“Searching for an Oriental Paradise? Imaginaries, Tourist Experiences and Socio-Cultural Impacts of Mega-Cruise Tourism in the Sultanate of Oman”

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and outline of the thesis

“We certainly do not encourage tourism in its general unrestricted sense. When I was in Spain last year I met the King of Spain – he came to dinner – and he asked me ‘What is the tourist situation in your country?’ I told him ‘We have begun to open up the country.’ He said 'Be careful. Be extremely careful that you do not make the same mistakes that we did. I replied 'We have absolutely no intention of making the same mistakes you did. Tourism has a positive side and a negative side and we are concentrating on the positive side. We thank God that there are many positive aspects and they have started to produce beneficial results, which, God willing, will have a positive impact in providing employment for our sons and daughters (and our daughters and sons) in the hotel sector and in a wide range of other sectors.”

(His Majesty Sultan Qaboos’ address to students of Sultan Qaboos University on 2 May 2000:280).

Tourism is seen as one of the most important socio-cultural influences today, “rearranging global cultures and changing the ways humans relate to one another, to themselves, to history and nature” (MacCannell 2012:184). Within global tourism, cruise tourism is one of the fastest growing segments, with Asia representing a market with high potential of growth (UNWTO 2010:18). Over the past twenty years the cruise liner itself has turned into the main destination whereas the port of travel has become secondary. Referring to the growing economic importance and development of cruise tourism in Asia and especially in the Sultanate of Oman, which is seen as an emerging cruise destination, the following research investigates the links between cruise tourism and the local society, culture and space at a time of rapid increase in cruise tourism. It focuses on the imaginaries and experiences of German-speaking mega-cruise tourists visiting two locations in the Sultanate of Oman, Souq Muttrah, the oldest, market place in Muscat, and an oasis and the Sharquiyah Sands desert on the periphery.

When Western tourists and the local community share the same space, conflicts may arise. This study aims at analysing the voices and perceptions of tourists and local community members, shopkeepers, business owners and high-ranking government officials. It aims at contributing to filling a gap between the creation and the consumption of tourist spaces through the embodiment of Oriental imaginaries and the tourist behavior in a Muslim country, an area currently little researched. Furthermore, the research aims to advance applied research in sustainable tourism. Recommendations for businesses including the introduction of slower, more responsible tourism features and recommendations for further research may help in finding a more holistic approach to mega-cruise tourism in Oman. Mega-cruise ships carry more than 1,800 tourists plus crew. Field-research including a pre-study was conducted in both destinations between 2011 and 2014.

The research attempts to answer the following questions: What are the cruise tourist’s imaginaries of Oman? What are their embodied experiences and performances in both places? What are the local community’s perceptions about cruise tourism including those of cultural brokers, shop vendors, business owners, tour operators, residents and high-ranking government officials and decision-makers?
Results reveal that the cruise tourist experience is commodified, rushed and superficial due to a lack of time in the destination as well as little preparation and pre-travel information. Hence, there is little social interaction between hosts and guests and few financial benefits for the local community. Results also indicate that the tourists’ main motivation is to experience a cliché of the Orient, an imaginative country of The Arabian Nights, with colorful souqs, camels and sand dunes and to realize their own selves within the “cruise communita”. As a consequence, in particular on-board and local cultural brokers play an essential role in shaping the on-site tourist experience. Often the experience is visual, tourists gaze at the locals and locals gaze at the tourists. Moreover, socio-cultural impacts such as overcrowding of the space, limited parking and an aggressive selling behavior of expatriate vendors are impacting the local community and the tourists alike. A mindless tourist dress behavior and low-spending have resulted in negative views about cruise tourists in both locations and among the multi-ethnic community. As one result long-established family businesses relocate or close down in Souq Muttrah, thus changing the overall socio-cultural structure of the space.

In conclusion, it is suggested that in order to preserve the identity of both places and to reduce negative impacts such as overcrowding, the number of mega-cruise tourists arriving in Muscat and visiting both destinations during the winter season is limited. It is seen as essential to monitor and manage cruise tourist visits. In addition, it is important to raise local empowerment of the multi-ethnic community in both destinations and to create awareness of tourism developments that include all stakeholders of the local community, e.g. in the planning and realization of the new cruise liner port within the Port Sultan Qaboos Waterfront project and its operations. Regarding the Oriental imaginaries with their powerful impacts on communities and tourists’ alike, it is suggested involving the multi-ethnic community and constructing “real life” imaginaries of “today’s Oman” in promotional material including media articles. Moreover, it is necessary to create respectful, mindful tourist behavior through intercultural education of cultural brokers as well as through direct and correct pre-travel communication. An international certification or eco-labelling of both destinations would enhance Oman’s branding efforts as a sustainable destination that respects and protects its social, cultural and environmental diversity.

The thesis is based on three research papers and a conference paper that are published or accepted for publication in international peer-reviewed geographical or interdisciplinary tourism journals. The following chapters will give an introduction to my research. I will briefly explore the history of travel and outline key concepts analyzing the relation between tourists, society, culture and space that have shaped my research results. Moreover, I will outline the research-setting and the methodology used. This will be followed by my research papers that deal with various aspects of the socio-cultural impacts of mega-cruise tourism, tourist imaginaries and their experiences. The last section of the thesis is dedicated to the conclusions including recommendations of the results presented.

1.2 The story of Western tourism

“Travel and tourism are part of human life. To discover new places is an ancient tradition – as old as human civilization itself” (Singh 2012:331).

As a result of modernity and an increasing urban culture worldwide, tourism has been closely related to “the pursuit of the exotic”, “authentic” and “simple” experiences outside normal life (Turner & Ash 1975:19). Tourism requires large compact cities and the possibilities of travel in order to escape
Already some 2,000 years ago, people travelled to take part in games and competitions at religious centers like Delphi or Olympia to relax at spa locations. Similarly, the Greeks and the Romans constructed so-called “pleasure resorts” for the wealthy who lived on the outskirts of the cities so that they could escape their hardship (ibid.:24).

