main aim of this study as mentioned above.
- Explore the brand attributes involved in the projected Omani image and identify the communication marketing tools which Oman authoritie chose to communicate with the target market.

The term semi-structured interview refers to an interview technique which allows a researcher to use a relatively flexible questioning approach (Gill et al., 2008; Saunders et al., 2007, 2016). A semi-structure interview has specified and predetermined questions, at the same time allowing the researcher to delve further through discussion (Huss, 2008). This allows the investigator to provide clarification, and the data generated will be rich and qualitative (Gill et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews explore participants' subjective meaning, allowing them to talk in depth about their experience (Braun and Clarke, 2013: Austin& Sutton, 2014). They enable the researcher to modify questions, and participants can add any information as they remember it (Austin& Sutton, 2014). The interview questions guide is listed **in Appendix 4**.

The semi-structured interview approach enables the researcher to guide the line of questioning and to collect data about the research topic systematically; nevertheless, the

open-ended nature of the questions is flexible enough to explore the specific relevant issues that arise (Kapila and Lyon, 1994). The meeting needs to be held in an appropriate environment, in terms of the time and place (Austin& Sutton, 2014). Researchers prefer semi-structured interviews because questions are prepared in advance, but can be modified to encourage interviewees and interviewer to communicate. However, interviewing skills are required to keep timing (Austin& Sutton, 2014).

With variety of research methods and the rise of technology, many more possibilities could be explored for qualitative research, such as Skype for remote face-to-face interaction (Sullivan, 2012; Deakin and Wakefield, 2013). Its free communication service provides the opportunity for calling, seeing messages and sharing with people whoever they are (Janghorban et al., 2013).

Weller (2015) argued that using communication programs like Skype mimics face-to-face interaction. It can produce data as reliable and in-depth as that produced by personal encounters (Deakin and Wakefield, 2013), but it offers the researcher and the participant more flexibility, is less costly and more time efficient (Janghorban et al., 2013; Redlich-Amirav and Higginbottom, 2014). It was also chosen for this study because of the visa issue, as a useful replacement for traditional face-to-face interviews. Table (4.10) Mapping research objectives (**1&3**), interviews constructs and related sources.

Table (4.10) Mapping research objectives, interviews constructs and related sources

Research Objectives	Construct	Construct and measurements	Reference
1-To identify the tangible and intangible attributes that currently contribute to the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination.	Brand Identity of Oman -Brand identiy attributes. -Logo - Problem facing Oman brand.	**-Can** you tell me about Oman's destination brand? -What destination attributes do you associate with your brand? **-Do** you feel the elements being branded accurately reflect your country's identity? -**Talking about**" identity" as the identification of the country in the mind of people, in branding Oman, which concept stands out in your brand message? Why? -**What** identity does Oman destination brand aim to project about Oman? -**Was** your brand logo pre-tested to ensure that it clearly reflects the desired image and experience of the destination? **-Do** you feel that you have been successful in creating your desired image -**What** is this that it makes you unique, and different from your competitors? -**What is** this that it makes you unique, and different from your competitors? **-When** we talk about Challenges that face Oman tourism, Are there any problems facing the brand of Oman?	Fakeye & Crompton 1991; Gartner 1993: Kirmani, 2000: Hankinson, 2004: Williams et al., 2004; Blain el al., 2005 ; Risitano, 2005: Kotler; 2006; Keller and Lehmann, 2006; 2007; Aaker Kapferer,2008; Baker, ,2009 ; Kavaratzis, 2009; Kozak and Baloglu, 2010; Qu et al.,2011 ; Kapferer, 2012; Zhiyan et al., 2013 Schaar, 2013 ; Ahmed and Fatawu, 2014; Jiang, 2014.
3-To analyse the potential communication gaps between supply and demand regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity effectively	Communication -Noise. -Marketing tools. -Target market.	**-How** you communicate with your customer? **-What** message is being delivered through your brand? **-Do** any factors prevent your message to reach your customer? **-How** do you believe that potential tourist's perceived Oman? **-What** do you do to identify your target audience?	Smith et al., 1999 ; Cai, 2002:Wu and Newell, 2003; Ryan and Conover, 2004;Fill, 2005; Panda, 2006;Minkiewicz et al., 2007; Ghodeswar, 2008; McCabe, 2010;Brunello, Kapferer, 2008& 2012; Tsiotsou and Goldsmith`s ,2012; 2013;Basan et al., 2013;Johansson and Carlson, 2014;Rosenbaum-Elliott et al.,2015; Schultz et al.,2015.

4.8.2 Sampling selection process for qualitative method

As discussed above, there are different methods of sampling. It is essential to interview Omani providers who are informed and have more experience and knowledge about Oman's tourism brand. Thus, purposive sampling is most appropriate (Gray, 2014). Purposive samples are used when a particular group of people is chosen because the group members are known to provide important information that could not be gained by other sampling design techniques (Gary, 2016). This technique is widely used in the qualitative method (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling aims to select a small number of subjects, usually no more than 30, from whom to obtain in-depth information (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Guetterman, 2015). This study interviewed 14 Omani tourism providers (managers, senior managers, guides and tour operators) who are part of the process of developing the brand; their experience provides information that helps understand the phenomena thoroughly, as they are responsible for marketing Oman internationally. Therefore, purposive sampling was the most appropriate.

The questions prepared in advance covered:
- The destination brand attributes.
- Brand identity of Oman in tourism market.
- Communication marketing tools, and target market.
- Challenges facing tourism branding in Oman.

4.8.3 Pilot study of interview questions

Pilot studies can be referred to as a small scale version of feasibility studies; one of their advantages is that they may serve as a warning about where the main researcher could fail (Williams, 2014; Salkind, 2010). The goal for using an interview pilot study is to identify problems in the design of questions, and to ensure that all questions were understandable and relevant (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2010). This stage helps the researcher to gain experience and practice in interviewing techniques. The researcher arranged pilot interviews with three Arab colleagues, PhD students in the Salford Business School, who acted as Omani tourism providers to check the questions. The researcher asked them to record the conversations to help her to refine the questions and to manage the interviews correctly. Their feedback and comments were useful in modifying the queries and removing repetition, and in managing the time. The researcher did two pilot interviews first than modified the questions

and did the third pilot interview. This was successful and the researcher was able to handle the time.

4.8.4 Validity and reliability of qualitative interviews

Reliability refers to the application of a researcher's approach that is consistent across different researchers and projects (Creswell, 2014). To guarantee reliability in qualitative research, a test of trustworthiness is crucial (Golafshani, 2003). The validity and reliability of data depend on the design of the research questions' structure, and the success of the pilot study (Silverman, 2009; Hennink, 2014; Saunders et al., 2015). In qualitative method, no statistical tests for reliability and validity as in quantitative method. According to Linclon and Cuba (1985, cited in Loh, 2013); and Korstjens and Moser, 2018), for the qualitative method the researcher should consider four criteria: credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. These aspects have been applied to this study, as illustrated in Table (4.11).

Table 4. 11. Qualititive data quality

Credibility (internal validity): refers to the trustworthiness of the finding	-This study applied mixed methods; interviews are used for supply-side and a questionnaire survey for the demand side as an appropriate solution for increased reliability and validity. -The researcher spent more than one hour with each interviewee to make sure the respondents answered all questions. - The same questions were asked in different ways. Moreover, the interview questions are designed to support the research objectives; each is explained to each participant in order to make sure that all questions are answered in the same way. -This study was discussed with my supervisor to gain from her experience and opinion. -Every interview was translated and transcribed word by word, checking the transcripts to make sure that they contained no obvious mistakes.
Transferability (external validity): refers to the result being generalised.	- This study conducted interviews with different individual Omani tourism providers from various departments (manager, senior manager, tourism operator and travel guide) to extract different views and opinions. -The interviewees were very helpful in sharing information related to their experience in the context of the interview; the outcome is described in detail in chapter six, in order to make comparisons.
Dependently(reliability)	-The process of research was reported. Three pilot studies were conducted to refine interview questions as described above, and determine the timing of the interviews. In addition, the researcher sought the permission of every participant prior to making an appointment, and asked them to carefully read the background information provided and to sign the consent form; participants were assured that all information would be in confidence and anonymous (see Appendix 3). -Every interview was translated and transcribed word by word, checking the transcripts to make sure that they contained no obvious mistakes. -The interview transcripts were analysed to accurately understand the embedded meanings on which the results are based.
Confirmability (objectively): refers to the quality of the result. To examine if the finding emerge from the data	-All the interview questions come from the literature review. The main questions were prepared before the interviews and ethical approval was obtained. - Data analysis came from the interviews only. -The transcript was checked word by word before started analysis. - The data was analysed manually to make sure all of it was included in the analysis process. The chapter on analysis was written in detail to help the reader to see the themes emerging from the collected data. - The findings were compared with the literature and with the quantitative findins.

Cited from Korstjens& Moser (2018:121).

4.8.5 Qualitative data analysis process

The data collection took place from the end of November 2016 to 4th of January 2017. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher sought the permission of every participant prior to making an appointment with him; she also asked them to carefully read the information given in the information sheet which includes background knowledge on the research and to sign the consent form. Participants were informed that all their information would remain private. Consent forms were signed by participants and sent to my UK address by post.

Bakken (2018) described data analysis as the process of transforming the data into findings by bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of material collected. "Data analysis process in qualitative research involves working with data, organising it, breaking it in manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (Lawrence, 2013).

In this study the qualitative data analysis was carried using thematic coding techniques. Thematic analysis is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data, a method for identifying and analysing patterns or themes (O'Reilly et al., 2013; Gray, 2014). It is important for social research because it produces insightful analysis that answers particular research questions (Alhojailan, 2012; Chapman et al., 2015). Thematic analysis is useful because it works with a range of research questions, beginning with those about people's experience, and for different types of data including that derived from secondary sources (O'Reilly et al., 2013; Gray, 2014). A theme is an outcome of coding, categorisation, and analytic reflection (AlHaidari, 2017).**This approach is used here to interpret and evaluate the interview transcriptions, generating ideas and new themes and helping to develop theory, the main aim of this study.** The thematic method can produce insightful analysis to answer research questions (Bag, 2017).

There is no particular approach or software for analysing qualitative data, although most researchers use NVivo for the organisation, reduction and storage of data. This study used the manual method (hard copy and coloured pen) for analysing the interviews, which increased familiarity with the data and helped the researcher to make comparisons between the interviews. The researcher developed the following procedures to analyse the qualitative data.

First, the interviews were first translated and transcribed to make sure no important information was forgotten. A Microsoft Word document was used to organise the interviews into codes (cut and paste). This stage included coding the transcript of interviews manually. Then, all these were saved in a folder in the desktop of the researcher after being organised and compressed into a form that permits drawing conclusions.

Secondly, the data was printed out as hard copy, with coloured pens and highlighter to identify to underlying ideas in the text more easily. In this stage the researcher used a notebook to link all the information together; the text was read many times to understand the meaning and identify the respondents' ideas. Once similar and different themes (information) were detected, they were organised into themes and sub-headings (to put the relevant text into the single theme) according to the participants' views and opinions. At this stage the researcher returned to the research guide model and the literature, to decide if one theme was more important than another. Using this thematic analysis, three main themes were identified: "brand identity attributes", "communication marketing", and "problems facing Omani brand".

The final stage involved writing up of these findings. The researcher started to interpret the themes in order to make sense and derive meaning from the data.

Table 4. 12. Main themes with subheading theme

Main themes	Brand Identity attributes	Communication marketing	Problems and challenges facing the Omani brand	Other themes emerged from the analysis process

Subhead theme (child)	- **Cognitive element**
	  • Natural resources.
	  • Heritage and culture.
	  • Infrastructure.
	
	-**Affective element**
	  • Atmosphere.
	  • Social environment.
	- **Brand logo**
		- Communication tools.
		- Target market.
		- Factors influence the Oman message (noise).
			. Lack cooperation
			- Consumer concern
			- Budget.
				- Awareness.
				- Reputation.
				- Satisfaction.

4.9 Ethical considerations

There is no particular moral issue associated with this research, which met the ethical requirements as approved by the Salford Business School Ethics Committee (see Appendix 7). Before collecting the data, the aim of the study was clarified for the participants. They were assured that the data collected would be used for academic purposes only. In terms of the qualitative study, the participants were asked if the interview could be recorded, and again reassured that the material would be used for academic purposes only. The participants were volunteers and were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.

In order to keep the participants' identities anonymous, their names were not required for the completion of either the survey or the interview. All personal information collected from individuals during this research remains confidential in accordance with the regulations of the Ethics Committee. In addition, data collected from the participants was accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor.

4.10 Summary

Justification was given for the selection of the research philosophy, strategies and methods of data collection; see Figure (4.5) below. The aim of the research influenced the researcher to adopt a mixed method approach, in order to understand the phenomenon and investigate certain issues in detail. A questionnaire was developed to assess the image of Oman among 430 potential international tourists.

The research instruments were pretested at different stages to establish validity and reliability, before commencing on the main phase of data collection. These processes included conducting pilot studies for both the semi-structured interviews and the self-completion questionnaire.

Figure 4.5. Summary of research methodology

Resaerch philosophy (pragmatism), because it allows the use of mixed methods combines quantitative and qualitative, comprises inductive and deductive, positivism and interpretivism.

↓

The approach of this research abductive (deductive and inductive), because they are part of the mixed method and the present study needs to analyse a large number of quantitative data to help the researcher identify the perceptions of the demand side, and understand the meaning from the opinions of supply side to generate the themes and will help to develop a new theory.

↓

Single case study strategy used to obtain rich data and understanding of the research phenomenon and help the researcher to develop theory

↓

Mixed method research adopted because it provides a full picture and more in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon through traditional qualitative and quantitative research method.

↓

Survey chooses to gain a significant number of different perceptions of demand-side respondents, from a different background.

Semi-structured interviews used to obtain a deeper understanding and explore research problem from perceptions of the supply side.

↓

Convenience sampling because it helps the researcher to collect a large number of respondents from different nationality in short time

Purposive sampling used because this study needs to interview a particular group of people, this group members are known to provide relevant information of the research phenomenon.

↓

Analytical software, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) chapter 5

Manually analysis
(Thematic method) chapter 6

↓

Chapter Seven
Triangulate by comparison between the findings of two methods

CHAPTER FIVE: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter starts by presenting the analysis and research findings of the questionnaire. It is divided into three parts: people who have visited Oman, comparison between those who have visited Oman and those who have not, and the whole sample. A normality test was used to determine whether or not the data followed a normal distribution, followed by the descriptive statistics, such as frequencies concerning the demographic factors of respondents, to explore their features and characteristics. The first part presents the experience of tourists' to Oman. Part two compares the perceptions of two groups of people: those who have already visited Oman and those who have not. ANOVA and T tests are used in order to identify the differences between respondents' perceptions.

Part three presents the whole sample, applying factor analysis to identify the important attributes about the perceptions of demand side. Maximum likelihood was used to determine how many factors were appropriate and which items belonged together to be used with the varimax rotation. All these techniques were undertaken using the statistical package SPSS version 23.

5.2 Criteria for normal distribution

A normal distribution describes data distributed symmetrically around the centre of all scorers with the greatest frequency of scores in the middle and with the smaller frequencies deviating from the centre and decreasing towards the extremes (Field, 2005; Hinton et al., 2014). A normal distribution is bell-shaped curve; most of the data values tend to cluster around the mean (Dakhale et al., 2012). Data normality describes the distribution of the individual measurement items of the study variables, and can be tested by evaluating skewness and kurtosis values. The normality test was applied to question whose (14) 37 attributes are measured on the Likert scale.

Skewness is a measure of asymmetry; when the distribution is unbalanced or shifted to one side (Tabachnick et al., 2001). There are two types of skew: negative if the distribution is shifted to the left and positive to the right (Jerry et al., 2011). Kurtosis is a measure of the

peaks of a distribution (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). Positive kurtosis values indicate a peaked, leptokurtic distribution and negative kurtosis values indicate a flat, platykurtic distribution (Grove et al., 2012). If a distribution has values of skew or kurtosis above or below zero, this indicates a deviation from normal. At the 95 percent confidence level, the results of these equations are problematic when they exceed 1.96, indicating a significant deviation from a normal distribution.

SPSS also generates histograms and normal Q-Q Plots to assess the normality of the distribution of scores. Histograms provide the shape of the distribution of each variable by plotting the observed scores on the horizontal axis of a graph; with a bar indicating the number of times each score occurred in the dataset. A symmetrical bell-shaped curve indicates a normal distribution. Normal Q-Q plots (normal probability plots) plot the observed value for each score against the expected value from the normal distribution. A reasonably straight line indicates a normal distribution. Histograms and normal Q-Q Plots only show the distribution of responses and fail to provide any criteria for assuming a normal distribution. Thus, when assessing normality, it is useful to perform all the above tests to ensure an accurate assessment of normality (Hinton et al., 2014).

A Z-test was applied to assess normality using skewness and kurtosis. It divides either score by its standard error, and if the result is greater than ±1.96, it means the data are not normally distributed (Kim, 2013). According to Krithikadatta (2014), positive or negative values indicate a deviation from normality. The range of values for acceptable deviations is affected by sample size; slight deviations can be serious in small samples of less than 30, while with large sample sizes of more than 200 it can be ignored (Madrigal, 1988: 130). As this study involved 430 cases, it is questionable whether these values are suitable for deciding which technique to use. Table 5.1 shows that 37 attributes were tested for normality, all attributes having negative skewness and kurtosis values, of over 1.96, indicating the data are not normally distributed. Figure 5.1 illustrates a histogram and normal Q-Q Plot for all attributes, visually indicating this. Field (2005) suggests that if an assumption is violated, non-parametric tests should be employed to analyse the data. However, the choice of technique (parametric or non-parametric) is a controversial topic as it is argued that parametric tests can still be used even if the assumption of a normal distribution is breached (Field,2005: Pallant,2013; Hinton et al.,2014).

Figure 5.1. Distribution of all attributes
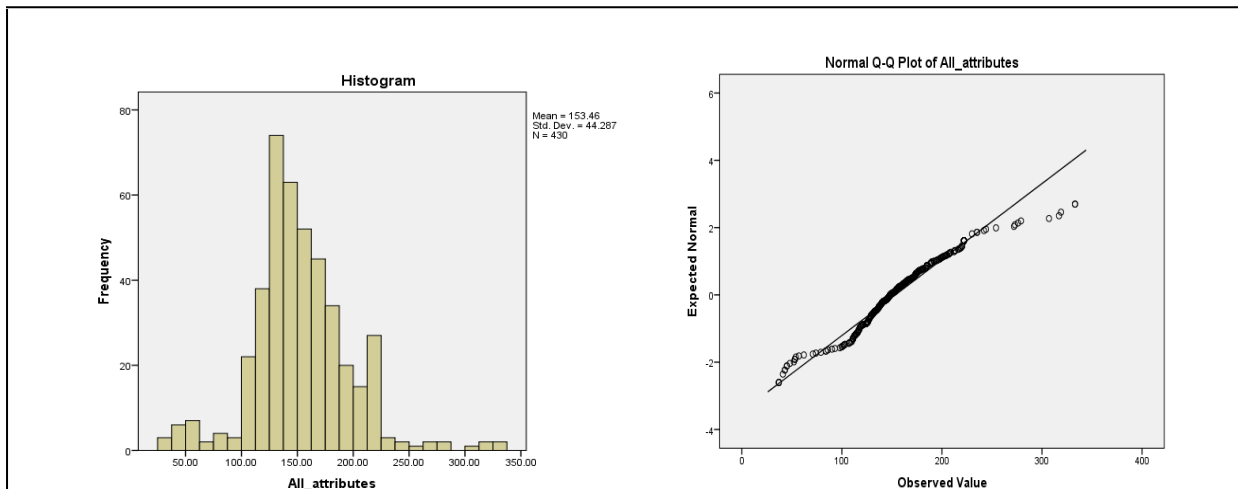
Table 5.1 Z Values of descriptive importance scales								
	Variables	Valid	Missing	Kurtosis	Kurtosis St. Error	Z Kurtosis	Skewness	Skewness St. Error	Z Skewness
1	Beautiful scenery	430	.000	2.321	.235	9.876	.315	.118	2.669
2	Beautiful beaches	.430	.000	1.686	.235	7.174	.060	.118	.508
3	Hot climate	430	.000	2.288	.235	9.736	.014	.118	.119
4	Camping facilities	430	.000	211.600	.235	900.43	12.500	.118	105.932
5	Quality of accommodation	.430	.000	12.490	.235	53.149	12.456	.118	105.559
6	Availability of internet	430	.000	.1.071	.235	4.557	.301	.118	2.551
7	Good health services	430	.000	.1.269	.235	5.4	.746	.118	6.322
8	Excellent shopping centres	430	.000	1.339	.235	5.698	.556	.118	4.712
9	Good transport services	430	.000	265.678	.235	1130.545	14.526	.118	123.102
10	Availability of tour packages	430	.000	1.564	.235	6.655	.757	.118	6.415
11	Political stability	430	.000	1.202	.235	5.115	.406	.118	3.441
12	Clean & tidy environment	430	.000	1.943	.235	8.268	.465	.118	3.941
13	Special festivals/fairs	430	.000	1.376	.235	5.855	.607	.118	5.144
14	Safety & security	430	.000	1.210	.235	.5.149	.090	.118	.763
15	Restful/relaxing	430	.000	2.548	.235	10.843	.589	.118	4.992
16	Hospitality of people	430	.000	1.965	.235	8.362	.243	.118	2.059
17	Trustworthy people	430	.000	1.575	.235	5.851	.331	.118	2.805
18	Historical interest	430	.000	2.154	.235	9.166	.719	.118	6.093
19	Modern architecture building	430	.000	1.650	.235	7.021	.490	.118	4.153
20	Quality infrastructure	430	.000	1.462	.235	6.221	.803	.118	6.80
21	Good restaurants	430	.000	1.465	.235	6.234	.605	.118	5.127
22	Quality sport facilities	430	.000	.767	.235	3.264	.741	.118	6.279
23	Unique theme parks	430	.000	255.645	.235	1087.851	14.120	.118	119.661
24	Fashion stores	430	.000	1.072	.235	4.562	.825	.118	6.992
25	Appealing destination	430	.000	1.496	.235	6.366	.633	.118	5..364
26	Gardens & springs	430	.000	1.429	.235	6.081	.855	.118	7.246
27	Customs/tradition/culture	430	.000	243.047	.235	1034.243	13.585	.118	115.127
28	Availability of information resources	430	.000	.1.429	.235	6.081	.855	.118	7.246
29	Easy access to area	430	.000	1.402	.235	5.966	.650	.118	5. 508
39	Cultural shows	430	.000	1.804	.235	7.676	.504	.118	4.271
31	Positive reputation of country	430	.000	1.568	.235	6.672	.421	.118	3.567
32	Reasonable price for tourists	430	.000	.536	.235	2.281	.476	.118	4.034
33	Tax benefits	430	.000	.629	.235	2.677	.576	.118	4.881
34	Attributes of national parks	430	.000	.865	.235	3.681	.450	.118	3.814
35	Museum attractions	430	.000	.993	.235	4.228	.505	.118	4.279
36	Theatres/concerts	430	.000	.412	.235	1.753	.507	.118	4.297
37	Physical atmosphere	430	.000	.982	.235	4.179	.506	.118	4.288

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5.3 Descriptive analysis of the sample

The demographic characteristics of potential international tourists in this study were measured by a set of questions at the end of the questionnaire regarding the respondent's gender, age, employment status, and level of education. The summary of demographic characteristics is represented in Table 5.2. The following discussion provides comparisons between different demographic characteristics of the sample population.

Past research suggests that the destination image might differ depending on the socio-demographic variables, such as age, gender and education, as well as factors such as nationality and previous travel experience (Qi et al., 2009; Mohammed & Som, 2010). The demographic variables may influence tourists' perspectives of a destination due to the differences in their attitudes or needs (Wong et al., 2016).

Table 5.2 shows that over 44.5% of survey respondents are young people aged between 31-40 and most of them are male (63%).Only one respondent was in the 60 or over age group. The level of education of the respondents varied from diploma to PhD. The largest numbers of respondents were qualified at Master's degree level (35.3%) and only one respondent was not educated beyond primary school. Finally, it appears that more than half of the potential tourists are in employment. That means potential visitors were young, with a high level of education and a high income.

Table 5. 2. Sample distributions according to demographic variables

Variable	Interval	Number of respondents	% of total of respondents
Gender	Male	272	63
	Female	158	37
	Total	430	100
Age	18-30	113	26
	31-40	193	44.5
	41-50	94	22.3
	51-60	29	7
	60 or over	1	.2
	Total	430	100
Occupation	**Employment**	**222**	**52**
	Unemployment	20	5
	Retired	7	1
	Student	153	35.5
	Self-employed	28	6.5
	Total	430	100
Education level	Primary school	1	.2
	High school	5	1
	Diploma	65	15.2
	Bachelor degree	108	25.2
	Master's	152	35.3
	PhD	99	23.1
	Total	430	100

Source: Primary research

The respondents' nationalities are important because this relates to different perceptions that people have, based on their backgrounds and their culture. The nationalities of the 430 participants are shown in Table 5.3. The largest percentage was British people (30.5%) because the questionnaire was distributed throughout the UK.

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Table 5. 3. Respondents' nationality

Nationalities	No. of representatives	% of total of respondents
British	131	30.5
Libyan	47	11
Saudi Arabia	39	9.1
Kuwaiti	38	9
Pakistani	37	9
Malaysian	21	5
Nigerian	19	4.4
Sierra Leonean	15	3.5
Iraqi	15	3.5
Jordanian	13	3
Chinese	11	2.5
Egyptian	10	2.4
Irish	9	2
Jamaican	9	2
Russian	5	1
Italian	5	1
Chadian	4	1
Indian	2	.4
Total	430	100

5.4 Tourist Travel Experience. (Have you visited the Sultanate of Oman before?)

This is a general question, whose purpose is to identify respondents' perspectives, and distinguish between organic and induced images in terms of experience, because image is part of destination branding (Gunn, 1972; Baloglu and McCleary; Lopes, 2011).

Respondents were asked to state whether or not they had visited Oman before, if so how many times, and why they chose to visit it. Images of a country are developed at different levels. According to the literature, an organic image develops internally because of the actual experience or visit, and an induced image develops because of externally perceived and processed information such as advertisements, news reports or word of mouth (Kong et al., 2015). The questionnaire respondents did not include Omanies people, it is formulate to examine the Oman image from the international tourists perspectives. The researcher asked the respondent about this/her nationality before ask him to complete the questionnaire.

The 430 participants were divided into two groups: those who had visited Oman before and those that had not; this study will compare the destination image of Oman among these two

groups. Oman appeared as not a very popular destination since the number of international tourists who had visited it was low, only 38 people (8.8%); of these, 28 (74%) had visited once, 2 (5%) had visited twice and 8 (21%) had visited Oman three times. See Table 5.4. Repeater visitors can rely on their perceptions because of their experience; they are familiar with Oman as a tourism destination, and must have been satisfied. **44.7%** said that the destination met their expectations. The places visited by the international tourists were Alberimi, Muscat, Nizwa, Durqm, Salalah, Bati Zubair and Sohar.

Table 5. 4. Number of people and number of visits

	Visited Oman before		Not visited before		Total	
Sample	No	**%**	No	%	No	%
	38	8.8	392	91.2	430	100.0
Male	27	71	245	62	272	63
Female	11	29	147	38	158	37
Visited once	28	74				
Visited twice	2	5				
Visited three times	8	21				

Table 5.5 summarises the frequencies and percentages of those who visited Oman; it also exhibits the reasons for the visits. The purpose of this question is to identify different perceptions of respondents, because there are differences between the needs and wants of the two segments (leisure-business). The image is perceived differently, because the business traveller's motivator is to attend a business event. On the other hand, the customer who travels for leisure may be motivated to obtain their travel experience (Heung et al., 2001; Woodside and Martin, 2007).

Question (3): What was the main reason for your visit?

The majority of the group visited for leisure/holiday 63.2% (24); this helps the study to consider their perceptions, which differ with respect to several attributes of the destination (Buhalis, 2000; Cristiano, 2006; Krajnovicet et al., 2016). 18.4% (7) of them visited Oman for business, 13.2% (5) for both business and leisure. Only 5.2% (2) of the respondents travelled to Oman as a holiday destination for other reasons.

Table 5.5. Main reason for visit		
	No	**%**
Leisure / Holiday	24	63.2%
Business only	7	18.4%
Both Business and	5	13.2%
Leisure	2	5.2%
Other	38	100.0
Total		

Source: Primary research

Part One: Perceptions of People Who Had Visited Oman Before

5.5 Post-visit perceptions

The aim of this section is to identify the perceptions of the group of 38 respondents who had visited Oman before. According to the literature review, the overall holistic destination image consists of functional characteristics (tangible/cognitive), the physical characteristics (intangible/affective) Echtner& Ritichie (1999, 1993; Lin et al., 2007: Martins, 2016), discussed below.

5.5.1 Affective Image (intangible attributes)

Affective image is the emotion or feeling generated about the destination (Martins, 2015).

5.5.1.1 Atmosphere or mood. (How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you experienced while visiting Oman?)

The aim of this question is to identify the intangible attributes related to the respondents' behaviour. Respondents were given the opportunity to choose more than one option. Table 5.6 represents how international respondents expected the atmosphere of Oman to be. Most summed it up as Oman is peaceful place to visit and friendly people. "**Peaceful" and "calm" were cited by 33 (86.8%) respondents, supporting Oman's image of safety**. "Pleasant" was mentioned by 15 (39.5%) respondents, referring either to being satisfied with Oman's services or having a good general experience. "Stimulating" was reported by 6 (15.8%) respondents, but "boring" by only 3 (7.9%) perhaps because Oman is a quiet, uncrowded country lacking nightlife and entertainment. **A large number (36 out 38)** described the Omani people as friendly. Therefore, the atmosphere of Oman is conceived positively in terms of the local people being considered as friendly.

Table 5. 6. Atmosphere or mood about Oman expected by people who had visited Oman before

Word /statement	Whole sample	
	Number	%
Friendly people	**36**	**94.7**
Boring	3	7.9
Stimulating	6	15.8
Pleasant	15	39.5
Peaceful, Calm	**33**	**86.8**

5.5.1.2 Tourists' Positive Emotion toward Oman. (Which of the following would give a positive emotion to you in relation to Oman?)

Table 5.7 highlights the respondents' feelings towards Oman. The purpose of this question is to identify the intangible attributes of the brand image components. They were asked about the positive emotions towards Oman, and were given the opportunity to choose more than one option. 24 (63%) of the 38 respondents considered the "**Arab culture**" as the most important attribute, perhaps reflecting a desire to experience different cultures. "**Feeling safe**" was stated by 22 (57.9%) of the respondents; tourists like to visit places where they feel safe, not those with a high crime rate. Oman as a destination for entertainment was chosen by 7 (18.4%) respondents. "Quality of the facilities" was reported by 8 (21.1%) and 3 (7.9%) would choose Oman because it allows them to pursue interests such as cycling.

