



## Stimulating Public-Private Partnership in Post-Outbreak Period: Omaní Tourism Focus\*\*

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### Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the role of public-private partnership to further develop and enhance tourism industry in Oman and how this partnership can help the industry to grow post-outbreak. The literature pertaining to Oman's tourism industry was thoroughly reviewed and for quantitative method, a survey questionnaire was prepared for 152 representatives from tourism management companies such as public and private tourism associations, department of tourism and centres for tourism development, tourism-related organizations such as department of planning and investment, department of finance, department of information and communications and representatives from local authorities of Oman. Overall, the study found that partnerships between private and public organizations functioning in Oman's tourist industry can help to speed up the industry's recovery. Based on the findings, this study provides some contributions to tourism policy makers to better understand the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic on Oman Tourism, to help create measures that can increase the positive results of the tourism industry for the post-pandemic period, and to develop more effective instruments.

### Article Type

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## INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry has experienced the biggest pandemic effect ever in 2019-2021. People's livelihoods, nations' economies, public service, and prospects in all countries around the world were badly harmed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 pandemic prompted lockdowns, which prohibited public meetings and resulted in the cancellation of international flights, hotel reservations, and other tourism-related booking. According to Ozili and Arun (2020), cancellation of local events, flights, and foreign events resulted in a loss of more than 200 billion USD by April 2020. United Nations World Tourism Organization (hereafter UNWTO) (2020) reported that, tourism export revenues decreased by more than \$910 billion to less than 1.2 trillion dollars. The global GDP declined by 1.5 to 2.8 percent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's detrimental impact on the tourism industry. Knowing the importance of tourism in the global economy, everything that impacts it has a global impact on many people's livelihoods (UNWTO, 2020). As a result, any disruption in tourism, such as that produced by the COVID-19 pandemic, have a significant impact on global and national economies as well (OECD, 2020). Robust advancement has been recorded over the last few years and more is promised in spite of the general economic decline in the region (Haider, 2018).

Omani tourism, like many other tourism industries throughout the world, was severely harmed by the Coronavirus outbreak. As a result of the pandemic, Oman has faced problems due to cancellation and closure of various investments in the tourism sector. The tourism sector has been hit particularly hard by the pandemic as it is one of the important growing industries of the country. The hotels in Oman, for example, had a 50.1% drop-in hotel occupancy rates compared to the same period of the previous year (Prabhu, 2021).

Beside the loss in revenue and occupancy rates, the industry also faced loss of jobs. Service providers in Oman's tourist business were unable to keep a big number of employees due to declining income and occupancy rates. As a result, the majority of employees were compelled to take unpaid leave, accept wage cutbacks, and others were laid off entirely. Tour guides, drivers, and hotel personnel are examples of those (Al-Hasni, 2021a).

The government of Oman announced incentives as a part of economic diversification which is a part of vision 2040. In addition to affecting the government's capacity to satisfy its financial responsibilities, it also has an impact on the government's ability to execute projects that might improve the country's economic situation. The Omani Government has put in place regulations and policies to help businesses cope with the economic downturn. To support its tourism sector, the Omani Government has granted tax reductions and incentives as well as some price regulations to increase revenues. These types of conjectural tactics may help the tourism industry to survive in the economy, but to recover and resilience. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the role of public-private partnership (hereafter PPP) to further develop and enhance tourism industry in Oman and how can this partnership help the industry to grow in post outbreak.

### Background of the study

#### Tourism in Oman

Tourism is looked at as the world's largest industry which plays a significant role in economic development. Oman, taking its economic diversification goal into account, is very eager to move away from the dependency on oil revenues. Therefore, the Omani Government has realized the importance of tourism industry and has started to

develop the sustainable developmental strategy of tourism sector.

The Oman's travel and tourism sector was ranked 92nd in the WTTC report globally with respect to the approximate size of its entire contribution to GDP, whereas it was ranked 28th with respect to overall forecasting in 2018 when undertaking its lasting growth prediction between 2018 and 2028. The report was explored at travel types and spent money around the country, indicating that approximately 73% of the contribution of sector elevated from leisure travel in 2017, whereas 27% emerged from business trips. Some 30% of the total expenditure was made by local residents and 70% was made by foreigners (Oxford Business Group, 2018).