In the 16th century “the European Grand Tour”, a kind of cultural tourism for the wealthy to expand young man’s education, developed providing opportunities to visit places of historical and literary interest. In addition, it offered social refinement and the study of academic subjects including architecture, languages and arts. The young men would be accompanied by a tutor or a servant, travelling as a member of their social class. Any contact with lower classes was seen as unsuitable (ibid.:33). Greek cities were especially developed as a source of civilization and of social refinement for visiting young aristocrats. The Romans visited Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean while the English visited Italy (ibid.:29). In the 18th century in Italy, a kind of one-man tour operator was initiated, a so-called vetturino, who organized transport for passengers and their luggage from one location to the next. In this way, the first packaged travel, which included stops along the way and accommodation and all-inclusive meals was launched (ibid.:40). Due to rapid urbanization in Europe, the countryside was increasingly idealized. In 1820 the first tourist hotel opened in Switzerland (ibid.:43). For European poets travelling offered a relaxation from physical and social restrictions at home (ibid.:46). Until the 19th century travelling was a male activity (Urry 1995:121). However, by the mid-19th century a large number of European women also had the opportunity to travel.

Compared with older means of transportation, such as walking or horse riding, the invention of the railway and the first railway tracks inaugurated in Europe in the mid-19th century, accelerated the speed of travel tremendously. As a result of these “time-saving interventions”, time was speeded-up leading to a loss of quality time and travel experiences (Dann 1999:167). In 1845, Thomas Cook initiated trips to the seaside in the UK for a large number of tourists. His slogan was: “God’s earth in all its fullness and beauty is for the people” (Turner & Ash 1975:50). Health resorts or spas also developed in the 18th and 19th century in other European countries, for example along the French Riviera or in Germany, in Baden-Baden, Aachen etc. where bathing was used as a cure. Therefore, “the pursuit of health became a convenient cover for the pursuit of pleasure” (ibid.:61). After the 1920s, sunbathing became a fashion; having a sun tan was associated with class, and race; a visible sign that people could afford to travel from the North to the South (ibid.:80). Thomas Cook tours in Egypt were different from those in Europe, where tourism served as a democratization for the masses. In 1868 Thomas Cook conducted a tour around the Middle East. He opened his first “Cooks hotel” in Luxor (Egypt) in 1887. Three years later Thomas Cook & Son operated fifteen steamers as floating hotels along the river Nile (Turner & Ash 1975:57). In Egypt tours were more luxurious and “imperial”, tourism for the aristocrats and colonials, enforcing rigidly hierarchic distinctions between the white rulers and colored servants. Cook also established offices in Bombay and Calcutta, where he arranged royal visits and organized the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca (ibid.:59).

Due to the industrial development many Europeans had enough income and paid leave to travel (Singh 2012; Smith 1989). A “democratization of travel” took place, enabling people to replace work with leisure time. International tourism became a mass phenomenon after World War II (Cohen 1996:54) and one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors worldwide (Eadington &
Redman 1991:41). Since then, the middle class of the West have been the main consumers of tourism (Singh 2012:349).

By the end of the 19th century, Thomas Cook & Son had established a tourism industry with certain standards, ensuring comfort and convenience but with a decrease of the travel experience. The introduction of long-haul flights extended the European tourism “pleasure periphery” to far reaching destinations such as Africa, South America and increasingly Asia. In future, these emerging holiday destinations will gain more importance (Steinecke 2014: 178). This also applies to cruise tourism.

Since the rise of mass tourism around five decades ago, tourism has been criticized as having negative social impacts, and has been compared with colonialism. “From its beginning tourism is a kind of secondary invasion, secondary to outright military invasion or economic penetration” (Turner & Ash 1975:30). Distinctions were drawn regarding the mode of travel (sea, air or rail), different types of travel (scheduled or package air flight) and different tastes between various destinations (Urry 1995:130), because what people want to experience and to buy is a special habitus or lifestyle of other consumers (ibid.:131). Today’s tourism is seen as a by-product of Western culture, promoted by globalization and capitalism (Singh 2012:349). As a consequence of globalization with its new forms of global communication, we are all tourists or strangers within our own societies (Turner 1994:185). One of the early tourism researchers Krippendorf (1987) commented: “A restless activity has taken hold of the once so sedentary human society” (Krippendorf 1987:XiII). MacCannell (1999) described tourism as a movement of “the old arrogant Western Ego that wants to see it all, know it all, and take it all, an Ego that is isolated by its belief in its own superiority” (ibid.:xxi).

On the other hand, in recent years mass travel has been seen in more positive ways. Vainikka (2013:280) argued that we should rethink mass tourism within flexible discourse instead of using judgmental discourse, recognizing the heterogeneity of mass tourism with its “fluid nature of travelling” (ibid.:277), without referring to a particular type of tourists and a specific travel motivation. The emergence of a new middle-class has resulted in the expansion of different middle classes with various consumption patterns (Mowforth & Munt 2009:27). Thus, a deterministic discourse on mass tourism is no longer valid for the 2010s, and we need to recognize the flexible and individualized nature of mass tourism. Accordingly, mass tourism should be seen as a general concept to describe popular or large-scale tourism. Large-scale is defined as individuals who form diverse tourist groups and segments in large numbers, such as tourists travelling with a mega-cruise liner. Large-scale tourism does not only imply a standardization but also an increasingly customized behavior and customized content of the entire journey (Vainikka 2013:280).

The introduction of rapid forms of travel has changed the way people experience the world today, leading to changing forms of sociability and the aesthetic appreciation of landscapes, other societies and cultures (Urry 1995:144). Up to now only a few places on earth have “escaped the curiosity of the tourist” (Robinson & Picard 2006:8). This idea leads to one of the most rapidly developing forms of large-scale travel, mega-cruise tourism and its implications. However, firstly I will explain the interdisciplinary nature of tourism studies.