Table 5. 7. Tourists' feelings towards Oman

Statements	Whole Sample	
	No	%
Arab Culture	**24**	**63**
Feeling safe	**22**	**57.9**
Entertainment available	7	18.4
Quality of facilities	8	21.1
Cycling (bike activities)	3	7.9

5.5.1.3. Tourists' satisfaction. Did your trip to Oman meet your expectations?

The aim of this question is to identify the level of the respondent's satisfaction, because this influences the brand image of Oman and leads to positive or negative word of mouth recommendations. Respondents were asked to state whether or not their holiday in Oman had met their expectations. Destination image is influence the tourist's behavior such as decision making and satisfaction (Aliman et al.,2014). The responses to this question are presented in Table 5.8. Of the international tourists who had visited before, **the majority was satisfied with their visit to Oman, 17 of the 38 (44.7%),** stating that Oman completely met their expectations, presumably because they had a good experience. Only a small proportion, 4 (10.5%), reported that their expectations had not been met. 8 (21.1%) respondents indicated that Oman had met the greater part of their holiday expectations, and 9 (23.7%) only some of

their expectations. The finding shows that respondents' expectation were met, leading to satisfaction and positive word of mouth recommendations. According to Pawaskar& Goel (2014), satisfaction implies the meeting and fulfilling expectations, satisfied customer tends to be more loyal to a brand over time. In addition, satisfying a customer create behavioral loyalty (Zakaria et al., 2014).

Table 5. 8. Tourist expectations

Did your trip to Oman meet your expectations?	Whole sample	
	Number	%
Completely	17	44.7
For the most part	8	21.1
Partly	9	23.7
Not really	4	10.5
Total	38	100%

Source: Primary Research

5.5.1.3 Intention to recommend by word of mouth. Would you recommend Oman to your friends or relatives?

The aim of this question is to see the image of Oman in the actual visitor's mind. Only if they have positive image will they recommend others to visit Oman in future. Tourists satisfaction is the level of fulfilment in meeting the visitors needs wants, and expectations and is usually measured by asking the visitors to what extent they were meet expectations when visit this destination(Haarhoff &Gany, 2017). Destination loyalty denotes the desire of the tourist to repeat a visit or recommend it to their friends and families (Valle, et al., 2006). Table 5.9 shows that **the majority of respondents**, **34 (89.5%) out of the 38,** said that they **would recommend Oman as a holiday destination to their friends and relatives.** This implies that these people were very satisfied with their visit, and were willing to make positive remarks about Oman and to recommend it to other people. This supports the fact that the positive reviews of a destination may enhance the tourist's destination trust and positive perceptions; people need more accurate information to support their choice of destination (Abubakar, 2016). The findings in Table (5.9) show that people who visited Oman were satisfied and that their visit met their expectations; they intended to recommend others to visit Oman, exhibiting positive word of mouth.

Table 5. 9. Intention to recommended Oman

Would you recommend Oman to your friends or relatives?	Number	%
Yes	34	89.5
No	4	10.5
Total	38	100%

5.5.2 Cognitive image of Oman (tangible attributes)

The cognitive image component consists of beliefs and knowledge about a destination primarily focusing on tangible attributes (Pike& Ryan, 2004; Lin et al., 2007).

5.5.2.1 Information Resources. (What influenced you to visit Oman for your last trip?).

Respondents were asked to identify the travel information that had influenced them to visit Oman and to talk about the destination brand. Table 5.10 documents the major sources. Five sources were suggested by the questionnaire, and the opportunity to add others was given. The social narratives in terms of word of mouth are the most influential sources for developing a destination brand image (Ishida et al., 2016; Hamidizadeh et al., 2016). 23 **(60.5 %)** of the respondents developed their cognitive image of Oman through social narratives such as **word of mouth from family members,** friends or colleagues. Positive word of mouth is one of the important elements that contribute to the brand building (Aziz et al., 2012: 215). Interestingly, the people who visited Oman depended on other sources of information: 29 (6.7%) indicated social media (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter) that their friends and relatives used to send information to them.

Five respondents (13.2%) were influenced by travel agents. The media was important as a source of formation of image impression for 4 (10.5%) respondents. The tourist guidebooks which are usually considered some of the most effective promotional tools, had relatively few responses, 3 (7.9%). Website information constituted just 3 (7.9%), although most respondents mentioned more than one source, which might include the Ministry of Tourism's website offering limited information.

The analysis indicated that social media and word of mouth communication have a great impact on people choosing Oman as a holiday destination. Another explanation for this result is that people found more information about Oman from these sources than others, especially

as the majority of the respondents were young people aged 31-40 and in employment. **This helps them to share the information with their colleagues and relatives through social media.**

The result suggests that the opinion and recommendations of friends have a strong influence on the intention to visit Oman; the literature also shows that word of mouth is more effective than other forms of marketing (Abubakar, 2016).

Table 5. 10. Information sources influencing tourists

Source	Whole sample	
	Number	%
Advice from travel agent	5	13.2
Recommendations from family, friends and colleagues	23	**60.5**
Internet information(Website)	3	7.9
Media reports (TV, radio, newspaper, etc.)	4	10.5
Tourist guide books	3	7.9
Other(social media)	**29**	**76.3**

5.5.2.2 Places people had visited in Oman (which places did you visited in Oman?)

The aim of this question is to identify the names of attractions and places which actual visitors visit, such as significant historical places, natural places, sites of beauty, or places offering leisure. All the names of the attractions are under the Oman brand. Most people choose interesting places to visit before they travel, and these places may themselves be their reason for visiting Oman.

This question investigates tourists' knowledge of the Omani attraction centers more than one reply could be given. Most of respondents visited the main cities in Oman, the unique city of **Salalah was mentioned by 14 (36.8%)** of the international tourists who had visited Oman before, followed by Muscat, the capital city, which respondents described as an attractive place to visit as they were travelling for leisure. Salalah is the second major city after Muscat. The results show the importance of the infrastructure in attracting tourists. Sohar was mentioned by 6 (15.7%) respondents, and two mentioned some specific places in Sohar:

"It has different attractive places such as the City Cinema, and the Safeer Mall".

Nizwa was mentioned by 2 (5.3%) respondents, and Green Mount by 2 (5.3%); these cities all have historic sites, competing to deliver services such as gardens, parking, restaurants, and culture through history, all images and associations pivotal to the success of a destination brand (Gartner & Ruzzier, 2011). Alberimi was mentioned by only one respondent (2.6%), as seen in the Table 5.11 below.

Table 5.11. Unique places in Oman

Place name	Whole sample	
	Number	**%**
Alberimi	1	2.6
Muscat	13	34.2
Salalah	14	36.8
Sohar	6	15.7
Nizwa	2	5.3
Green Mount	2	5.3
Total	38	100.0

5.5.2.3 Distinctive Attributes of Oman (compared to other destinations that you visited, how do you compare Oman's to these destinations?)

The aim of this question is to identify the attractive attributes Oman has over other Arab countries, because people choose the destination before travel and make many comparisons between destinations to choose the best. Therefore, this question defines the difference between countries which are close or have the same culture.

Three questions (9, 19 &20) at the end of the questionnaire asked respondents about the difference between Oman and other destinations. In no. 19 they were asked if there was any different between Oman to other Arab nations: 16 (42.1 %) answered "yes", as illustrated in Table 5.12a. Their reasons are given in Table 5.12b. People found Oman is different by different factors but, the majority of respondents **26.3% mention Oman is different for its good value for money as a holiday experience**, followed by **security and safety mentioned by 7 (18.4%) respondents.**

Table 5.12 a. Oman differ from other destination

	No	%
Yes	16	42.1
No	22	57.9
	38	100.0

Table 5.12b. Oman's key differences as a tourism destination

Statement	No	%
High quality of accommodation services	3	7.9
Security and Safety	7	18.4
Value for money in shopping centres	4	10.5
Good value for money as a holiday experience	**10**	**26.3**
Free Internet& Wi-Fi facilities in hotels	2	5.3
Updated infrastructure of hotels	3	7.9
Online hotel booking	3	7.9

Question 9 was open-ended, to explore different views expressed by the respondents. Table 5.13 displays the cognitive image of Oman's competitiveness compared to other destinations that respondents had visited. It can be seen that Oman is perceived as a competitive destination. The majority of the respondents agreed that Oman is different because it has beautiful scenery, friendly people, a different culture, while others stated additional attributes such as the Omani food, safety, unique social life, rich history, excellent location, and good reputation. However, one of the respondents reported that Oman's infrastructure needs improvement. Value for money was the distinguishing feature of Oman as a tourism destination, followed by safety and security. Respondents also believed that Oman is different for its attractive and beautiful scenery, and because the Omani people are friendly towards visitors, an influential attribute for travelers.

Table 5.13. Comparing Oman to other tourism destinations

How Do you Compare Oman to other destinations that you have visited?	Sample of people visited before	
	No	%
Beautiful Scenery	**5**	**13.2**
Friendly people	3	7.9
Peaceful and safe	3	7.9
Loved Omani food	3	7.9
Different culture	2	5.3
Rich history	2	5.3
Unique social life	2	5.3
Feeling of warmth	1	2.6
Great country	1	2.6
I felt at home	1	2.6
Interesting clothing	1	2.6
Less development	1	2.6
Needs better infrastructure	1	2.6
Not crowded	1	2.6
Reputation of the country	1	2.6
Respectful people	1	2.6
Very good place to visit	1	5.3

5.5.2.4 Factors influencing visitors' decision to choose Oman (which one of the following do you think best influences a visitor's decision to choose Oman destination over others within the Arabic countries?

The aim of this question is to identify the attributes associated with Oman's image. Table 5.14 highlights the respondents' views about Oman. They were asked about the factors which influenced them to choose Oman over other destinations. The respondents were given the opportunity to choose more than one option. A large number of the respondents, 9 (23.7%), opted for "natural beauty" and "friendliness of residents towards international visitors" by 7 (18.4%)."Natural beauty of the destination", "cultural attractions", "Destination's favourable climate", "quality of available accommodations" and "security and safety" were each stated by 5 (13.2%) respondents, Shopping, distance and travel time to destination were the less influential. Thus, it can be inferred that natural beauty is an important attribute for international tourists and is likely to determine their decision-making process. The same attribute was chosen as the most important in distinguishing Oman from other destinations; see Table (5.14).

Table 5.14. Factors influencing visitors' decision to choose Oman

Variables	No	%
Destination's favourable climate	5	13.2
Natural beauty of the destination	**9**	**23.7**
Cultural attractions	5	13.2
Quality of available accommodation	5	13.2
Shopping	1	2.6
Security and safety	5	13.2
Distance and travel time to destination	1	2.6
Friendliness of residents towards international visitors	**7**	**18.4**

Part Two: Comparison between the Two Groups

5.6 Comparison between Visitors and Non-visitors

This section compares the perceptions of the people who had visited Oman before and those who had never been there. Non-visitors hold an induced image influenced by secondary data such as TV programmes or other media, and word of mouth; while visitors hold an organic image based on their own experience (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2016). Both groups answered the same questions from question 12 to the end of the questionnaire.

5.6.1 Interpretation of Oman's Logo by Respondents (what does this logo suggests to you?)

Figure 5.2.Oman brand (logo)

The questions related to the Oman logo aim to identify the levels of brand awareness and most attributes associated with the logo. This logo is a part of the destination branding process, reflecting Omani attributes. The destination marketers have to build a brand image that is consistent with the brand identity (Mindrut et al., 2015; Kelly, 2017). Respondents could choose more than one option and space to write extra information if required. Table (5.15) represents how potential tourists identify the Oman brand.

Both visitors and non-visitors saw the logo for the first time, and most commented on it. Little difference between two groups about Oman logo as seen in Table (5.15). People never had been visited Oman before reported that their suggestion **Oman logo as nature, water, mountains, desert and sun**. While who had visited before Oman logo suggested to them as **nature, mountain, water, desert, sun.** It is clear that the **colour and design** of the logo influenced respondent's perceptions, in both groups. However, some failed to understand the logo; one of the respondents said:

The logo looks like waves, it is coloured, but I cannot understand it; I know Arabic but I can not read the word of Oman in this way, and the design doesn't make sense to me.

Table 5.15. Interpretation of Oman's Logo by respondents

Attributes	People that have not visited before		People that have visited before	
	No	**%**	**No**	**%**
Nature	**222**	**57**	27	**71.1**
Desert	57	15	14	37
Mountain	79	20.2	17	**45**
Sun	52	13.3	9	24
Water	181	**46.2**	15	40

5.6.2 Respondents' attributes associated with the Omani logo

Both groups had the same perceptions of the logo, most describing their associations with it as simple and easy to recall and to generate positive feelings. This is illustrated in Table 5.16.143 (37%) who had not visited Oman before agreed that the logo is attractive. The majority of both groups viewed it as simple and attractive, while a small proportion of both groups felt that it was memorable. According to the literature, it is important for a logo to be memorable and unique (Rodriguez et al., 2013). From this result it is clear that there is a gap between Oman authority and potential international tourists, there is culture noise. The potential tourists did not understanding the Oman logo because it written in Arabic way as mention from one of the respondents above.

Table 5. 16. Respondents' attributes associated with the Omani logo

Respondents' attributes associated with the Omani logo	People that have never been to Oman (N=392)		People that have visited Oman before (N=38)	
	No	%	No	%
Simple	**227**	**58**	**23**	**62.2**
Attractive	**143**	**37**	**16**	**42.1**
Memorable	62	16	9	24
Conceptual	69	18	1	3
Funny	24	6.1	2	5.3
Safety	43	11	9	24
Popular	23	6	5	13.2
Versatile	58	15	3	8

Source: Primary research

5.6.2 Reasons for visiting Oman in future

This question aims to identity the reasons to visit Oman in future. Not all people travel to destinations for leisure; there are other reasons particularly as Oman is an employment destination for many people.

Table 5.17 reveals that the majority of people who had never been in Oman before, 214 (55%), would like to travel to Oman in the future for rest and relaxation, other reasons were enjoy the outdoors, and take heritage or culture trips. The first three reasons for visitors were a theme park trip, rest and relaxation, and a heritage or culture trip.

Interestingly, 35 (1%) of non-visitors wished to work in Oman in the future, while only one person chose Oman as the best place for work or business in future from actual visitor group. It can be inferred that most respondents from both groups need to relax and rest, and enjoy the outdoors and culture because they are in employment and aged 31-50, and their image of Oman is as a quiet, safe area for rest after hard work.

Table 5.17. Reasons for visiting Oman in future

	Non-visitors		Visitors	
	No	%	No	%
For rest and relaxation	214	55	25	66
Outdoor trip	122	31.1	10	26
Heritage or culture trip	170	43.3	13	34.2
Theme park trip	28	7.1	35	92.1
Work & business	35	1	1	3

5.6.3 Challenges to tourists choosing Oman. (What would be the main concerns that would deter you from choosing Oman as a holiday destination?)

The aim of this question is to identify the issues facing tourists when choosing Oman as a destination. Any problems and issues will influence Oman's image and impact development of the tourism brand. This question dealt with concerns that might deter potential international tourists from visiting Oman and impact their brand. The major concerns mentioned by both groups are summarised in Table 5.18 below. The **hot climate** was the first concern mentioned by 15 (39.5%) previous visitors, and "**safety and distance"** the second

(13: 34.2%). "Budget", visa requirements and personal taste were the least important concerns.

Of the non-visitors, **123 (31.4%)** mentioned "the visa" as their main concern and 109 **(27.5%)** "Safety". "Budget" was selected by **117 (29.8%)** respondents and "distance" by **29 (23%).** "Hot climate" was reported by 104 (26.5%) non-visitors and "personal taste by 61 (15.6%). "I don't know" was stated by 38 (9.7%) respondents.

Thus, it can be inferred that potential international tourists are concerned with **visas** because the Omani government requires a long list of documents, causing problems. The **hot climate** was found to be a major cause in the choice of Oman as a holiday destination because it affects tourists' activities. **Safety** is another concern, unsurprisingly, because Oman is part of the Middle East, where travel restrictions are in place.

Table 5.18. Concerns that deter potential tourists

	People that have visited Oman before		People that have never visited Oman before	
	No	%	No	%
Visa	7	18.4	**123**	31.4
Safety	13	**34.2**	**109**	**27.8**
Budget	8	21.1	117	29.8
Distance	13	34.2	90	23.0
Hot climate	15	**39.5**	104	**26.5**
Personal taste	4	10.5	61	15.6
I do not know	1	2.6	38	9.7

5.6.4 Respondents' image when hearing about Oman. (What image comes to your mind when hearing about Oman?)

These questions concerned the overall image or characteristics most associated with Oman. Because people have an internal image in their mind about places when hear the name of the destination, they see this image. In general, the image is positive in both groups' minds, visitors and non-visitors. The majority of visitors had perceived it as either positive or extremely positive, with 11 (29%) reporting as very positive and the same number as extremely positive. Only 5 responses were extremely negative. 11 (29%) respondents rated the image of Oman as neutral.

The majority of non-visitors, 195 (50%), rated Oman as having **a neutral image,** because most of this group had no idea where Oman is located. 135 (34.4%) rated it as very positive. The result suggests that Oman has an overall positive image in the actual visitor mind.

Table 5.19. Image when hearing about Oman

Statement / word	People that have never been to Oman		People that have been to Oman		Whole sample	
	Number	%	Number	%	No	%
Extremely negative	4	1	4	10.4	8	1.9
Somewhat negative	9	2.3	1	2.6	10	2.3
Neutral	**195**	**50**	**11**	**29**	206	50
Very positive	135	34	11	29	146	34
Extremely positive	49	12.5	11	29	60	13.9
Total	392	100.0	38	100.0	430	100.0

Source: Primary research

5.6.5 Future tourist behaviour. Would you visit Oman in the future?

The aim of this question is to identify the intention of previous visitors to Oman. Visitors to Oman were asked whether or not they would recommend Oman as a holiday destination to others; in addition both groups were asked if they intended to (re)visit in the future. The answers to these questions are summarised in Table 5.20.

The majority of previous visitors (86.8%) wished to visits Oman again, indicating a good travel experience. 83.4% of non-visitors said they would like to visit Oman, in the light of more information.

This is therefore a positive finding, as the image of Oman satisfied the previous tourists who would like to visit again based on their positive experiences; in addition, Oman appeared positive in the minds of those who had never been. This implies that destination managers should consider incentives to motivate them to make first visits or revisits, which will also influence the positive word of mouth recommendation about the destination.

Table 5. 20. Intention to revisit or to visit for the first time

Would you visit Oman in the future?	People that had visited before		People that had never been to Oman	
	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	33	86.8	327	83.4
No	5	13.1	65	16.6
	38	100.0	392	100.0

5.6.6 Comparison of Oman with other Arab Countries (Oman's Position).

Respondents were invited to answer the next two questions if they could:

-Do you believe that Oman differs from other Arab countries?

-In your own opinion, what is Oman's key differentiator as a tourist destination, relative to other Arab countries?

This question was choice for respondent to answer it. Before groups were asked if Oman differed from other countries. The answers from previous visitors were reported in **part one** above. This section compares the results between the two groups. When asked to compare Oman and other Arab destinations, most respondents from people who never been, 267 (68.1%), were unaware of differences, 125 (31.9%) said they were different. People who answered positively gave the reasons illustrated in Table 5.21: 16.6% considered Oman's security and safety and 2.6 % its free Internet and Wi-Fi facilities in hotels.

Table 5.12a shows that 42.1 % of the previous visitors answered positively. 26.3% of them indicated good value for money and the smallest proportion Oman hotels' free Internet and Wi-Fi facilities.

In sum, there was no difference between Oman and other Arab countries, meaning that they have similar images. All respondents found that Oman has the same culture as other Arab states. However, a large proportion of both groups believe that Oman has attributes that influence tourists' perceptions, such as safety, value for money and quality of accommodation. These elements encourage more tourists and give Oman a distinctive market position. However, Oman cannot compete in the international tourism market if potential visitors remain unaware of its many tourist attractions.

Table 5. 21a. Oman differs from others

	Visit Before		Never been	
	No	%	No	%
Yes	16	42.1	125	31.9/
No	22	57.9	267	68.1
	38	100.0	392	100

Table 5. 21b. Oman's key differentiator as a tourism destination

	People Never been		Visit before	
Statement	No	%	No	%
High quality of accommodation services	35	28	3	7.9
Security and safety	**65**	**52**	7	**18.4**
Value for money in shopping centres	22	18	4	10.5
Good value for money for holiday experience	**36**	**29**	10	**26.3**
Free Internet and Wi-Fi facilities in hotels	10	14	2	5.3
Updated infrastructure of hotels	22	18	3	7.9
Online hotel booking	15	12	3	7.9

5.6.7 Evaluation of Oman's image from both visitors' and non-visitors' perceptions

Destination image is influenced by the visitor's perceptions before, during and after a visit, so it is an important instrument which contributing to successful tourism development and destination marketing, with an impact on both supply- and demand-side aspects of marketing (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Moghadam et al., 2016). This section compares and analyses the views of potential international tourists with those who have already visited Oman (T test and ANOVA test).

5.6.7.1 T- test

The t-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from one another (Kim, 2014). It is a reasonably powerful test used on data that is parametric and normally distributed. . The t-test is useful for analysing simple experiments or when making

simple comparisons between levels of the independent variables (DeCoster, 2006). According to Kanji (2006), the test is used if the population is normally distributed or if the sample size is sufficiently large; in this study the sample size is 430. In addition, the t-test is used for large samples because it is more reliable (Lumley et al., 2002). It is also used here to determine if there is any difference between the two groups' (visitors or non-visitors) perceptions and which attributes concern the demand side.

Step One: Checking the Mean

The mean values related to the study attributes are presented in Table 5.22. The table shows the differences between the two groups. As mentioned above, the differences may be induced or organic. The image of Oman is more positive in potential visitors' perceptions than actual visitors', possibly from information received about Oman, pictures seen in the media or stories from family and colleagues who had already visited Oman, or from Oman's good communications tools in creating awareness of the destination. **Non-visitors had a significantly higher mean than visitors** on all Oman's image brand attributes (M= between 4.03 and 4.50 and. M<4 respectively).**Customs and tradition and quality of accommodation are the most important attributes for non-visitors** (M $\geq$ 4.30),other attributes for non-visitors had higher means, (4.30 to 4.10), noticeably expressing low reaction to political stability, and fashion stores (4.10 to 4.00).

On the other hand**, for actual visitors, the mean for all the attributes (M<4), indicated ambivalent images of Oman.** This group appreciated Oman for its **beautiful scenery, restful/relaxing atmosphere, safety and security, historical interest, quality of infrastructure, and customs and tradition**. They expressed a stronger negative reaction to the **reasonable prices for tourists.**

Thus, it can be inferred that the imagination of people who had never been to Oman his was filled with positive images; these people got their information about Oman as a tourism destination from different sources, such as media, or word of mouth. Meanwhile, respondents who had visited the country had a different image **because of their experience**; Part One of this chapter shows their explanations were more specific and detailed.

Table 5. 22 Comparison of perceptions of visitors and non-visitors to Oman

Attribute	Those who have visited Oman before			Those who have never been to Oman		
	No	Mean	Std. Deviation	No	Mean	Std. Deviation
Beautiful scenery	38	4.00	1.507	392	4.27	1.477
Beautiful beaches	38	3.76	1.195	392	4.12	1.335
Hot climate	38	3.45	1.201	392	4.21	1.335
Camping facilities	38	3.55	1.288	392	4.21	3.038
Quality of accommodation	38	**3.34**	1.341	392	**4.41**	3.001
Availability of Internet	38	3.50	1.520	392	4.13	1.380
Good health services	38	3.76	1.550	392	4.18	1.510
Excellent shopping centres	38	3.11	1.158	392	4.20	1.480
Good transport services	38	3.24	1.304	392	4.23	3.494
Availability of tour packages	38	3.24	1.173	392	4.22	1.575
Political stability	38	3.74	1.389	392	4.08	1.607
Clean tidy environment	38	3.55	1.483	392	4.18	1.400
Special festivals/fairs	38	3.55	1.489	392	4.20	1.584
Safety & security	38	3.92	1.343	392	4.11	1.409
Restful/relaxing	38	3.84	1.197	392	4.26	1.392
Hospitality of people	38	3.76	1.364	392	4.29	1.390
Trustworthy people	38	3.79	1.298	392	4.27	1.462
Historical interest	38	3.84	1.263	392	4.30	1.446
Modern architecture	38	3.29	1.592	392	4.11	1.491
Quality of infrastructure	38	3.82	1.858	392	4.17	1.584
Good restaurants	38	3.53	1.538	392	4.22	1.528
Quality of sports facilities	38	3.55	1.856	392	4.15	1.684
Unique theme parks	38	3.26	1.329	392	4.27	3.525
Fashion stores	38	3.34	1.547	392	4.03	1.684
Appealing destination	38	3.34	1.457	392	4.20	1.611
Gardens & springs	38	3.68	1.165	392	4.21	1.765
Customs and tradition	38	3,82	1.574	392	4.50	2.903
Availability of information resources	38	3.79	1.833	392	4.22	1.587
Easy access to area	38	3.58	1.328	392	4.20	1.551
Culture shows	38	3.55	1.309	392	4.28	1.499
Positive reputation of country	38	3.24	1.567	392	4.16	1.489
Reasonable prices for tourists	38	3.03	1.442	392	4,20	1.664
Tax benefits	38	3.55	1.941	392	4.17	1.663
National parks	38	3.26	1.349	392	4.21	1.607
Museum attractions	38	3.13	1.417	392	4.14	1.533
Theatres/concerts	38	3.13	1.492	392	4.12	1.648
Physical atmosphere	38	3.21	1.298	392	4.30	1.663
Valid N (listwise)	38			392		

Step Two: Levene's test

Before carry out T test should check the assumption between the groups is equal. Therefore, Levene's test is used to check the assumption of equality of variances; it is an inferential statistic used to assess the equality of variances for variables calculated for two or more groups (Cohen & Lea, 2004). The result of this test determines which the t- test values provides, if **sig,** value is larger than **.05,** it use the first line in the table which refers to **equal variances assumed.** If the significant level of Levene's test is (p< or =.05) this mean that the

variences for the two groups are not the same. It should use the second line of the t test which refers to **equal variance not assumed (Pallant, 2007, 2016:234).**

In Table 5.23 the results indicate that almost all the variables are significant, above 0.05 ($p>.05$), which mean the groups have equal variance. Levene's test verified the equality of variances in the samples (homogeneity of variance) ($p>.05$) (Martin and Bridgmon, 2012).

Step Three: T- test

The t-test findings confirm the significant difference in the means between the two groups; the P-value ($P<.05$) is significant on 23 of the attributes, as can be seen from Table 5.23.

This Study applied eta Squared ($\eta 2$)

Effective size is "simply a way of quantifying the size of the difference between groups" (Arthur, 2012:45). The correlation ratio eta squared ($\eta 2$) was applied because the sample size is large and there is a difference in the means between two groups; it is important to estimate the effect of size in determining the magnitude of the findings. $\eta 2$ was calculated by the following formula:

$$\eta 2 = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N1+N2-2)} \quad \text{(Abbott, 2016:229).}$$

According to Gravetter and Wallnau, 2004, cited in Pallant 2007: 217), the meaning of effect size is interpreted in three categories

1- .01 - .07 small
2- .30 - .21 medium
3- .50- .35 large

The effect of size, $\eta 2$, was between 0 and .04; this means a small effect for all variables, as shown in Table 5.23. The effect size was significant for all attributes ($\eta 2<.05$).

Table 5. 23. T-Test

	Table 5.2.T-Test					
		Levene's Test		**T- test**		
No	Variables	F	P	T	P	η2
1-	Beautiful scenery	.024	.88	-1.075	.28	.00
2-	beautiful beaches	.001	.98	-1.586	.11	.01
3-	Hot climate	.038	.85	-3.387	.00	.03
4-	**camping facilities**	.669	.40	-1.315	**.19**	.00
5-	**Quality of accommodations**	.298	.59	-2.162	**.03**	.01
6-	**Availability of internet**	.347	.54	-2.673	**.01**	.02
7-	Good health services	.089	.77	-1.616	.11	.01
8-	Excellent shopping	.534	.47	-4.416	.00	.04
9-	**Good transport services**	.347	.56	-1.747	**.08**	.01
10-	Availability of tour packages	1.202	.27	-3.755	.00	.03
11-	Political stability	.121	.73	-1.258	.21	.00
12-	Clean tidy environment	1.724	.19	-2.638	.01	.01
13	**Special festival/fairs**	.001	.98	-2.427	.02	.01
14	Safety & security	.311	.56	-.813	.42	.00
15	**Restful/relaxing**	.656	.42	-1.799	**.07**	.01
16	Hospitality of people	.060	.81	-2.249	.03	.02
17	Trustworthy people	.998	.32	-1.964	.05	.01
18	Historical interest	.343	.56	-1.876	.06	.01
19-	Modern architecture building	.539	.46	-3.229	.00	.03
20-	Quality infrastructure	.017	.90	-1.298	.19	.00
21-	Good restaurants	.079	.78	-2.659	.01	.01
22-	Quality sport facilities	.716	.40	-2.051	.04	.01
23-	**Unique theme parks**	.616	.43	-1.739	.08	.01
24-	**Fashion stores**	.439	.51	-2.414	.02	.01
25-	Appealing destination	.109	.74	-3.156	.00	.02
26-	Gardens & springs	1.400	.24	-1.786	.08	.01
27-	**Customs and tradition**	**.018**	**.89**	-1.426	**.15**	.01
28-	**Availability of information resources**	.012	.91	-1.591	**.11**	.01
29-	Easy access to area	.466	.46	-2.390	.02	.01
30-	**Culture shows**	.093	.76	-2.887	.00	.02
31-	Positive reputation of country	3.366	.08	-3.635	.00	.03
32-	Reasonable price tourists	.559	.44	-4.201	.00	.04
33-	**Tax benefits**	.010	.99	-2.146	.03	.01
34-	National parks	.375	.54	-3.528	.00	.03
35-	Museum attraction	.03	.86	-3.888	.00	.03
36-	Theatres/concerts	.398	.53	-3.558	.00	.03
37-	**Physical atmosphere**	1.078	.30	-3.907	.00	.03

5.6.7.2 ANOVA tests

One-way analysis (ANOVA) is an extension of the independent t-test in that it is a statistical method for studying sampled data relationships and focuses on the differences that appear amongst the means of the groups; ANOVA also enables the relationship to be studied for more than two independent samples (Arkkelin, 2014). In the earlier section above, the mean of 37 attributes measured on the Likert scale was presented to compare the two groups' image of Oman in the international market. The Likert scale is good for representing interval measurements (Sullivan & Artino, 2013; Yusoff & Mohd Janor, 2014), and is also powerful in statistical analyses such as ANOVA, correlations, factors analysis and regression analysis (Yusoff & Mohd Janor, 2014). **ANOVA tests were conducted to identify any difference in**

perceptions between the two groups about all the attributes of the destination brand image.