In parallel with policy makers, several studies (Haque et al., 2016; Al Saidi, 2017; Hamid & Amin, 2017) have focused on tourism sector as accelerator of economic diversification in Oman. Hamid and Amin (2017) showed that the current economic structure has low chance of attaining economic diversification as proposed by the government so that to reduce the country's overly reliance on the oil and gas industry. On the other hand, Al Saidi (2017) identified expansion of consumer options, employment of under-utilized resources, encouragement of innovation and entrepreneurship and exploration of less visited places as the available opportunities for tourism in Oman.

There are severe challenges such as capturing that expansion with supply and developing supplementary infrastructure for the progressively popular sites of the country. In addition, human resources are a major concern, with the initiative to attract talented and young Omanis to the tourism industry. The prospective events will nevertheless be looking for an expansion in the sector, with extra vacation apartments, hotels, and incentives, meetings, exhibitions, and conferences. Previous record-breaking success has been witnessed in the year 2018 with the inauguration of the new Muscat International Airport, a spark in visitors, and phase 2 of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre to one of the star attractions of the country. The subtle transformation is another trend in the tourism segment, which shows exclusive destination of the past towards one with a broader reach as well as more affordable accommodation (Hamid & Amin, 2017).

It cannot be denied that the long-term success of tourism is only possible with if the local residents support it. And it seems the significant levels of awareness and support of local people have been raised to make tourism sustainable in Oman (Ravikumar et al., 2022).

### **The Roles of Public and Private Actors in Omani Tourism Industry**

Tourism is one of the most important non-oil contributions to Oman's GDP, providing cash and job possibilities for Omani inhabitants (Al-Maamari, 2020). The tourism strategy of Oman (2016-2040) was established by the Ministry of Tourism (after 2020 Ministry of Tourism and Heritage) in order to bring diversification in Oman's economy and create jobs by offering world enriching tourism experiences with personalities of Oman. This strategy was launched in the year 2016 and the aim was to make Oman a top destination for vacations, discovery and meetings by the year 2040, attracting tourist (more than 11 million) which includes 5 million international tourists hence bringing an increase in the GDP to 6 percent by 2040. The aim of Oman's tourism strategy is to make the country a sustainable tourism destination and also emphasizes on 3 guiding principles such as; cultivating the cultural heritage and tradition of Oman, preserving the country's natural resources and to ensure sustainability (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). The tourism industry in Oman provides 2.8 percent to the country's GDP. Furthermore, the direct added value provided by the Omani tourism sector was RO 505 million (about US\$ 1.3 billion) in 2009 and RO 719 million

(approximately US\$ 1.8 billion) in 2017 (Cartier and Taylor, 2020).

According to Cartier and Taylor (2020) study which has looked into the impact of the coronavirus on the country's tourism and economy, Omani Government needs to protect tourist industry players from the damaging effects of the coronavirus. Abbas et al. (2021) found that the COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating effect on the tourism business, which will take longer to recover than the previously estimated 10 months. The hoteliers, as well as employees in the tourism sector, are the key and affected stakeholders in the consequences. The tourism support industries have seen a drop-in revenue as a result of the pandemic. There is symbiotic relationship between these industries and tourism (Atsalakis et al., 2018). COVID-19 has had a significant impact on these supporting businesses. A study conducted by Al-Hasni (2021b), states that the pandemic has crippled the tourism industry worldwide and Oman is not an exception. The study findings revealed that the pandemic has contributed towards the decline in the performance of Oman's tourism sector because of which there has been an increase in unemployment, reduced incomes and falling consumer purchase power (Al-Hasni, 2021b).

The main impact of the pandemic on Omani tourism industry includes loss of revenues and decreases in the hotel and occupancy rate. This led to massive job losses, pay cuts and unpaid leaves amongst the employees in the tourism industry. The measures taken to overcome this is categorized into two: government and business measures. Oman tourism industry needs to identify specific travel destinations and work on associated recovery plans and adopt better approaches to improve the tourism sector in the country and to stimulate its domestic tourism markets to enhance the income in the tourism industry (Al-Hanai and Matriano (2021).