1.3 The study of tourism

Since Europe was the first continent to experience the impacts of mass tourism, the scientific study of tourism was initially introduced there. In 1899, the Italian L. Bodio published the first scientific
article on tourism. Major contributions followed in German. Moreover, the sociology of tourism, which is one major discipline, related to my research, is a relatively new scientific field that only emerged in the 1970s. It is concerned with tourists and the social environment they visit, and includes the tourists’ motivations, and their roles and relationships with the host communities, and with governmental institutions and their impact on tourists and communities (Cohen 1972:51). The first designated journal of tourism research, entitled *Annals of Tourism Research*, was founded around forty years ago.

By its nature, tourism highlights processes within societies (Wood 2000:347). As such, tourism research is seen as a very complex system involving many disciplines, for example cultural geography, human geography, anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics as well as event and hotel management. Due to the global scale of tourism one can predict potential general trends for the future (Eadington & Redman 1991:41) including some complex issues of globalization (Wood 2000:350). Regardless of its links with globalization, the study of tourism has been associated with relaxation, play and the human body. Therefore, it has been regarded as “frivolous” and unimportant to study, suffering from marginalization and stigma (Bohn Gmelch 2010:6).

It is important to underline that our knowledge about the linkages between tourism, local societies and cultures is incomplete. One reason is that social practices and cultural beliefs cannot be quantified easily, unlike economic and environmental impacts (Williams & Lew 2015:126). Moreover, they are diverse and not easily separated from the impacts of other influences (Bohn Gmelch 2010:13), such as globalization, the internet and the media at large. Therefore, research on socio-cultural impacts of tourism has received much less attention than economic and environmental impacts of tourism development (Weeden et al. 2011; Williams & Lew 2015). To further understand the socio-economic environment in which tourism activities are embedded in the Sultanate of Oman, the research setting will be outlined in the next section.
2 The Research Setting - Contextualising Oman’s Tourism

2.1 Historical trading routes & lifestyles

Historically the Sultanate of Oman is the oldest state of the Gulf Cooperation Council, GCC (Oxford Business Group 2010:14). Geographically Oman has benefited from its strategic location, on the crossroads of important trading routes between India, East Asia and Africa. Around 4,000 years ago Oman - then known as Magan - was part of a trading route between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley. Apart from the sea route, the frankincense route and the silk route passed via Oman (ibid.:21f). During the 8th century the city of Sohar was the main entrepôt for goods between China and the Gulf region; while later on Muscat emerged as the major shipping center. Due to the steady influx of people, new innovative ideas such as water management technologies like the aflaj system were introduced by the Persians or the boat building industry was introduced by the Portuguese (Doerr & Richardson 2003a:25).

Three different lifestyles have been present throughout history in Oman – desert, mountain and village. In the market places of towns people met and exchanged goods; mountain people brought rosewater and honey, for example, while Bedouins from the desert brought fish, weaving and desert-palm basketry. Through the interaction with traders and craftsmen from the towns the different products were exchanged including dates, spices, coffee beans, textiles, threads, tools, jewelry and weaponry (ibid.:17f.). Traditionally the economy was based on agriculture, trade and maritime resources. Agriculture, fishing, herding, copper mining and trade were the major industries on which Oman’s socio-economic development was based (ibid.:19). There was some commercial exchange between the mountain, coastal and desert regions of Oman. The settlements in the interior of the country were mainly self-sufficient. The main exchange center for goods was the port, controlled by the “international merchant class” (Wilkinson 2013:17). Overseas trade formed a different economic system from that of villages, and only a few habitants benefited from the maritime location (ibid.:18). Oman’s rise as a seafaring power and trading empire began in the 17th century when Omaniis sailed to Baluchistan, India, Zanzibar and Kenya; the African East Coast developing as a center for slave trade. It is estimated that in the late 18th century around five-eighths of the total Gulf trade and half of the products from Yemen passed through Omani ports (ibid.:24). Oman’s imperial power diminished in the 19th and 20th century.

In 1970 His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said came to power and the country was renamed the Sultanate of Oman, marking an era of modernization referred to as al nahda, the Renaissance (Oxford Business Group 2010:12f). This economic and infrastructural development transformed the country within a decade, leading to rapid urbanisation. Consequently, the economic and social changes that occurred in such a short timeframe have “outpaced the evolutionary capacity of most of Oman’s traditional craft industries, and they have declined dramatically as a direct consequence”. Traditionally hand-made products were finding fewer applications within a modern lifestyle. Due to the introduction of supermarkets and shopping malls in Muscat and the increased competition from imported goods, craftsmen were confronted with the loss of traditional souqs (Doerr & Richardson 2003b:513). Souq crafts declined in the Omani market, only a few skilled copper and silver workers continued to exist (Wilkinson 2013:19). The extent to which traditional craftsmen in Oman will survive for future generations will depend on their ability to define themselves and innovate in a globalized world (ibid.).
2.2 The rise of tourism: tourism development in Oman

Tourism in Oman has been promoted along with other destinations in the GCC, especially Dubai, though on a much smaller scale (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner 2004). Since the 1970s oil-producing countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have been aware that to secure rapid economic development future oil revenues will be insufficient in the long term. Oman has been a “rentier” state, in which government revenues like oil and gas consist of external “rent”; thus abolishing tax collection (Mansfeld & Winkler 2008:237). The main goal of introducing tourism was to diversify the local economy, to provide job opportunities for the young, growing population and to provide revenues for the economy. Therefore, tourism has been developed to supplement and eventually replace oil revenues in the future (ibid.:238). In the 1980s the Sultanate started its tourism industry. Prior to that time the country was officially closed for Western leisure tourists (Feighery 2012:269), only diplomats and businessmen could visit Oman. Since it opened up to international tourism, Oman has pursued a marketing strategy to attract elite, high-spending tourists from the West (Feighery 2012:269). It was during the 1980s that a Department of Tourism at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry was set-up, which coincided with the setting up of the Dubai Commerce and Tourism Promotion Board in 1989 (Stephenson & Ali-Knight 2010:279). According to UNWTO Oman is promoting itself as a “twin center with Dubai”, aiming to complement the modern features of Dubai with traditional culture and heritage in Oman (UNWTO 2010:22). Local journalists compare Oman with neighboring UAE: “There are no man-made wonders anywhere. It’s only the raw and pure nature” (Shafeequ 2015) offering a “more relaxed, get-away-from-it-all atmosphere” (Oxford Business Group 2015:232).