Table 5.24 below compares the F and p values of the respondents' opinions, based on gender. The F-ratio is a criterion to judge if there are significant differences between groups (Cardinal & Aitken, 2013). Significant results refer to significant differences between groups. It can be seen from Table 5.24 that **non-visitors** have significantly high **F values (F>1)** and p values **(p<.05)** for most attributes. Only three attributes were less (F <1): **camping facilities** (F=.331), **political stability** (F=.859), and **physical attributes** (F=.790); these attributes showed no significant difference (p> .05). This group perceived the image of **Oman as better than did the previous visitors**. **Non-visitors had a positive attitude to 19 destination** brand image attributes (see Table 5.24). Although other attributes were perceived negatively by this group (p>.05) (Table 5.24).

However, **people who had visited Oman before** had different perceptions: F values were **generally very low for most attributes**, with only four larger, that is, the means of the groups are not equal (Dean & Illowsky, 2009). P values for this group showed no significant difference **(p>.05) on most attributes**. Only ten attributes of the Omani brand image showed a statistical significance (Table 5.24).Because this result may have a negative impact in terms of repeat visits and word of mouth recommendations. Oman marketers need to consider this result by improving Oman's brand attributes and image and developing their brand.

There were significant differences among the means for respondents' perspectives from both groups. **Eta squared (η^2)** was used to estimate effect size. This is a measure of the proportion of variance used to describe effect size for data analyses using ANOVA (Privitera, 2015: 456). The value of η^2 can range between 0 and 1.0 (Privitera, 2015).

According to Brown (2008), for the one- way ANOVA test there is no difference between eta squared and partial eta squared. It is computed by this formula:

$$\eta^2 = \frac{SS_{between}}{SS_{total}}$$

According to Table 5.24, η^2 is small effect for most variables based on the conventions given in the table; this mean the difference between two groups is very small. For example, **η^2 for**

beautiful scenery is. 02, meaning 20% of the total variance is accounted for by the treatment effect.

The result shows differences concerning the necessary attributes required to encourage destination image development. Visitors and non-visitors had different opinions about six attributes. **The former group had more positive opinions about camping facilities, fashion stores, availability of information resources, culture shows, tax benefits and physical atmosphere than the latter, significant at p<.05**.

Interestingly, **respondents from both groups tended to have the same positive perceptions of "restful/relaxing" (p=.03),** the result indicating this as the most important reason to visit Oman, presumably because most respondents from both groups are employees with a high level of stress and responsibility. Restful/relaxing is especially important in terms of retaining repeat tourists (Tosun et al., 2016). However, other attributes had a negative direction in both groups (p>.05) (see Table 5.24).

Tables 5.22 and 5.24 show that tourists' experience influences the destination image and perception, as the two groups of respondents has different images of Oman. Non-visitors have a positive image because they are influenced by different information sources, indicating an inability to conceptualise Oman as a competitive tourism destination. **Such as, hot climate potential groups statically significant but actual visitors have negative image because they already now the Oman weather**.

However, people who have visited Oman before had an organic image because they had knowledge about Oman; this group's perceptions affect the Oman tourism brand by word of mouth, as mentioned before. Therefore, Oman tourism providers should consider this result and modify the Omani image if they want to develop the Oman brand as a tourism destination.

	Table 5:24.One way ANOVA according to respondent s gender						
		People that have not visited Oman before			People that have visited before		
No	Variables	F	P	η2	F	P	η2
1-	Beautiful scenery	2.897	.06	.02	.202	.96	.03
2-	beautiful beaches	2.983	.05	.02	.507	.73	.06
3-	Hot climate	5.949	.00	.03	1.597	.19	.16
4-	**camping facilities**	.331	.72	.01	4.546	.003	.42
5-	Quality of accommodations	3.529	.03	.02	1.712	.17	.17
6-	**Availability of internet**	4.382	.01	.02	2.835	.03	.31
7-	Good health services	4.939	.01	.03	1.962	.10	.28
8-	Excellent shopping	3.484	.03	.02	.165	.95	.02
9-	Good transport services	3.112	.05	.02	.685	.61	.08
10-	Availability of tour packages	3.424	.03	.02	.445	.78	.05
11-	Political stability	.859	.42	.04	.337	.89	.05
12-	Clean tidy environment	1.197	.30	.01	.335	.85	.04
13	**Special festival/fairs**	3.051	.05	.02	7.471	.000	.92
14	Safety & security	1.373	.26	.01	.449	.77	.05
15	**Restful/relaxing**	3.635	**.03**	.02	.949	**.03**	.05
16	Hospitality of people	1.932	.15	.01	.500	.74	.06
17	Trustworthy people	4.651	.01	.02	.674	.61	.08
18	Historical interest	2.346	.09	.01	.336	.85	.04
19-	Modern architecture building	3.002	.05	.02	.299	.91	.05
20-	Quality infrastructure	4.908	.02	.03	.256	.93	.04
21-	Good restaurants	2.731	.07	.01	.243	.94	.04
22-	Quality sport facilities	6.689	.00	.03	2.028	.09	.28
23-	**Unique theme parks**	3.275	.04	.02	6.636	.000	.91
24-	**Fashion stores**	2.236	.11	.01	6.060	.000	.54
25-	Appealing destination	2.722	.07	.01	.648	.665	.092
26-	Gardens & springs	1.874	.16	.01	1.775	.16	.18
27-	Customs and tradition	2.281	.10	.01	.886	.50	.122
28-	**Availability of information resources**	2.225	.11	.01	4.799	.000	.90
29-	Easy access to area	4.119	.02	.02	1.453	.24	.15
30-	**Culture shows**	5.170	.01	.03	5.147	.000	.9
31-	Positive reputation of country	1.406	.25	.01	.905	.47	.09
32-	Reasonable price tourists	1.299	.27	.01	.826	.518	.09
33-	**Tax benefits**	1.735	.18	.01	3.708	.01	.42
34-	National parks	3.526	.03	.02	.340	.89	.05
35-	Museum attraction	2.290	.10	.01	1.358	.27	.175
36-	Theatres/concerts	3.063	.05	.02	4.567	.00	.42
37-	**Physical atmosphere**	.990	.37	.01	4.579	.00	.42

Part Three. Whole Sample

5.7 Factor analysis

The main aim of using factor analysis (Maximum likelihood) **in this study is to identify the important attributes about the perceptions of the demand side,** and to put the attributes into groups to explain the variability of the group characterist**ics. Also, it used to make a possible generalization of the sample and yielding the largest probability of accuracy** (Field, 2009; Osborne & Banjanovic, 2016).

Factor analysis can be used to explore the data for patterns, to confirm the initial hypotheses and/or to reduce the numerous variables to a more manageable number (Farmer, 1999; Pallant, 2016). The concept of factor analysis is based on the fact that multiple observed variables have similar patterns of responses because they are all associated with a latent variable (i.e. a variable that is not directly measured) (Chatfield, 2018).

Factor analysis usually is applied to a large set of variables; it involves identifying the common and unique sets of variances called factors or components. It allows the researcher to condense the information into a manageable number of related variables prior to using them for conducting other analyses such as multiple regression or multivariate analysis of variance. Additionally, it helps the researcher to determine the number of latent variables of a set of items, and to define the substantive meaning of variables that account for the variations among a large number of items in a questionnaire (Field, 2013). It is easier to focus on some key factors rather than to consider too many variables that may be trivial, so factor analysis is useful for placing variables into meaningful categories (Reio & Shuck, 2015).

Hair et al. (2010) specify two main purposes of factor a**nalysis. The first is to identify the unit of analysis, and as a general model that examines the correlations between variables and respondents**. Thus, it identifies the structure of both the variables and the respondents. The second purpose is data reduction and variable selection. It summarises the data by defining the structure of the variables by placing them in groups, then providing identification for further analysis (Farmer, 1999; Hair et al., 2010; Pallant, 2016).

Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis (MLFA) is a common technique (Preacher & MacCallum, 2003). It used to estimate the factor loading. The procedure iteratively improves the parameter estimates to minimise a specified fit function (Crisci, 2011).MLFA is a method of parameter estimation that is preferred in statistics; it is also an indispensable tool for many

statistical modelling techniques, in particular non-linear modelling with non-normal data (Myung, 2003). Factor analysis is a useful tool for investigating the variable relationships of complex concepts such as socio-economic status, dietary patterns or psychological scales (Dharmawardena et al., 2015).

Factor analysis was applied to the measurement scale for tourism destination brand image consisting of 37 attributes. Only one question in this study questionnaire included scales.

The eigenvalues of the factor represent the amount of total variance explained by that factor (Pallant, 2016), which is mainly used to identify the number of factors that can be extracted using factor analysis. Therefore, the extracted factors should have eigenvalues that exceed 1, which means that the marginal contribution of this factor in explaining variance in the data is more than 0.

5.7.1 Criteria for factor analysis

Several tests on the data can be used to ensure that the data is suitable for factor analysis and that the extracted factors are meaningful.

5.7.1.1 Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

Vaske et al. (2017) state that prior to factor analysis, it is important to check that the scale being used is reliable. The reliability of a scale indicates how free the scale is from random error (Pallant, 2016). The two main approaches to assessing the reliability of a scale are test-retest reliability and internal consistency. The first approach splits the sample in half and correlates the scores between each group. The second measures the degree to which the items of the scale measure the same underlying attribute. Cronbach's alpha, a statistical technique, can be used to test the internal reliability (consistency) of a scale. The alpha is given by a statistic that varies from 0 to 1. Some researchers note that reliability coefficients should be 0.7 or greater for a scale to be reliable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the performance scale was calculated at 0.96 which indicates a good degree of internal consistency.

Table 5.25 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.963	.974	37

5.7.1.2 Sampling adequacy

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Barlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) were both calculated (Pallant, 2007) for this study to calculate the amount of total variance which represents a particular factors. Barlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS), a test of significance of correlation matrix, significant level of <.5, indicates the existence of sufficient correlations among attributes. The value of the KMO statistic falls between 0 and 1, where 0 indicates that the sample is not sufficient for factor analysis, and 1 indicates that factor analysis should yield distinct and reliable factors; in social science research, the cut-off value for KMO is 0.6 (Field, 2013).

It is also useful to refer to the correlation matrix; if not many correlations are larger than 0.03, then it is unlikely that the variables share common factors, and that the factor analysis is pointless (Pallant, 2016). As Table 5.26 demonstrates, the occurrence of many correlation coefficients is at or above .03. The KMO test shows 0.808 which is satisfactory; the BTS was also significant (P=0.000) and df= 406. **Therefore, factor analysis was considered appropriate for this study (Pallant, 2007: 190).**

Table 5.26 KMO and BTS tests

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.808
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4041.366
	Df	406
	Sig.	.000

5.7.1.3 Factor extraction

Factor extraction involves determining the smallest number of factors that can be used to best represent interpretation among a set of variables (Pallant, 2016). Different techniques are available for extraction, including the maximum likelihood estimation approach which was used in this study. In this approach, the researcher continues to experiment with factor manipulation until a satisfactory solution when the suitable number of factors is retained (Field, 2013). In order to determine factor extraction, MLFA was used, the factors are extracted based on Kaiser's criterion or eigenvalue, also, scree plot variables used to identify the number of factors to be extracted (pallant, 2007). In this study three factors were extracted.

Table 5.27 summarises the total variance of the extracted components. The total column in the initial eigenvalues highlights the total variance of each of the factors. The percentage in the variance column in the initial eigenvalues column shows the percentage variance of each of the factors, about 53.153% for the first factor. The analysis also shows that only three factors have an eigenvalue more than 1; therefore, the Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings demonstrates the factors that have been considered and those whose eigenvalue is more than 1. Besides, the cumulative percentage variance of the Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings shows that these three factors are responsible for 56.445% of the total variance.

Table 5. 27 Total variance explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	%of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	%of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	%of Variance	Cumulative %
1	19.667	53.153	53.153	19.257	52.045	52.045	8.143	22.009	22.009
2	1.550	4.189	57.342	1.101	2.976	55.021	7.697	20.802	42.811
3	1.095	2.959	60.301	.527	1.423	56.445	5.045	13.634	56.445

5.7.1.4 Rotated components matrix

Rotation is used after extraction to improve the interpretability and clarify data structure (Costello& Osborne,2005). Factor rotation aims to simplify the factor solution by identifing groups of variables more clearly. Consequently, factor rotation does not change the underlying solution but the factors are easier to interpret (Pallant, 2016). There are two main

approaches to rotation: orthogonal (varimax) and oblique techniques. According to Pallant (2016), the two approaches often result in similar solutions. However, where the underlying contracts are assumed to be uncorrelated, Gorsuch (2015) argues that the varimax method of rotation is the most appropriate technique to use because it produces results which are easy to interpret. In the oblique rotation, the factors may be correlated with conceptual advantages. Oblique is more complex than varimax since it can involve one of two coordinate systems which are a system of primary axes or a system of reference axes (Yong and Pearce,2013). In practice, researchers can conduct both varimax and oblique rotations and then report the clearest to interpret (Pallant, 2016). In this study, **the varimax rotation is used as it provides better interpretation,** leading to more interpretable factors as it allows a smaller number of variables to load highly on each factor. The varimax rotation aims to simplify the factors by maximising the variance of each factor loading.

Following rotation, factor loadings should be more transparent to the researcher. According to a number of studies (Field, 2009; Napitupulu et al., 2017), factor loading of the variables >0.3 is considered significant, factor loading variables >0.4 are very important, and a factor loading variable >0.5 is considered very significant. As a rule, to assess the significance of factor loadings, factors should have a loading greater than 0.4, and factors below 0.4 should be eliminated (Hon et al., 2012). **This study considered factors loading greater than >0.4 to be important.**

5.7.1.5 Maximum likelihood

As mentioned above, this study utilised maximum likelihood estimation as a method to determine how many attributes the demand side considers and which items belong together, because the collected usable sample data was large (N=430) and this study used parametric tests.

Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003) and Achieng et al. (2014) recommended classification of the destination branding components, one of which is image. This result presents the most intangible and tangible of the destination brand components which the demand side considers. The purpose of the rating scales in the questionnaire was to focus on the common, attribute-based components of Oman as a tourism destination. The destination image consists of two major components: cognitive and affective. Both have been assessed to understand the recognition level as well as the emotional feeling towards Oman's attractions from the perceptions of tourists. Image is a destination-specific concept, which varies from one

destination to another (Echtner & Ritiche, 1993).The results highlight the importance attached to certain attributes when choosing Oman as a holiday destination.

According to the study's findings, three latent variables were identified from the cognitive-affective images of Oman as perceived by tourists: tourist resources and motivation, socio-cultural and economic environment and infrastructure.Respondents rated Oman's image high in terms of 32 attributes, **but very low (negative) in the five attributes identified above are dropped out: camping facilities, good transport, customs and traditions, unique theme park, and quality of accommodation**. These five factors were very low in another test. People who have visited Oman gave the perceived quality of accommodation as a low percentage (7.9%): Table 5.12 (b) and (13.2%): Table 5.14; Table 5.24 shows that theANOVA test was not significant, at 0.17.

Oman has not managed to create close relationships with customers by adding value to their brand.Therefore, tourism marketers in Oman should endeavour to improve the negative attributes of Oman's image, concentrating on the most important image attributes and understanding tourists' needs and wants.

Factor one is labelled "touristic attraction resources" and includes 15 attributes at value over 0.4. This factor is based on the natural resources available in the destination and other intangible attributes which attract tourists, related to the natural attractions, entertainment, safety and security, and the social environment. These attractions are essential for successful tourism brand destination development, contributing to attracting and motivating tourists to visit a destination (Gunn, 1972). Hospitality of the local people was an important feature, having the highest loading from respondents. This was followed by safety and security, as people tend to avoid destinations with political instability. Oman was rated very highly on the safety attributes, showing that international tourists constantly receive information on security and political issues in the Middle East, including the Sultanate of Oman, that daily occupy the media. The restful/relaxing parameter has a positive influence on behavioural intention, which shows that the respondents perceive the Oman's affective images positively. Trustworthy people, availability of the internet and other demand-side concerns are considered in travelling to Oman, as are health services, especially for older tourists and those with young children.

Respondents are also concerned with natural resources such as the hot climate, golden sandy beaches, and gardens and springs, when they choose a holiday destination. Although Oman's

good weather is attractive for people from cold countries, it also needs high-quality infrastructure such as transport and water supply.

Factor two, "socio- cultural and economic environment" has 12 attributes. Those with the highest loading are museums (.766), followed by theatres/concerts (.744), then hospitable people, national parks, tax benefits, trustworthy people, positive reputation of the country, culture shows, historical interests, and easy access to the area. This factor refers to custom, experience, rituals, the architecture of a people, and host communities. It represents how the demand side identifies Omani culture and hospitality attributes. The data showed that most of the respondents expressed a strong interest in exploring the authentic side of Oman, interacting with the real culture and lifestyle of the local people. Tourists love to share new culture experiences such as traditional dress, food, festivals, music, games and dance.

The popularity of museums is perceived as an important tangible reflecting serious interest in Omani culture and confirming the argument that socio-cutural differences create a favourable destination image (Martins, 2015). This study's finding show that most of the respondents expressed a high level of interest in exploring the authentic side of Oman by interacting with the real culture and lifestyle of the local people. Atmosphere is another important variable, and many destinations promote the physical atmosphere to attract tourists and encourage them to revisit (Marino, 2008; Lopesi, 2011). This factor is thus of great significance for the Oman brand, because these attributes contribute to increasing attractiveness. International tourists are price-sensitive (Pritchard, 2003), and reasonable prices and tax benefits are important for international visitors when selecting a holiday brand destination.

Factor three, "**infrastructure impact**" has 5 variables (fashion stores, modern architecture, quality of sports facilities, quality of infrastructure, excellent shopping centres) which are incorporated into the cognitive image of Oman. Fashion stores and modern architecture had the highest loadings, .630 and .590 respectively. This factor is of great significance to visual brand identity because a good destination infrastructure improves competitive advantage and poor infrastructure can threaten development of the brand.

The result of the factor analysis presents the demand-side perceptions in three factors (touristic resources, socio-cultural and economic environment, and infrastructure) which comprise 32 attributes that potential tourists are concerned about, and can be interpreted as the demand-side perceptions of the attributes of the Oman brand identity. Therefore, these

attributes are important for Oman destination marketers because they need to develop their brand.

No	Table 5.28 .Exploratory factor analysis results						
	Extraction Method : Maximum Likelihood Rotation Method: Varimax						
No		Factors			Factors Identifications	Cronbach's Alpha	Communality
	Variables	**1**	**2**	**3**	Touristic resource (Attraction and motivations attributes)	.962	
1	Hospitality of people	.736					.742
2	Safety & security	.704					.692
3	Restful/relaxing	.677					.668
4	Clean tidy environment	.620					.665
5	Beautiful beaches	.610					.498
6	Trustworthy people	.599					.633
7	Political stability	.596					.573
8	Beautiful scenery	.588					.388
9	Availability of internet	.584					.614
10	Hot climate	.558					.424
11	Good health services	.536					.622
12	Appealing destination	.552					.612
13	Special festival/fairs	.513					.589
14	Availability of tour packages	.476					.599
15	Gardens & springs	.422					.468
16	Museum attraction		.766				.797
17	Theatres/concerts		.744				.759
18	National parks		.703				.755
19	Physical atmosphere		.679				.705
20	Tax benefits		.652				.640
21	Reasonable price tourists		.630		Socio-cultural and economic environment	.961	.666
22	Positive reputation of country		.562				.673
23	Information resources		.529				.616
24	Culture shows		.529				.602
25	Historical interest		.501				.506
26	Good restaurant		.486				.668
27	Easy to access to the area		.458				.571
28	Fashion stores			.630	Infrastructure Impacts	.961	.639
29	Modern architecture building			.590			.695
30	Quality sport facilities			.562			.721
31	Quality infrastructure			.538			.618
32	Excellent shopping Centre			.518			.550
	Overall scale Cronbach's Alpha					.963	
	Total variance explained					56.4%(56%)	
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy					.977	

Source: Primary research

The data for actual visitors was also subjected to factor analysis, and four factors emerged, as shown in Table (5.29). In comparison with Table (5.28), culture and custom, quality of accommodation, good transport services, and camping facilities were dropped again because they had low loadings of less than four (loading variables <0.4). The other attributes in Table (5.29) show a significant difference with the whole sample result. The first factor is "**infrastructure and motivations attributes**" which includes 17 attributes between (.728-.423); this differs from factor one in the whole sample: potential international tourists

consider the Oman brand to have good-quality infrastructure such as sports facilities, with most attributes having loading .728. Regarding the outcome for non-visitors, their image is mostly tangible; this can be seen with the highest loading in Table (5.29), such as sports facilities and national parks. The fourth factor was a tangible attribute, **clean and tidy**, as potential visitors consider Oman a clean place and environment. This result is reported here, but should be concerned as descriptive statistics only, because this study needs the whole sample; the other group is a very small sample which cannot be subjected to factor analysis.

No	Table 5.29. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for non- visitors						
	Extraction Method : Maximum Likelihood **Rotation Method: Varimax (N=392)**						
No		**Factors**				**Factors Identifications**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
	Variables	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	(Infrastructure and motivationals attributes)	.959
1	**Sport facilities**	**.728**					
2	**National park**	**.713**					
3	Theatre / concerts	.697					
4	Musium attraction	.695					
5	Tax benefites	.671					
6	information resources	.661					
7	Fachion stores	.660					
8	Modern architecture building	.659					
9	Quality of infrastructure	.650					
10	Reasnobale price for tourist	.622					
11	Good restaurants	.572					
12	Physical atmosphere	.566					
13	Attributes easy access to the area	.528					
14	Culture shows	.488					
15	Availability of tour packages	.476					
16	Gardens & springs	.462					
17	Unique theme park	.423					
18	Hospitality of people		.701				
19	Trustworthy people		.625			Socio-cultural and attraction attributes	.960
20	Saftey and security		.622				
21	Positive reputation of county		.573				
22	Political stability		.550				
23	Appealing destination		.516				
24	Historical interest		.497				
25	Special festival		.493				
26	Custom and culture		.302				
27	Hot climate			.620		Natural resources and motivation	.959
28	Beautiful beach			.603			
29	Avaliability of internet			.594			
30	Beautiful senery			.578			
31	Good health services			.567			
32	Attribute restful/ relaxing			.554			
33	Excellent shopping Centre			.546			
34	Quality of accommondation			.370			
35	Good transport services			.336			
36	Camping facilities			.302			
37	Clean and tidy				.546	Clean and tidy	.959
	Overall scale Cronbach's Alpha						.961
	Total variance explained						57.6%(58 %)
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy						.975

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5.8 Chi-square test and Cross- tabulation

Cross-tabulation tables are often used to examine the relationship between variables. Displaying the distribution of two or more variables jointly in this form enables the researcher to make some significant observations about the relationship between them (Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2017). After data analysis in different ways, cross-tabulation carried out to see if any particular characteristics of the potential tourists (e.g. age, education or brand logo components) have a statistical impact on the answer given.

Chi-square tests were conducted to examine significant relations between the respondents' perceptions. The advantage of using this method is that it can test for an association between two or more variables and measure the difference between observed and expected results (Morgan et al., 2013).

People with different level of education may have different perceptions. Therefore, cross-tabulation is used to discover if there is any relationship between the Oman brand and respondents education level as shown in Table 5.30.

The result might be explained people with higher education more concerned than lower education level. While, the findings of Chi-square table show there is no significant relationship between Oman attributes and respondents education level (P=.629) at the .05 level. Therefore, the resulted reported here should be concerned as descriptive statistics only.

Table 5.30 .Chi Square tests and cross-tabulation of potential international tourists education and Oman logo									
Chi Square				Cross-tabulation					
	Value	Df	**P**		Nature	Desert	Mountain	Sun	Water
Pearson Chi-Square	48.326[a]	54	**.629**						
Likelihood Ratio	56.449	54	.384	Primary school	.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.5
Linear-by-Linear Association	.938	1	.333	High school	6.8%	5.6 %	2.1%	3.3%	9.2%
N of Valid Cases	430			Diploma	9.6%	18.3%	7.3%	16.4%	10.7%
				Bachelor degree	28.5%	**35.2%**	29.2%	24.6%	24.5%
				Master's degree	**33.7%**	32.4%	30.1%	**37.7%**	**34.7%**
				PhD	20.9%	8.5%	**31.3%**	18.0%	20.4%
a8 58 cells (74.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00									

5.8.1 Oman logo and physical atmosphere

Atmosphere is an important attribute which influences tourists' level of satisfaction. Cross-tabulation was used to discover if there is any relationship between Oman's tourism logo and tourists' perception of physical atmosphere, as shown in Table 5.31, and the result is significantly positive. Potential tourists choose Oman not because of its brand attributes but for other variables such as atmosphere. A large proportion of the demand side (45.1%) selected the **desert** over other brand components. Chi square was significant at the .05 level. Therefore, Oman destination marketers need to consider this attribute when developing their brand, such as by focusing on the hotels, tourist services, restaurants, etc.

Table 5.31 .Chi Square tests and cross-tabulation of potential international tourists atmosphere and Oman logo									
Chi Square				Cross-tabulation					
	Value	Df	**P**		Nature	Desert	Mountain	Sun	Water
Pearson Chi-Square	82.938[a]	54	**.007**						
Likelihood Ratio	78.325	54	.017	Strongly disagree	5.6%	9.9%	8.3%	9.8%	5.1%
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.140	1	.001	Dis agree	7.6%	2.8 %	2.1%	4.9%	5.6%
N of Valid Cases	430			Neither	33.8%	25.1%	38.1%	26.2%	33 %
A 28 cells (93.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08				Agree	**36.1%**	**45.1%**	**38.5%**	**37.7%**	**40%**
				Strongly agree	16.9%	17.1%	12.5%	21.3%	16.3%

5.8.2 Relationship between information resources and Oman logo

Information resources influence tourists to travel and also influence the development of the tourism brand too. This part concerns people who have visited Oman before because they have used different information sources for travel to Oman. **Cross-tabulation is used to find if any relationship exists between information resources used by actual** tourists and the Oman brand. Table 5.32 shows that this relationship is significant (P=.000) at the .05 level. **Word of mouth** recommendation was the most important information resource for respondents with good links to the Oman brand.

Table 5.32 Chi Square tests and cross-tabulation of Oman brand and tourists information resources									
Chi Square				Cross-tabulation					
	Value	Df	**P**		Nature	Desert	Mountain	Sun	Water
Pearson Chi-Square	170.955ᵃ	54	**.000**						
Likelihood Ratio	51.825	54	.558	Advice travel agent	2%	1.4%	2.1%	1.6%	1%
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.418	1	.234	Recommendation from friends and relatives	**8.0%**	**12.7 %**	**11.5%**	**8.2%**	**4.1%**
				Website	1.2%	1.4%	1%	1.6%	.5%
				Media report	.8%	**1.4%**	1%	3.3%	1.5%
				Tourist book guide	1.2%	**4.2%**	1%	3.3%	0.0%
				Other	**8.8%**	**18.3%**	**14.6%**	**13.1%**	**6.1%**
A 62cells (88.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00									

5.8.3 Relationship between intention to visit Oman in future and Oman logo

It is important to identify the intention of potential tourists toward the Oman brand in future, and cross-tabulation was used to discover this. However, Table (5.33) indicates that is not significant (P=.559) at the .05 level.

Table 5.33. Chi Square tests and cross-tabulation of Oman brand and intention to visit Oman in future									
Chi Square				Cross-tabulation					
	Value	Df	**P**		Nature	Desert	Mountain	Sun	Water
Pearson Chi-Square	16.486ᵃ	18	**.559**						
Likelihood Ratio	21.635	18	.249	Yes(with in visit visit Oman in future)	91.6%	95.9%	92.7%	95.1%	84.3%
Linear-by-Linear Association	.624	1	.430	No (with in visit visit Oman in future)	**8.4%**	**7. %**	**7.3%**	**3.3 %**	**15.3%**
A 28 cells (93.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08									

5.8.4 Relationship between quality of accommodation and level of education of people who have visited Oman before

Accommodation quality has a negative image in the analysis above, so cross-tabulation was used to find if the level of education of past visitors has any impact on the responses given to the survey on this topic. From **chi Square part, there is a relation between respondents' education level and the quality of accommodation (p= .001) at the .05 level.** People who have a Masters degree consider the quality of accommodation to be important, but 100% of them thought it unsatisfactory in Oman; 12.5% of people with a high school education agreed

that Oman has a good quality of accommodation. As accommodation is one of the brand attributes, Omani marketers need to consider the education level when they develop their brand attributes, because there are many people not educated.

Table 5. 34 Chi Square tests and cross-tabulation of level of education and quality of accommodation									
Chi Square				Cross-tabulation					
	Value	Df	**P**		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Pearson Chi-Square	44.140[a]	20	**.001**						
Likelihood Ratio	39.927	20	.005	High school	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
Linear-by-Linear Association	.687	1	.104	Diploma	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
N of Valid Cases	38			Bachelor degree	0.0%	**0.0%**	11.1%	8.3%	75%
				Master's degree	**100%**	33.3%	77.8%	**83.3%**	**0.0%**
				PhD	0.0%	33.3%	**33.3 %**	33.3%	0.0
a.27 cells (90..0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is..08									

5.8.5 Relationship between Quality of accommodation and respondents age of people has visited Oman before

Cross-tabulation was used to find if the age of the actual visitors has any impact on their responses for accommodation quality. **The result of the chi-square test was not statistically significant so the finding should be considered descriptive**.

Table 5.35. Chi Square tests and cross-tabulation between people have visit before age and quality of accommodation									
Chi Square				Cross-tabulation					
	Value	Df	**P**		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Pearson Chi-Square	10.176[a]	16	**.857**						
Likelihood Ratio	10.995	16	.810	18-30	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
Linear-by-Linear Association	.615	1	.433	31-40	17.6%	11.8%	11.8%	**41.2%**	17.6%
N of Valid Cases	38			41-50	23.1%	**7.7%**	30.8%	23.1%	15.4%
				51-60	**0.0%**	0.0%	**50.0%**	**25. %**	**25.0%**
A24 cells (96.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.									

5.8.6 Relation between camping facilities and level of education

Camping facilities have a negative image as seen in the factor analysis. Therefore, cross-tabulation was applied to find if the level of education has any impact on the perceptions of respondents. **The finding shows that there is a significant relationship between level of education and the participants' responses about the camping facilities attributes (P=.03).** People who have a lower level of education consider the quality of facilities for camping more than do people with a higher level of education. The higher percentages were from people with primary and high school education.