In a few years, the Omani tourism sector can be remarkable player in the worldwide tourism market. According to PwC (2020), the number of tourists visiting the Middle East increased by 7% to 64 million. The Sultanate of Oman welcomed more than 3.5 million tourists in 2019, up 18.14 percent from the previous year (Tatiana & Dennis, 2020).

The National Tourism Strategy targets boosting the number of annual arrivals from the 2015 total of 2.6m to 11.7m by 2040 and elevating the share of GDP to over 6% of the sector from 2.6% (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). Accomplishing such objectives is potentially to take an assorted approach. The leisure industry is one of the major economic resources and enablers to GDP of Oman. The country has a lot to offer with respect to culture, landscape, infrastructure, and history. On the other hand, additional effort is needed from different players throughout the industry for positioning the country as a leisure destination, specifically from the Ministry of Tourism, hotels, and tour operators (Kessler & Raj, 2018).

A planned investment of approximately OR20BN (\$51.9bn) is needed for the National Tourism Strategy with majority of the investment comes from the private sector. Infrastructure receives the majority of funds whereas promotional activities are encompassed in the budget. A significant elevation in the number of hotel rooms available is envisioned in the strategy for advocating an additional and uniform exposure of facilities around the country, as compared to simply focusing on Muscat and other cities. By 2040, some 80,000 new initiatives will be taken 33,373 hotel rooms, 29,287 vacation home rooms, and 17,262 rooms in united tourism complexes, but the contribution of all lodgings will be reduced from 53% to 30.8% (Ministry of Tourism, 2016).

The tourism sector is gaining reputation at regional and international level ever since the government has progressed in bringing attention to this utterly important sector and its multiple activities to raise national awareness

among citizens in order to accept foreign tourists and treat them respectfully and pass this hospitality to generations.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has the directive to develop and implement sector strategies and regulations, whereas further issuing licenses for monitoring compliance and tourism-related activities. The ministry further operates promotional campaigns locally and represents the industry internationally (Oxford Business Group, 2018).

The strategy includes 14 development tourism complexes across the governorates alongside a wide range of tourism products which are suitable for both local and international markets which will further enhance and develop the governorates and their tourist potential hence giving a boost to the sector (Haider, 2018).

Considering the discussion of the existing literature about how Oman's oil-based economy is switching to production-based economy in which tourism industry has been playing a major role in increasing the country's GDP by focusing on stimulating public and private joint venture projects to boost the tourism industry in the recent years and how the current pandemic situation has affected this situation as there is no empirical evidence in context to Oman that focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on the public and private joint venture projects of the tourism industry.

The Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran) is a public enterprise, which was established by government mandate in 2005, and was intended to develop tourism infrastructure of the country. The corporation, which is the master developer of a wide range of tourism, urban, and heritage projects, which include the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), some upscale hotels, ports and airports, marinas logistics and transportation services etc., is being supervised by the high level governmental team (Oman Daily Observer, 2019).

As a step to establish Oman on the tourism map, the Omani Ministry of Tourism and Heritage has joined hands by signing strategic partnership with number of leading companies in world of tourism. The ministry joined hands with Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in 2019. With this partnership, Oman experienced a good visitor's turnout who showed their admiration for leisure opportunities in the natural, historical and geographical sites which reflects the heritage of Oman (Gulf Today, 2019).

## **Research Design**

### **Research Questions**

- Q1.** How do the participants of tourism perceive the affects of Covid-19 on Omani Tourism?
- Q2.** How well are the participants of tourism aware about private and public sector roles and partnership in post-outbreak tourism recovery in Oman?
- Q3.** What do the participants of tourism give priority in public private sector partnership in Oman?