Within various marketing campaigns the Ministry of Tourism has primarily capitalized on imaginaries of Orientalism that have been circulating globally “grounded in Occidental authority and dominant power relations” (Feighery 2012:269). “Beauty has an address” is the slogan of the latest advertisement for Oman, thus feminizing the landscape, providing Western tourists with exotic tourism fantasies and products (Morgan & Pritchard 1998:199). Therefore, showcasing various untouched landscapes and wildlife, including turtles or dolphins mixed with the promise of pure, authentic Arabian hospitality, presenting an impression of a “Garden Eden on Earth” similar to the promotional video “Welcome to My Country”. The film belongs to “a discourse of global tourism/capitalism in which Oman is commodified through discourse,” while serving to support commercial aspirations (Feighery 2012:282). "Oman to me is like Switzerland in Europe. I genuinely believe that there is no other country in the entire region that has more stability than Oman," said Samih Sawaris, Chairman of Muriya Tourism Development and CEO of Orascom Development in Egypt (MacDonald 2014). Within a region of political and military conflicts, Oman is a safe, terrorism-free country, according to the Global Terrorism Index 2015 (Institute for Economics and Peace 2015). The Sultanate of Oman offers many intangible heritage features like the friendliness and Omani hospitality as well as religious tolerance and the pride in Omani tradition and heritage. Most Omanis belong to the conservative Ibadi branch of Islam, which is highly tolerant towards other faiths, making Oman welcoming to tourists from various cultures (Oxford Business Group 2015:225f.). Moreover, the Sultanate has many tangible heritage features: the variety of landscapes and environments including desert, oases, mountains, wadis (dry riverbeds) and a long coastline and fjorded seascape known as the “Norway of the South” in Musandam and in the South of Oman the khareef monsoon season in Dhofar. The Omani government has invested highly in the “physical
remains of the past”, restoring old fortresses and ancient irrigation systems (aflaj) as well as opening heritage museums, providing the country with a “strong sense of continuity with the past” (Oxford Business Group 2015:226). Similar to other Gulf countries, Oman has invested in sports such as golf and sailing, building upon the country’s seafaring history and local traditions of dhow building and dhow racing (ibid.:233). According to Omran, Oman Tourism Development Company LLC, the key role of tourism development is to support the transformation of the country’s sustainable economic development in order to improve the life of local communities (Omran 2012:13). In 2016 there are tourism projects worth RO 300m ($779m) under construction in Oman (Umar 2016).

However, in 2015 the oil price plunged and Oman had a budget deficit of $8.57bn, which forced the government to increase corporate taxes, and cut subsidies and therefore increase the century long fuel prices and the tourist visa fees. Since then several large-scale infrastructure projects such as the railway project have been delayed (ibid.). Transportation has been an essential part of the national tourism strategy and the Minister of Tourism sees a necessity for further developing infrastructure in remote areas with strong potential for tourism (Oxford Business Group 2015:236). With $20bn allocated for transportation during the government’s Five Year Plan 2011-2015, the physical infrastructure has been expanding rapidly: the extension of airports in Muscat and Salalah and new airports in Ras Al Hadd, Duqm and in Sohar, a national railway project (2244 km of tracks), a road network and the redevelopment of Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat to a cruise liner terminal with a maximum capacity of a total of three cruise ships carrying 11,000 passengers at one time (Oxford Business Group 2015:230). Additionally, Oman will establish two own budget carriers, named “Salam Air” (Muscat Daily 2016a) and “Salalah Air” (Times Oman News Service 2016). Several low-cost carriers have been flying to Muscat such as FlyDubai, Air Arabia, IndiGo or Spice Air (flying from India), thus officially promoting low-budget and mass tourism. There are further plans for the construction of hotels, resort facilities and entertainment centers (ibid.:229), including Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITCs), established for the first time in 2006 with the development of The Wave Muscat, (rebranded into Al Mouj Muscat in 2015). Similar to other GCC countries, where ITCs were developed, these complexes are “gated communities” where “high-end real estate is combined with hotel and entertainment facilities, aimed at tourists.” (ibid.:230) There are currently four realized ITC projects in Muscat: Al Mouj Muscat, Muscat Hills – both have 18-hole golf courses, Jebel Al Sifah resort and Barr Al Jissah resort.

2.3 The policy framework

In 1992 the Omani government signed the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was ratified in 1994 with the National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment, Water Resources and Nature Conservation 2001). Three years later, in 1995 the Omani government announced the Vision 2020, a masterplan for the development of Oman, which highlighted tourism as one of the main pillars of economic diversification as well as the creation of a National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP). The plan stipulates as its missions and objectives “sustainability, preservation of cultural integrity as well as environmental protection” (Oxford Business Group 2015:226f.). The National Tourism Development Plan has been instrumental in the growth of the tourism sector in Oman, emphasizing that Oman is a high-end tourism destination (ibid.:232). The Oman Tourism Law was introduced in 2003 (Ministry of Tourism 2017) and extended
with an executive regulation in June 2016 (ONA 2016), facilitating procedures and principles to implement SMEs and to foster investment in tourism.

The Oman Ministry of Tourism was established in 2004. One year later the government set-up Omran LLC. (Oman Tourism Development Company), with its main task to manage tourism infrastructure including the management of numerous luxury hotels and ITCs (Oxford Business Group 2015:228).