Table 5.36. Chi Square tests and cross-tabulation of level of education and camping facilities									
Chi Square				Cross-tabulation					
	Value	df	**P**		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Pearson Chi-Square	61.264[a]	42	**.028**						
				Primary School	0.0	**100%**	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Likelihood Ratio	56.566	42	.066	High school	0.0%	3.2%	12.9%	29.0%	**41.9%**
Linear-by-Linear Association	.464	1	.496	Diploma	1.8%	12.5%	21.4%	25.0%	39.3%
N of Valid Cases	430			Bachelor degree	7.3%	**3.7%**	26.6%	35.8%	26.6%
				Master's degree	**4.9%**	7.6%	34.0%	**28.5%**	**25%**
				PhD	6.3%	6.3%	41.1 %	22.5%	24.3%
a.33 cells (58.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00									

5.8.7 Relationship between safety and intention to visit Oman in future

Safety is an important attribute for international tourists, and insecurity is a reason for people to cancel their travel plans. Therefore, cross-tabulation was used to find out if safety has an impact on intention to visit in future. **The result shows that chi-square test was statistically significant (P=.000),** meaning that there is a relationship between demand-side intention and safety. Cross-tabulation shows that 86.7% of respondents consider safety in visiting Oman in future, so Oman should consider this as it cannot develop its brand unless it has a high level of safety (Mawby, 2016). People who have visited before agree that Oman is a safe place to visit.

Table 5.37 Chi Square and cross- tabulation between demand side intention visit Oman in future and safety and security								
Chi Square	Value	df	**P**	Cross-tabulation	Intention to visit Oman in future		
	36.906	12	**.000**				
Pearson Chi-Square					Yes	No	
Likelihood Ratio	31.931	12	.001	CountStrongly Disagree Within attribute safety	21(91.3%)	2(8.7%)	23(100 %)
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.839	1	.016	Disagre Within attribute safety	16(61.5%)	10(38.5%)	26(100 %)
N of Valid Cases	430			Neither	64(83.1%)	**13 (16.9%)**	**77(100 %)**
				Agree	**159(90.6%)**	29(9.4)%	188(100 %)
				Strongly agree	**100 (86.4%)**	16(13.6%)	116(100 %)
				Total Within attribute safety	**360(83.7%)**	70(16.3%)	430(100)
A9 cells (42.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .22.							

5.8.8 Relation between safety with image when hearing the word of Oman

Cross-tabulation used to find if safety variables come to respondents mind when hearing the word of Oman.The result shows that the chi-square test was statistically significant (P= .000). The most significant proportion (58.4%) indicates that safety associated with the image of Oman in respondents mind. Respondents perceived Oman is a safe place. Therefore, Oman authority should consider safety on develops their brand.

Table 5.38: Chi Square tests and cross-tabulation between safety and image when hearing Oman									
Chi Square				Cross-tabulation					
	Value	df	**P**		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Pearson Chi-Square	156.2569[a]	36	**.000**						
Likelihood Ratio	121.248	36	.000	Extermaly negative (with image when hearing about Oman)	25.0 %	12.5 %	12.5 %	0.0 %	50 %
Linear-by-Linear Association	.615	1	.007	Some what negative	10.0 %	50.0 %	20.0 %	**10.0 %**	10.0 %
N of Valid Cases	430			Netural	4.2 %	**6.6 %**	25.1%	37.7 %	26.4 %
				Very positive	3.4 %	3.4 %	16.4%	34.2 %	42.5 %
				Extermaly positive	11.7 %	1.5 %	6.7%	21.7%	**58.4 %**
A30 cells (61.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .11.									

5.9 Validity

Validity is an important characteristic of tests and social research there is a general consensus that the trustworthiness of any substantive research depends on the validity of the instruments employed to gather the data (Baghaei & Tabatabaee Yazdi, 2016). It is defined by Heale and Twycross (2015) as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study. According to De Vaus (2013), there are three ways to assess validity (criterion, content and construct validity); criterion and content validity were discussed in Chapter Three.

5.9.1 External validity

External validity is related to generalisation. It requires a good understanding of the relationship between the variables. In establishing validity an agreement between the theoretical underpinning of the variables and the measurement scale is sought (Heale and Twycross, 2015).

5.9. 1.1 Discriminant validity

There are two types of validity comprises discriminant and convergent validity. Discriminant validity is the extent to which a measure does not correlate with other constructs from which it is supposed to differ (Lu, 2007; Hair, 2015). It involves demonstrating the lack of correlation between different variable (Hair, 2015). It was defined by Dmitrienko et al. (2007: 377) as the ability to distinguish between relevant subject groups. To test the discriminant validity of the study variables, Pearson correlation was used here to measure the strength of association between variables as a parametric test.

Table 5.39 illustrates the correlation coefficient between the variables extracted from factor analysis and other factor loadings. Discriminant validity was established by comparing the Pearson correlation between 10 attributes, five with a high loading from factor analysis (hospitality of people, safety, museums, theatres and national parks) and other attributes from dropped from the factor analysis because they had low loading (customs and traditions, facilities for camping, transport services, theme parks, quality of accommodation). (Kambewa, 2007) Pearson's correlation (r) suggests the direction and strength of the relationship. For example, the correlation between museum attraction and hospitality of people was .605, and that between theme parks and hospitality .246, all smaller than 1. This suggests good discriminant validity.

Table5. 39. Pearson correlation for destination image variables

		Factors attributes	Hospitality of people	Safety and security	Museum attraction	Theatre and concert	National park	Custom and tradition	Camping facilities	Transport services	Theme park	Quality of accommodation
Factors attributes		1 430										
Hospitality of people	Person correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.785** .000 430	1 430									
Safety and security	Person correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.787** .000 430	.702** .000 430	1 430								
Museum attraction	Person correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.827** .000 430	.605** .000 430	.581** .000 430	1 430							
Theatre and concert	Person correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.808** .000 430	.574** .000 430	.552** .000 430	.826** .000 430	1 430						
National park	Person correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.829** .000 430	.571** .000 430	.592** .000 430	.796** .000 430	.754** .000 430	1 430					
Custom and tradition correlation	Person Sig. (2-tailed) N	.392** .000 430	.350** .000 430	.314** .000 430	.321** .000 430	.287** .000 430	.303** .000 430	1 430				
Camping facilities	Sig. (2-tailed) N	.427** .000 430	355** .000 430	.376** .000 430	.335** .000 430	.353** .000 430	.342** .000 430	.140** .004 430	1 430			
Transport services	Person correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.344** .000 430	.308** .000 430	.239** .000 430	.252** .000 430	.237** .000 430	456** .000 430	.116** .016 430	.192** .000 430	1 430		
Theme park	Person correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.434** .000 430	.264** .000 430	.351** .000 430	.405** .000 430	.372** .000 430	.298** .000 430	.140** .004 430	.160** .000 430	.133** .006 430	1 430	
Quality of accommodation	Person correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.411** .000 430	.278** .000 430	.311** .000 430	.330** .000 430	.298** .000 430	.332** .000 430	.184** .002 430	.168** .000 430	.158** .001 430	.189** .000 430	1 430

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5.9.1.2 Convergent validity

Convergent validity is the extent to which scales correlate positively with other measurements of the same construct (Hair, 2015: 258). That is, it is concerned with the agreement of various rating scales that measure theoretically similar constructs. Construct validity is achieved when an item has a high correlation with another item that measures the same construct (Bolarinwa, 2015; Hair, 2015).

According to Hair et al. (2011), the term convergent validity specifies the degree to which the items of a particular construct converge or have a high proportion of variance in common. Factor loading, variance extracted and composite reliability can be used to assess convergent validity (Hair et al., 2011; Quinn, 2015). In this study factor analysis was used to establish convergent validity of the image attributes. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was calculated to assess the convergent validity of the constructs. This value is calculated manually, by using the formula:

$$AVE = \sum \lambda^2 / n$$

λ is the standardised factor loading, and this is divided by the number of attributes (variables) (Hair et al., 2010). The value of AVE should be 0.5 or more for this validity to be achieved (Quinn, 2015). Based on the results given in Table 5.40, the AVE was above 0.5 for all items. The lowest AVE was seen for "Touristic resource (Attraction attribute and motivations)", at.55, but since this value was higher than 0.50 and highly significant, convergent validity is supported.

Table 5. 40 Convergent validity

Construct	AVE	Composite reliability
Touristic resource (Attraction attribute and motivations)	.55	.96
Socio-cultural and economic environment	.67	.96
Infrastructure impacts	.71	.92

5.10 Summary

This chapter introduced the findings from the questionnaire that was used to measure the image of Oman held by international tourists. The self-administered questionnaire was given to the previous and potential international tourists. The chapter was divided in three parts. **The first concerning people who had previous experience of Oman.** The most popular reasons for their travel to Oman were **leisure**, suggesting that they were interested in exploring all Oman's attractions. The image attributes that they are perceived included friendly people, a peace environment, Arab culture, entertainment, quality of facilities, cycling, safety and security, good value for money, beautiful scenery and the hot climate. Muscat, Salalah and Sohar were the most popular tourist sites.

Previous visitors shared their opinions of Oman as a holiday destination with friends and family**, by word of mouth and social media**. The study findings demonstrate that affective and Cognitive images have an influence on visitors' behavioural intentions.

Part two compared those people who had visited Oman already and those who had not. **Signficant differences were found between the groups, people who had never been to Oman having more positive attitudes. The non-visitors to Oman perceived all the attributes positively (M>4). However, the mean for the attributes of previous visitors was lower (M<4).** This may be because of different information resources available to them. The findings show that the non-visitor group corresponds with holding cognitive and affective images; both groups considered more intangible than tangible attributes.

The importance of the logo as a part of destination branding was tested by asking the respondents for any attributes they associated with it. Not surprisingly, **most respondents were unfamiliar with the Omani logo** if they had not visited the country, but all agreed that it is straightforward. The previous visitors thought that the logo suggested nature and the mountains, while the non-visitors focused on nature and the water.

Part three of this chapter covered the whole sample (430). Factor analysis was used to divide the 37 attributes listed in question 14 into three groups: touristic attractions, socio-cultural impact and infrastructure. Participants rated the Omani image of 32 attributes as high; hospitality of people, safety and security, restful/relaxing, clean tidy environment, beautiful beaches, trustworthy people, political stability, beautiful scenery, availability of internet, hot climate, good health services, appealing destination, special festival/fairs,

availability of tour packages, gardens and springs, museum attraction, theatres/concerts, national parks, physical atmosphere, tax benefits, reasonable prices for tourists, positive reputation of country, information resources, culture shows, historical interest, good restaurants, easy to access the area, fashion stores, modern architecture, quality sport facilities, quality infrastructure, and excellent shopping centre. The low ratings were for **camping facilities, good transport services, customs and tradition, unique theme park quality and accommodation.** The higher loading was awarded to hospitality, security, theatres, museums and national parks.

The key point of the findings:

- The result indicates that Oman has a low position as a result of lack awareness. The majority of people in the street have no idea where Oman was located and demand side did not seem to have much knowledge about Oman. 392 of the 430 respondents had never visited Oman before.

- Both groups consider intangible attributes more than tangible attributes.

- Brand attributes such as safety and atmosphere were found to have significant interest from potential international tourists across the chapter of analysis.

- Word of mouth and other resources such as social media were the most valuable information resources obtained from actual visitors.

- The findings showed a lack awareness of the Oman logo (noise); the Oman logo is not understandable or memorable to international people because of language (cultural noise)

- Demand-side subjects have different perceptions according to education level, those with higher education better understanding the Omani brand.

- Oman lack position in potential tourists' minds due to lack of communication. Potential visitors have a natural image when hearing the word Oman.

CHAPTER SIX: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYASIS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the supply-side views. Interviews were used in the second phase of the study, as explained in the methodology chapter. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 Omani tourism officers, two tour operator managers and one tour guide. The purpose was to identify the opinion of the Omani authorities regarding the destination brand.

The participants were interviewed individually to discuss their perceptions of the destination brand of Oman. All were assured of confidentiality in terms of the information they provided. The destination branding attributes, brand identity and communication marketing were discussed. The findings come from themes identified from the interview transcripts. They finding are triangulated with the quantitative findings in the discussion chapter.

6.2 Descriptive analysis

The data collection process; was undertaken using Skype for visa reasons (as discussed in Chapter Four), began after collection and analysis of the quantitative data. The number of participants consulted for qualitative research normally depends on the number required to give a full account of the most important information in relation to the phenomenon under study (Sargeant, 2012). In this study, the data collection process was continued until enough information had been collected, with no further data required to fulfil the needs of the study, and no further insights forthcoming from the interviews (Myers, 2013: 123). These criteria were satisfied after 14 interviews, conducted between November 2016 and January 2017.

Before conducted interviews each participant received the information sheet to inform them more information about the study such as the research aim. The participants were informed about the research before being interviewed; the information sheet (Appendix 3) was sent by email before the interviews, explaining the research aim and the rationale behind selection of the participants. All interviwees signed consent forms about their rights to privacy and data confidentially. The consent form states clearly that participations are voluntary, anonymous and they have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. All interviewees signed the consent form and it sent to the researcher's address by post (**see Appendix 6).** Most of the interviewees were open in sharing their knowledge about the Oman tourism brand.

Based on the research aims, interviews were conducted with Omani tourism providers who have experience of the Oman tourism brand. The process of analysis started after the data collection was complete; the interviews were first translated and transcribed to make sure no important information was forgotten. Then, all the transcripts were stored in a computer folder and thematic analysis was used to identify and present the themes found in the data (Alhojailan, 2012). This study used the manual method (hard copy and pen) for analysing the interviews, which increased familiarity with the data and helped the researcher to make comparisons between the interviews and it is the best way to enable revision of the text many times over, and identify the themes more easily. This section was discussion in methodology chapter above.

6.2.1 Participants' data

The participants' data were included in Table 6.1 below

Table 6.1. Participants' data

N0	Gender	Date	Job Title
1-	Male	12/11/2016	Marketing Promotion Manager for Tourism & Domestic Events
2-	Male	13/11/2016	Marketing Assistant for Tourism & Domestic Events
3-	Male	22/11/2016	Director for Tourism & Domestic Events
4-	Male	23/11/2016	Employee in Tourism Marketing Division for Tourism & Domestic Events
5-	Male	28/11/2016	Coordinator in Tourism Marketing Division for Tourism & Domestic Events
6-	Male	4/12/2016	Executive Director for Tourism & Domestic Events
7-	Male	6/12/2016	Employee in Omani Tourism Convention Bureau
8-	Male	7/12/2016	Deputy Chairman, Marketing and Promotion for Tourism & Domestic Events
9-	Male	11//12/2016	A Tour Guide
10	Male	20//12/2016	Senior Tourism Market for Tourism & Domestic Events
11	Male	21/12/2016	Tourism Marketing Consultant
12	Male	23/12/2016	Marketing planner
13	Male	28/12/2016	Managers of tour operators
14	Male	4/1/2017	Managers of tour operators

6.3 Oman destination attributes

According to the interviewees, the Oman tourism brand was launched in 2009 by the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development. During the course of the interviews, the rationale underlying this launch became apparent, with the participants offering different views concerning the aim of Omani tourism, some of which are listed below.

It aims to promote the tourism of Oman and improve the Oman economy (interviewee no. 6)

The Oman tourism destination brand aims to build a positive image and awareness in the customer's mind (no. 3).

The aim of this brand is to build and communicate identity and a build positive image (no. 13).

Interviewee no. 10 confirmed that the aim was to differentiate Oman from other nations, attract many visitors, and develop its economy. This answer was found seven times during the coding process.

Participant no. 14 expressed a different view that the Oman brand was not focused on holiday tourism but on trade and investment, equally important to the national economy; analysis of the Omani logo below shows that it represents trade and investment too. On the other hand, most foreign companies and businessmen see Oman as a better place to do business or find employment than in other Gulf counties.

The aim of the Oman brand was to promote investment and trade. Oman has a good geographical position which helps it to attract international investors, Oman has nature, beaches, and people are very friendly (no. 14).

In addition to speaking about Oman as a destination brand, the participants defined the Omani destination brand. Participant no. 1 agreed with no.14 view regarding Oman's variety of resources, clarifying the destination brand as follows:

The destination brand of Oman includes forms of different tourism components such as water, culture, and traditional customs of Oman. Furthermore, it is a mixture of several

elements of Oman's tourism working together with local people to generate a positive image about Oman (no.1).

The destination brand is about creating an Omani identity that can be marketed and promotes the Omani tourism industry. The Oman tourism brand does not include just attributes but refers to many concepts and meanings that create the distinctive features of Oman. Oman has different attributes and we have many customers from different countries (no. 3).

Another participant explained that the logo includes different colours; each one representing attributes of the Omani brand components:

The Omani tourism brand includes different colours to describe Oman's brand components (no. 4).

The interviewees highlighted the attributes of the Omani destination brand, the majority agreeing that Oman has various resources to help formulate a destination brand, such as culture, tradition, heritage, nature, desert, history, wildlife, friendly people, climate, hotels, environment, mountains, sports, camping, Omani style, hospitality, trustworthy destination and low cost. This supports the idea of Pike (2004: 3) from the supply-side of the marketing perspective, that destination management presents a variety of attributes, including natural resources, commercial and non-profit facilities and amenities and people.

Oman has more than just beautiful beaches and culture. It has unique attributes such as agriculture (mentioned only by no. 4), Folklore and music mentioned by interviewees no 1, 3, 7 and 9.

Oman has an attractive geographical position that contributing to the country's destination branding. It is also a large country with five regions and four regional governments which work together to build a positive image in the visitor's mind. Interviewees 12, 13 and 14 pointed out that:

Oman has an attractive geographical position on the coast of the Arabian Peninsula and on the mouth of the Persian Gulf" (nos. 12, 14)

"Oman is a big country - it has five regions and four governments (Muscat, Musandam, Dohfar and Al Buraymi). We work together in Oman to become a distinctive destination (no. 13).

If you see Salalah, it is one of the destination brands of the world (no.10).

Yet another interviewee stressed the importance of culture:

These attributes are associated with the brand to build a positive image in the tourist's mind. The most important Omani tourism brand component is culture. Oman offers a unique cultural experience to tourists which contribute to their overall feelings of satisfaction (no.4).

6.4 Brand identity

Figure 6.1. Oman Brand Identity
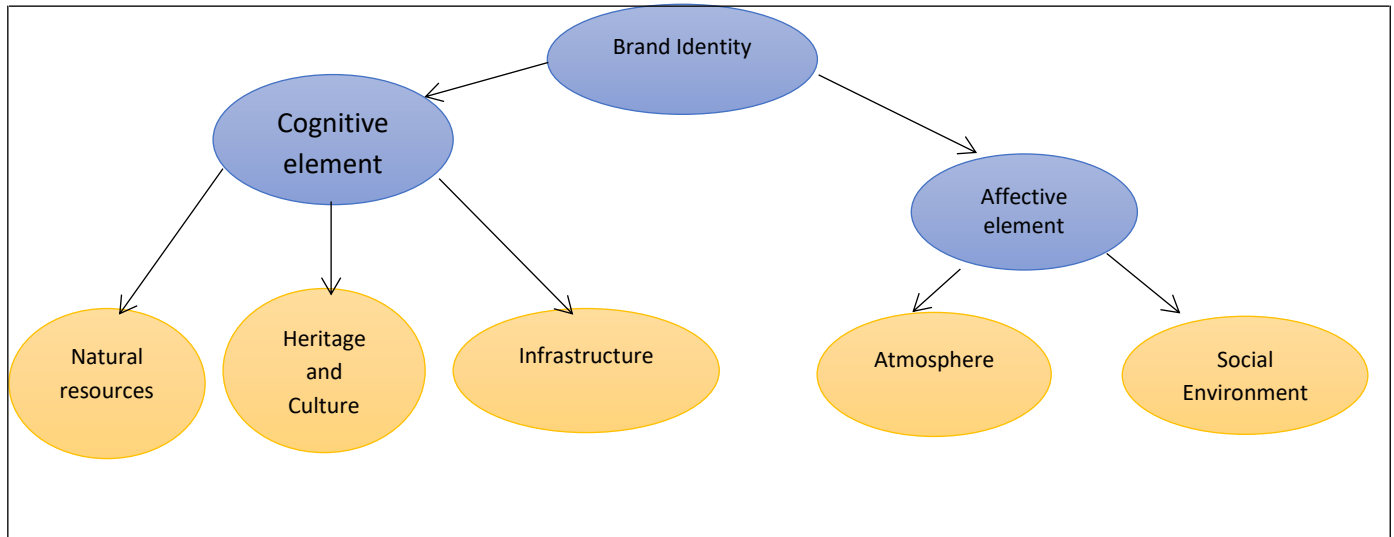
The literature shows that the sender (i.e. the destination brand marketer) projects a destination brand identity through all the features and activities that differentiate the destination from its competitors (Qu et al., 2011). Destinations need to select the attributes influencing visitors and creating experiences for customers (Seyidov and Adomaitiene, 2016). Mahdzar et al. (2015) indicated that tourists choose a destination with the attributes they consider important.

This section outlines the brand identity that Oman destination marketers aim to project to target markets through their destination branding strategy. According to the literature, brand identity is a multi-dimensional construct and consists of functional and emotional brand benefits; therefore, these ingredients encompass a wide variety of attributes (Echtner and

Ritchie, 1993; Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Um and Crompton, 1990; Dinnie, 2008; Anholt, 2007; deChernatony and McWilliam, 1990; de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo-Riley, 1998). As mentioned in Chapter Two, the categorisation of the destination brand identity attributes into cognitive and affective types was based on the studies by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and Wang, et al., (2014).

6.4.1 Oman's cognitive brand identity

 The cognitive components comprise the beliefs about and knowledge of a particular destination, focusing on tangible attributes (Pike and Ryan, 2004; Lin et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2014). Cognitive identity refers to the identity that destination marketer's project to target markets in terms of their own beliefs about and knowledge of the destination. From Omani's providers' view, cognitive identity is divided into the following attributes.

6.4.1.1 Natural resources and attractions

Oman's natural scenery was mentioned several times as a part of Oman's brand identity. This supports the idea of natural resources, important because they contribute significantly to the quality of tourism (Radovic-Markovic and Nikitovic, 2015). The majority of the participants mentioned Oman's climate, mountains, beaches, wildlife, desert environment, sports, camping, adventure potential, safety and peacefulness. Examples are given below.

> *Oman has a distinctive brand identity; Oman is rich in natural assets and cultural heritage and the country provides an attractive and safe destination for tourists to experience.* (no. 6).

> *The identity of Oman has distinctive natural attributes; it includes elements which make Oman able to compete with other destinations* (no. 8).

Indeed, Oman's authorities argue that Oman's brand identity has attributes which differ markedly from its competitors, such as mountains and animals:

> *The brand identity of Oman consists of the mountains and animals of Oman, the rich marine life of Oman, Omani frankincense, and turtles* (nos. 4,6,7,8,10).

Several other participants believed that Oman has

> *An amazing desert experience with very popular camel racing sports* (nos. 2 and 14).

6.4.1.2 Heritage and culture

When participants were asked about destination branding and brand identity, the attribute of culture was a significant feature. Omani tourism brand identity is based on culture because, according to the interviewees, Oman is considered to be one of the few tourism destinations in the region that still maintains its culture and identity. It is a unique country which prides itself on, and is famous for, its rich culture, and is considered to be one of the few countries in the Gulf region trying to preserve its local culture as a critical element in its brand identity.

All the participants agreed that culture and heritage are the main attributes which Oman uses to attract foreign tourists. One of the main reasons people travel is to get experience about another country and to explore new customs and cultures (Falk, 2016). The majority of the participants believed that Oman has a heritage, museums, history, warm hospitality, friendly people, good food, and interesting clothes, music, folklore and dance. Local communities remain proud of their traditional clothes, and the majority of Omani woman in rural areas dress in the traditional fashion. This is distinguished by brightly-coloured fabrics and jewelled adornments which differ from one area to another. Likewise, many Omani men wear traditional clothes even at work, and are proud to do so.

Omani people are proud of their traditional clothes and their customs (nos. 5 and 12).

Another participant mentioned women's fashions:

In our culture, women are still proud to dress in traditional fashion, particularly those who live in rural areas; the clothes are very colourful. Omani men wear their white robes even at work (no. 3).

Other participants agreed that

Omani males wear the traditional dress for their everyday activities (nos. 10 and 13).

Frankincense also features in Oman's branding as it is evidence of an early trading route from Oman across the Middle East. Omani people use it at the end of a meal. It was mentioned by all interviewees, because it is one of the elements of Oman's logo.

Frankincense is associated with an early trading route which ran from Oman across the Middle East. It was used by Omani people to spread their culture and language. We use frankincense every day at the end of the meal (no. 3).

Another interviewee indicated that

Frankincense plays an important role in our culture and tradition and we use it every day and in all our celebrations (no. 5).

The participants also mentioned that the tradition and culture that are part of Oman's branding can be found in everyday public places. Visitors can observe Oman's culture and heritage when walking through the streets, and in the public market, where silver handicraft is common and traditional clothes and jewellery are sold. Folklore and music also give visitors a positive experience of Oman. Folklore, music and similar attributes were mentioned by participants as attractive many to tourists, particular people from Asia who consider that

Vocal music is very popular especially in marriages (nos. 1, 3, 7, 9).

6.4.1.3 Infrastructure

In terms of tourist infrastructure, Oman destination marketers aim to project an identity which shows that Oman offers a wide range of hotels, resorts, airports, transport and services. According to the interviewees, Oman has a high quality of services, making it a convenient place to visit.

However, there was unanimous agreement that Oman's infrastructure is poor despite recent developments. **The vast majority of the infrastructure is to be found in the main cities of Muscat and Salalah**, where the services are better. Despite huge improvements in infrastructure, some regions and services still need more consideration, such as camping. However, these regional differences affect the attraction of the whole country, a drawback which is detrimental to the brand image of Oman:

Oman lacks tourism infrastructure except in Muscat and Salalah while other cities have poor infrastructure (nos. 8 and 9).

Muscat has been facing a rise in tourism development and many resorts are being established with high international standards of hospitality services to meet the tourists' needs (no. 1).

The director of Oman tourism stated that

Oman's strategy now is to repair the infrastructure and transport to make travel between Oman and our neighbours and travel for foreign tourists easier so that tourists will be able to visit more than one country (no. 3).

However, Oman still suffers from the absence of direct flights between Oman and some European countries due to the distance involved. One of the Omani officials commented on this by saying,

There are excellent services in airports but there were no direct flights between Oman and other European countries in the past; however, there are some direct flights now but not many (no. 11*).*

Transport was another element of the infrastructure image. One of participant said:

Transport is a problem as we do not have a good public transport system (no. 2).

However, participant no. 4 stated that there are different types of transport, although he meant the services in Muscat.

There are different types of transport such as buses, taxis and, if tourists have a licence, they can rent a car.

Another participant had a different view about the public services when he said:

I would say there are a lot of hotels, beaches and camping opportunities. The camping is free here in Oman but there are no services such as public toilets (no. 1).

As for hotels, the majority of the participants mentioned that Oman's hotels vary considerably. Some private hotels are owned by individuals, while

There are many five-star hotels (no.12).

6.4.2 Oman's affective brand identity

The affective component is related to the emotional aspect of social identification (Wang et al., 2014; Wang, 2016). The interviews with Omani tourism management indicate their opinion of the atmosphere of the destination and social environment.

6.4.2.1 Atmosphere of Oman

The positive atmosphere of a destination might incorporate enjoyable activities or experiences that promote fun, relaxation, freedom from stress, fashion, and are family-orientated (Dwivedi et al., 2009; Campelo et al., 2014). From the analysis of the interviews, it was clear that Oman destination marketers try to evoke a positive sense in their target markets through their branding strategy. Throughout the interviews, Oman's environment

was mentioned as being a fun and relaxing place for enjoyment. They believe Oman has many unique intangible attributes that can differentiate the country from other destinations.

Two participants agreed that Oman is a wonderful place to visit:

Oman is a wonderful place to visit; it has many attractions (nos. 5, 6).

They felt that Oman is a safe and peaceful place and has the ability to build a positive experience and image in the customer's mind.

Oman is a safe destination for a tourist's experience" (no. 6).

Other participants confirmed this by stating that:

Oman is a peaceful country and creates a positive image in the tourist's mind (nos. 2, 4, 12, 14).

Participant no. 4 added, "It is very welcoming".

6.4.2.2 Social environment

The literature review indicated the relationship between social, cultural and economic development impacts and support for the development of resources and attractions (Yoon et al., 2001; Hsieh et al., 2017). All the participants indicated that Oman is very welcoming, with hospitable and friendly people. Local residents are known for their hospitality (Al-Baushi, 2009). The interviews indicated that Oman management represent hospitality through the local people. The word hospitality was repeated more than 14 times by participants and is one of the main attributes of Oman's brand.

Omani people are very welcoming, offering coffee with dates to home visitors (nos. 5, 10).

Oman is different in terms of the hospitality of the people (no. 11).

Another participant confirmed this by saying, "We can be trusted to satisfy customer needs" (no. 1).

One participant, however, added a cautionary note:

Yes, Oman is famous for its hospitality. But, for Oman to compete with other destinations and attract tourists there is a need to improve the quality of hospitality and provide better products and services to tourists (no. 4).

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The findings showed that Oman has unique tangible and intangible attributes and can be expected to build a stronger and more recognisable brand identity based on the above-mentioned attributes as they seem to better represent Oman's destination brand. However, from the interviews it would appear that the project director has no clear plan concerning the actualisation of these attributes, especially the tangible attributes, during the project stage. It is clear that the Omani authority is dependent on the intangible attributes to attract potential tourists.

Safety is a very important factor in influencing tourist behaviour and motivating them to visit a specific destination (Turk, 2011; Yang et al., 2015). According to a newly released World Economic Forum (WEF) report in 2017, Oman was ranked the fourth safest country in the world for visitors. The participants indicated that **safety** was the main distinctive attribute of Oman as a tourist destination. In fact, it is one of the safest tourism destinations not only in the Middle East region, but in the world at large. Words connoting s**afety** were repeated many times in the interviews. Several examples are given below.

> *The message we send to our customers is "Welcome to your second country, Oman, a country of safety, peace and a warm welcome"* (nos. 1, 4, 5).
> *Our brand offers safety and a good experience* (no. 11).
> *Oman is peaceful and safe, which makes us different from any other destination in the Middle East* (no. 14).

6.4.3 Oman brand logo

As tourists can choose from among thousands of destinations to visit, effective destination branding should provide them with an assurance of quality experiences (Blain et al., 2005). An effective destination brand combines visual communication and marketing techniques to promote a destination. One of the participants explains this:

> *Oman's logo is a message to represent Oman to the target market* (no. 3).

As already explained, Oman's logo was launched in 2009 by the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development to represent Oman's national brand. The logo is a critical component in establishing a destination brand identity and image (Barisic and Blazevic, 2014). Oman's is based on culture and heritage. It comprises the word Oman in Arabic calligraphic script (عمان), each letter representing attractive elements of Omani's

nature and culture, namely, the marine environment, mountains and animals, frankincense and a dhow.

Figure (6.2) illustrates the logo.

In more detail, the components of this brand identity are:

1- The first letter (dark blue) is the dhow (ship), representing the history of Oman in sea navigation.

2- The second letter (dark green) refers to turtles to represent the marine life in Omani waters.

3- The thrid letter (light blue) refers to the high mountains and reserves for animals such as the leopard, unique to Oman in the region.

4- The fourth letter (light green) is the smoke of an Omani frankincense burner, as Oman is known historically for the trading of frankincense around the world.

