Factors Affecting Tourists Choice Of Destination- A Study In Sultanate Of Oman

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Abstract
Tourism traditionally is when an individual or a group of individuals travel to or within a country temporarily for partaking in various activities, some formal activities include business meetings, medical visits, education, scouting for sportspersons or show business, whereas others partake in activities inclusive of sightseeing, exploration, weddings, parties, concerts, expos or conventions, visiting friends, family and relatives. This paper attempts to analyze a few important factors affecting tourists' choice of destination. Four factors namely, Location, Infrastructure, Culture and Trends have been identified as the key factors affecting the destination choice of tourists visiting Salalah, Sultanate of Oman. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) has been used to analyze the impact of these factors on the choice of destination. The findings suggest that infrastructure, followed by culture and locations have the maximum impact on the choice of a tourist destination.
Keywords: - Destination Choice, Tourism, Location, Infrastructure, Culture, Trends.

1- INTRODUCTION

Tourism traditionally is when an individual or a group of individuals travel to or within a country temporarily for partaking in various activities, some formal activities include business meetings, medical visits, education, scouting for sportspersons or show business, whereas others partake in activities inclusive of sightseeing, exploration, weddings, parties, concerts, expos or conventions, visiting friends, family and relatives.

Tourism has two sides like that of a coin, these sides represent what types of tourist are there in a country. On one side there are international tourists; this includes both inbound and outbound tourism, both have an influence over the incoming and outgoing of the balance of payments in a country. On the other side there are domestic tourists; they are citizens and residents who partake in exploration and leisure activities within the country and consider this as a relatively cost efficient option compared to international tourism as it has reduced hassle of differences in currency, food, etiquette and language. However, domestic tourism statistics are significantly underreported compared to international tourism.

1.1- CONCEPTUALIZATION

Overall the key drivers of tourism, be it international or domestic, can be classified into four major categories; Location, Infrastructure, Culture and Trends. Either one all or a combination of the following drives tourism:

- Location based tourism is when people tour for the admiration of or the exploration of natural formations and sceneries. It can also be for experiencing a natural phenomenon or astronomical events.

- Infrastructure based tourism is when people tour for experiencing manmade structures, buildings, services, technology and even medical care. These can revolve around the bases of leisure, luxury, purpose and convenience.

- Culture based tourism is when people tour for participating in cultural activities, meeting friends, family and relatives, various forms of public or private events, charities, fashion, cuisines, conventions and other niches. It also includes exploring and experiencing history, traditions and heritage.
- Finally, Trend based tourism where people's main agenda is following up on popular trends that is driven by geological factors, politics, conflicts, events of any sort, viral internet trends etc. Sometimes political changes which tend to cause people to travel, visit and experience countries for their peace, prosperity or sometimes even the contrary.

Oman as a country can generally be considered as being rich in tourism based on Culture and Location as it hosts a diverse range of tourist attractions from mountain valleys to old forts in the north, and sea sides to a unique monsoon season in the south. The infrastructure for tourism in the country is a result of extensive government investments and efforts towards simplification of procedural travel requirements /which in turn has yielded an increase in the number of visitors and their expenditures in the country. .

1.2- OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research can be considered an exploration as to what is it that really drives tourism in Oman and how accessible Oman really is and whether or not there is enough public and international exposure of the country in terms of marketing efforts to promote tourism It aims to find out which of the four aforementioned drivers of tourism is the most dominant in Oman and which one is lagging behind; it also tries to compile what drives residents and citizens of Oman into tourism.

The data collected and analyzed can be taken into consideration while conducting feasibility studies for investments into various tourists' attractions, activities and related businesses. It will also help in determining and understanding what can be done to enhance the tourists' interest, experience and value during their stay within the country of Oman. It will also try to prove that more marketing and exposure is need for the country's growth in tourism.

1.3- LITERATURE REVIEW

In older times, traveling outside of one's local area for leisure was mainly an activity for the wealthy classes, who at times traveled to distant parts of the world, to see great buildings and works of art, learn new languages, experience new cultures, and to taste different cuisines. With the advent of various religious sects, the tradition of pilgrimage had begun whereby groups of people would set off to reaching their destinations of worship. This mass movement presented business opportunities as to what we would nowadays consider a part or the tourism industry.