To promote responsible tourism development in Oman, there have been various initiatives. In 2005 the Ministry of Tourism in cooperation with the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) organized the Conference on Built Environments for Sustainable Tourism (BEST). The conference concluded with the Muscat Declaration on Built Environments for Sustainable Tourism (2005), recognizing the “numerous implications of tourism to societies, especially with respect to the sociocultural fabrics of host societies and to their built and natural environments” (Rolling Rains Report 2005). Five years later, in 2010 the Development Control Plan Framework for Tourism Development Projects (Ministry of Tourism 2010b) was implemented by the Ministry of Tourism in coordination with the Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Muscat Municipality and the Supreme Committee for Town Planning. This plan sets the framework for all tourism development (ibid.:8). In 2010 the 4th Global Responsible Tourism in Destination Conference took place in Muscat organized by the Ministry of Tourism and United Nations Environment Programme’s Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism (Ministry of Tourism 2010a:23). Two years later, in 2012 the Ministry of Environment & Climate Affairs issued the National Report on Sustainable Development, Rio – Brazil (2012) which outlines sustainable development goals and objectives proposed by the United Nations Commission of Sustainable Development (Ministry of Environment & Climate Affairs 2012:7). In May 2015 a three-day workshop on the Application of Sustainable Tourism Indicators was organized by the Ministry of Tourism and the UNWTO. Local community members from ministries and higher education institutions participated. Furthermore, in the past years the Vision 2040, a long-term tourism strategy has been prepared by a committee of external consultants from Spain and Germany and members of the Ministry of Tourism. Results shall be announced in 2017.

In May 2016 the Supreme Council for Planning (former Supreme Committee for Town Planning) who have been in charge of developing a Masterplan for the entire Sultanate, announced “The National Programme for Enhancing Economic Diversification”, the so-called “Tanfeedh” programme (meaning “implementation”). The programme that includes tourism began in 2016 with numerous working groups from the private and public sector, civil society and academics in tourism. The tourism strategies developed will translate into key performance indicators (KPIs) and various projects (Oman News Agency 2016). A local community participation was encouraged, through the public viewing of the plans during a 3-day exhibition held at the Oman Exhibition Center in Muscat in November 2016. The exhibition along with an online survey were seen as suitable platforms to engage with the local community. “Everybody who is living in Oman is welcome,” said the Deputy Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning (Al Lawati 2016). However, such platforms inform the public without engaging them in a further discussion. A final report of the “Tanfeedh” programme is expected to be announced in 2017.
2.4 Tourism indicators

During the International Tourism Fair (ITB) in Berlin in March 2016 the Sultanate was named Best Tourist Destination in the Middle East (NCSI 2016b) and has been acknowledged as one of the fastest growing destinations worldwide (NSCI 2015). The overall target of the government is to welcome 7m tourists in Oman in 2040 (NCSI 2016b), which would represent nearly the double the current Omani population. The Sultanate of Oman had a population of 4.2m in 2015, with 2.3m Omanis and 1.8m expatriates, compared to a population of 3.9m in 2014 (NSCI 2015a). In 2014 a total of 2.4m tourists visited Oman realizing a total value added to the GDP of RO 724.5m (around €1.4bn), or a 2.2% share in the GDP (NCSI 2016a:3). According to official statistics of the Ministry of Tourism the number of inbound tourists visiting the Sultanate has more than doubled since 2005 (Table 1), from 1.1m, to 1.5m in 2010 and 2.6m in 2015 (Ministry of Tourism 2016c).

Table 1. Inbound tourists in Oman (2005-2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Inbound Tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2016c)

The majority of international visitors were from the GCC region (45.8%), followed by tourists from Asia 22.6%, Europe 19.2%, Arab countries 6.2% and 6.2% from the Americas and Oceania. Moreover, the scope of domestic tourism has tripled within that decade (NCSI 2016a:9). As for the travel motivation, 38.7% were visiting friends and relatives followed by leisure and recreation 34.3%, and business 18.7%. However, the relative share of inbound tourism in the leisure and recreation segment has been stagnant for the past four years (ibid.:8). In 2014 the total tourism production was RO 1.22 billion in 2014 (around €2.4bn), which was an 8.1% increase compared to 2013. 20.5% of the total generated value was from inbound tourism and 79.5% derived from domestic tourism (NCSI 2015a:2).

In line with the establishment of low-cost airlines to boost domestic tourism, for example to Salalah, there is as well an increasing shift towards low-cost accommodation. In a media interview the Minister of Tourism, H. E. Ahmed bin Nasser Bin Hamed Al Mehrzi said:
“We plan for tourism to be the fourth largest sector in the economy, and while we still view high end tourism as a profitable endeavor in terms of its high contribution to GDP, we are not losing sight of guided, mass tourism opportunities,” adding that the ministry wishes to balance mass tourism and high-end tourism, especially with regard to the khareef tourism season in Salalah, as well as cruise and charter tourism. In this context he mentioned that “mid-range and budget accommodations could complement luxury options” (Oxford Business Group 2015:236). The target is to increase the tourism share of the GDP to 6% (NCSI 2016b), compared to 2.2% of the GDP in 2014, confirming the opening of Oman for large-scale or mass-tourism. Referring to the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Tourism, Oman is even “looking at a growth of 8 to 12% minimum, every year” (Das 2016). Accordingly, the German popular daily newspaper BILD announced: “Oman the Caribbean of the Orient”. The newspaper noted that “Oman shall become the better Egypt; more secure and politically stable; without pharaohs, but with a sultan. And with sun, coast and desert - similar to the Red Sea” while mentioning the first German charter flights that landed in Salalah in 2013 (BILD 2013). There has been a continuous increase in German-speaking tourists in the past years (Table 2).

Table 2. German-speaking tourists (Germans, Austrians, Swiss) arriving in Oman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Arriving Tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>87,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>82,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>76,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>65,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>53,226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2015c)

In 2015 a total of 87,773 German-speaking tourists, namely from Germany, Switzerland and Austria, visited Oman. This is a 39% increase compared to 53,226 tourists in 2011 (Ministry of Tourism 2015c). The large majority of the German-speaking tourists originated from Germany followed by Switzerland and Austria (Table 3).

Overall, the total average expenditure per tourist stood at RO 119.6 per person (around €240) in 2014, which is a significant increase of 31% compared to 2009, when the total average expenditure per visitor was RO 91.1 (around €182). The total inbound tourism expenditure was RO 250.9m in 2014 (around €502m), a 10.4% increase over RO 227.3m in 2013 (around €454m), RO 200.2m in 2012 (around €400m) and RO 158.6m in 2011 (around €316m). In 2015, accommodation accounted for 39.5% of the visitor’s total expenditure, followed by food and beverages (15.2%) (NCSI 2015a:6).
overnight stays totaled 11.3m, with an average of 7.4 nights per tourist (NCSI 2016a:8) (Table 4). This is a sharp increase compared to previous years.