Some participants, however, felt that all elements of Oman as tourism destination branding (not just the elements found in the logo) create a unique destination and differentiate it from all others. Also, these elements create an experience in the customer's mind that cannot be forgotten. This view was refuted by some of the participants who supported the Omani logo.

All these elements together indicate a unique destination to visit (nos. 5, 13).

Interviewee no.4 supported this view:

These elements create an image of Oman that tourists cannot forget and they can differentiate Oman from other destinations.

In this way they highlighted Oman's logo elements as an important part of the project and showed that it could be used to support efforts to attract visitors.

However, another interviewee commented on the Omani brand as follows:

Omani tourism brand does not just include attributes but also refers to many concepts and meanings that bring out the distinctive features of Oman (no. 2).

The participants also supported the choice of colours used for the logo, as they create brand awareness and reflect Oman's nature and water, which helps the audience to recall or recognise the Omani brand. Omani management believe the logo is memorable as when they have seen it tourists do not forget it. The literature indicates that a good logo should be easily recognisable, memorable, and appropriate (Budakov, 2016).

The colour choice creates awareness in the customer's mind when he sees the colour again (no. 9).

Another participant added:

Oman's logo colour reflects the colour of nature and water (no. 3).

The Omani logo does not include the unique attributes which the country has to attractive international tourists. A different idea about the Omani logo came from interviewee's no. 7, who indicated that it does not include all the elements of Oman's identity but just represents some of its attributes.

The Oman identity brand (logo) reflects part of Oman's identity - not all the elements. [It is] very basic and poor (no. 7).

However, the logo represents different sectors: trade, tourism, education, and information technology, it represents Oman as a nation is not belonging to only tourism. The main aim of Omani government diversity is to boost its economy by using these resources. Light blue is the dhow, representing the history of Oman in sea navigation; this element represents the trade. According to the Ministry of Information (2006), in the 16th century when the Portuguese had discovered the sea route round the Cape of Good Hope to India, Muscat dominated the trade until expelled by the Omanis in 1650. The Oman logo written in Arabic attracts students from Arab countries to study at Oman universities.

For example.

The logo of Oman is meant to to promote tourism, trade, education and information technology. Oman wants to present all the Omani elements to the world" (nos. 4,9,11).

Interviewee no. 2 endorsed this statement:

The logo of Oman is used in different sectors, not just in tourism.

Another participant mentioned that there are plans a foot to change the logo characters, because the Omani authorities see this logo as not including all the national elements, emphasising the lack of a definitive Omani strategy for the market. The logo is not a clear representation for many potential tourists because it written in Arabic.

*There are many components which have been requested to be added and explained in detail. Formerly, it was very basic and poor and it focused on Arabic targets (*no. 7).

Participant no. 10 added:

The logo of Oman needs to be more clear and focused on attributes which tourists like rather than on attributes which are already there. The logo design needs to be strategically planned to make it more memorable and to help tourists to relate to it.

According to the literature, culture sets the values that feed brand inspiration, and explains the origins of the product (Kapferer, 2008). Although Oman has many attributes it is clear that the logo is based on culture and heritage, which might indicate that Omani tourism lacks a strategy because it ignores other sectors. Omani management focused more on intangible than tangible attributes when projecting the Omani logo.

Figure 6.2. Omani logo elements
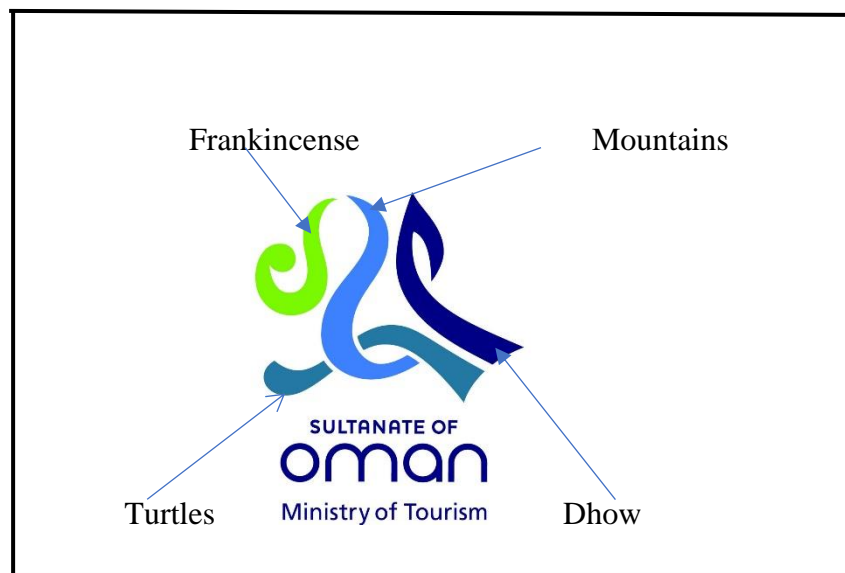
6.5 Communication in Marketing

Figure 6.3. Communication market elements
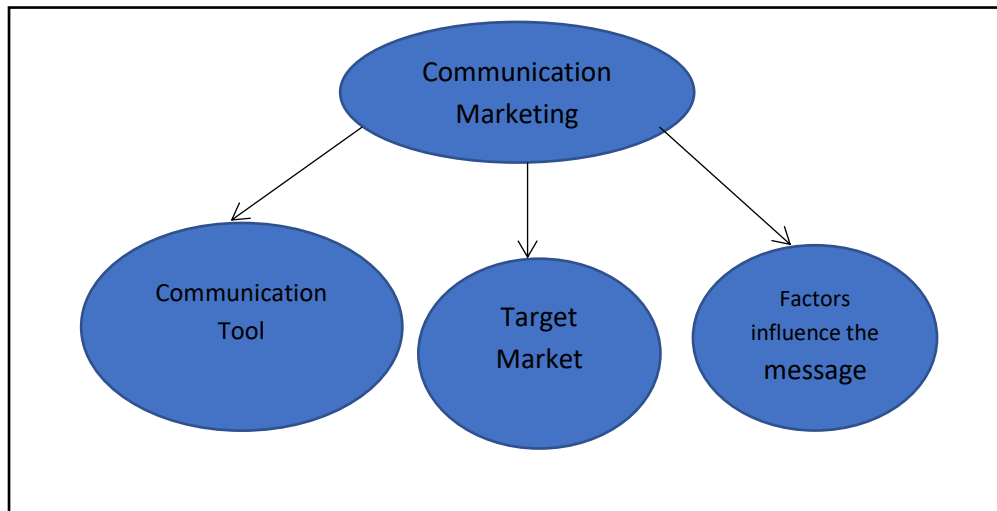
Marketing communication represents the voice of the company and its brand, and is the means by which it can establish a dialogue and build relationships with consumers (Amoako et al., 2012). Communication can be used to develop brand feeling and to change or manage the behaviour of the target audience (Baines et al., 2017: 397). Communication between the brand and its consumers can be examined in terms of brand identity and brand image. Brand identity resides within the sender who is responsible for specifying the meaning, aim and self-image of the brand while brand image is regarded as a reflection of the consumer's perceptions of a brand and can be judged by the brand associations held in the memory. In a nutshell, this comes under the purview of communication marketing.

The interviewees commonly stated that Omani tourism has a website to communicate with their customers (www.destinationoman.com). The website was launched by the Ministry of Oman Tourism to offer information regarding the Sultanate, including everything potential visitors need to know about the country such as hotels, restaurants and transport, with suggestions of things to do and places to visit. Also, there are many Omani tour operators offering services to help customers to choose anything they want.

There is a website related to the Oman tourism news. Customers can find information about Oman in the tourism Oman website (nos. 1, 2,3,4,5,6,7,10).

Interviewee no. 8 agreed that it was the best platform for tools promoting the brand identity of Oman.

One interviewee indicated that the tourism website included all the information and news needed to support potential tourists in choosing hotels and applying for visas. It also includes attractive photos. His comment was:

> *The Tourism Ministry of Oman has a website to communicate with international tourists which includes Omani tourism information, news and pictures. People can apply for a visa and can book a hotel, and receive specific information about restaurants* (no. 9).

A participant from a tourism operator mentioned services that are available to support tourists, such as transport.

> *We help travellers to choose everything they want - even transport, as some visitors like to rent a car* (no. 13).

On the other hand, some participants stated that the Omani Tourism Ministry used the website to communicate with its customers because it was an easy way to update information.

> *It is an easy way to give updates. We focus on the places to visit, instead of focusing on the activities available in the Sultanate of Oman* (no. 12).

Interviewee no. 14 agreed that a website is a cheap and easy way to communicate with the customer; it does not need a big budget, unlike advertising.

Website is an easy way to communicate with our customers (no. 14)

The participants also discussed the communication tools and why Oman chose to use the website rather than other communication tools. They felt that the customers nowadays use social media more than other tools, watching less television. Participant (no11) thought most people do not watch TV these days. **Because of most of the young people busy with their work and people around the world using social media more than any other communication tools.**This finding shows that destination marketers prefer cheap tools to promote their tourism products.

> *It is difficult to reach customers because now customers use social media more than any other media tools. However, advertising is important for reaching new customers and keeping old customers. People do not need to watch TV or read newspapers to see our advertising* (no.11).

Oman tourism uses other tools in addition to marketing communication. The Omani tour operators offer good services and attempt to build a positive image. According to Jalil and Abd (2010), tour operators and travel agents play a double role as distribution channels and image creators.

However, interviewee no. 3 seemed to disagree, saying that

> *To date, Oman does not have any communication market tools in the tourism sector. Oman needs a strategy to focus on communication with consumers because communication marketing in tourism needs more effort from all stakeholders.*

6.5.1 Promotional campaign through communication tools

According to the interviewees, Oman tested its logo in a popular campaign called "Beauty has an address". The campaign was launched in 2011 to create awareness in the international market and to deliver tourism products to potential visitors. The campaign included a ten-minute video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8523uL7_YE). It is noticeable that such campaigns launched by the Oman Tourism Authority represent all the attributes which the participants discussed, not just the logo attributes. This may be because the Omani logo represents other sectors, and the attributes reflecting tourism are easy to understand and clear for potential tourists.

In addition, "Beauty has an address" has a unique experience highlighted in the identity. Most of the participants mentioned the campaign in passing, and three of them explained it in detail. The researcher watched the campaign, finding differences between the logo and the website. The website, established by the Ministry of Tourism, includes all Oman's unique attributes, while the logo was launched by the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development.

Overall, natural resources are the most attribute appearing in the website campaign, and the first key message. From the website clearly reveals that tourism in Oman emphasises the beauty of its natural resources such as the beaches, the landscape, agriculture, animals and the desert.

Culture and history are the second most prominent image attributes, and it is noticeable that the people in the video are wearing traditional clothes. Food and restaurants come third, the different types of hotels fourth, and customs and the way of life take fifth place. Infrastructure, hospitality, adventure and activities are the other most prominent image

attributes in the official website, with others representing different places to create a relaxing, stress-free atmosphere.

Sailing and water sports are the sixth most prominent attributes in the promotional video, which and adventure the seventh, with activities including biking scenes. Turtles and marine life constitute the eighth attribute and infrastructure the ninth. Souqs and shopping opportunities are the tenth attribute, with frankincense the last-placed. Newer image attributes that emerged during the video were hospitality, friendly people and atmosphere.

Interviewees 1, 13 and 14 said that

Beauty has an address" was a video of about ten minutes long. The aims of this campaign were to increase awareness in the potential international tourist's mind. The campaign was designed to include the elements highlighted in the Omani logo besides other elements used to attract tourists.

I think the Ministry of Tourism was the first and only one to adopt the idea of a campaign video; it was a campaign designed by the Ministry in 2011 to attract more potential visitors and to promote Omani culture, history, wildlife and beaches, so it was a video specifically about tourism (no. 1).

Participant no. 8 stated:

Our target market is European and Asian countries such as India. In the European market, France is a competitor in Europe, although it has a different culture and history. There is a need, therefore, to attract European tourists who are looking for new things to do.

Another participant added:

Our hotel managers and tour operators conducted many more campaigns to communicate with new customers (no. 5)

Other participants mentioned the reasons for conducting campaigns were to explain the logo attributes to potential tourists:

We conducted a campaign to communicate with and explain to potential tourists the meaning of Oman's logo (no. 6).

Interviewee no. 10 made the following comment:

Through the effort to promote the brand, Muscat attracted over 200 visitors from Asia between ages 18-24, especially from China and Sri Lanka [in August 2015].

Another specific campaign was launched by the Ministry of Oman which focused on **wedding ceremonies and honeymoons.** According to the literature, destination marketers aim to attract particular tourists by identifying and targeting specific segments in which to implement effective marketing tactics (Garrod and Fyall, 2017). This kind of branding is executed by specifying the target market and setting up a marketing approach which pays attention to the target market forces and needs. **The target market for the weddings campaign is potential visitors from India**. The participants mentioned that Oman is likely to become a favoured destination for Indian weddings because it is close to India and offers a blend of modern infrastructure and old world charm. Also, Oman is a honeymoon destination for many Arab countries.

We had special online campaigns such as the wedding ceremony in the Indian market, because Oman is a destination brand for some people from Asia seeking honeymoons (nos. 3, 14).

Some other participants agreed but added another idea.

Oman is a very popular wedding destination for visitors from the Indian and Turkish market (nos. 9, 11, 12, 13).

However, another participant said:

We know awareness is important for developing a tourism brand. But, our effort is more likely to improve internal communication rather than external communications (no. 2).

The Oman tourism management encourages local tourists to travel inside Oman rather than abroad, and gave more attention by advertising on local TV to identify improvements and the development of the tourism industry. This strategy may help Oman to promote their tourism attributes evaluated by local people, whose feedback helps modification of the negative image.

On the local TV, travel agents offer their services but Oman does not have any channel to communicate with other potential tourists from outside Oman, such as a magazine or TV programme.

Results indicate that Omani management efforts seem to be effective, although it is clear that they need to select the appropriate target market .Oman chose the European market but most visitors come from Asia, especially China and Sri Lanka, perhaps because the European market is not responsive to the Omani message, or because of noise resulting from the culture's different interpretation.

The results reveal that Oman did specify campaigns such as on weddings, to attract particular groups from India. This was applied because each target market has its own unique character and its own preferences for tourism products (Chusnul, 2017). Oman has succeeded in attracting these groups because its traditions and customs are interrelated and close to Indian traditions and customs at wedding parties.

6.5.2 Target markets of Oman's tourism marketing

Target markets have been identified as the most important area of the marketing strategy (Stylos et al., 2017). Countries seeking to increase their tourism share should consider the characteristics of their target markets (Van Nostrand et al., 2013).

According to the interviews with the Oman Tourism Authority, their target market is all international tourists, including those from neighbouring countries, as a means of developing and diversifying the economy. The Oman operators conducted this campaign in European countries such as the UK, Germany, Italy, France and Russia, and other countries such as India and the United Arab Emirates. The tourist authority is concerned to improve the guided tours and the quality of other services in accordance with the different needs and manners of potential visitors. This is supported by George (2017), who explained that creating a tourism brand needs to consider emotional attributes which can be symbolised verbally and visually, and understood by different target markets in different situations.

Interviewees 1, 13 and 14 said:

> *Oman's target markets were European countries such as the UK, Germany, Italy, France and Russia and other countries such as India and the United Arab Emirates.*

6.5.3 Factors preventing the message (Noise)

Communication is a continuous process and its goal is to ensure a complete and accurate understanding of the message. However, there is the possibility of interference, or noise, which may prevent the marketer's message from reaching its goal (Lunenburg, 2010; Adu-

Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang, 2014). As the literature suggests, it is important for organisations to be aware of noise and to handle it as carefully as possible, in order to prevent its negative influence on the consumer's brand perception (Kapferer, 2012).

According to the findings, most participants agree that there are problems affecting the message being sent to the customers. They are highlighted that the problem lies in the lack of effort and tools to communicate with potential visitors. Five participants gave their opinions in this regard, acknowledging the fact that it is difficult to reach customers, and that the Oman brand has limited appeal. Also, participants mentioned that culture may have an effect on consumers' perceptions.

Cultural noise was the first factor mentioned by participants, referring to it as an obstacle between people from different backgrounds, especially in language (e.g differences in the **meaning of words, body language),** and religion (Vinaya et al., 2012). The receiver may not understand the language used by the transmitter, and although Omani's destination management believe that they deliver their tourism products by campaigns in different countries they do not receive sufficient responses. The communication process is completed only when the receiver has understood the message of the sender (Ricketts and Ricketts, 2010).

Participant no.12, for example, considered the cultural factor affecting the Oman tourism message:

> *I think our message reaches many different places; we present our logo in different markets in Europe and India. However, our logo is focused only on culture, possibly because our culture is so different. Or perhaps they are not happy to visit another Arab country* (no. 12).

> Most the interviewees felt that the Oman logo is not clear as its elements are not understood elements, although the overall campaign is understood by international tourists. The Omani providers understand that consumers need to understand the brand message.

> *Consumers need to understand the meaning of the Oman brand message* (no. 10).

This was endorsed by another participant who indicated that the "consumer may misinterpret the brand message" (no. 14).

Meanwhile, according to two of the tour operators, brand language is another factor influencing the communication process. The word Oman, for example, is written in Arabic and yet our target market does not know Arabic. Therefore, the customer does not understand the brand message which leads to the communication barrier (Fred, 2010). Hence, the language being spoken must be clear and concise (Adu-Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang, 2014).

> *People do not understand the language in the logo because the Omani logo contains the word 'Oman' written in Arabic calligraphy. However, there are many different target markets. The tourism target market is different, for example, from the education target, which focuses more on attracting Arab students. But tourism aims to attract people from Europe, the USA, and Asian countries* (nos. 13, 14).

This agrees with other studies (He and Liu, 2010; Vinaya et al., 2012; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014) which indicate that as a result of different cultural backgrounds, it is often possible to generate misunderstandings in branding.

Another factor mentioned by one of the participants was that consumer behaviour and concern can also affect the Oman tourism message, and it is useful to think of consumers' understanding the message in different ways according to different tastes. Consumer attitudes influence the communication process and we know that other destinations have a more powerful campaign than Oman. The greatest advantage for an organisation is to understand their consumers' attitudes, behaviours and experience, making the communication more valuable (Duffett, 2017).

> *I think we should consider the tastes of customers and consumer behaviour* (no. 11).

A different view was forthcoming from two participants who mentioned the factors affecting the communication process of the Omani tourism brand. They agreed that consumer belief affected communication in terms of the Omani brand attributes.

> *I think many potential tourists do not trust the campaigns or our message because many different marketers around the world claim something they do not have. Consumers need more honesty* (nos. 6, 8).

Participant no 6 added that "consumers do not believe that Oman is safe, for example".

This finding shows that Oman tourism communication with international tourists does not always consider culture, language and consumers' concerns, so that the Omani message fails to reach them. This influences the customers' perceptions and memorisation of the brand (Keller, 2016). It is clear that the causes of noise might be misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the meaning of the message, or past experience with the sender, or maybe that the Omanis chose the wrong channel for their message. According to the literature, the most obvious language problem arises when two people do not share a common language, or if the receiver perceives the sender as dishonest or ignorant.

6.6 Desired images of the Omani brand

According to the interviews with the Omani Tourism Authority, the key message is to project a strong Omani brand identity, to show the world that tourism in Oman offers more than what might be expected and consists of what can be regarded as the most common Omani tourism elements, namely its rich culture and old heritage. Oman's brand message is focused on what is projected as a unique experience, highlighted in the brand identity by using the Omani logo elements which are based on Oman's culture, and sent to agencies through the "Beauty has an address" campaign. However, this is not how potential visitors perceive the destination to be. It is therefore necessary for the destination marketers to project and modify the image perceived by the target audience and to the continuously manage the brand identity (Ghodeswar, 2008).

The Tourism Authority of Oman reported that it has sent its message to various audiences around the world, with an emphasis on **safety** and peacefulness. The most important factor in determining if potential tourists will visit the destination is the image that they have of that destination (Lu et al., 2015).

The message we sent to our customers was that Oman is a place of safety, peacefulness, welcoming you to your second country - Oman (no. 1).

A number of other participants indicated that Oman's brand constituted a promise to its customers. Those participants mean Oman has more to discover that the customer expected:

Oman sent out a message promising potential visitors that they would find more than they expected (nos. 2, 3, 4, &10).

Participant no. 5 agreed, and added a point about the destination brand's attributes.

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We promise our potential tourists they will find more than we mention. Our brand presents sports, wildlife, landscape, culture and traditional, friendly people. Oman is a safe country.

Participant no. 7 described the Oman brand as a promise representing Oman's history and culture:

We send a promise to our customers to find out more about our history and culture.

Other participants added even more ideas concerning the establishment of a brand identity for Oman, including Omani culture, traditions, a variety of water sports, nature and landscape, beaches and a sunny climate (nos. 6,11,13,14).

In addition, participants stated that the Omani destination brand delivers a promise to its customers to find more than expected.

Our message, incorporated in the identity of Oman, promises our customers that they will find more in Oman than expected (no. 8).

Our message represents all the elements that Oman has and not just what is represented in the Oman logo. We promise our customers that we will find more outdoor activities to do (number 12).

Although Oman has many different attributes which can be used to project a positive image, the brand message itself is mainly based on culture and heritage which are promoted through campaigns which also include the appeal of Oman's natural resources. When put together these attributes and resources still only constitute a simple message. As such, Oman needs to differentiate its image from that of other Gulf countries which have the same culture. The Oman Authority wants its customers to hear its message which includes a promise to meet all their needs. From the interviews, it is clear that Omani management does not have a clear future plan or strategy to project a strong image to present to the Omani tourism sector.

6.7 Oman's tourism destination position

According to Keller (2008), position is one of the communication marketing forms that play important role in attractiveness tourism destination. The purpose of the position is to create a distinctive picture of that destination in the minds of potential tourists. Participants were asked to state if they had anything different from their competitors, and they concluded that

Oman is different from its competitors by virtue of its tangible and intangible attributes. The biggest difference is that Oman has nature, culture and heritage. The Omani brand communicates its culture to tourists by showcasing features such as the Omani dhow. Oman is also rich in historical sites such as forts, castles and tombs. The government's efforts to preserve cultural heritage and identity are extended to include preserving national dress. According to the participants' repeated answers, these are not enough to position a destination in tourists' minds. It is important to understand the needs and desires of visitors, while bearing in mind that each visitor is a potential market (Scott et al., 2013).

> *In fact, we have two important elements in Oman tourism: the historical heritage and unique natural phenomena"* (no. 13).

The Omani government has taken the initiative to restore most of the historical sites and traditional places such as local markets (souks), local songs and folklore.

> *Also, I think songs and dances in Omani folk music are different* (no.6).

Oman's warm, hospitable nature implies that visitors are guests in Oman and should be welcomed according to Omani hospitality and cultural customs.

> *Oman is different by virtue of her geographical position, culture, and hospitality* (no. 8).

Another attribute that differentiates Oman from her competitors is her nature and landscape, which are a focus and a big part of Oman's identity. Participants indicated Oman is in a good geographical position on the coast of the Arabian Peninsula and at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It has a variety of natural resources such as the relatively clean sea, sandy beaches, lakes, climate, green mountains, huge desert, and agriculture. Interviewee no. 7 concurred:

> *Oman is different because Oman has geographical diversity.*

This shows that Oman enjoys a positive image. Several participants explained that this positive image helps Oman to differentiate herself from other nations while, at the same time, having a good relationship with all countries, especially European countries. Product differentiation is a key marketing component used to gain a competitive advantage and is achieved through services differentiation (Kowalkowski et al., 2017).

Oman wants to be a tourism destination, but the development of its branding strategy is still in its early stage among Oman tourism stakeholders. The findings show that Oman has the ability to appeal to different markets because it has different attributes which help it to plant a

pleasant experience in the consumer's mind. However, efforts to establish a winning tourism for **Oman have not yet proved successful despite the fact that the image of Oman is associated with safety and peace**. Thus, Oman needs to project a different image in order to avoid being burdened with a similar positioning and losing its bid to be different in the target market. If there are two similar segments compete for attention at the same time, the result might be disappointing if similar marketing strategies were applied (Chusnul, 2017).

6.8 Emergent theme: reputation

The theme of reputation was discussed in the interviews. Reputation is the key to many tourism development issues as it affects many countries around the world, especially developing countries, due to their reputation of being regions of conflict and turmoil. Participants believe that customers choose Oman because it has a good reputation with a positive image which makes it different from other destinations. More than half of the participants indicated that Oman has a good reputation, a fact repeated ten times during the interviews.

Oman has a good reputation (nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14).

One of interviewees mentioned that a good reputation is a step towards reaching our target market.

I think we reach our customers by reputation. We are truthful and kind and we have a good image and reputation (no 1).

Another participant indicated that social media helps to build reputation between countries.

These days people use social media, such as Facebook. They tell their friends and colleagues about their travels. This helps Oman to build trust and reputation between Oman and other countries around the world (no. 2).

Participants believe that Oman is perceived in a good light by international tourists because it has a good reputation.

Oman has a good reputation and positive image between countries. This means that the tourists perceive Oman positively and give good feedback (nos. 5, 6, 9, 11*).*

I think that if their expectations are met, this helps us to build a positive reputation and trust" (no.10).

With the number of tourists increasing, this means they perceive our image. In the last year we have had big numbers of visitors from Singapore and Hong Kong. You can say, Oman has a good reputation and this leads people to visit it (no. 13).

Yes, Oman has a positive image in the customer's eyes and we have a good reputation in the world; visitors from Asian countries, Europe and Canada help us to build a positive image (no. 14).

6.9 Awareness

Awareness is another theme emerging from the analysis of the interviews. The findings showed that the Omani authority received different views about potential tourists' awareness of Oman and the local people's awareness of tourism. This can be noticed in the following comment.

The planning authorities envisaged consulting residents about the implementation of a plan to increase people's awareness of the expected positive outcome of the development process (no. 1).

Another view supported the idea when mentioning the importance of awareness in attracting tourists and communicating with international tourists.

We know awareness is important for developing the tourism brand. Our effort improves internal communication (communication with local people) more than external communications (no. 2).

In terms of building the awareness of foreign tourists, most of the participants mentioned that the Omani Authority had launched campaigns to raise the awareness of people about Oman. One of the participants explained that awareness is the key to developing the tourism process for local people and potential international tourists.

In 2011, the Ministry of Oman Tourism launched the "Beauty has an address" campaign. The aim was to raise awareness and promote tourism. It was represented in different European countries such as the UK, Germany, Italy, France and Russia and other countries such as India and the United Arab Emirates (nos. 1, 13, 14).

Another participant added:

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The logo can effectively raise awareness and communicate the desired attributes to Oman's visitors (no. 4).

Participant no. 9 agreed with this regarding Oman's logo used to build awareness in the consumer's mind.

The Omani government chose the colour of the logo to create awareness in the customer's mind when s/he sees the colour again (no. 9*).*

Meanwhile, other participants indicated that the Omani Tourism Authority's strategy was to spread awareness among countries around the world. This can be clearly seen in the following comment:

We had many campaigns around the world; the aim of our destination branding was to build a positive image and awareness in the customer's mind (nos.10, 12).

Hence, it can be concluded that awareness is important for destination branding, but still more effort in communication marketing and more focus on the international market rather than on local tourists is required by the Oman Authority.

6.10 Satisfaction

This particular theme emerged from the analysis of the interviews; gaining an understanding of tourists' satisfaction is of utmost importance for the tourism industry, especially because of its effect on the future economy. Tourist satisfaction can be defined as the level of fulfilment in meeting the tourists' needs, wants, requirements and expectations. Mixed opinions were expressed by the participants, some of whom indicated that the Oman Authority aimed to ensure customer satisfaction.

Our aim is to ensure customer satisfaction (nos. 1, 5)

In addition, interviewee no. 5 repeated the word satisfaction more than six times, for example:

By ensuring customer satisfaction and keeping our promise, this helps to build customer loyalty,

In my view, a tourist's positive experience of a destination is created from the tourist's satisfaction.

Interviewee no. 6 believed that tourists come back to Oman again and again because they perceive Oman's brand identity positively.

Yes, Oman has a positive image around the world. Many foreign tourists repeat their visits to Oman - this means tourists are satisfied (no. 6).

Meanwhile another participant explained the importance of customer relationships; by fulfilling customer needs and expectations it is possible to keep your customer and attract new ones. Thus, it is important to satisfy the customer in order to gain trust and loyalty.

Satisfaction is the most important thing for keeping your old customers besides attracting new ones. In my view, it is best to establish a relationship with customers because customer satisfaction leads to trust and loyalty (no. 11).

One of the tour operators said that Oman needs to explain its brand in more detail to the customer because, although it is an attractive country, customers discover this only after visiting it.

Most of our visitors were satisfied: they started off with a negative perception of Oman, but when they visited it they were surprised (no. 13).

A tourist's satisfaction can only be regarded as 'overall satisfaction' if all the various aspects of the journey (e.g. transport, accommodation, restaurants, activities offered, hotels, etc.) are assessed as satisfactory.

Thus, Oman's destination branding marketers must implement effective plans and strategies to increase the number of tourists as well as to maximise the benefits and profits through tourist satisfaction.

6.11 Problems and challenges facing the Omani brand

In order to build a unique brand for any country as a tourism destination, it is necessary to define what that country represents, to distinguish it from competitors, and to determine the message that the country wants to send out about itself to the world. Answering all these questions concurrently is most important (Babic-Hodovic, 2014).

Throughout the interviews, the tour operators and tourism officers discussed the barriers faced by the Oman tourism brand and influencing its brand image.

According to the interviewees, the tourism sector in Oman lacks coordination between government officials, tour operators and hotel managers. Coordination is a necessary element for managing tourism-related cross-cutting issues and tourism development strategies (Saner and Filadoro, 2015). One of the problems facing tourism in Oman is the lack of cooperation and coordination between Omani stakeholders to promote Oman in the international market; this was repeated six times throughout the interviews. Indeed, the literature indicates that branding destination requires the coordination of numerous stakeholders (Daye, 2010; Knott et al., 2016). Participant no. 4 mentioned many problems faced by the destination brand; one of them is coordination between tourism stakeholders. Lack of coordination and unclear internal communication between stakeholders influence tourism planning and development. Development and improvement of the brand need more sharing of information between stakeholders to achieve their aim.

The biggest problem facing the Oman brand is the lack of coordination or co-operation between the Oman government officials and other personnel such as tour operators or private sector workers (no. 4).

Participant's nos. 5, 9, 10 and 11 agreed:

The brand destination of Oman still suffers from a lack of coordination among Oman tourism stakeholders.

In addition, participant no. 12 mentioned the need for collaboration between all the tourism stakeholders. The findings indicate that the tourism sector lacks a strategy or policy to link up all tourism stakeholders.

Collaboration between all the tourism stakeholders is the main problem facing our brand. We do not talk to or transfer information between each other (no. 12).

The finding shows that the Omani tourism sector lacks coordination and cooperation between stakeholders, influencing the current brand and causing the negative image of some tangible attributes on the quality of services. Coordination and collaboration are essential for the tourism development process (Zach, 2016). The Ministry of Oman Tourism should create internal communications first, before external ones, by encouraging stakeholders to position their brand.