The contemporary style of tourism as we know it today derives from something known as the Grand Tour from the late 1600s. This form of tourism was primarily undertaken by upper-class Northern and Western European men for the exploration of art, cuisine, fashion and technology. It was until the advent of large-scale rail transit during the Industrial Revolution of 1840s that tourism started involving the movement of individuals for the purpose of education. The tradition of travelling was then extended to include the purpose of leisure as it became cheaper and easier to travel resulting in it being incorporated in the lifestyles of the middle-class people. Nowadays there is a multitude of purposes to which people travel around the world which has become easier and more affordable than ever before, which had led to giving people the perception of a shrinking world. Tourism has become one of the more major sources of income for a large number of countries in the world as it

has effects over the economies of both the host and guest nations in terms of various factors like the balance of payments. It has also become one of the top priorities of many people, to travel, to learn, to explore and accumulate wisdom.

According to Gauthami S. Jeganathanin the Growing Drivers of Tourism in India (2014), *"Tourism is one among the largest services industry in the world. Its contribution to the world economy has been growing year over year in terms of contribution to a country's GDP - Gross Domestic Product, its employment generation and its FEE - Foreign Exchange Earnings"*. He also stated that, *"Tourism contributed much for the economic growth of emerging economies such as France, Lebanon, Spain, Italy, Mauritius, The Bahamas and Thailand"*. He then mentions that tourism tends to play a very important role in the development and growth of the economies in these countries. The rate of growth of their tourism industry is set to increase due to the millions of dollars being spent by their governments to advertise and market their country as the preferred tourist destination for people around the world.

As per Dr. Craig Webster's point of view on Geopolitics as a Driver of Tourism (2015), *"Tourism will persist, as long as there are people with disposable income and a predisposition to travel. However, as the economic and political circumstances of the world change, so will the tendencies of tourists globally"*, which essentially means that tourism is a form of an evergreen business industry and should not be ignored or given an inferior status when compared to other forms of income for a country. *"The trends in motion indicate a radically different world with a new global leadership, increased political instability, a rise in regional integration, greater corporate and governmental control over people, and increasingly powerful corporations.* "In this, he considers the global geopolitics as a

contributing driver towards the growth in tourism, this kind of a driver could be based around trend chasing as in, doing things that are being done by everyone else and following a social or political phenomenon.

According to an article posted on Fin24 regarding Drivers of Tourism in South Africa (2017), they stated that, *"The growth of the tourism industry can be attributed to increasing interaction between various travel industry players and digital integration, using platforms such as social media and meta-search engines"*. They also stated that, *"Some of the key domestic tourism challenges faced by most countries are the perception of the fact that travel is not affordable amongst the locals and that the travel agencies prioritize international tourists more than the domestic tourists with the view that foreign visitors have a higher spending potential than locals"*. Their focus was the perception of tourists and the affordability of travelling around the country.

According to an article posted by Articles Junction Blogs (2013), *"Tourism is affected by five main factors, environmental factors, socio-economic factors, historical and cultural factors, religious factors and trend chasing."*

According to Dr. Marina H. Mustafa on Tourism and Globalization in the Arab world (2010), "Tourism is considered a major source of foreign exchange, balance of trade and development of infrastructure", its advantage is that these countries will get hold of foreign currency, which may be of more value in the outside market. "It also has a major contributor to employment in these countries especially in Egypt, Bahrain, and Oman. Tourism for the Gulf countries is their ticket to diversification of their GDP from the primary oil based economies". Since most Arab countries consider petroleum and its by-products as its main export and the main source of income, these countries turn to tourism as a way of diversifying their GDP distribution which in creates

new jobs both directly and indirectly which in turn boosts businesses and creates wealth.