Table 3. Countries of origin of German-speaking tourists in Oman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Switzerland</th>
<th>Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2015c)

Table 4. Number of nights spent in Oman (in million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2016c)

To promote international tourism a number of new flights were launched. “Around 60 percent of the world’s population lives within eight hours flying distance of Oman,” an official of Oman Airports Management Company said, focusing on the investments in aviation that strives to become one of the biggest economic sectors in Oman (Pourmohammadi 2015). Oman Air, the national airline introduced non-stop flights between Muscat and Munich and between Muscat and Frankfurt in October 2009. Moreover, Oman Air launched flights to Asian destinations and two daily flights to London. The number of passengers arriving at Muscat International Airport has increased rapidly in
recent years. In 2015 a total of 10m passengers travelled through Muscat International Airport. The aim is to reach 12 million passengers by 2016 (Interview with Aimen Al Hosni, 25 May 2014), though most passengers are transit travelers. In addition, all members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are planning to introduce a unified tourist visa in the coming years. Before the construction of hotels travelers in the Interior of Oman were accommodated in a separate place, a so-called sebla, which was apart from the local community. In 2015 there were 318 hotels with 16,991 rooms in the Sultanate (Table 5 & 6), compared to 224 hotels with 10,491 rooms in 2009 (Ministry of Tourism 2016c). Therefore, the number of hotel rooms has increased by 38.2% within six years, between 2009 and 2015.

Table 5. Number of hotels in Oman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Hotels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2016c)

According to Omran, the government aims to introduce another 2,000 hotel rooms by the end of 2016, and to double the overall capacity to a total of 33,373 rooms in ITCs by 2040. With the aim of becoming unique destinations, these ITCs will be developed over the next 10 to 15 years (Umar 2016). According to the Ministry of Tourism, the majority of the new four and five-star hotels are located in the capital Muscat (14 hotels), followed by the Southern governorate Dhofar (5 hotels). A few luxury hotels are situated in the Northern governorate Musandam (4) as well as in Al Batinah (3), Al Dakhiliyah (2) and Al Wusta governorate (1).

The following five-star hotels are currently under construction or planned in Muscat and in Salalah, most of them being part of ITC development projects: Crowne Plaza Hotel (as part of the new Oman Conference and Exhibition Center), JW Marriott, Kempinski Hotel, Ramada Hotel, Four Seasons, Anatara Hotel, Muscat Hills InterContinental, Saraya Hotel Jumeirah, Banyan Tree Hotel, Mövenpick Hotel, Club Mediterranée and Shaza Salalah. Moreover, the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center, covering 22,000 sq meters and located close to the airport, will open by the end of 2016 (Oxford Business Group 2015:231).
Table 6. Number of hotel rooms in Oman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Hotel Rooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>12,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>12,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>14,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>15,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>16,991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2016c)

Since the large majority of the hotels are located in the capital Muscat (Table 7), 58.2%, or 6,268 of the total workforce were employed in Muscat and 12.5% in Dhofar. The total number of employees working in hotels/accommodation services reached 10,763 in 2014, which was an increase by 8.8% (9,893 employees) in 2013. Of those working in hotels a total of 31.4%, or 3,381 were Omani, compared to 68.6%, or 7,382 expatriates. In most governorates the total employed workforce in hotels/accommodation services averaged around 3.3% (NCSI 2016a:13). The Omani government is planning to employ up to 500,000 people in tourism (Umar 2016). The total revenue generated from hotel accommodation reached RO 216.5m in 2014 (around €434m), with an average growth of 5.9%. Of that total, 51.6% of the revenue generated came from five-star hotels (NCSI 2015a:15).

Table 7. Number of hotels per governorate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>Number of Hotels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muscat</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhofar</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sharqiyyah</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakhilya</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buraimi</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Al Batinah</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Wusta</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Al Batinah</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musandam</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Dhihira</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2016c)
2 The Research Setting - Contextualising Oman’s Tourism

2.5 Cruise tourism

The Sultanate has emerged as one of the new and “promising cruise destinations” in the Middle East, with its key aim “to encourage a new generation of tourists to cruise in the Arabian Gulf and the Sea of Oman” (Muscat Daily 2014). It has been projected to attract 1.6 million cruise tourists yearly by 2020 and 2.1 million by 2030 (Oman Tribune 2015). Similar to the expansion of international airports and the construction of hotels, cruise tourism has been seen as a way of increasing the number of tourists rapidly and in cooperation with other GCC destinations, namely Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Bahrain. As part of the so-called “Cruise Arabia Alliance”, the government’s long-term vision is to transform the entire Gulf region “into a leading cruise destination globally” (Times News Service 2014). This alliance will enable tourists “to explore the rich, ancient culture of the region while enjoying the winter sun on clear, serene beaches” (Muscat Daily 2014). However, the cruise season in the GCC is limited to the cooler months only. The majority of the cruises arrive between October and April, usually reaching a peak between January and April. For example in 2011, the annual peak was recorded in March, with more than 42,700 tourists and the lowest in May with 985 cruise passengers arriving in Muscat. During the time of this field research, between November 2012 and April 2013 the following contemporary mega-cruise ships carrying more than 1,800 European tourists on board anchored in Muscat a total of 96 times: Serenade of the Seas (22 times), Mein Schiff 2 (22 times), Costa Atlantica (18 times), Costa Classica (16 times), AIDAblu (15 times), Costa Romantica (2 times), Costa Deliziosa (once) (Ministry of Tourism 2012a).