Communication marketing is another issue mentioned by participants. They feel that Oman has failed to implement an affective promotional programme. Participant's nos. 3 and 13 stated that:

We live in a competitive world; the first problem is the lack of communication marketing tools, and this is creating a large gap between our brand and potential tourists.

Participant no.6 agreed stated:

One of the problems facing the Oman tourism brand is still the lack of communicative marketing tools to communicate with its customers.

He went on to mention the importance of gaining a competitive advantage, indicating that:

Oman has the same attributes as other destinations so there is a need to market it in the international market.

Participant no. 8 indicated that "Oman lacks both internal and external communication marketing" and added that it had failed to implement an effective promotion programme.

Oman needs to encourage local people to travel inside the sultanate and to attract foreign people to Oman.

The poor quality of infrastructure outside Muscat and Salalah was another problem mentioned by participants. The lack of public transport and the inferior road system were factors recognised as detracting from the brand's attributes. The findings show that poor infrastructure may result in a negative brand and image about the destination. Interviewee no. 8 endorsed this opinion, stating that:

The lack of a tourism infrastructure and good services is a problem in most cities in Oman except Muscat.

Participant no. 9 added that "Oman has a poor infrastructure except in Salalah and Muscat".

However, the participants agreed that Oman's strategy must be to establish and repair the roads and transport system to encourage tourists to travel between Oman's cities and regions. In addition, Oman is planning to make agreements with its neighbours to make travel all over the country easier for foreign tourists.

Oman's strategy must now be to repair the infrastructure and transport system in order to make the travel between Oman and her neighbours easier for tourists, enabling them to visit more than one country (nos. 3, 5*).*

Transport is another problem as we do not have a public transport system (no. 2).

Another area of concern for participants was the issue of investment and its relationship with the infrastructure.

Foreign businesses and companies are faced with problems getting approval and dealing with complex procedures in Oman" (nos. 2, 14).

Participant no. 3 suggested that the Omani government should teach tourism destination branding in high school and at university or via campaigns, because local people need more knowledge and information about Oman as a tourism destination.

Local people do not have much knowledge of destination branding; more effort is needed to teach tourism destination branding in high schools and at university or through campaigns.

Another challenge faced by the government is finance, which influences the development of the tourism brand. The government is responsible for supporting tourism, including tour operators, hotels and restaurants. However, insufficient funds have been allocated for the development of tourism. This issue was mentioned by participant's (nos. 2, 4 and 11).

Also, the tourism budget is very limited and does not allow us to develop the sector.

According to the interviewees, most staff working in tourism are not educated and most come from other countries.

We need to consider the people who represent Oman to the international tourist; most of these people work in hotels, restaurants and travel agents or work as taxi drivers, who are not educated (no 2).

This opinion was consistent with that of other participants:

Another problem is people of different Asian nationalities are working in tourism and are not educated. These people work in hotels and restaurants (nos. 5, 13).

The results revealed that there are some negative factors affecting all the efforts to project a strong image, including, according to customer feedback, low quality of services provided, a

lack of a clear strategy for internal and external marketing communication, and therefore a negative image of Oman as a tourist destination. This needs to be taken into account for the purposes of attracting potential international tourists. A destination branding strategy succeeds only when the destination manages to coordinate all stakeholders and persuades them to work as a group (Manhas et al., 2016). It is clear that the main problem facing Oman, like all developing countries, is the lack of a clear aim and objectives, planning and timely implementation within budget.

6.12 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the thematic analysis of a series of interviews in terms of the proposed aims of the Omani destination brand. Oman's tourism brand marketers aim to improve the Omani economy and to promote Oman as a unique destination. From a cognitive perspective, the branding strategy places emphasis on Omani culture and traditions, while affectively, it emphasises Oman's ambience and the hospitality of its people. According to Balogu and McClearly (1999), the projected identity of a destination should represent the true identity of that place. This concept can be seen in the Omani destination marketers' efforts to formulate a destination brand. The participants in the interviews believed that by promoting the culture and heritage of the country, they would attract visitors and create a positive experience in their mind.

The Oman Authority stated that Oman has a range of attributes which make it unique. Oman's logo is based on culture and heritage with five attributes: the frankincense-burner, the dhow (representing the history of Oman in terms of sea navigation and marine life in Omani waters), the mountains and animal reserves. These attributes were conveyed through positioning the word Oman in an Arabic calligraphic style. However, the findings revealed that this logo was intended to represent other sectors beside tourism.

The Omani Ministry of Tourism designed a website to communicate with its audience, and set it up as a communication tool because it is easy to update and provides information on for potential tourists. In addition, Oman launched campaigns such as "Beauty has an address", which was used to attract different markets in Europe and Asia. However, the findings also showed that Oman's tourism brand communication strategy was unsuccessful, due to many factors affecting customers' perceptions of the country, such as culture, the language on the logo, consumer behaviour and consumer belief. Also, the findings show that altholugh the

Oman Authority presentsll of Oman's attributes thay have not selected specific attributes in their campaigns, and did not have a strategy to select the appropriate target market for their brand.

In the final analysis, the results revealed many issues affecting the Omani tourism brand, such as lack of coordination among the Omani tourism stakeholders, financial limitations and, finally, the communication marketing strategy, all of which could have a negative impact on the development of the destination brand and competitiveness.

The findings' key points:

- Oman has different attributes to project its brand.
- Oman's logo is based on culture and heritage, comprising the word Oman in Arabic calligraphic script, each letter representing attractive elements: frankincense burner, dhow, turtles and mountains.
- Oman's logo represents different sectors: trade, tourism, education and information technology.
- Oman's logo was launched by the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development to represent Oman, while the "Beauty has an address" campaign was launched by Oman's tourism authorities.
- Oman marketers use a website to communicate with their customers.
- The target market was European countries such as the UK, Germany, Italy, France and Russia and other countries such as India.
- Factors impacting the communication message include cultural noise (language), and consumer concerns.
- Challenges facing development of the Omani brand include lack of coordination among the Omani tourism stakeholders, financial limitations and, finally, the lack of a communication marketing strategy.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter's aim is to triangulate and discuss the results of chapters five and six and to link them to the literature review in chapters two and three. A model is then proposed for developing destination branding for Oman, the main research aim. .

7.2 Comparison between perceptions of supply-side and demand-side findings

A brand is a mixture of tangible and intangible attributes, symbolised in a trademark (Clifton and Maughan, 2000; Reid and Bojanic, 2009; Thomas and Housden, 2017). According to Cai (2002), destination branding means selecting a consistent mix of brand elements in order to identify and distinguish the destination through positive image building. In this section the Omani image projected by the marketers and that perceived by potential international tourists are compared.

7.3.1Tangible attributes of identity and image

This section discusses the identity of Oman as perceived by potential tourists and the image projected by the Omani destination marketers. The aim of this comparison is to classify the tangible and intangible attributes of both. Table 7.1 therefore summarises both qualitative and quantitative findings. **The quantitative data column includes information** from factor analysis findings Table (5.28), the main test used to identify demand-side characteristics, with some other information attributes needed to support data in the tables from other parts of the analysis.The level of consideration of brand attributes is classified into high, moderate and low.

High level indicates that the variable is considered more from the supply side, the demand side or from both groups. **Moderate level** indicates that they are concerned about it but not much. **Low level** indicates that the supply-side group and/or demand side have a low level of concern about this variable. This comparison was used to highlight any gap between the two sides.

7.3.1.1 Natural Resources and Attractions

Table 7. 1. Natural Resources and Attractions

Attribute Tangible	Omani Providers(Supply side) Views	Tourists (Demand side) Perceptions	Finding
1-Natural Resources and Attractions			Demand side did not perceive all attributes which Oman offered, due to the lack of awareness.
1.1.beautiful scenery	High	High(Loading .588)	
1.2.Beaches	High	High (Loading.610)	
1.3.Climate	Moderate	Moderate(loading .588) **(13.2% Table 5.14)**	
1.4.Animals	Moderate	-	
1.5.Clean environment	High	High(loading (.622)	
1.6.Mountains	High	Low (22.3%)	
1.7.turtles	High	Not mention	
1.8. agriculture	Moderate	Not mention	
1.9.water	Moderate	Moderate (42.1%)	
1.10. wild life	High	Not mention	
1.11.desert	High	Low (16.5%)	
1.12.Appealing destination	High	Moderate(loading.522)	
1.13. Oman geographical positions	High	Not mention	
2.11.Modern architecture building	Not mention	Moderate(loading.590)	
2.12.Restaurants	Moderate	Moderate	
2.13.Camping facilities	High	Low	
2.14Unique theme park	Not mention	Low	
2.15.Cycling bike	Moderate	**Low (7.9%) (Table 5.7)**	
2.16.Sailing	High	**Not mention**	
2.17.Diving	Moderate	Not mention	
2.18.Trekking	Moderate	Not mention	
2.19.Hiking	Moderate	Not mention	
2.20.Shopping centre	Moderate	Moderate (loading .518)	
2.21. Water sport (Safaris- wake boarding- Boat trips)	High	Not mention	
Insight: Oman offers many attributes but demand side does not perceive all of them; there is a gap between supply and demand sides preventing the demand side from receiving the Omani message, resulting in lack of awareness			

The natural resources available in any area for the use and enjoyment of visitors include climate, water, supply for drink, beaches, lakes, rivers and natural beauty (Jao et al., 1989; Mihalic, 2013). They are essential attributes for the visitor's choice of destination (Emir et al., 2016; Getz and Page, 2016; Jeuring, 2016). Natural resources extensity used in many destinations to attract tourists (Emir et al., 2016). If it managed well, it can contribute to brand development (Janiszewska Inch, 2012).

The findings from tourism management indicated that Oman is an attractive destination, due to its **geographical position** on the coast of the Arabian Peninsula and at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, Oman located between three seas: Arabian Sea, Arabian Gulf, and sea of Oman, with a wide range of natural resources including clean, uncrowded beaches, mountains, unique beautiful scenery, animals, turtles, rich marine life, a pleasant climate, agriculture and wildlife, as well as a desert. The Omani authority should focus more on natural resources to

attract tourists when projecting the current brand. However, the creation of attractive destinations requires more than these natural resources (Angelkova et al., 2012). Notwithstanding its unique natural resources, the findings revealed that these are not all included in Oman's logo.

The quantitative data on natural resources showed that potential international visitors from both groups of the study consider beautiful beaches, hot climate, beautiful scenery, mountains, desert and clean environment. Beautiful scenery and beaches were the most prominent image attributes for both groups on the demand side (see Table5.28). This finding agrees with those of Othman (2015), who asserts that natural resources can influence the tourism industry of the destination.

However, the results show that neither of the demand-side groups recognised most of Oman's natural resources and attractions. There are variables such as **Oman geographical positions, world life, turtles, agriculture, animals, are not mention from demand side .It** is clear that there is a **gap** between the two sides. This may be due to the lack of communication with potential tourists, or because these attributes are not necessary for the demand side. Destination marketers should be aware of which attractions have a stronger impact on tourists' decision choices, and destination strategy should be developed in the light of this information (Emir et al., 2016: 93). The finding shows that the Omani authority showed little awareness about creating value for customers. According to Hajli et al. (2017), establishing value helps destinations improve the process of identifying customers' needs and wants.

7.3.1.2 Tourist infrastructure and entertainment

Table 7. 2. Tourist infrastructure and entertainment

Attributes 2. Infrastructure and entertainment	Omani providers (supply side) views	Tourists (demandside) perceptions	Finding
2.1. Quality sport facilities	High	Moderate(loading.562)	It is clear there is noise; there is a communication gap between two sides, most sports attributes not perceived, some attributes perceived but with a negative image. Oman's communication marketing techniques are not enough to communicate with customers.
2.2. Quality infrastructure	Moderate	Moderate(loading .538)	
2.3.A commendation	Moderate	Low (.13 Table 5.14)	
2.4. Road	Moderate	Low	
2.5Healthy services	Moderate	Moderate(loading .536)	
2.6.National Park	Moderate	High(loading.703)	
2.7.Transport	Moderate	Low	
2.8.Airport services	High	Moderate	
2.9.Wi-Fi	High	Moderate	
2.10.Fashion stores	Moderate	High (loading .630)	
2.11.Modern architecture building	Not mention	Moderate(loading.590)	
2.12.Restaurants	Moderate	Moderate	
2.13.Camping facilities	High	Low	
2.14Unique theme park	Not mention	Low	
2.15.Cycling bike	Moderate	Low (7.9%) (Table 5.7)	
2.16.Sailing	High	**Not mention**	
2.17.Diving	Moderate	Not mention	
2.18.Trekking	Moderate	Not mention	
2.19.Hiking	Moderate	Not mention	
2.20.Shopping centre	Moderate	Not mention	
2.21. Water sport (Safaris- wake boarding- Boat trips)	High	Not mention	
There is a gap between two sides due to the lack in communication strategy			

The tourism infrastructure is the basis of development, using existing destination resources which include a wide variety of services to meet tourists' needs and increase their satisfaction during their stay (Jovanovic and Ivana, 2016).The same authors argue that tourism infrastructure is critical for success: the supply chain of transport (roads, airports, and railways), with the social and environmental infrastructures (accommodation and facilities, stadiums, galleries, etc.; and national parks and marine parks, respectively) collaborating at a regional level to attract tourists. Infrastructure is an essential element for developing a brand which enhances the visitor experience.

The interviews with Omani tourism management concluded that Oman has a range of hotels and resorts, roads, excellent health services, parks, transport and airport services. Oman

hotels have many Facilities, such as offering different international foods and free Wi-Fi. The interviews showed that Oman offers a wide variety of outdoor adventure for visitors, such as free camping facilities, camel riding, cycling, sailing, diving, trekking, hiking and water sports. For those who prefer adventure by the sea, Oman has attractive beaches with more than 3,165 km of coastline and different types of sports including safaris, wakeboarding and boat trips.

In order to create a unique brand, it is essential to identify the attributes that best represent the destination (Aziz et al., 2012). Oman has made many changes to developing its brand and improved its infrastructure, particularly in the main cities, to attract visitors and create a positive image. The main cities Muscat and Salalah have a better infrastructure than another region in the sultanate, as both have many attractions and Oman has focused on developing the tourism sector there for several years. Muscat is the capital city of Oman; it has significant tourism infrastructure development. All these improvements enable Oman to differentiate its products from other destinations' branding.

Salalah is the second city of Oman, a city for tourists because it has all that visitors need; it dreams of becoming the next top brand destination in the Middle East (http://www.hindustantimes.com). Infrastructure gives tourists a memorable experience and enhances their satisfaction (Manhas et al., 2016). According to the interviews, the Omani authority strives to generate customer satisfaction, knowing the relationship between customer satisfaction and repeat tourists visits, and customer loyalty. However, they need a strategy to increase customer satisfaction. According to Pawaskar and Goel (2014: 264), a satisfied customer can enhance destination branding through fulfilled expectations. Customer satisfaction is essential to build brand loyalty and create a strong brand image (Rajesh, 2013: Pawaskar and Goel, 2014).

However, infrastructure was another issue mentioned by the Omani authority in applying destination branding; they agreed that most places in Oman have poor roads and lack public transport such as bus and railway, and four individuals commented on this. According to Manhas et al. (2016), infrastructure is an integral part of economic growth, its absence leading to lost revenue because poor accessibility hinders tourists' ability to travel to particular attractions (Tukamushab et al., 2016). Services should keep in mind consumer satisfaction and build a unique brand image or identity differentiating the destination from

competitors (Manhas et al., 2016). The interviews revealed that the government is paying more attention to improving roads, with new ones under development. The current poor state of the infrastructure contrasts with the view of other researchers (Philemon, 2015; Seyidov and Adomaitiene, 2016) that infrastructure is the base of a country as a potential determinant of the attractiveness of a destination.

The demand side showed both groups perceived facilities attractions, giving the quality of infrastructure a loading of .538, health services.538; the variety of sports facilities.562, the availability of tour packages .467, entertainment 18.4% and cycling 7.9% (**see Table 5.7**). Omani management has attempted to build new hotels and create a positive image, in the face of a negative perception about transport services and even camping. These attributes were low loading in the factor analysis. They might be of lower quality, but Oman should strive to remove the weaknesses related to these attributes. The poor result leads to negative impact on consumer satisfaction and influences positive word of mouth. The findings indicated a small number of people who had visited before, who perceived quality of accommodation; it was very low in factor analysis and was therefore dropped.

Activities and entertainment include camel riding; cycling, sailing, diving, trekking, hiking and water sports, and the Omani providers do offer these products, although potential international tourists, even those who had visited Oman before, did not perceive them. Possibly these facilities were not ready to receive them. The finding shows that Omani destination marketers needed to identify all the attributes at their disposal, but that they need to make more effort to communicate with potential international visitors to motivate and attract them. It is clear there is a gap between the Omani authority and the demand side, because the communication resources were inadequate. Furthermore, Oman brand tourism stakeholders and human resource have the most influence on brand value, because, they responded to build the emotional connections with people who visit the destination and interacted with the brand.

7.3.1.3 Economic and political factors

Table 7. 3. Economic and political factors

Attributes 3.Economic and Political	Supply side views	Demand side perceptions	Finding
3.1.Political stability	High	Moderate(loading .596)	Demand side perceived Oman as a safe country for travel. Safety is a powerful attribute for successful tourism development brand. It is a concern for potential visitors.
3.2.Safety	High	High (loading .704)	
3.3.Reasonable price tourists	Moderate	High(loading.604)	

Political stability and safety and security have a significant impact on the tourism industry (Hall et al., 2012). Safety and security is one of the forces changing the nature of the tourism industry in recent years (Garg, 2013), influencing the travel intentions of tourists around the world. All the Omani participants stated that Oman is a safe destination with political stability, and it is a very cheap country for the tourist. Safety is a critical attribute in attracting tourists and promoting Oman's brand. Without protection, destinations cannot successfully compete in the markets as potential tourists do not want to visit a place that they perceive as unsafe (Msuya, 2015).

Potential international tourists perceived Oman as a safe destination, with reasonable prices; both groups of the demand sides share the same feeling and attitude towards safety. Omani providers should use safety as attraction variables to promote their brand abroad; there was no difference between the perception of Omani tourism management, and both groups of international tourists considered Oman as a safe and secure destination. As mentioned before, according to a newly released World Economic Forum (WEF) report (2017:35) Oman was ranked the fourth safest country in the world for visitors http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TTCR_2017_web_0401.pdf .

Although, the findings indicated Oman's many unique tangible attributes and its positive image and reputation, these do not attract more visitors, perhaps as a result of poor communication tools.

7.3.1.4 Culture, history and heritage

Table7.4. Culture, history and heritage

Attributes 4. Culture and Art	Supply side views	Demand side	Finding
4.1.Culture	Moderate	Moderate(loading .529)	Oman tourism identity is based on the culture and heritage. But, demand side was only concerned with museums and theatre. There is a gap as most attributes were not perceived from the demand side due to lack of communication and awareness.
4.2.Historical side	High	Moderate(loading .501)	
4.3.Museum	High	High(loading .766)	
4.4. Custom and tradition	High	Low	
4.5.Theatre and concert	Moderate	High (loading .744)	
4.6.Festival	Moderate	Moderate(loading.513)	
4.7.Music and folklore	High	Not mention	
4.8.Craft hand	Moderate	Not mention	
4.9.Frankincense	High	Not mention	
There is noise between two sides.			

According to Csapo (2012: 201), culture involves complex attributes which include knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a community.

Culture comprises essential attributes that influence visitors to choose the destination (Vinh, 2013). Therefore, marketing the heritage destination involves the identification of the needs and wants of the tourists, but under the constraint that the heritage destination must be protected (Fullerton et al., 2010). Heritage derives from the word inheritance, which means the transfer of historical value from one generation to another (Eriksen, 2014). These attributes help to build the destination brand (Martains, 2015).

Omani destination marketers showed that culture, heritage and tradition and custom are the core of the Omani brand identity which should be emphasised to attract tourists.Culture is a primary travelling motivation for the Omani brand, and Oman depends on the culture and heritage when projecting its logo. This finding agrees with Kladou and Kehagias (2014: 3), who indicated that culture can help brand destinations become more attractive and competitive. There was agreement among the participants about an Oman brand built on these elements, and that concentrating on them would give them a significant competitive advantage. The interviewees mentioned cultural heritage: Oman has a long history, with rich custom and tradition, theatre and handicrafts, frankincense, traditional cloth and jewellery, and different music, folklore and wedding dances, providing a rich diversity of folklore. The participants also mentioned cultural events, such as Muscat's annual festival, where tourists

enjoy and experience Omani culture, although they were aware of how much effort was required to develop a destination brand. Some agreed that this event was not valid because of poor communications, advertising and cooperation between tourism stakeholders.

The demand side perceived Oman's with rich culture and history, an image formed from different resources. Indeed, tourists are enthusiastic to experience other cultures (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). However, **custom and heritage** did not have a positive image for potential international tourists. While **frankincense** was another attribute projected by the destination marketers, and a leading element in the logo, it was not perceived by potential tourists, who may not have been interested in it. Custom and tradition were not significant in either group's perception. Some destinations having rich natural and historic resources but do not benefit from them because of mismanagement and consequent failure (Emir et al., 2016). The views of the supply side support the idea of (Csapo: 2012: 206) that culture is one of the most motivating of tourism brand attributes, helping visitors to understand new ways of life and visit attractions such as cultural events. The finding shows that Oman fail to make close relation with its customer due to communication gap. Oman authority should take control when they send message to their customer to ensure their message received from their customer.

7.3.2 Intangible Omani (identity/image) attributes

Intangible attributes are another component of brand identity. Effective perception is created from a psychological process rooted in the setting; the status of a place is determined not only by physical elements but also by the meaning and association developed between people and places (Contractor, 2001; Wang, 2016).

7.3.2.1 Atmosphere of destination

Table 7. 5. Atmosphere of destination

5. Atmosphere attributes	Supply side views	Demand side perceptions	Finding
5.1Physical atmosphere	High	High (with loading.679)	Both sides are concerned with affective attributes. It is clear people consider intangible rather than tangible attributes
5.2.Quiet place	High	High (86.8%)	
5.3.Relax and restful	High	High (loading .677)	
5.4. Boring	_	Low (7.9%)	
5.5.Stimulating	_	Low (15.8%)	
5.6.Pleasant	_	Moderate (39.5%)	
Oman perceived from demand side as relaxing place for a holiday.			

Atmosphere is an essential attribute in the tourist experience; it seems to influence tourists' behaviour and use of leisure space (Can, 1999; Vida, 2011). According to the interviewees, Oman has different attributes such as the sun, calm beaches with white sand, green mountains and luxury hotels which help it to attract more visitors. The Omani tourism management identified the relaxed destination by a range of photos on the tourism website of range of attributes. Destination management marketers used these attributes for attracting visitors, and a creative experience (Martins, 2015). The Omani authority believes Oman is a peaceful place with uncrowded beaches, where tourists can relax.

A similar positive image of the atmosphere was perceived by the whole sample of international tourists, especially those who had visited Oman; both groups of respondents perceived Oman as destination, with a high restful and relaxing place (factor loading of .677). Also, 55% of the people who had never been to Oman recognised it as a future destination for rest and relaxation (Table 5.17). This finding supports the idea suggested by McCabe et al. (2016) that emotions and feelings play an essential role in travellers' decision making and intentions. Thus intangible brand attributes play a significant role in attracting tourists. The atmosphere of a destination and its brand are related to tourists' internal factors that directly affect their destination choice (Seyidov and Adomaitiene, 2016).

7.3.2.2 Social Environment

Table 7. 6. Social environment

6.Social environment attributes	Supply side views	Demand side perceptions	Finding
6.1. Hospitality of people	High	High (loading .736)	The findings show Oman's success when launched: hospitality of people, and friendly people to attract tourists; potential tourists were interested in these attributes
6.2 Friendly people	High	High (94.7%)	
6.3.Trust worthy	High high	Moderate(loading.599)	
6.4. Positive reputation of country	High	Moderated loading (.562)	
Oman has positive image in terms of hosipitality of people, and friendly people.			

To enhance the effectiveness of destination marketing strategies, the social environment such as the hospitality of local people must be used in developing destination brand as a pull factor

(Kokkranikal et al., 2011). According to the tourism management, Oman projects a range of social environments to attract more visitors, and marketers aim to convey a harmonious Omani social character; Oman is famous for its hospitality and the local people are very welcoming and friendly. Hospitality services are one of the primary attributes on which Omani providers depend to attract visitors and to develop their brand. This support the idea of Naidoo et al. (2010) that hospitality plays an essential role in the visitor's experience and satisfaction with the tourism destination. In tourism and hospitality, the construct of tourist experience has been typically approached by service providers to design an experience for consumers in order to make their experience memorable and persuade them to revisit a particular destination (Manhas et al., 2016). Hospitality contributes to creating the atmosphere of the place (Manhas et al., 2016).

Many studies have found that hospitality affects tourist satisfaction (Song and Cheung, 2010; Wan and Chan, 2013; Cetinkaya and Oter, 2016). **The quantitative survey revealed that both groups of international tourists held a positive image of Omani people being friendly (97.4%; see Table 5.6 above),** with hospitality services meet the expected quality of actual visitors. Hospitality services had the highest loading (.736) from respondents, and although many of the sample had not visited Oman before they had heard about the hospitality of the sultanate of Oman. A trustworthy and positive reputation was equally important with potential tourists. This finding agrees with Manhas et al. (2016), that the social environment is essential in the range of attractions in the formation of the brand image, along with marketing communication programmes. Little difference was found between the supply- and demand-side perceptions. Also, although the international tourists considered the hospitality of the people, it was not the most important factor encouraging them to choose the destination (Zaei and Zaei, 2013). Atmosphere and hospitality are related therefore, Omani marketers should focus on improving both these variables to develop their brand.

7.3.3 Overall identity

Tables above (7.1 - 7.6) compares the quantitative and qualitative findings concerning the tangible and intangible attributes of the brand components. The intangible factors have a positive influence on overall identity. All attributes of tangible and intangible identity components make a unique contribution to the whole identity brand and image formation (Qu et al., 2011). According to the literature, brand identity and brand image are critical ingredients for a successful destination brand (Risitano, 2005; Qu et al., 2011; Yusof and

Ismail, 2015; Roy and Hoque, 2015). Oman has the potential to build a unique image in the international tourism market. However, the Oman authority needs to consider that positive image building comes through different forms of marketing communication with potential visitors.In addition; it should consider establishing a department for quality assurance to improve the quality of services, particularly those attributes which are negative in the perceptions of potential tourists. Also, the findings show that both Omani tourism management and international tourists consider the intangible attributes more than tangible ones.

7.3.4 Oman logo

Table 7.7. Compare the finding on the Oman logo with literature review

Literature	Qualitative	Quantitative	Overall
The logo is an important tangible asset that serves as a value proposition and provides the organisation with the means of raising brand awareness and reputation	Five attributes are **represented by the Omani logo: Arabic calligraphic script, frankincense, dhow, turtles, and mountains.**	Respondents perceived the logo as nature, water, mountains, desert and sun. Their meaning is simple (58%) and attractive (37%). A small number in both groups see the logo as memorable (17%), safe (12.1%), popular (8.8%), versatile (14.2%), funny (6%) and conceptual (16%). However, most people had not seen it before and did not understand what it intends to express.	There is a clear gap between Oman's logo and customer awareness; most of the respondents did not recognise it the first time they saw it (lack of awareness). Although the logo conveys many positive attributes it was perceived as simple and attractive. Respondents did not understand what the logo intends to express, because it is written in Arabic.
Insight: There is noise between the supply and demand sides due to the (culture noise) logo language and lack of an effective communication tool. The result indicates that Oman has a low position as a result of poor awareness.			

Due to the intense competition in the tourism market between destinations, destination management and marketers consider using branding initiatives such as logos and taglines to attract visitors (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Manhas et al., 2016). The tourism destination logo is a graphic design used for identification, and can be helpful to destination marketers in establishing a unique brand identity that is relevant before the actual visitor experience (Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Pike and Page, 2014). The logo should reflect the identity and wished-for image in order to express the overall idea (Henderson et al., 2003; Blain et al., 2005). Accordingly, the logo should be recognisable, meaningful and useful, and all three parameters are involved in developing and presenting the destination logo (Hem and Iversen, 2004; Ad et al., 2012). In the tourism market, the logo is used to build the destination brand,

helping to develop brand equity through increased brand recognition and brand loyalty (Hem and Iversen, 2004).

The Omani destination management pointed out that the logo also represents different sectors which are information technology, trade, education and tourism. Oman's logo is based on Omani culture and heritage. The tourism brand of Malta is an example for Oman; it also represents itself as a place of cultural importance (Foxell and de Trafford, 2010). This agrees with Zeybek and Unlu (2016) that priority is attached to cultural and historical characteristics in the national tourism promotion logos. Budakov (2016: 6) agreed, indicating that in order to design a compelling logo it is advisable to establish a cultural connection between the brand and its consumer.

According to Zeybek and Unlu (2016: 39), when designing the elements of a national logo, the marketer should consider the compatibility between the colour, font style, emblem and other elements of the logo. **Oman's design was chosen by Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development to represent Oman's;** the name in **Arabic calligraphic** script was selected because the government believed that this would attract more customers. Ad et al. (2012) indicated logos which include text, which might be the place name, inside a geometric shape.

Oman destination management sees the logo design as a message conveying distinctive attributes to differentiate Oman from other destinations. It is represented by its logo: Arabic calligraphic script, frankincense, dhow, turtles and mountains.Similarly, Hem and Iversen (2004), Airey (2010) and Ad et al. (2012) considered the logo as a graphic design which can be regarded as a destination's signature on all its materials. Hence, history and culture are the foundation of destination marketing and branding (Pike and Page, 2014).

While the demand side stated the Omani logo represents nature because it is colourful, it was difficult to understand the meaning of the logo name in Arabic. Both demand-side groups recognised a strong association of the Omani logo that significantly **simple and attractive**, that is they identified this logo characteristic. Marketing managers see these associations with the logo as a summary of everything that the organisation stands for: its values, beliefs and perceptions (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). Ad et al. (2012) and Budakov (2016) indicated that a logo must be simple to be easy recognisable.

However, the findings show that only a small proportion **(%17)** from both the demand-side groups believe the Omani logo is **memorable,** possibly because its visuals or colour and shape fail to make it memorable, and it is not understandable. Oman's destination management used two colours, green and blue, to convey the attributes, following Ad et al. (2012) who indicate that too many colours logo make it difficult for the audience to remember it. Budakov (2016: 6) suggested that making the logo memorable and appropriate is one of the major obstacles faced by designers.Hem and Iversen (2004: 88) considered that inappropriate destination logos are difficult to store or access in memory; they are not likeable, and they fail to create a sense of meaning that matches the destination they support.

In fact, Oman's logo conveys many positive ideas although most people in both groups failed to recognise. If the logo has a clear meaning, it can be linked more readily to the destination (Hem and Iversen, 2004). There is an experience gap between supply side and demand side when delivering the Omani brand to customers. The gap influences the potential visitor's memories of the brand. This result suggests that Oman's logo does not communicate its message to international tourists (non-Arabic speakers); it was designed with a lack of awareness and was promoted insufficiently in the global tourist market. Oman needs to project a memorable and understandable logo specifically for the tourism sector. "Incredible India" is an excellent example of a famous brand in the international tourism market.