According to E.Stiakakis and C. K. Georgadis in their article titled Drivers of Tourism and e-business strategies (2009). in which they quoted, "Insufficient adoption of information and communication technologies is considered as a barrier to equal opportunities to commercial activities: people and businesses without access to the Internet and related technologies are incapable of benefiting from e-services provided and could be gradually driven out of competition from global markets". This essentially means that with regard to tourism and e-tourism it is quintessential that governments and private companies of any business type adopt modern and up-to-date marketing, sales, operations, HRM, and purchase techniques. While also keeping track of other potential rival operations and practices, which could be other firms or governments, and also being vigilant to various consumer behaviors and trends.

Some of the key criteria which have been identified for the study based on review of the extant literature are elaborated below.

1.3.1- THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCATION

The location of the tourist destination is one of the key factors affecting the choice of the destination. People travel for various purposes and may travel for the novelty of the location itself. This may be influenced by the weather and climate, natural beauty, historic significance, recreation facilities, ease of access, costs and expenses and several other factors. Oman is a country which is centrally located between Europe and Asia and has a range of cultural and natural experiences to choose from. The weather is moderate, especially during winter months and the country is easily accessible due to its impressive connectivity. The country is blessed with breathtaking natural beauty, from mountain ranges to pristine beaches.

1.3.2- TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

The presence of basic infrastructure facilities is an essential criterion for the development of the tourism industry in a nation. Tourism infrastructure can be regarded as the physical elements that are designed and erected to cater for visitors. The strong relationship between tourism development and infrastructure has been theoretically established by a number of authors (Adebayo, Iweka, 2014). Tourism infrastructure includes ancillary and complementary facilities, equipment, systems, processes, and resources necessary for the functioning of every tourist destination. This primarily includes roads, railways, airports, and the like, which make a tourist destination accessible for tourists. In addition, infrastructure includes health care systems, services, and public services. Building on infrastructure, superstructure includes building facilities, which exist only because of tourism activities. Their main purpose is accommodation and meeting the needs and desires of tourists, in the form of hotels, campsites, restaurants, sports facilities, and the like (Popesku, 2011).

1.3.3- CULTURE AND SOCIETY

One of the key reasons why people choose to travel is to explore different cultures and societies. Cultural tourism is a great tourist draw, especially in Asian and African countries. Oman has a rich cultural heritage dating back to thousands of years. The various heritage sites like Al Baleed, Ubar point to a civilization that flourished several millennia back. Forts, castles and museums showcase the proud heritage of the country and are major tourist attractions. Folk music , dance , handicrafts, local food etc also make Oman a mystical and exotic tourist destination and can be a huge advantage in promoting the country as a tourist destination.

1.3.4- TRENDS

People like to visit destinations that are in the news because of various reasons. This is a pattern of trend following. In the past

few years, the Middle East has become a trending holiday destination thanks to places like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha etc which have showcased their appeal successfully to foreign tourists. Oman also has to encash this trend and project itself as an attractive alternative destination for travelers going to the Middle East. As a relatively new destination, with its rich culture, heritage, natural beauty, culinary choices, wonderful infrastructure, Oman can showcase itself as the complete family destination.

2- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses an exploratory research design to uncover the importance of the chosen variables as drivers for tourism. Data has been collected using a structured questionnaire as well as personal interviews. The questionnaire comprised of 41 questions with each of which utilized

the Likert scale of measuring the responses of the respondents to the questions. A 5-point Likert Scale has been used to rank the responses. Random sampling has been used and the sample size consists of 100 respondents who are visiting tourists. The study has been conducted between October – December 2018 in Salalah city. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) in SPSS been used to identify the most important factors affecting tourists' choices.

3- ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from this distribution and collecting responses from 100 respondents regarding tourism in Oman based around the four main drivers of tourism and the demand and satisfaction towards tourism was analysed using descriptive statistics and Principal Component Analysis.