### **Instrument Design**

The survey questionnaire was designed comprising of two sections, the first section consisted of demographic details of the study sample and the second part comprised of questions focusing on role of private and public sector in the planning and development of tourism during the pandemic and how this partnership is helping the tourism industry of Oman to progress during COVID-19. In first part of the questionnaire, nominal and ordinal-scaled questions have been asked to collect categorical characteristics (gender, age, experience, education level and type of

organisation). Dichotomous, multiple choices questions have been employed in the first part. The second part was designed in interval scale rating questions. Purposively, 7-point Likert scale rating questions have been developed where 1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Somewhat Disagree, 4- Neutral, 5- Somewhat Agree, 6- Agree, and 7- Strongly Agree) to rate and compare the responses of the participants under the four groups of factors (See on Table 6).

### **Sample, Sampling Technique and Data Collection**

According to Raosoft online calculator, the estimated sample size was 152 with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The study adopted snowball sampling method to recruit study participants. This research technique is considered valid for recruiting the participants that are not easily accessible. Moreover, the snowball sampling technique is favourable to conduct researches related to education, health and to collect community –based data (Naderifar et al., 2017).

The study adopted snowball sampling method to recruit study participants therefore, representatives from tourism management companies such as public and private tourism associations, department of tourism and centres for tourism development, representatives from tourism-related organizations such as department of planning and investment, department of finance, department of information and communications and representatives from local authorities of Oman were given the questionnaire to filled. So, a total of 160 study participants were recruited. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants via email.

The study was designed from October to November 2020 and the process of data collection lasted for 4 months that is from December to March, 2021. Before, the commencement of the study, a written consent form was signed by all the participants and were assured of data confidentiality.

### **Validity and Reliability**

A pilot study was conducted with 10 tourism representatives for the reliability and validity of measurement scale and content of the questionnaire. Also, the Cronbach value of each item was more 0.7 which shows that the questionnaire was fit to be used for collecting data.

### **Data Analysis**

After collecting the data, it was analysed using IBM Statistical Package of Social Sciences version 23.0. Furthermore, descriptive statistical analysis using standard deviations and mean values and SEM were generated.

### **Findings**

Table 1 shows the demographic details of all the study participants. Majority of the participants were male (62.5%) out of a sample of 160 and 37.5% were females. Also, majority of them fell into the age range 40-49 (37.5%), held Master's degree (68.7%) and had an experience of 6-10 years (56.2%).

**Table 1.** Demographic Details of the Participants

Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	100	62.5%
Female	60	37.5%
<b>Employee Age</b>		
30-39 years	55	34.3%
40-49 years	60	37.5%
50 years and above	45	28.1%
<b>Educational Level</b>		
Bachelor	20	12.5%
Masters	110	68.7%
PhD	30	18.7%
<b>Professional Experience</b>		
1-5 years	40	25%
6-10 years	90	56.2%
11-15 years	30	18.7%

Table 2 shows the reliability of the items under each variable. The value of cronbach alpha is greater than 0.7 for all the items which shows that the questionnaire was fit to be used to carry out the study.

**Table 2.** Reliability Test of Questionnaire

Variables	Number of Items	Reliability Cronbach Alpha
Public-Private Partnership	5	0.88
Impact of COVID-19 on tourism industry	5	0.84
Strategies used to support tourism industry during COVID-19	5	0.83
Perception of the entrepreneurs, professionals and bureaucrats	5	0.85

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistical analysis of the study with strategies used to support tourism industry during COVID-19 having a mean value of 4.55, which is at a high level, then comes public-private partnership with a mean value of 4.34, and impact of COVID-19 on tourism industry with a mean value of 4.32.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistical Results

Variables	Items	Mean	Std Deviation
Public-Private Partnership	5	4.34	0.78
Impact of COVID-19 on tourism industry	5	4.32	0.76
Strategies used to support tourism industry during COVID-19	5	3.77	0.85
Perception of the entrepreneurs, professionals and bureaucrats	5	3.91	0.90

Table 4 shows the impact of the two independent variables and their impact on tourism industry in Oman. The independent variables show a significant impact on the tourism industry, ( $p=0.000$ ) and the strategic relationship of public-private organizations plays a crucial role in boosting the tourism industry of Oman during the pandemic.