7.4 Communication in marketing

Table 7. 8. Compare the finding of the communication market with literature review

Literature review	Quantitative	Qualitative
Communication tool is primarily used in the tourism industry. It is the key to building a successful brand (Vukasovic, 2013; Salehi & Farahbakhsh, 2014).	Recommendation from friends or relatives and social media were the most common communication tools used by people who had visited Oman before. A few used other forms such as websites, and tourist guidebook. Availability of information resources for people who had never been was (M=4.22).	The website was Omani tourism management's tool to promote and communicate with people, because it is easy to update.
Insight: Oman chose a website to communicate with its consumer, but people who had visited Oman before used word of mouth in choosing their travel destination, which they could trust.		

Marketing communication is a management process through which an organisation engages with its various audiences (Fill, 2009; Soba and Aydin, 2013; Baines et al., 2013). It has a significant role in brand building, it help destinations by present the brand to potential customers and rising the awareness of the brand (Debski, 2013). Organisations make advertising an essential tool for marketing communication, the prospect's interaction with the communication that can predict sales effects (Um, 2016). Communication strategy plays an essential role in building destination branding by delivering persuasive messages and transferring the image of the brand to many people in a short time through advertising techniques (Kuchinka et al., 2018). Destinations should use communication marketing techniques to teach potential customers, to inform, persuade and remind them (Debski, 2013).

The semi-structured interviews identified the marketing communication tools used to reach the customer and the factor (noise) affecting the message sent. The website (www.destinationoman.com) was the communication tool used by Omani tourism providers to identify their market, chosen as a promotional tool to meet new customers, and readily updateable. It is an appropriate way to advertise their services. According to Lin et al. (2016), the website a sufficient, efficient and available platform irrespective of place and time, used to improve the destination image and interact with and motivate potential tourists. This finding supports other studies (Kitchen and de Pelsmacker, 2004; Wolk and Theysohn, 2007; Holliman and Rowley, 2014; Jarvinen and Taiminen, 2016; Isidea et al., 2016; Wang, 2016) which indicate that websites are attractive tools where potential visitors can find more information on destination attributes. This finding also agrees with Schmallegger and Carson, 2008), that research destinations use the website as a promotional tool for interaction with the audience. It guides users when they seek, visit or join these communities (Huotari, 2015). Keller (2009: 147) stated that destination must design websites that embody or express their purpose, history, products and vision, be attractive on first viewing and interesting enough to encourage repeat visits.

The Omani tourism providers reported that the Oman tourism website includes information regarding Oman as a tourism destination, as mentioned in chapter six, an important aspect of brand awareness because anyone can access and the site, influencing their perceived image of Oman. This supports Kiralova and Pavliceka (2015) and Zarrad and Debabi (2015), that websites can help destinations to increase awareness of their goal. The website has an

important role in the image-formation process. However, it is not used widely enough to present the brand to potential visitors, because few people know about it.

However, the quantitative findings showed that word of mouth was the information source they chose when intending to travel to Oman. Most people who had visited Oman before (60.5%) used recommendations from family, friends and colleagues as their communication form, and the same group used other sources such as social media (76.3%) to get information. This may because they trust their friends. Websites (7.9%) were chosen by a small number of people as they may lack trust or awareness. This finding supports other researchers (Albarq, 2014; Hernandez-Mendez et al., 2015; Zarrad and Debabi, 2015; Basri et al., 2016; Ishida et al., 2016; Wang, 2016), who indicate that word of mouth recommendations are the most critical source informing a touristic image and the most believable and truthful communication channel.

Ministry of Oman Tourism also used campaigns to identify Oman in the international market and to create a connection with foreign tourists. "Beauty has an address" was the first mentioned by participants; it was popular in Oman, but exclusive to the tourism sector; included an online video of about ten minutes (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8523uL7_YE) and was an efficient advertising campaign. Similarly, Devashish (2011) and Salehi and Farahbakhsh (2014) indicated that the web provides more information and a variety of sources such as text, photos, graphs, audio and video clips across the world and the region.

The campaign message was different from the Omani logo elements, including Oman's entire brand attributes as described in Chapter Six. The Omani tourism management wanted to brand its products and create an individual promotion distinguished from other destinations, but it lacked a strategy to market its attributes in the international tourism market. There is little awareness of Oman on European countries. Although this campaign was conducted in different parts of Europe, few potential tourists were aware of it. In other words, communication between Oman and its potential tourists has failed, and this gap may impact its brand.

7.4.1 Factors preventing the message (Noise)

Table 7. 9. Compare the finding of the factor influence the Oman message with literature review

Literature	Qualitative	Quantitative
Most of the literature concluded that noise hinders the communication message (Dolnicar & Grun, 2007; Fill, 2009; Manchaiah & Zhao, 2012; Finne & Gronroos, 2017)	The qualitative method showed cultural noise influenced the Omani tourism destination message.	The language of the logo influenced the Omani message.
Insight: Oman's tourism destination image message is influenced by noise from cultural differences. There is a gap between brand identity and brand image		

Destination marketers should understand the difference between the projected and the received destination images (Martins, 2015). Differences might result from alteration and modification of the message either by the source of communication or by the receiver. Moreover, it is critical to be aware that destination-originated messages are not the only ones reaching the receiver (Foroudi et al., 2018), although the primary communication model describes how the destination (source) sends a message to the consumer (receiver). A communication gap can exist if there is a discrepancy between the destination (identity) and consumer (image) processes (Nandan, 2005; Howe, 2013). Feedback is a crucial resource for communication marketing that is the process of receiving the message from a customer. Marketing communication concerns not only whether the message has been received but also whether it is the target that has received it. Noise, which is usually present to some extent in all communications, is a complicating factor which may affect the quality of feedback (Fill, 2009: 46). It occurs in the communications process when the message is blocked before reaching the receiver; it may be physical or cognitive noise (Fill, 2009: 46; Finne and Gronroos, 2017).

In the qualitative method, interviewees mentioned the following factors: culture, misinterpretation of the Omani logo, **language, and consumer behaviour and concern**. This noise might result from the background of the receiver, including the consumer's personality, experience or interest in listening to the message being sent. In fact, most of these factors are related to **cultural noise,** which refers to obstructions to successful communication between people from different backgrounds and language (Dolnicar and

Grun, 2007; Manchaiah and Zhao, 2012). Language is the central issues in cultural noise because the receiver may not understand the words used by the sender, especially if the sender is foreign to the receiver (Csapo, 2012; Flood et al., 2015).

Consumer behaviour was also mentioned by one participant as influencing Oman's brand message. The literature review showed that the needs and wants of the consumer are changing rapidly with time, and marketers should make efforts to recognise these changes. Oman brand marketers should design their message to influence consumer attitudes and behaviour towards the brand (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016).

The findings agree with other studies (Sambey, 1999; Means, 2006) which indicated that choosing the target market is essential in marketing communication, and the best way to make sure the message is received. If the message is not clear (misinterpreted) or the receiver is not interested in it, or has poor communication skills this cause noise and distractions, the message will not be received.

As mention above the quantitative analysis showed that most of the respondents did not understand the logo the first time they saw it, and did not understand the **language (culture noise)**. From the discussion above there are many gaps between Oman's tourism management and potential tourists. Oman providers should make efforts to reduce the negative image and change potential tourists' attitudes toward their brand by using appropiate communication channels.

7.4.2 Oman's branding and position

There is a process of positioning the brand in potential tourists' minds; it requires establishing specific attributes to distinguish the destination from competitors (Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Kotler and Keller, 2009; Akpoyomare et al., 2013; Mitsche et al., 2013; Azmi, 2017). The aim of positioning the destination is to succinctly convey the brand identity in a way that will stand out from rival and substitute brands amidst the noise of other mass communication, and be noticed by the target audience in a meaningful and memorable way (Pike and Page, 2014: 28).

Oman wanted to be a major travel destination in the tourism market, but clearly the country suffers from some issues related to the management and marketing promotion. A good

indication is that Oman is not yet branded as a tourism destination. There is still much work to be done before it can compete as a destination branding. In addition, the country has an ambivalent image of the perceptions of people who had already visited it, as discussed earlier. Developing a national image as a tourist destination needs to be thoroughly considered to successfully develop a position in the competitive market place (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002: 122)

Oman's excellent reputation was commented on more than ten times by interviewees. Oman authorities see themselves as different from others through Oman's reputation among countries worldwide; this helps the Oman brand to build a competitive position in the tourism market. Good reputation contributes to developing a national brand (Szwajca, 2017).

However, the demand side is not aware the Omani brand, and did not seem to have much knowledge about Oman. 392 of the 430 respondents had never visited Oman, and had no idea about the logo. This indicates that the Oman brand is still not positioned in the consumer mind.

Oman needs to develop its position strategy regarding its image by using communication channels to spread awareness among potential visitors. The empirical results show that over 40% of the people who had never visited Oman, in answering the question,**what image comes to your mind when hearing about Oman** had a neutral image. This means the Oman message has not been thoroughly perceived, as a result of communication gaps between potential consumers and the Omani brand. However, developing a tourism brand is a new experience for Oman authorities and needs time and effort to underpin appropriate strategies and implement the brand project.

For unique branding of any destination to be successful, it is essential to know the target market, and competitors' role and positioning (Lhotakova and Klosova, 2009). The target market of Omani tourism is international but the tour operator conducted the "Beauty has an address" campaign only in Europe, Russia, India and the United Arab Emirates; the wedding campaign was directed only at India. While, the quantitative finding showed that of the people who had already visited Oman, 20 were British, 7 Saudi Arabian, 3 Libyan, 3 Kuwaiti, 3 Indian, one Egyptian and one Jordanian. The finding shows that the Omani authority did not select their target market, therefore failing to deliver its message and communicate with its customers.If an organisation is unaware of its audience and its characteristics, it will fail to

deliver a unique image and communicate with consumers (Punjaisri et al., 2008). In planning to develop tourist assets, marketers need to start by evaluating the external environment, focusing on the needs and wants of the target market, before assessing inner strengths (Ing et al., 2010).

7.5 Challenges facing Oman to build destination branding (This from supply side perceptions)

As a result of its complexity, developing a brand for a tourist destination cannot be the same as branding goods or services. Therefore destination marketers need to be aware of and understand the internal situation of the individual destination, in other words, its obstacles and challenges, and the external case's opportunities and issues (Schwaighofer, 2013). The most challenging step in the destination branding process in the case of the sultanate involved problems in building a brand. **The first problem was lack coordination and cooperation** between tourism stakeholders in representing Oman as a single tourist destination in the international market. This comment was made by six of the interviewees. For develop brand in any destination require coordination between tourism stakeholders, because should all tourism providers involved in making the decision process.   It ignores the recommendation of Apostolakis et al. (2015 that it is necessary to establish cooperation between stakeholders to implement the destination branding process successfully. Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) also suggested that collaboration between stakeholders is essential when building the brand identity, which must derive from the values and beliefs of people living in the country.

Staff working in tourism and hospitality sectors present another challenge, mentioned by three of the interviewees. A significant number of uneducated staff from different nationalities delivers services to tourists; they are, preferred by the owners of private hotels and restaurants because they accept low wages. However, this issue may hinder the destination in its brand development. Staffs are at the heart of promoting and delivering services, and tourism destinations depend on the ability of the professional team to create an image and to produce the quality tourists expect. According to Gruescu et al. (2009), education and training for staff are required for tourism development because the services depend on the quality of the personal skills of those delivering the services. This finding

supports Baum (2002) who indicated that lack of skilled employees is an avoidable consequence affecting competitiveness, productivity and services.

However, the quantitative data shows that various issues deter potential tourists from visiting Oman. Visitor's mentioned that the hot climate, safety and distance, budget, visa requirements and personal taste were their least significant concerns, but non-visitors were worried about all of these. Omani tourism managers should address this issue when promoting and developing their brand because these problems determine Oman's image.

7.6 A proposed model for developing tourism destination branding in the Sulanate of Oman

The process of destination branding, a very complicated process in itself and particularly in a developing country such as Oman, needs to create a positive image and position in the potential consumer's mind. This study develops a model for developing destination branding. The literature describes many destination branding models, including those of Pritchard and Morgan (1998), Keller (2001), Cai (2002), Kotler and Gertner (2002, 2004), Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003), Anholt (2009), Giannopoulos et al. (2011), Kemp and Bordelon (2011),Tsiotsou and Goldsmith (2012) and Morrison (2013). The study considered these models to establish guidelines for data collection (Chapter Three). They include all the relevant theory related to understanding the process of destination branding.

The best practice model (proposed model) below was developed after data analysis and the literature review, summarising the themes and patterns that emerged from both (Figure7.1). The proposed model model aims to provide a useful practical tool to help managers to identify the elements involved in the branding process. Its design requires the involvement of all stakeholders in the branding process, especially the perceptions of both supply and demand sides and the outcome of the communication market analysis. The brand position (i.e. identification of the target market and competitive advantage) was formulated. However, developing destination branding often needs to begin with appropriate planning and implementation of tourism development projects because it will require time and effort. The model below (Figure 7.1) can be adapted to any regional, city or other tourism destination because it provides the essential components for developing brand destination. The model below providing several elements involved in developing destination branding process. In the following section is explaining these elements in detail.

- **Supply side**

The supply side comprises the Omani authority's views of the projected brand identity; this side is responsible for projecting the image of the destination. According to the findings of this study, the supply side should consider:

Cooperation between supply-side members (strategic decisions)

There is no model in the destination branding literature about the importance of cooperation between internal stakeholders. Establishing collaboration and coordination between tourism destination stakeholders is essential to creating a successful brand. It should be the first step in the branding process, and all tourism stakeholders should be involved in it (Matuleviciene and Stravinskiene, 2015). Because they are part of this process, destination marketers cannot achieve their aim without cooperation between all members including both public and private tourism sectors. Effective internal communication between all members will help them to avoid many challenges and understand the development process. It is essential to identify goals, resources and opportunity to encourage employees, managers and planners across Oman to share ideas before making decisions or strategy, and to learn from each other the process of implementing the development strategy. This also helps them to identify major issues that influence the development process.

Brand identity

Brand identity is the main component on the supply side. According to the literature, brand identity and brand image are critical ingredients for a successful destination brand (Risitano, 2005; Qu et al., 2011; Yusof and Ismail, 2015; Roy and Hoque, 2015). Brand identity is necessary within the area of brand management (Kapferer, 2010). It is created by destination management and reflects the contributions of all brand elements to image and awareness (Tsaur et al., 2016). In other words, brand identity is how a destination wants to introduce its brand to its customers (Qu et al., 2011). Brand identity is the primary component to consider when developing a tourist destination in general (Kuchinka et at., 2018). **Brand identity** should include all brand elements (**tangible and intangible brand attributes**) to create a unique and memorable perception leaving a good impression because the branding aims to increase attractiveness and inform international visitors (Roy and Hoque, 2015).

It is essential for Oman to review all the attributes in order to create a positive image. In particular, the findings revealed some attributes with a negative image such as accommodation, roads and public transport, all related to the quality of services. The findings showed a signficant positive image in terms of safety and atmosphere, and therefore both need more consideration from Omani planners when developing their brand. The interviews showed that the Omani authorities had little awareness about project branding and development of tangible and intangible attributes. Therefore, they need to encourage all tourism stakeholders to share their experience and help them understand the branding process. Brand logo and brand name are part of brand identity and should be highlighted.

Brand logo and brand name

A clear understanding of the brand name and brand logo is essential to guide the development of the destination process. Both are crucial aspects of establishing destination branding (Kladou et al., 2017). It is important to build the relationship between brand and potential customer by choice of affective name for brand success and by choosing a design and elements of the logo that reflect what it wants to say to the customer. The findings showed noise related to the brand name and logo elements. Omani marketers should consider visual logo design; identify logo elements, and the elements of the logo that reveal what it wants to tell the customer. If the logo includes words (language), they should be readily understood by the target market. If the logo does not mean anything to the audience, it has not accomplished one of its aims, to be understandable and memorable.

Brand position

Based on the findings, Oman should position its brand to create a unique identity or image in consumer mind by distinctive its brand. The brand position is one of destination branding process steps after brand identity (Kotler and Armstrong, 2006; Pike, 2009; Yousof and Ismail, 2014; Steenkamp, 2017). Therefore, the brand position should be closer to the brand identity on the supply side.The position moves from brand identity analysis to brand destination development, each stage interlinked. After the brand identity defines the attributes marketers should position them. According to Akpoyomare et al. (2013), position strategy refers to the choice of the target market and defines the basis of competition. Oman should determine the appropriate market segment to understand what people to attract and identify their needs and decision making. Destination must be competitive against other destinations,

so it is essential for Oman to differentiate itself from other Arab countries who already offer the similar attractions. Managers brand of Oman cannot be successful in positioning their brand without communication market, choose a useful communication tool and distribution system in the target market (Yusof&Ismail, 2014).

Communication market

Communication is an integral part of forming and improving destination image since destination marketers communicate to explain and promote the attributes their destination is offering (Manhas et al., 2016). **Marketers need to adopt effective communication marketing for developing destination branding**. This attracts attention, but is only successful if the best communication tools for reaching the target market are chosen. Although Oman lacks these communication tools, the study's findings indicate that websites and word of mouth cannot be ignored in the spread of destination information. However, the study found communication gaps between the supply and demand sides, revealing that customers had not received Oman's message (noise), particularly regarding its logo. This shows that the attributes offered by the Oman Authority were not received by the demand side.

One of the barriers to communication is noise, which refers to anything that distorts the destination message; one possible cause is misunderstanding of the meaning of words in the message. Noise can take different forms including poor design of the brand (logo), poor communication services, and the language of the brand. Therefore, destination marketers should consider language problems and cultural differences when they are communicating with their audiences, because these may affect the interpretation of the brand message, which in turn can lead to a low position of the brand. The findings indicated that language (cultural noise) distorted the Omani message, as the demand side did not understand the Oman logo written in Arabic, and had never seen the logo before. It is necessary for destination marketers to be aware of noise and handle the message to avoid any negative brand image.

Customer feedback must be considered by the Omani authority in the branding process. Feedback is the final components in the communication process, meaning that the destination's message has been perceived and understood. Developing a destination brand requires marketing research to enhance customer services and improve destination attributes. Feedback helps Omani marketers to explore the noise between them and potential customers
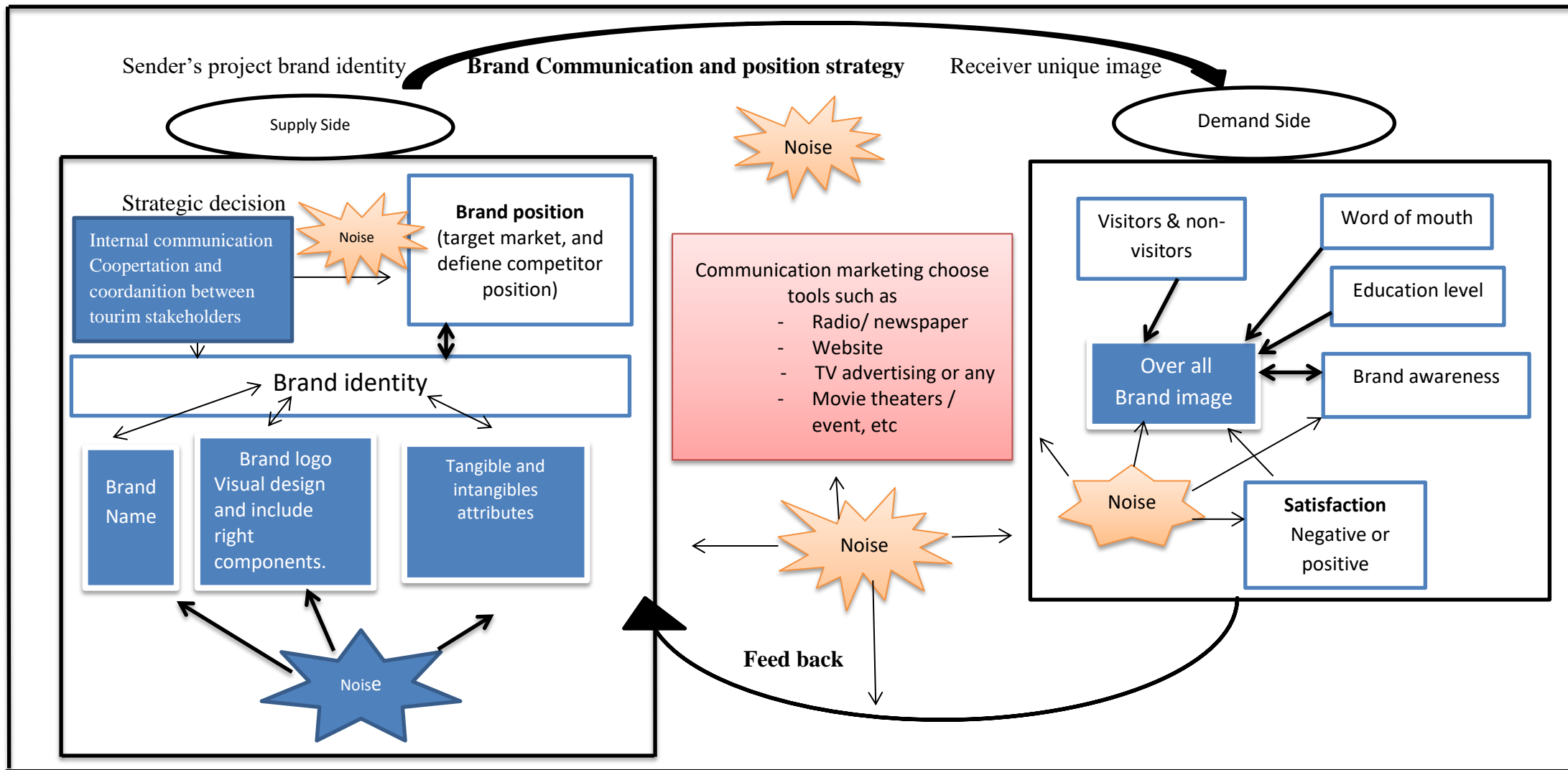
Demand sides

The demand side combines brand image and brand awareness. The findings indicate that the overall image includes all the attributes which Oman projects. In any destination, creating an appropriate image is essential for destination marketers because a positive image helps the destination position itself in relation to its competitors (Martins, 2015). Destination marketers should consider past travel experience because this influences image formation, leading to induced and organic images built by visitors.The tourist's image is formed as a result of knowledge (cognitive image), feeling (effective image) and future intentions (conative).These components result in the functional and physical characteristics of the overall image created by tourists (Basaran, 2016). In tourism market, it is very important for a destination to determine its image because of its influence potential tourist travel choice.

After the brand has been positioned and the image identified, the marketer can communicate with the target audience by sending messages to create awareness, choosing the best communication tools. The concept of brand awareness is essential for developing destination branding, and is linked to the brand image (Ghodeswar, 2008; Kehinde, 2011). The findings show a lack of awareness influencing tourists' perceptions. The destination needs to create a positive image and choose the best communication marketing to create awareness in the consumer's mind (Pawaskar and Goel, 2014; Avraham and Ketter, 2016). **The finding of people who have visited before shows that there is a positive relationship between word of mouth and brand image**. If the brand image is positive, it will lead to positive word of mouth recommendation (Roy and Hoque, 2015). According to the findings, most of the people who had visited Oman before found that it met their expectations (see Table 5.8) and 89.5% of this group intended to recommend others to visit Oman (see Table 5.14) or to revisit Oman in the future (86.8%). This finding suggests that visitors were satisfied with their visit to Oman. If they were dissatisfied, their word of mouth and the influence of the image of the destination would be negative. According to the literature, customer satisfaction is essential in building brand loyalty and creating a strong brand image, thus increasing the possibility of repeat visits (Pawaskar and Goel, 2014). Therefore, a satisfied customer can enhance destination branding with fulfilled expectations (Pawaskar and Goel, 2014: 264). Satisfaction must be analysed in order to have an understanding of what attributes are able to meet tourists' expectations. Each of these components is dependent on other parts in the model for success in attracting, servicing and satisfying visitors.

The findings show that level of education has an impact on the demand- side responses. Marketers should consider the requierments of non-educated people.

Figure 7.1. A Proposed Model for Developing Oman as Tourism Destination Branding

Sender's project brand identity   **Brand Communication and position strategy**   Receiver unique image

Supply Side

Demand Side

Noise

Strategic decision

Internal communication Coopertation and coordanition between tourim stakeholders

Noise

Brand position
(target market, and defiene competitor position)

Brand identity

Brand Name

Brand logo Visual design and include right components.

Tangible and intangibles attributes

Noise

Communication marketing choose tools such as
- Radio/ newspaper
- Website
- TV advertising or any
- Movie theaters / event, etc

Visitors & non-visitors

Word of mouth

Education level

Over all Brand image

Brand awareness

Noise

Satisfaction
Negative or positive

Noise

Feed back

245

7.6 Summary

This chapter discussed and analysed the findings and results of Chapters Five and Six, linking them to the literature review. It presented the brand identity/image attributes, brand communication, factors influencing the destination message, brand position, and factors affecting the Oman destination branding. The gaps between the two sides were highlighted. Finally, the proposed model for developing as the destination branding of Oman was considered.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research conclusions, and presents the research contribution with recommendations to Omani tourism providers and other destinations. It acknowledges the limitations and makes suggestions for further study.

8.2 Research findings with relation to the research objectives

The research aimed to achieve three objectives and answer three questions. This section summarises how this questions have been answered and the research objectives achieved. The research questions objectives are as follows:

Q1-What are the Oman tourism suppliers' perceptions of the tangible and intangible attributes that can be used for developing the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination?

Objective 1-To identify the tangible and intangible attributes that currently contribute to the brand identity of Oman as a tourism destination.

This objective was addressed through the interviews with Oman's tourist authorities and managers (supply side) to identify their perceptions, as they are responsible for developing and marketing Oman's tourism brand. The objective was achieved, as described in Chapter Six.

The study revealed that Oman has unique attributes and beautiful natural resources such as beaches, a pleasant climate, mountains, a vast desert and agriculture. It also has culture and custom, history, museums, frankincense, the hospitality of the people, friendly people, safety, political stability, and is a cheap country for tourists. Its infrastructure includes a hospital, and a range of hotels and restaurants especially in the main cities of Muscat and Salalah. It is making efforts to improve its infrastructure, including roads and transport, but there is still a long way to go. It is easier to improve and develop tangible attributes than to enhance intangible attributes. Oman has different sports and adventure tourism, such as camping facilities, camel riding, cycling, sailing, diving, trekking, hiking and water sports. It has a good atmosphere in which to relax. However, Oman's tourism management needs to

understand customer services, paying more attention to the quality of the services required, which influences satisfaction and the choice of destination (Hanlan et al., 2006).

The findings of the current study suggest that Oman's identity is based on its culture and heritage, the main elements of the Omani logo; Mainly European countries were chosen as the target market, as discussed above. The logo components were described in Chapter Six. The Omani authority agrees Oman that the country is differentiated largely by its culture, with both men and women proud to wear their traditional clothes even at work.

Omani people are hospitable and very friendly, and happy to share with visitors their traditional foods, coffee and dates. The government has good relations internationally, and a good reputation.

The Omani authority agrees that it is looking for an appropriate strategic communication marketing tool to promote tourism and determine its specific market. Destination marketers should not just offer Oman's attributes to tourists but should also consider potential customers' needs in relation to the quality of the attributes.

The very complex and abstract nature of destinations as brands presents several issues that hinder the implementation of the entire strategic process (Martins, 2015: 6). Regarding the Omani context, the greatest problem facing destination management is **coordination cooparation** between stakeholders, finance, and the absence of communication marketing tools.

Q2-What are the perceptions of the intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by potential international tourists?

Objective 2- To identify the perceptions of intangible and tangible attributes of Oman as a tourism destination held by potential international tourists (the demand side).
This objective was achieved as described in Chapter Five. Different resources can form the image. Most of the sample had not visited Oman, but they perceived the it's image positively. A small number of the sample had visited Oman, but had an ambivalent image about the country. Both groups of respondents perceived Oman as having friendly people, museum attractions, beautiful scenery, beautiful beaches, a hot climate, good health services, theatres and concerts, fashion stores, national parks, availability of the Internet, culture shows, a clean and tidy environment, information resources, excellent shopping centres, special festivals and fairs, historical interest, mountains, springs and gardens, good-quality sports facilities,

political stability, safety and security, reasonable prices for tourists, in short an appealing destination with quality infrastructure, availability of tour packages, good restaurants, easy to access to the area, modern architecture, deserts, tax benefits, hospitable and, trustworthy people, and a positive reputation as a country. This study considered the perceptions of potential international tourists as a basis for constructing their image of Oman and their likes, dislikes or lack of knowledge about the destination's attributes. However, five attributes had a negative image for the demand side: camping facilities, transport, customs and traditions, unique theme parks, and the quality of accommodation. Identifying and rectifying these attributes should be used to modify Oman's image. The findings from people who have visited before show that there is a positive relationship between word of mouth and brand image. However, level of educations has a negative impact on the demand-side responses (see Tables 5.34 and 5.36).

The findings show that most of the past and potential tourists have no idea about Oman's logo, given little promotion. They see it as suggesting nature and simplicity, but do not believe it is memorable. The find shows that desert the most important attribute which potential tourists consider.

The findings show that potential visitors consider the intangible attributes more significant than the tangible ones, such as hospitality a loading of .736, safety (.704), restful and relaxing (.677) beautiful scenery (.588) and history (.501) (see Table 5.28). The study examines these perceptions of as a basis for constructing the image of Oman, taking into account their likes, dislikes or lack of knowledge about the destination's attributes. This is an important stage in developing destination branding, because developing a strong brand means involving both demand- and supply-side perceptions (Wang and Pizam, 2011).

Q3-What communication gaps can occur between supply side and demand side regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity?

Objective 3-To analyse the potential communication gaps between supply and demand regarding how to communicate the Omani brand identity effectively.

Oman used its website to communicate with its customers, as explained in Chapter Six, although the study showed that people who had already visited Oman preferred to use word of mouth in choosing their destination. The study revealed Oman's lack of appropriate communication tools. The Omani authority believes their message is hindered by cultural noise such as language and consumer behaviour.

The result shows that Oman's projected image does not match the perceived image. The demand side, including actual visitors, did not perceive all the attributes Oman projected. This finding illustrates a gap between supply and demand sides in receiving the Omani message, caused by mismanagement.

The analysis of Oman's logo indicates that further cultural noise affecting the destination's message, partly the result of language and partly because it is not is not memorable. This is a serious issue. Communication marketing is essential for developing and promoting tourism, especially through its logo (Devashish, 2011; Gorlevskaya, 2016).