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
VAR00001	4.10	.674	100
VAR00002	3.51	1.159	100
VAR00003	4.07	.728	100
VAR00004	3.45	.903	100
VAR00005	4.08	.734	100
VAR00006	4.29	.686	100
VAR00007	2.66	1.075	100
VAR00008	3.72	.854	100
VAR00009	3.17	1.181	100
VAR00010	3.28	1.026	100
VAR00011	4.05	.857	100
VAR00012	3.61	1.188	100
VAR00013	2.23	1.014	100
VAR00014	2.88	.844	100
VAR00015	4.04	.887	100
VAR00016	3.95	.783	100
VAR00017	3.65	.925	100
VAR00018	3.81	.813	100
VAR00019	2.88	.891	100
VAR00020	3.31	1.143	100
VAR00021	3.82	.809	100
VAR00022	3.93	1.148	100
VAR00023	3.78	.860	100
VAR00024	3.57	.998	100
VAR00025	3.48	.948	100
VAR00026	3.79	.640	100
VAR00027	4.21	1.066	100

VAR00028	4.12	.742	100
VAR00029	3.58	1.319	100
VAR00030	4.16	1.161	100
VAR00031	4.23	.709	100
VAR00032	3.99	.959	100
VAR00033	4.35	.857	100
VAR00034	3.88	.832	100
VAR00035	3.17	.805	100
VAR00036	3.90	.785	100
VAR00037	3.79	.902	100
VAR00038	3.82	.989	100
VAR00039	3.73	1.100	100
VAR00040	3.47	1.251	100
VAR00041	3.89	.952	100

It can be seen from the table above that most of the responses have a mean value fo more than 3, which indicate that they are significant in nature. Some responses have a mean value of more than 4.

Table 2 - KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			**.633**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square	3716.028
		df	820
		Sig.	.000

KMO & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is a measure of sampling adequacy that is recommended to check the case to variable ratio for the analysis being conducted. In most academic and business studies, KMO & Bartlett's test play an important role for accepting the sample adequacy. While the KMO ranges from 0 to 1, the world-over accepted index is over 0.6. Also, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity relates to the significance of the study and thereby shows the validity and suitability of the responses collected to the problem being addressed through the study. For Factor

Analysis to be recommended suitable, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity must be less than 0.05.

The values of KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are .633 and 0.042 respectively which indicate that the data is suitable for PCA analysis.

Factor Loading

From the Principal Component Analysis, the first component that is loaded has been taken to show the relative importance of each of the 41 factors in the questionnaire. The results of the factor loadings are as follows.

Table 3 - Factor loading for questions regarding Location and Sightseeing

Categories and Questions		Remarks	Factor Loading
Sr.Num.	Description		
PART 1 - Locations and Sightseeing			
1	Do you think there are a lot of natural places to explore in Oman?	Despite having a large majority of people agreeing to this, their awareness of possibilities does not affect their drive to travel.	0.017
2	Do you travel to such locations often?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.139
3	Are you willing to visit these places of sightseeing more often in the near future?	Having only positive responses. People definatly are keen on visiting natural locations for sight seeing and other outdoor activities.	0.308
4	Do you feel that it is sometimes inconvenient to go to these locations?	People have conflicting responses to this question which essentially means that it really isn't a factor influencing their decision.	0.128
5	Do you feel that more can be done to improve the experience of sightseeing?	Having only positive responses. People definatly belive the more can be done to impove the experience of outdoor exploration.	0.556
6	Do you feel that sightseeing is a good reason to participating in tourism?	Despite having a large majority of people agreeing to this, their opinions of participation does not affect their own drive to travel.	0.211

From this table it is seen that the most significant factor with a loading of .556 is that the authorities in Oman can do more to improve the experience of sightseeing for the tourists. Interestingly not a lot of people feel that there a lot of natural places to visit in Oman which highlights the fact that awareness of tourist spots is quite low among tourists.