**Table 4.** Impact of Public-Private Partnership and Strategies Used to Support Tourism Industry

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig	95.0% Confidence level for Beta	
	Beta	Std error	Beta			Lower Boundary	Upper Boundary
PPP	87.85	6.38	0.45	13.46	0.000*	65.56	99.56
Strategies to support tourism industry post-outbreak	0.16	0.63	0.33	0.57	0.000*	0.31	0.52

Significant level \*p<0.05

In order to evaluate the significance of public-private partnership on the tourism sector, KMO measure of sampling adequacy, Bartlett’s test of Sphericity have been used to figure out the relevance of data that will be used in the factor analysis. Table 5 presents the value of KMO that is equal to 0.957>0.9. It demonstrates that factor analysis is suitable for the data analysis. Moreover, the Bartlett’s test has been found as highly significant (p0.00001) which exhibits that there is an absence of multicollinearity. Therefore, the Eigenvalues associated with each factor have been calculated for representing the variance of linear elements.

**Table 5.** KMO and Bartlett’s test

<b>Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>	0.957
<b>Bartlett’s Test</b>	Chi-square
<b>Sphericity</b>	Df
	Sig.
	403.68
	21
	0.00

This study has used exploratory factor analysis. To unveil difficult patterns Varimax with Kaiser Normalization were used. Through Factor loading, relationships of variables were evaluated. Table 6 presents the results of The Factor Analysis.

**Table 6.** The Results of Factor Analysis

Factor	Item	Factor loadings	Variance %	Eigenvalue
Public-Private Partnership Impact of COVID-19 on tourism industry for Private and Public Joint Investment Projects	The establishment of the Tourism Development Fund is a right step towards reviving the tourism industry of Oman.	0.824	52.725	26.890
	The Follow-up programs of monitoring the tourism related projects are well-functioning.	0.809		
	The Foreign Investment Capital Law will increase the attraction of the international firms to add up foreign direct investment (FDIs) in the tourism sector of Oman.	0.883		
	The Public Authority for Privatisation and Partnership (PAPP) will boost the completion projects related to infrastructure that would bring progression in the tourism industry.	0.832		
	The Bankruptcy Law will accelerate the establishment of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry of Oman and will unfold the credit facilitation programs for the companies that have been in financial stress during the Covid-19.	0.873		



**Table 6.** The Results of Factor Analysis (cont.)

	<b>There was a decline in the services of the tourism sector.</b>	<b>0.442</b>		
	Most of the companies had been facing financial stress.	0.532		
Impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry	There was a need of promulgating legislation for easing the investment procedures, specially related to investment projects to continue business during Covid-19.	0.697		
	The pandemic triggered the need of unfolding procedures to rescue the insolvent and financially struggling companies because it emanated financing challenges, and challenges related to integrated tourism.	0.795	<b>10.893</b>	<b>2.403</b>
	The tourism industry of Oman needed to transform its operation with reference to ensure sustainability, competitiveness, local added value, tourism products and services, the labour market, support for local products and tourism promotion.	0.817		
	There was an increased cooperation of the government to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 on the tourism industry.	0.638		
Strategies used to support tourism industry during COVID-19	The government created favorable conditions to help the tourism sector.	0.645		
	The government has taken the measures that are sufficient to address the main challenges and propose solutions through coordination and integration between the ministry and the concerned authorities.	0.611	11.550	5.06
	Through encouraging the public-private partnership, the PAPP will lead in preparing, evaluating, negotiating and awarding tenders for PPP projects.	0.614		
	It will add up the consultation of the private entities with the relevant government ministry(s).	0.758		
Perception of the entrepreneurs, professionals and bureaucrats	Public-private partnership is crucial to tackling the crisis of Covid-19.	0.856		
	The adopted legal framework will reduce the unnecessary procedures and will eliminate red-tapism in the tourism sector of Oman.	0.820		
	As a bureaucrat, rate your response that in the wake of Covid-19, the tourism sector was necessary to completely shut down its services to contract the spread of the virus.	0.879	44.559	2.312
	Lifting the limitation on the local businesses and facilitating the international firms will help reducing the burdens and mitigating damages to the tourism industry of Oman.	0.840		
	Apart from the FDIs and expertise, the entrance of the international investors will have more control over new companies and will receive a higher share of profits in the tourism sector that will reduce the revenue streams for the local competitors.	0.856		