8.3 Contribution

The research makes the following contributions:

Table 8. 1. Comparison of the model and previous models components and literature gap

Summary			Current study
Authors	Year	**1- Branding element**	Presents a model for developing destination branding considering all these gaps. It includes both supply and demand sides. The supply side includes cooperation, brand identity based on its approaches (intangible and tangible attributes, brand name, brand logo) and brand position (competitive advantage and target market). The demand side includes brand image, brand awareness, tourists' experience, knowledge, and satisfaction. Communication marketing tools result in noise everywhere in the model, and feedback.
Kemp & Bordelon	2011	Marketing mix elements (advertising intensity, distribution intensity, and pricing perceptions)	
Keller	2001	Brand salience, brand performance, consumer judgements, and consumer brand resonance	
Cai	2002	Brand image, brand identity and marketing communication	
Kaplanidou & Vogt	2003	**Demand side** (visitors' perceptions)	
Morgan et al.	2004	A SWOT analysis to determine its chief strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.	
Anholt	2009	**Customer group** or market segment; their perceptions will define brand characteristics.	
García et al.	2012	Brands, brand awareness, brand meaning, brand equity.	
Tsiotsou & Goldsmith	2012	**Supply side** (brand identity based on attributes) and **demand side** brand knowledge and **noise,** competitors	
Morrison	2013	**Perceptions of past and potential visitors** to evaluate brand image and identify brand position and identity	
2--Brand logo components			
Blain, Levy & Richie	2005	**Little focus on the tourism logo components**	
Pike	2016	Lack of identifying effective positioning logo and slogan in destination branding literature	
Kladou et al.	2017		
3-Actual and potential visitors' perceptions			
Yilmaz et al.	2009	**Actual and potential visitors' perceptions**	
Wang & Davidson	2009		
;Lim et al.:Kong et al.	2014		
;Jani & Nguni	2015		
	2016		

8.2.1 Contribution to theory

8.2.1.1 Addressing the gap in the destination branding research with reference to the Middle East and developing countries

Most of the existing research related to destination branding has been conducted in developed countries and therefore the field of tourism need studies that present developing countries' perspective. The present research relates to Oman as a developing country, adding to the existing body of literature on destination branding research in tourism. Moreover, little work has been carried out in the Middle East on destination branding; hence this study may be regarded as a pioneer in the Omani tourism context. The findings of this study have good theoretical implications for future studies because they provide a base for further research to build new frameworks, helping researchers to understand the process of developing destination branding. The study reviews and critically discusses the concept of destination branding, components of destination branding in detail, and challenges the influence of destination branding and communication marketing. It reviews different developing destination branding models to understand the process of developing destination branding.

8.2.1.2 Addressing the gap in the destination brand building literature by considering the supply and demand sides perceptions

This present study further adds to existing theory by developing model that is suitable for developing a destination brand based on the perceptions of stakeholders, adding all the important elements in addition to brand image and brand identity. The findings suggest that it will be beneficial for destination managers and destination marketers in developing destination branding, because it explains the destination branding process.

The literaturee review identified different models for developing destination branding, but each considered different angles or elements, and none explained the process of branding destinations (see Table 8.1).This study contributes to knowledge by understanding the process of destination branding (projected and perceived images). **As mentioned above,** several studies on tourism destination brand building focus only on **demand side** perception (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2003; Anholt, 2009; Morrison, 2013); others focus on the demand side but consider the difference between the images held by **potential** tourists and **actual** visitors to the destination (Yilmaz et al., 2009; Wang and Davidson, 2009; Lim, et al., 2014; Kong et al., 2015; Jani and Nguni, 2016). **Yet other** studies consider the **supply-side**

perspective when developing a brand (Konecnik and Go, 2008: 2; Cai et al., 2009: 70; Suma and Bello, 2012: 89). Few studies focused on developing destination branding from both supply- and demand-sides' perceptions (Tsiotsou and Goldsmith, 2012), concentrating on the brand identity and brand image and not carrying out a practical study. **The differences between previous models and this proposed model are on the components involved in the process of branding, as explained below.**

In the proposed model, the supply side is not focused only on brand identity, as in previous studies. The supply side includes coordination and cooperation between supply-side members (public and private sectors); no previous model mentions this. The findings of this study show that the development of national destination branding at international level depends on the capacity of its tourism management to encourage cooperation between all internal stakeholders, ensuring the application of that brand, and providing plans and guidelines on how the brand can be used.

It also defines the brand identity attributes offered by providers and the highlights the importance of understanding other aspects of destination branding such as **brand names**, **memorable logo** elements and structure design. The literature review shows that no specific study has addressed the logo components and design process (Blain et al., 2005: 332). Also, the findings show Oman's failure to choose understandable and memorable logo attributes for the international tourism market.

Another significant contribution which adds to the body of knowledge is brand positioning used in developing a brand; this concept includes the **target market** strategy, and **competitive advantage; all brand attributes should be different from their competitors to help** destination marketers to position their brand in customers' minds and sell the tourism experience. The result of this study shows that Oman does not well-known in the international tourism market due to the mismanagement. Therefore, this study suggested that position brand is one of the main elements should supply side consider for developing the brand.

On the other hand, the demand side includes the different opinions of respondents, actual and potential visitors from different nationalities. It is important for marketers consider the perceptions of both visitors and non-visitors when examining the image of destination because experience influences the tourist's perceptions. This study contributes to the field of tourism brand development by extending previous studies by evaluating the image of Oman

through the perceptions **of both actual and potential international tourists**. It provides an understanding of tourist awareness for developing a brand destination and is, to the researcher's best knowledge, the first study to examine the image of Oman in the global market. Also, the model considers other variable influence the image brand such as tourist's satisfaction, word of mouth, and education level.

Finally, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by considering communication marketing, one of the leading components in developing destination branding. This study suggests that the destination marketer should focus on choosing appropriate communication tools to help the destination to create awareness and position the brand in the consumer's mind. The study highlights the importance of communication marketing and identifies concerns such as noise; noise is distributed everywhere in the model, because it occurs in the brand message. The proposed model can also help destination planners to identify the communication gap between the brand and its target market. It is important for Oman to be aware of the noise and to handle it in order to avoid negative impact on tourists' image.

8.2.2 Contribution to practice

8.2.2.1 Addressing the gap of a proposed model for building destination branding

This study presents a proposed model to ensure that the entire set of destination brand components is included. The model is straightforward and practical, and therefore appropriate for developing Oman's brand as a tourist destination. This model can be used for any city, region or country needs to develop and position its brand.

The proposed model will help Omani tourism destination marketers to develop their brand and to design promotional campaigns, and it may help them to change their strategy and improve their image. The Omani authorities can apply the model and examine their image by using online surveys such as Talk Online Panel to obtain information from global consumers. The findings may also help other destination marketers and practitioners who wish to develop their tourism brand.

This study is a useful resource for academic researchers and students who have an interest in understanding the process of developing destination branding.

It makes another practical contribution by using a mixed method approach to help Omani destination marketers in addressing the issues facing their tourism, particularly negative attributes.

8.3 Recommendations

The study considers the brand image of Oman in the international tourism market to see how actual and potential tourists perceive Oman; this is important for destination marketers and managers in addressing issues related to the image of Oman in the international market, and evaluating the image of actual and potential tourists.

The demand side is identified by different tangible and intangible brand attributes, although it became apparent that potential tourists are more concerned with the intangible attributes. However, five important attributes have a negative image (as discussed in Chapters Five and Seven): camping facilities, transport, customs and traditions, unique theme parks, and quality of accommodation. This will influence the image of Oman in the future, through intention to revisit and word-of-mouth recommendations. Nor did the demand side understand the Omani logo, as a result of its design and language. As a result, brand marketers should endeavour to rectify the negative attributes of the Oman brand image. The study recommends that the Omani authority discusses and deals with these issues. Oman should focus on improving the infrastructure in the regions where this is necessary

As infrastructure is the main tourist attraction that needs more attention from destination marketers, they should consider for example, camping facilities as one of the destination attractions about which tourists express concern. The problem with camping facilities is toilets, so it is recommended that more toilets and showers are provided, both for campers, on the beaches and in visited parts of the desert. The target market of Oman is Western countries, most of whose people travel to the Middle East for sun, beaches with adventure and exploration. It should be remembered that it is essential for a destination to meet the tourists' needs (Manhas et al., 2016).

The Omani tourism authority should make efforts to promote the image of Oman around the world by selecting the right communication tools, which present the real picture to potential visitors. With respect to Oman's logo, respondents did not understand its language or consider it memorable. The gap between the two sides mean that Oman tourism providers need a strategy to help them choose the right target market, and a new logo to represent the

components their market is interested in. In short, Oman should develop its brand by understanding its target market.

Finally, the study recommends developing Oman as a tourism destination brand by differentiating it from its neighbours to establish a strong brand identity and image. This can only be achieved by active collaboration and cooperation among all Omani tourism stakeholders to define the issues and to implement strategy and plans. The agreement will help them to succeed in the process of developing their brand, avoiding many challenges.Oman can differentiate itself from other Middle East countries by stressing its safe environment; according to the WEF report of 2017, Oman was ranked the fourth safest country in the world for visitors.

8.4 Research limitations and further study

The current study has some limitations, which present an opportunity for further research. First, the study examines the Oman image from the perceptions of both visitors and non-visitors, although the number of actual visitors was small. This limitation may encourage further study with greater numbers of actual and potential visitors.

This study used a mixed method. A large amount of quantitative data was collected to examine Oman's image in 430 respondents, but this needs more time for analysis and discussion especially as time is limited by the length of student visas. This limitation may provide the opportunity for a further single study, using the qualitative method for both sides. Focus groups for the demand side would help the researcher to explore more information about participants 'perceptions, giving them the opportunity to talk rather than complete a survey questionnaire.

Another limitation related to time is that this study did not make any comparison between Oman and other Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia or Qatar. This limitation may be addressed by further study in the future.

This study conducted interviews over Skype, due to the visa regulations. The researcher applied many times to the Omani government for a visa, with letters of support from her supervisor, the Libyan embassy and Omani tourism providers; however, the Omani government refused a visa application as her passport was out of date.

Skype was nevertheless a convenient tool for conducting the interviews, as the researcher was able to ask the questions and see the participant's body language. However, the time difference was a problem, and the researcher conducted most interviews in the early morng (7 a.m. UK time, 11 a.m. in Oman), to allow the participants to be interviewed in their work time. This may have limited the use of further face-to-face interview techniques.

8.5 Summary

The study examines two groups of stakeholders, the supply and demand sides, and the characteristic of their perceptions of Omani tourism: the providers (supply side) and actual and potential international tourists (demand side) for developing the Oman brand as a tourism destination. As already discussed, there is a dearth of studies on destination branding, particular in the Middle East, and few based on both supply and demand sides in developing destination branding.

The demand side perceived most Omani image attributes as positive, such as beautiful scenery, museum attractions, theatre and concerts, the hospitality of the people, and safety. However, five attributes have a negative image: quality of accommodation, transport services, camping facilities, custom and tradition, and theme parks. This finding will help Oman to improve its overall image. The Omani tourist authority projected many attributes that did not match the demand-side perceptions, and failed to consider the quality of services and customer needs. There is a gap between supply and demand sides which hinders the Omani message from reaching its customers.

The Omani experience gap between the supply and demand sides in the delivery of the Sultanate's brand means that potential customers are not aware of the Oman brand, and are unable to evaluate it.

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Appendix(1): Pilot study questionnaire

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;">

Questionnaire to Measure the Image of the Sultanate of Oman in International Market

</div>

Dear Respondent

My name is Fatma Mansour. I am PhD Student at the University of Salford. The purpose of this survey is to measure the influence of tourist's perceptions and attitudes towards destination brand and selection. The success of my research study is dependent on your views and responses to this questionnaire which should take approximately ten minutes of your time to complete. Your participation in this questionnaire is voluntary, and your responses will remain confidential. The names of individual persons are not required in any responses. The results of this research will be combined to examine the different perceptions (images) of tourists when thinking of Sultanate of Oman as a tourist destination.

Thank you for your time and support, every answer makes a significant contribution to the study.

If you have any question regarding this questionnaire, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the following contact details:

Fatma Mansour   **Supervisor: Agata Maccarrone-Eaglen**

Business School   **Business School**

University of Salford   **University of Salford**

F.mansour@edu.salford.ac.uk   **A.Maccarrone-Eaglen@salford.ac.uk**

Section One: Knowledge about Oman

In this section we are interested to explore how well known Oman is as an actual or potential tourist's destination.

1-Have you visited the Sultanate of Oman before? (Please, tick only one)

☐ Yes. (Please continue to the end of the questionnaire)

☐ No. (Please, go to Q12, and then continue to the end of the questionnaire)

2-How many times, previously, have you visited Oman? (Please, tick only one)

☐ One visit.

☐ Two visits.

☐ Three visits or more.

3- What was the main reason for your visit? (Please, tick only one)

☐ Leisure/Holiday.

☐ Business only (please go to question 5).

☐ Both Business and leisure.

☐ Other. Please be specify…………………………………………….

4- What influenced you to visit Oman for your last trip? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Advice from travel agent.

☐ Recommendations from family/friends/ colleagues.

☐ Internet information.

☐ Media reports picture (TV, radio, newspaper, etc.).

☐ Books.

☐ Tourist guide books.

☐ Other. Please specify………………………

5- Which places did you visited in Oman? (Please, state below)?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

6- How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you experienced while visiting Oman? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Friendly people.

☐ Boring.

☐ Stimulating.

☐ Scary.

☐ Pleasant.

☐ Other...…………………………………………………………………………………

7- Did your trip to Oman meet your expectations? (Please, tick only one)

☐ Completely.

☐ For the greater part.

☐ Partly.

☐ Not really.

☐ Absolutely not.If answered "**not really**" or "**absolutely not**" please state **why**:

…………………………………………………………………………………………

8- Which of the following would give a positive emotion to you in relation to Oman? (Please, tick as many apply)

☐ The characteristic of local attractions.

☐ Arabic culture.

☐ Feeling safe.

☐ Entertainment available.

☐ Arabic Shisha pipe.

☐ Quality of facilities.

☐ Cycling (Bike activities).

☐ Other……………………………………………………………………………………

9- Compared to other destinations that you visited, how do you compare Oman's to these destinations? (Please, state below)

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

10- Which One of the following do you think best influences a visitor's decision to choose Oman destination over others within the Arabic countries?

- ☐ Destination's favourable Climate.
- ☐ Natural Beauty of the Destination.
- ☐ Cultural Attractions.
- ☐ Quality of Available Accommodations.
- ☐ Reputation of the local food.
- ☐ Range of Recreational Activities.
- ☐ Shopping.
- ☐ Special Events & Festivals.
- ☐ Security and Safety.
- ☐ Distance and travel time to destination.
- ☐ Ease of entry to country (visa / passport).
- ☐ Friendliness of residents towards international visitors.
- ☐ Other (Please specify)…………………………………

11- Would you recommend Oman to your friends or relatives? (Please, tick only one)

- ☐ Yes.
- ☐ No.
- ☐ Please explain why…………………………….

Please, turn the page for section (2)

Section two: Awareness about Oman

In this section we would like to know your perception about Oman is as an actual or potential tourist's destination.

12- What does this logo suggests to you? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Nature.

☐ Desert.

☐ Mountain.

☐ Sun.

☐ Water.

☐ Other, please specific……………………………………………………………

13-Which of the following attributes do you think are associated with the Omani logo? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Simple.

☐ Attractive.

☐ Memorable.

☐ Conceptual.

☐ Funny.

☐ Safety.

☐ Popular.

☐ Versatile.

☐ Other, please specific…………………………………………………………..

Please, turn the page for section (3)

Section three: Image of Oman

In this section we would like to explore with you the images you have about Oman as an actual or potential tourist's destination.

14- Thinking of Oman as a tourist destination, please state if you agree or not with the following statements. *(It is not necessary for you to have visited Oman in order to respond to this question!)*

Elements of tourist destination	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Idont know
Beautiful scenery(Mountains, Valley, land scape)						
Beautiful beaches						
Hot climate						
Camping facilities						
Good quality of accommodation						
Availability of internet						
Good health services						
Excellent shopping centres						
Good transport services						
Availability of tour packages						
Political stability						
Clean and tidy environment						
Special festival/Fairs						
Safety and security						
Restful/relaxing						
Hospitality of people						
Trust worthy people						
Historical interest						
Modern Architecture Building						
Excellent quality of infrastructure						
Good restaurants						
High quality sport facilities						
Unique theme parks						
Fashion stores						
Appealing destination						
Gardens and springs						
Customs/tradition/culture						
Availability Information resources						
Easy access to the area						
Culture shows						
Positive reputation of the country						
Reasonable price tourists						
Tax benefits						
National parks						
Museum attraction						
Theatres/concerts						
Physical atmosphere						

15- What are the main reasons you would visit Oman? (Please, tick as many as apply):

☐ For rest and relaxation.

☐ Outdoor trip.

☐ Heritage or cultural trip.

☐ Theme park trips.

☐ Others………………………………………………………………………………

16-In general, what image comes to your mind when hearing about Oman? (Please, tick only one)

Extremely negative	Somewhat negative	Neutral	Very positive	Extremely positive
1	2	3	4	5

17-What would be the main concerns that would deter you from choosing Oman as a holiday destination? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Visa.

☐ Safety.

☐ Budget.

☐ Distance.

☐ Hot climate.

☐ Personal taste.

☐ I don't know.

☐ Other………………..

18-Would you visit Oman in the future? (Please, tick only one)

☐ Yes.

☐ No.

If **no**, why not? …………………………………………….

19-Do you believe that Oman differs from other Arabic countries? (Please, tick one)

☐ Yes. If yes (Please continue to the end of questionnaire)

☐ No. (Please, go to the q22).

20- In your own opinion, what is Oman's key differentiator as a tourist destination, relative to other Arabic countries? (Please, tick as many as apply).

- ☐ High quality of accommodation services.
- ☐ Security and safety of visitors.
- ☐ Value of money of shopping items.
- ☐ A good value for the money spent for the holiday experience.
- ☐ Free internet& Wi-Fi facilities in hotel.
- ☐ Updated infrastructure for tourist.
- ☐ Online hotel booking.
- ☐ Other. Please specify……………………………………………………………………………….

21- Could you please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in Oman? (Please state below)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Please, turn the page for section (4)

22- Please circle the most appropriate response, your answers (this will be kept strictly confidential and will be only used for statistical purposes):

Gender:

☐ Female.

☐ Male.

Nationality: ………………………….

Age:

☐ 18-30.

☐ 31-40.

☐ 41-50.

☐ 51-60.

☐ 60 or over.

Employment Status:

☐ Employed.

☐ Unemployed.

☐ Retired.

☐ Student.

☐ Self-employed.

Highest level of education attained:

☐ Primary/Elementary school.

☐ High school.

☐ Diploma.

☐ Bachelor degree.

☐ Master's degree.

☐ PhD degree.

---**End of Questionnaire**---

Appendix (2) questionnaire

<div style="border:2px solid; padding:10px;">

Questionnaire to Measure the Image of the Sultanate of Oman in International Market

</div>

Dear Respondent

My name is Fatma Mansour. I am PhD Student at the University of Salford. The purpose of this survey is to measure the influence of tourist's perceptions and attitudes towards destination brand and selection. The success of my research study is dependent on your views and responses to this questionnaire which should take approximately ten minutes of your time to complete. Your participation in this questionnaire is voluntary, and your responses will remain confidential. The names of individual persons are not required in any responses. The results of this research will be combined to examine the different perceptions (images) of tourists when thinking of Sultanate of Oman as a tourist destination.

Thank you for your time and support, every answer makes a significant contribution to the study.

If you have any question regarding this questionnaire, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the following contact details:

Fatma Mansour	**Supervisor: Agata Maccarrone-Eaglen**
Business School	**Business School**
University of Salford	**University of Salford**
F.mansour@edu.salford.ac.uk	**A.Maccarrone-Eaglen@salford.ac.uk**

Section One: Knowledge about Oman

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1-Have you visited the Sultanate of Oman before? (Please, tick only one)

☐ Yes. (Please continue to the end of the questionnaire)

☐ No. (Please, go to Q12, and then continue to the end of the questionnaire)

2-How many times, previously, have you visited Oman? (Please, tick only one)

☐ One visit.

☐ Two visits.

☐ Three visits or more.

3- What was the main reason for your visit? (Please, tick only one)

☐ Leisure/Holiday.

☐ Business only (please go to question 5).

☐ Both Business and leisure.

☐ Other. Please be specify……………………………

4- What influenced you to visit Oman for your last trip? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Advice from travel agent.

☐ Recommendations from family/friends/ colleagues.

☐ Website/internet information.

☐ Media reports picture (TV, radio, newspaper, etc.).

☐ Books.

☐ Tourist guide books.

☐ Other. Please specify……………………………………..

Please, turn the page

5- Which places did you visited in Oman? (Please, state below)?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

6- How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you experienced while visiting Oman? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Friendly people.

☐ Boring.

☐ Stimulating.

☐ Scary.

☐ Pleasant.

☐ Other...…………………………………………

7- Did your trip to Oman meet your expectations? (Please, tick only one)

☐ Completely.

☐ For the greater part.

☐ Partly.

☐ Not really.

☐ Absolutely not.
   If answered "**not really**" or "**absolutely not**" please state **why**:

   ……………………………………………………………………………………

 8- Which of the following would give a positive emotion to you in relation to Oman? (Please, tick as many apply)

☐ The characteristic of local attractions.

☐ Arabic culture.

☐ Feeling safe.

☐ Entertainment available.

☐ Arabic Shisha pipe.

☐ Quality of facilities.

☐ Cycling (Bike activities).

☐ Other……………………………………………………………

Please, turn the page

9- Compared to other destinations that you visited, how do you compare Oman's to these destinations? (Please, state below)

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

10- Which One of the following do you think best influences a visitor's decision to choose Oman destination over others within the Arabic countries?

☐ Destination's favourable Climate.

☐ Natural Beauty of the Destination.

☐ Cultural Attractions.

☐ Quality of Available Accommodations.

☐ Reputation of the local food.

☐ Range of Recreational Activities.

☐ Shopping.

☐ Special Events & Festivals.

☐ Security and Safety.

☐ Distance and travel time to destination.

☐ Ease of entry to country (visa / passport).

☐ Friendliness of residents towards international visitors.

☐ Other (Please Specify)…………………………

11- Would you recommend Oman to your friends or relatives? (Please, tick only one)

☐ Yes.

☐ No.

☐ Please explain why ……………………..

Please, turn the page for Section (2)

12- What does this logo suggests to you? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Nature.

☐ Desert.

☐ Mountain.

☐ Sun.

☐ Water.

☐ Other, please specific…………………………………………………………

13-Which of the following attributes do you think are associated with the Omani logo? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Simple.

☐ Attractive.

☐ Memorable.

☐ Conceptual.

☐ Funny.

☐ Safety.

☐ Popular.

☐ Versatile.

☐ Other, please specific……………………………………………………………..

Please, turn the page for section (3)

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Section three: Image of Oman

In this section we would like to explore with you the images you have about Oman as an actual or potential tourist's destination.

14- Thinking of Oman as a tourist destination, please state if you agree or not with the following statements. *(It is not necessary for you to have visited Oman in order to respond to this question!)*

Elements of tourist destination	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
Beautiful scenery(Mountains, Valley, land scape)					
Beautiful beaches					
Hot climate					
Camping facilities					
Good quality of accommodation					
Availability of internet					
Good health services					
Excellent shopping centres					
Good transport services					
Availability of tour packages					
Political stability					
Clean and tidy environment					
Special festival/Fairs					
Safety and security					
Restful/relaxing					
Hospitality of people					
Trust worthy people					
Historical interest					
Modern Architecture Building					
Excellent quality of infrastructure					
Good restaurants					
High quality sport facilities					
Unique theme parks					
Fashion stores					
Appealing destination					
Gardens and springs					
customs and traditions					
Availability Information resources					
Easy access to the area					
Culture shows					
Positive reputation of the country					
Reasonable price tourists					
Tax benefits					
National parks					
Museum attraction					
Theatres/concerts					
Physical atmosphere					

15- What are the main reasons you would visit Oman? (Please, tick as many as apply):

☐ For rest and relaxation.

☐ Outdoor trip.

☐ Heritage or cultural trip.

☐ Theme park trips.

☐ Others…………………………………………………………………………………

16-In general, what image comes to your mind when hearing about Oman? (Please, tick only one)

Extremely negative	Somewhat negative	Neutral	Very positive	Extremely positive
1	2	3	4	5

17-What would be the main concerns that would deter you from choosing Oman as a holiday destination? (Please, tick as many as apply)

☐ Visa.

☐ Safety.

☐ Budget.

☐ Distance.

☐ Hot climate.

☐ Personal taste.

☐ Other…………………………………………………………………………………

☐ I don't know.

18-Would you visit Oman in the future? (Please, tick only one)

☐ Yes.

☐ No.

If **no**, why not?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

19- Do you believe that Oman differs from other Arabic countries? (Please, tick one)

☐ Yes. If yes (Please continue to the end of questionnaire)

☐ No. (Please, go to the q21).

20- In your own opinion, what is Oman's key differentiator as a tourist destination, relative to other Arabic countries? (Please, tick as many as apply).

☐ High quality of accommodation services.

☐ Security and safety of visitors.

☐ Value of money of shopping items.

☐ A good value for the money spent for the holiday experience.

☐ Free internet& Wi-Fi facilities in hotel.

☐ Updated infrastructure for tourist.

☐ Online hotel booking.

☐ Other. Please specify……………………………………………………………………

Please, turn the page for section (4)

Section5: Demographic and Behavioural Information
Please could you provide some information about yourself?

21- Please circle the most appropriate response, your answers (this will be kept strictly confidential and will be only used for statistical purposes):

Gender:

☐ Female.

☐ Male.

Nationality: ………………………….

Age:

☐ 18-30.

☐ 31-40.

☐ 41-50.

☐ 51-60.

☐ 60 or over.

Employment Status:

☐ Employed.

☐ Unemployed.

☐ Retired.

☐ Student.

☐ Self-employed.

Highest level of education attained:

☐ Primary/Elementary school.

☐ High school.

☐ Diploma.

☐ Bachelor degree.

☐ Master's degree.

☐ PhD degree.

---**End of Questionnaire**--

Thank you for your valuable time to complete this questionnaire. Should you have any questions, then, please feel free to contact me at: F.mansour@edu.salford.ac.uk

(Appendix 3)   Information sheet

Research project Title

Destination Branding: an analytical study applied to Sultanate of Oman as a tourism destination.

Invitation paragraph

I would to invite you to take part in research project. The project is a part of my PhD at the University of Salford. I have chosen you because of you have experience in the tourism industry in Oman, therefore you can provide important information for my study. Please, take a minute to read the following information and feel free of to ask questions if anything is not clear.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to develop a comprehensive model for tourism destination branding using Oman as a case study. This will be achieved by examining the Omani context and its characteristics from the perspectives of potential tourists (demand side) and the Omani tourism providers (supply side). .

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited because you can provide a comprehensive illustration and information for my study.

Do I have to take part?

It is totally up to you to take part or not. In case you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form and you still have the freedom to withdraw your consent at any time without giving reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The interview will be approximately 1:30 hour in duration. The interview will be audio recorded with you agreement. The information you provide will be treated confidentially and only used for the research. Your name will not be recorded on the tape and on the transcription.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

There will be no possible disadvantage or risk of taking part of this research.This exploratory study to get participants perceptions.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

- All data will be kept strictly confidential.

- Transcribed interview will be kept in a password protected file.

- All data documents will be stored safely in a locked cabinet; they are accessed only by the researcher.

- All raw data will be destroyed after the completion of this research.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

Data will be used for the research purpose only. The findings will be presented as a part of the PhD thesis; the results may be published in academic papers or journals.

Who has ethically reviewed the research project?

The research has been ethically approved via the college Research Ethics Panel (REP) of the University of Salford.

Appendix (4) Consent Form

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am thankful for accepting to collaborate in this work as a part of my doctoral research. The aim of this study is to develop a comprehensive model for tourism destination branding using Oman as a case study. This will be achieved by examining the Omani context and its characteristics from the perspectives of potential tourists (demand side) and the Omani tourism providers (supply side).

The interview will be approximately 1 hour in duration. The interview will be audio record with the agreement of the participant. The information you provide will be treated confidentially and only used for the research. Your name will not be recorded on the tape and on the transcription, this consent form will also be securily kept.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me on my email address below.

Thank you

Participants Statement

I have read and understood the consent form above, and discussed all uncertainties with the interviewer. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature ---------------------   Date -------------------------   Time …………………

Job title……………………………………………………………………………………………… ……………………………

Researcher's signature --------------------   Date-------------------------

If you wish to contact me directly my email address is left here below:

F.mansour@edu.salford.ac.uk

Interview Questions	
Questions	Prompt/follow up
1-Could you tell me about Oman's destination brand?	• When was Oman's destination branding first Launched?
1- In your opinion, what are the components of tourism Oman Brand?	• What destination attributes do you associate with your brand? • Do you feel the elements being branded accurately reflect your country's identity? • Were there any specific reasons behind the introduction of Oman's destination brand?
2-Talking about" identity" as the identification of the country in the mind of people, in branding Oman, which concept stands out in your brand message? Why?	• What identity does Oman destination brand aim to project about Oman? • Was your brand logo pre-tested to ensure that it clearly reflects the desired image and experience of the destination? • Do you feel that you have been successful in creating your desired image? • What is this that it makes you unique, and different from your competitors? • Is there any future plan in changing this brand? When? Why?
3-Could you tell me please about communication market tools you are used?	• How you communicate with your customer? • What message is being delivered through your brand? • What do you do to identify your target audience? • What types of marketing campaigns have you run in the past? • Do any factors prevent your message to reach your customer? • How do you believe that potential tourist's perceived Oman as tourism destination? • How do you keep your customer trust?
4-When we talk about challenges that face Oman tourism, are there any problems facing the brand of Oman?	• Does there any issue that you can think of that affect the branding process?

Appendix (5) ethical approval

11 March 2016

Fatma Mansour

Dear Fatma

RE: ETHICS APPLICATION SBS 16/03 Destination Branding: an analytical study applied to Sultanate of Oman as a tourism destination.

Based on the information that you provided, I am pleased to inform you that your application SBS 16/03 has been approved.

If there are any changes to the project or its methodology, please inform the Panel as soon as possible by contacting SBS-ResearchEthics@salford.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Professor David F. Percy
Chair of the Staff and Postgraduate Research Ethics Panel
Salford Business School

Appendix (6)

EXPRESS WORLDWIDE **DOX** *DHL*

2017-01-19 XMLPI 5.3 / "90-1504"

From : MOHAMED AL SULAIMANI
MOHAMED AL SULAIMANI
WAY NO 6314
BLDG #952
P.O.BOX 1959, PC 111, CPO SEEB
GHUBRAH N/A
OMAN

Origin:
MCT

Contact: +96897773334

To : MRS FATMA MANSOUR
MRS FATMA MANSOUR

Contact:
+447463878708

MANCHESTER N/A
UNITED KINGDOM

GB-MAN-MAN

Day   Time

Ref: ID 02059141

Pce/Shpt Weight   Piece
0.5 kg   1 / 1

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