Table 4 - Factor loading for questions regarding Infrastructure and Modern Monuments

Categories and Questions		Remarks	Factor Loading
Sr.Num.	Description		
PART 2a			
7	Do you feel that there are enough Malls, Shopping centers and Theme parks in Oman?	A large majority of respondents answered negatively to this question.	-0.745
8	Do you go to such places often?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.023
9	Are you considering visiting these places more often in the near future?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.034
10	Do you feel that it is sometimes inconvenient to go to these places?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.081
11	Do you feel that more can be done to improve the experience	A large majority of people consider that, in fact more can be done to crate a better experience.	0.756
12	Do you feel that visiting these places is a good reason to participate in tourism?	Despite having a large majority of people agreeing to this, their opinions for participation does not affect their own drive to travel.	0.159

The above table clearly shows that there is a negative loading of the factor relating to adequacy of malls, shopping centres and theme parks in Oman. In other words, tourists feel that the numbers of these facilities are totally inadequate. Tourist locations need more malls, conveniences stores and theme parks. A majority of respondents feel that a lot more can be done to improve the experience relating to infrastructure and facilities.

Table 5 - Factor loading for questions regarding Infrastructure and technology

Categories and Questions		Remarks	Factor Loading
Sr.Num.	Description		
PART 2b - Infrastructure and technology			
13	Do you feel Oman leads the fields of technology?	A large majority of respondents answered negatively to this question.	-0.232
14	Do you travel to a different area in Oman to avail a service?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.009
15	Do you feel that Oman has a lack of much needed technology?	A lot of people agree to the fact that there is a significant lack of technological advancements in the country.	0.717
16	Do you feel that Oman has potential to develop a complex society?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.2
17	Do you think that the pursuit of technology is a valid reason to travel to other places?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.038

From the above table, it is clear that respondents feel that there is a lack of much needed modern technology in Oman (0.717). This includes fast internet access, modern medical services, acceptance of plastic money at all outlets, minimization of paperwork and other formalities, more ATMS and POS and other facilities dependent on technology.

Table 6 - Factor loading for questions regarding Culture and Places of Historical Interest

Categories and Questions		Remarks	Factor Loading
Sr.Num.	Description		
PART 3a - Culture and Historical displays			
18	Do you feel Oman has an abundance of rich historical sites?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.106
19	Do you visit such places often?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.002
20	Do you consider visiting such places, boring?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.081
21	Do you feel the government should take an increased initiative towards these places?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.075
22	Do you feel that visiting historical sites is a good reason for tourism?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.107

The responses to questions relating to Oman's culture and history are quite interesting. Most of the factors had negative loadings which show that most tourists are unaware of Oman's rich history. In fact, many tourists felt that visiting historical sites is not a good enough reason to visit Oman. This shows that the authorities have to make a concerted effort to showcase Oman's rich culture and heritage in order to attract visitors who are interested in cultural and historical tourism.

Table 7 - Factor loading for questions regarding Culture and Art

Sr.Num.	Description	Remarks	Factor Loading
	PART 3b - Culture and Art		
23	Do you feel that Oman has a rich and engaging culture?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.034
24	Do you like to indulge in the cuisine, art and traditions of Oman?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.049
25	Do you feel that the traditions and culture in Oman are welcoming?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.044
26	Do you feel that spectating forms of art is a good reason to travel to other places?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.272

The table above shows that there is a negative factor loading for the factor related to Oman's culture. Art, cuisine and culture all have weak factor loadings which indicate that most visiting tourists have little knowledge of Oman's rich cultural heritage and performing and fine arts.

Table 8 - Factor loading for questions regarding Trends and Social Activities

Sr.Num.	Description	Remarks	Factor Loading
	PART 4b - Trends and Social Activities		
30	Do you feel that there aren't enough public social activities in Oman?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.101
31	Do you think that there should be more events, domestic competitions?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.301
32	Do you feel that cultural and religious traditions restrict social events?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.285
33	Do you feel that there is just an overall lack of things to do in the country?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.013
34	Do you think participating in social gatherings is acceptable reason to travel?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.016

Most tourists feel that there is a lack of adequate public and social activities in the country. More events, festivals, fairs, etc are needed to attract more tourists to Oman. Events like the Muscat festival and Salalah festival are a big draw for tourists and more such events need to organize. Interestingly cultural and religious traditions were not viewed as barriers to organizing such events.