## Discussion

There is no doubt that tourism has a very positive impact on the economy of any country as it generates revenues that support various components of the economy. The study formulated three research questions and a conceptual framework. Taking the first research question into consideration, given to assessing the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism sector, the participants reported a decline in this sector. All the participants expressed that the businesses were under financial stress during Covid-19. They showed that legislation was needed to eliminate red-tape and ease the procedures post-outbreak. In the wake of Covid-19, the respondents emphasized the need of initiating credit facilitation programs for the businesses. They also agreed that Oman has transformed that its tourism industry with the help of sustainable measures, value-addition, labour market, and support for local products and tourism promotion.

Public-Private Partnerships involve public and private sectors to join hands as corporate investors. The aim of such partnership is to plan, fund, construct and supply infrastructural equipment (Kim et al., 2005). In tourism

context, in order to achieve harmony and sustainable tourism development, cooperation of the shareholders in this industry is a must. Moreover, through partnership the entrepreneurial ecosystem also gets a boost as well as the introduction of new touristic products. Moreover, public-private partnership is supposed to share the investments, responsibility, rewards and risk of the projects they commit to begin and end together (Kim et al., 2005). This sort of partnership can be between or among government, private, non-governmental sectors who can be involved in the cooperation process (Kaufmane, 2011).

As mentioned by Weiermair et al. (2008) public private cooperation is easiest in times of industrial crisis. In parallel, the respondents avowed the significance of public-private partnership during Covid-19. Upon asking the adoption of legal framework, the participants showed their satisfaction with regard the legal framework. According to bureaucrats, tourism related activities should have not been restricted and they favoured that international firms might have played a decisive role to revive the tourism in Oman. However, it was the opinion of the majority of participants that new entrants will be a threat to local entrepreneurs in this sector.

By discriminating local governments` role, we should understand PPPs are evolving and shouldn't be too much government based to develop unique core competencies and innovative capabilities to differentiate themselves in the market place (Weiermair et al., 2008). Taking the second research question into consideration, the participants have acknowledged that there was an increased cooperation of the government to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 on the tourism industry. They agreed that the government created favourable conditions to help the tourism sector. They also asserted the government has taken the measures that are sufficient to address the main challenges and propose solutions through coordination and integration between the ministry and the concerned authorities. They viewed that through encouraging the public-private partnership, Public Authority Public Private Partnership (the PAPP) would lead in preparing, evaluating, negotiating and awarding tenders for PPP projects. The participants avowed that it will add up the consultation of the private entities with the relevant government ministry(s).

The formation of PPP can benefit both parties. The PPP can increase competition and improve efficiency in provision of services, coverage can expand and also help in reducing the delivery cost. The private sector can manage the supply chain more efficiently that is to provide and distribute goods and services as compared to government agencies. The private partner also has to work on common projects in an entrepreneurial manner to secure the fulfilment of the PPPs social goals (Weiermair et al., 2008). The PPP can cater to new ideas for the designing of projects and also provide greater synergy between the operation and design of the facilities. When government goes into partnership with private sector, the governmental bodies get the chance to take an advantage of economies of scale. In short, PPP can help to generate job opportunities as well as meet the demands of public services and goods. Partnerships are considered to be effective way for the governments of developing countries to mobilize private and foreign investment capital for the improvement and expansion of foreign investment. The contribution of private sectors can increase national productivity and economic output, assure a better allocation of scarce capital resources and accelerate the transition to a market economy (Siddiqui et al., 2015).

Teker and Teker raised a question that which PPP model produces a more efficient solution for financing and efficient service production, and answered with "there is no single model exist which can be applied for all projects. Whether the government maintains a strong interest in ownership or control of the project or not is a strong indicator of type of PPP model in choice" (2012: p.11). For third research question, the respondents asserted that the

establishment of the Tourism Development Fund was significant step that would assist in reviving the tourism industry of Oman. The majority of the participants realized the importance of the monitoring system that was set up for evaluating the progress of the various projects related to tourism. All the participants agreed that legislating the Foreign Investment Capital Law will attract the foreign investment in the tourism sectors that would make progressive impacts on this sector. The PAPP was also considered a significant milestone to expedite the completion process of various infrastructural programs in Oman. The respondents expressed their views regarding the significance of the Bankruptcy Law and contended that it would boost the development of the SMEs in Oman in the tourism sector. This piece of legislation was considered pivotal to lessen the losses of the tourism sector.