Table 8. Number of cruise liner arrivals in Oman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Arrivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2016a)

The cruise tourism product consists of the ship and its itinerary. The ports or destinations play a major role in developing the cruise itinerary and to enhance the cruise tourist’s travel experiences. Ports provide an opportunity for cruise passengers to learn about the local community, its history, culture, and lifestyle as well as the natural environment (Marusic et al. 2012:3). The Sultanate of Oman has three ports: Port Khasab (in the Northern governorate of Musandam), Port Sultan Qaboos in the capital Muscat and Port Salalah (Dhofar governorate in the South). The mega-cruises of this research start their journey in Dubai, then sail to Muscat, where they stay for nine to ten hours. They
then continue their itinerary to Manama (Bahrain), Abu Dhabi and back to Dubai. Some mega-cruise liners continue their journey to Salalah, and then to the Red Sea, or they stop in Khasab (Musandam) or they travel further east, to India.

Registration of cruise tourists by the Ministry of Tourism began in 2009; thus, official statistics are available only since that year. According to one of the largest shipping agents in Oman, the first cruise liner arrived in Muscat in 1995. Ten years later 25 cruise ships arrived in Muscat in 2005. In 2004 the first Aida cruise liner arrived, and two years later in 2006 the first Costa cruise docked in Muscat. According to the Ministry of Tourism, between 2009 and 2012 the number of cruise liners arriving in Muscat increased from 84 cruises in 2009 to its peak with 135 cruises in 2012 (Table 8 above).

Between 2009 and 2012, the number of cruise tourists increased dramatically by 51% to a total of 257,000, arriving on board 135 cruise liners in Oman (Table 9 below). Due to the political unrest in the Bahraini capital Manama in 2012, mega-cruise liners such as AIDAblu cancelled the destination from their itinerary and instead extended their stay in Muscat for two days. In the same year the Omani government extended the free visa period of 24 hours to two days for cruise tourists and crew.

In 2012 a total of 257,000 passengers arrived, which exceeded the population of Muttrah. Despite the free visa period, in 2013 the number of cruise arrivals decreased again to 202,159 passengers, dropping further in 2014 to 125,375 while rising again to 146,509 passengers in 2015, entailing an increase of 17.6% between 2014 and 2015. Between 2012 and 2015 the number of cruise tourists dropped by 43%, to a similar level like in 2009 (Ministry of Tourism 2016a).

Table 9. Number of cruise tourists in Oman (2009-2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Cruise Tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>111,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>173,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>128,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>257,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>202,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>125,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>146,509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ministry of Tourism, 2016a)

This shows that cruise tourism peaked in 2012, the time when the first case study was conducted in Souq Muttrah. The numbers also stress the high volatility of the number of passengers throughout the past six years. Factors that have influenced this volatility were the worldwide economic downturn, the Arab Spring starting in 2011, the military conflicts in Syria since 2012 and in Yemen
since 2014, as well as the decision of one of the mega-cruise liners to remove Muscat from its itinerary in 2014. In addition to Costa Cruises and AIDA, Royal Caribbean International announced to send 32,000 tourists to the Gulf region in Winter 2015/2016 on a tour around the Arabian Peninsula. Since the beginning of 2016 there has been an increase in cruise passenger arrivals in Oman. Arrivals during March 2016 totaled 37,200 cruise passengers, up to 68% in comparison with figures from March 2015. 89% of the cruise passengers were Europeans, the majority were from Germany (NCSI 2016b:4). According to local shipping agents and the media, the number of cruise ships is expected to grow further during 2016, supported by the inclusion of more ships of AIDA and TUI Cruises Mein Schiff 3. At times two to three mega-ships were seen in the port on one day. All cruise ships arriving in Muscat are not open to the public. Omani residents are encouraged to gaze at the ships from afar. “It is a great opportunity for Muscat’s residents and their children to watch these impressive ships from Muscat Corniche,” said an official prior to the arrival of the Queen Elizabeth cruise liner (Times News Service 2016a).

Though environmental impacts are beyond the scope of this research, I would like to highlight that many researchers have pointed out severe impacts of cruise tourism to the air and marine environment (Caric 2012; Klein 2005). In Muscat close to the cruise harbor, garbage as a result of “mindless dumping” has been observed floating in the sea along the waterfront in Muttrah. A journalist noted, every evening “litterbugs leave a scary sight over the parapet wall bounding the seafront at Muttrah Corniche” (Lensman 2013). However, the source of garbage is unclear.

In an exclusive written statement (as an answer to my questions) the Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs H. E. Mohammed Al Toobi explained the ministry’s policy towards cruise tourism development in Oman as follows:

“*We encourage cruise tourism, as long as they take into account the environmental requirements and dimensions and apply the environmental conditions set by the Ministry*”.

However, although the scope of those environmental requirements were not made clear in the interview, it was stressed that the ministry has

“*developed rules and regulations to organize tourism activities, which allow the use of tourism potentials that abound in coral reef environments for watching marine animals such as whales and dolphins in a sustainable manner*” (Interview reply received on 15 July 2013).

However, through an increase of mega-cruise tourism those activities in particular can be threatened.

2.6 The Mina Sultan Qaboos Waterfront project

Due to the influx in cruise tourism in the past years, the Omani government has shifted most of the cargo activities from Port Sultan Qaboos in Muttrah to Port Sohar in 2014/15. The port in Muttrah started its activities in the 1970s. Within the next ten years, the government will transform Port Sultan Qaboos into a new waterfront project, to include a cruise liner port. The mega-project was launched on 16 November 2016, two days before the 46th Omani National Day.

“Our vision for Mina Sultan Qaboos Waterfront is to create a world-class development of outstanding beauty and interest that celebrates the maritime history of Muscat and showcases the very best of Omani culture, heritage and innovation to a global audience,”
said the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of Omran, H.E. Dr. Ali Masoud Al Sunaidy (Times of Oman 2016). In this context the Minister of Tourism noted that the Mina Sultan Qaboos Waterfront development will be “the most exciting and high potential real estate project currently underway in Oman,” while adding that it will “enrich the lives of the local community” and it will “play a pivotal role in the growth of the national tourism industry over the next 20 years and beyond” (Times of Oman 2016).