Table 9 - Factor loading for questions regarding Other Preferences

Categories and Questions		Remarks	Factor Loading
Sr.Num.	Description		
PART 5 - Other Preferences			
35	Do you find it easy to discover various places or activities of interest in Oman?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.145
36	Do you think there should be more low-end hotels and accommodations?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.049
37	Are you upset by lack of provisions and basic amenities near popular visit areas?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.102
38	Do you think that there is an insignificant amount of public transportations services?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.154
39	Do you think there is lack of information available online about things to do?	People answered mostly positively with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	0.05
40	Do you ever find it hard to describe on "why Oman is a good tourist destination" to strangers, friends and relatives?	People answered with conflicting results with no basis of correlation.	-0.035
41	Do you think Oman is under-represented globally?	A significant number of people agree to the fact that Oman is has minimal public exposure in the world.	0.807

This table reveals a lot of interesting information about the perceptions of tourists visiting the country. Most respondents agreed that its not difficult to discover places and activities in the country. With a high factor loading of 0.807, most people agree to the fact that Oman as a country is lacking in global exposure. Marketing strategies have to be evolved to showcase the country at international fora . Most respondents also agree that more affordable hotels and provisions and basic amenities are needed near tourist places. Public transportation is also another point where a lot of improvement is needed.

4- CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the data, it is clear that Location is the most prominent driver of inbound tourism in Oman. This mainly incorporates not only the exploration and experiences of open spaces but also the weather and climate. During the period between late September and early April, Oman gets a large majority of its visitors from north, northwestern countries mainly comprising of European visitors. It is during this time the appeal is towards the warm but not too hot climate that these visitors prefer. Three main points of agreement can be inferred from the factor analysis of the collected data. Firstly, the improvement and upgradation of modern infrastructure is highly required. This includes an increase in the number of or the improvement of malls, shopping centers, cinemas, theme parks, sports facilities, recreational social places and more. Secondly, the lack of available modern technology is a concern. This includes fast internet speeds, digitalization of banking and payment methods, minimization of paperwork in legal and financial proceedings, digitalization of educational facilities such as books, examinations, assignments etc. Finally, the problem regarding tourism discovered from conducting the research is the lack of exposure and underrepresentation of Oman on a global scale. This essentially refers to the perception of people outside the country about the features and possibly even the existence of the country. Oman in fact has so little popularity that, most people outside of Oman have no idea where Oman even is on the map. There is a need for large scale marketing efforts to make people aware of the attractions of Oman.

 Oman has safety and culture, natural beauty, airport facilities, e dining options, air connectivity, visa requirements and ease of communication as its major advantages in terms of being an attractive tourism destination. However, it is found lacking in enabling climate, visitor arrival, digital presence, customer outreach, unique experiences, accommodation options and availability of public transport.

Practical Implications of the Study

The findings of this study hold significant importance for government and private stakeholders in the tourism industry in Oman. In view of the findings, the authors suggest the following steps to be taken by the government and private sector to improve the attractiveness of Oman as a destination of choice for global travelers.

First, Oman is lacking a Unique Selling Proposition (USP) for its tourism. It needs to meaningfully differentiate its tourism from that of its rivals and come up with a strong brand positioning for itself. 'Beauty has an address' the punch line of Oman tourism is vague and lacks tangible benefits for the tourists.

Second, there is a need to resolve the lack of digital presence and customer outreach by actively participating in the relevant forum like travel blogs, trade exhibitions, conferences, digital marketing, etc. Oman tourism needs to upgrade its website and needs to make it more interactive and user friendly. Some of the information on its website is in Arabic only which needs to be translated into English at least.

Thirdly, basic amenities like affordable hotels, public transport and other facilities like toilets, washrooms, cafeterias and

restaurants have to be built at all tourist destinations in the country.

Fourthly, there have to be more events showcasing the culture and heritage of the country. Events like the Muscat festival have to be replicated across the country to showcase the uniqueness to tourists.

Oman has the potential to emerge as a preferred destination for tourists all over the globe if these suitable changes are made to make it more tourist – friendly and to increase awareness of the many attractions of this beautiful country.

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