## **Conclusion**

Oman has a rich cultural heritage which attracts tourist and this should be the driving point for The Ministry of Tourism and Heritage of Oman so as to shift its dependency from oil and with the help of tourism industry boost its economy further. Not only post outbreak recovery of tourism, but also for visionary long term strategies, the government will be the `big brother` who is initiating, encouraging and tolerating others, taking opportunities, handling problems, managing crises and accepting higher risks in public-private partnership in tourism.

The study contributes by assisting the authorities in the tourism industry in establishing measures that can enhance the tourism industry's positive outcomes after the pandemic by answering the study's research questions and examining the current effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Oman's tourism industry. The government should further devise good plans to boost the infrastructure of tourism and to maintain interests of public and private groups. On the one side focusing on those communities that can generate higher wealth, coming up with more joint ventures with the private sector of tourism industry to increase competitiveness and improve efficiency in provision of services, expand coverage and help in reducing the delivery cost on the other. Besides, by looking into the post pandemic situation which has affected every industry worldwide, the Omani Government should devise new strategies and plans and implement them to help the tourism industry which is infant yet.

It is believed that a long-term growth strategy will allow to achieve the vision 2040 identified by the government of Oman as it diversifies from oil based economy. The relevant businesses should analyze the potential opportunities and the influence of the measures announced, to capitalize on any potential savings and to identify the eligibility for the announced incentives.

## **Study Implications**

The tourism industry may continue to remain one of the hardest hit by the COVID-19 and the current situation looks still uncertain. Those destinations that rely only on international, business and events tourism are the ones which are struggling the most with many regional, coastal and rural areas faring better than cities. The study findings suggest that the survival of Omani tourism business is at risk without getting continuous help from the government and the government has taken some substantial actions to boost the tourism industry, to reduce unemployment and recovery. The study suggest some priorities that can become a part of the policy such as; restore travelers confidence, support tourism businesses to survive and adapt, promote local or domestic tourism and provide support to safe return of international tourists, strengthen cooperation within and between countries and build a more resilient and sustainable tourism industry. The policy solutions should be flexible which can help the tourism economy to survive

along with the virus in terms of short and medium term therefore, it is essential to look beyond and take measures to learn from the crisis which has showed the gaps in government and the industry preparedness and response to the crisis. That's why partnership between government and private sector is necessary in Oman. This crisis should be considered as an opportunity to rethink about tourism industry. This industry is at its crossroads and steps and measures taken today will help to shape the industry for tomorrow. In order to let this happen, the government needs to consider long-term implication of crisis by capitalizing on digitalization, providing support to low-carbon transition, and promoting structural transformation which is required to have strong, sustainable and resilient tourism economy in Oman.

### **Future Recommendations**

The pandemic has triggered extraordinary casualties for mankind in life-changing situations. Never before has the tourism industry ever felt the need to hold its perseverance as much as it faced with Covid-19. The further tourism resilience researches should be based on the economic, environmental and social setbacks along with policy suggestions. In context with the tourism industry and its sensitivity towards post pandemic, the existing literature in the field of tourism needs more sound work to prepare for the future. The study provides PPP direction to the future researchers to carry out Omani context PPP models for the tourism industry of Oman. It is also noticeable to know how the businesses will tackle this challenge and transform it into opportunity.

### **Declaration**

**The contribution of authors:** M. Kukreti and S. Yuksel co-worked in research design, literature review, data collection and conclusion & recommendations; A. Dangwal contributed to research design and data analysis.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in any regard.

**Approval:** Before the data collection stage, the research proposal has been submitted to the Scientific Research Department (SRD) at UTAS, Ibri/Oman. The SRD approved the research proposal on 20.10.2020.

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