The OMR 500m waterfront project (around €1bn), an ITC, will be the second biggest infrastructure project after the development of Muscat International Airport. The project will be divided into four phases. The first phase shall be complete by 2020. It will comprise an area of 64 hectares, including business and residential areas, a mall, hotels, recreation amenities and docking facilities for cruise liners and for a ferry linking Muscat and Iran. Moreover, it will accommodate the Oman coastguard and Royal Oman Police (Times of Oman 2016). The project shall create 12,000 direct and 7,000 indirect jobs as well as many business opportunities for small and medium enterprises. In addition to attracting tourists for the World Expo 2020 in Dubai and FIFA World Cup 2022 in Doha, it is expected “to attract 70% of its visitors from within Oman” (Nair 2016).

In a first stage of this complex which is similar to the first ITC in Oman, The Wave Muscat, a fishermen wharf, tourist boats, a car parking, a fish market, kiosks and a seafood restaurant will be developed. In the second phase six five-, four- and three-star hotels with a total of 1,500 rooms, 65 apartments, 219 family residential units and other buildings will be built. It will include 13 berths and more than 6,000 parking slots (Nair 2016). The third stage will include docks for large cruise ships, residential units with ships, restaurants and cafes and a pier for fast ferries. The final phase will include hotel services, logistics, a medical clinic, a gym and a residential complex for port service employees (Muscat Daily 2016b). The new port is expected to accommodate a maximum of 33,000 cruise passengers at one time. The transformation of the port will be a partnership between the government and private investors. A 51% stake will belong to Omran, the government-owned Oman Tourism Investment Company, and 49% to private and international investors (Muscat Daily 2016b).

During the Oman Economic Forum entitled “Oman – a bridge between Asia and GCC” in March 2016 in Muscat, Omran showcased US$1bn investment opportunities for foreign investment in the Mina Sultan Qaboos Waterfront project and Madinat al Irfan, located close to the Muscat International Airport. Participants from China, Japan, Iran, Turkey and other Asian countries attended the forum. The Muttrah Waterfront development has been benchmarked worldwide against similar developments such as the Waterfront in Cape Town and the Palm Jumeirah in Dubai (Muscat Daily 2016b). Therefore, competing globally for a “hyperreal” waterfront project beside Souq Muttrah. “Reimagining the iconic Port Sultan Qaboos, a global landmark in the making” announced an Oman Air advertisement the launch of the waterfront project in the local media.

It shows that the urban development of the Waterfront project will be not just a collection of tourist facilities but part of a global tourism development and the reimagining of space with a focus on tourist enclaves that are constructed for the tourist gaze, the “consumption of signs, symbols and spectacle, the experiencing of aestheticized spaces of entertainment” (Hall & Rath 2007:9). Public reports about an active involvement of the local resident and vendor community in Muttrah in the decision-making process of the project are missing, except that the Minister of Tourism communicates the Tourism Strategy 2040 to the Omani parliament Majlis Al Shura (Oman News...
Agency 2016). The Majlis Al Shura sessions held in Arabic are televised live via Oman TV and Oman Radio.

In this chapter, I have highlighted the fast pace and scope of tourism development in the Sultanate of Oman with its shift from its initial phase in the 1980s which featured high-end tourism, to mass tourism including mega-cruise tourism and the development of a new waterfront project next to the souq in the coming years. This fast development forms the basis for my field research, which was conducted during the peak timing of cruise tourist arrivals in Oman, between 2012 and 2014. In view of the planned Mina Sultan Qaboos Waterfront project, my case studies assume a high socio-cultural and political importance. To provide a theoretical context for this research, in the following section I will discuss the main concepts applied.
The research is positioned within social sciences - cultural studies, human geography, tourism geography, tourism sociology and tourism anthropology. The research adds further knowledge to the debate on mega-cruise tourism, imaginaries, the tourist experience and the socio-cultural sustainability of mass-tourism within society, space and time. The following part highlights the interdisciplinary concepts used in this research.

3.1 Cruise tourism, space and society

3.1.1 Cruise tourism and globalization

Cruise tourism is regarded as the biggest growth market in the tourism industry (Wood 2000:346). Around 24 million cruise passengers are expected to travel worldwide in 2016 (CLIA 2015). This shows a dramatic increase from 1.4 million in 1980 to 8.5 million passengers in 1997 and 15 million passengers in 2006 (Wood 2000:349).

In the past, the ship was seen as a means of transportation only. However, this perception changed when mega-cruise liners carrying more than 2,000 passengers (Weaver 2005a) were introduced in the late 1990s and early 2000 (Klein 2005:127). With globalization and its time-space compression (Harvey 1989; Urry & Larsen 2011), cruise tourism has become an important business like mass-tourism (Wood 2000:350). Similar to other types of travel, cruise tourism in Europe was part of elite luxury travel, until the 1970s. Since then the average age and income of cruise travelers has fallen continuously (Wood 2000:349), leading to a democratization of cruise travel. Worldwide the scale of cruise passengers arriving in each port of call has increased dramatically since 1980. In the Bahamas for example, cruise tourism began soon after World War II, where 241,000 cruise arrivals were recorded in 1964 compared to 1.6 million in 1996 (Wilkinson 1999:264). At that time the Caribbean, Europe and the US were the main cruise destinations. In recent years the trend has been shifting towards Asia, which is the fastest growing continent in the cruise industry. Between 2012 and 2014, the number of cruise tourists grew from 775,000 to nearly 1.4 million passengers, a 34% compound annual growth rate (CLIA 2015). The popularity of movies and TV series has played a part in the promotion of cruise travels. A few examples are the movie Titanic (Wood 2000:349), and the US-TV series The Love Boat (Weaver 2005b). Especially influential for German tourists is the TV series Das Traumschiff (in engl.: the Dreamship) that has been sailing to various destinations around the world since the 1980s, attracting spectators to exotic destinations including the Sultanate of Oman. Moreover, affordable mass-market air travel enabled tourists to reach the port of embarkation with ease (Weaver 2005b: 347).

Through globalization cruise liners enhance “new forms of deterritorialisation of capital, labor and touristic place itself” (Wood 2000:350). Hence, they disconnect social relations from the place visited and its local culture and society, leading to a new level of multiculturalism (Turner 1994:183). This phenomenon reflects postmodernity, the effect of a new means of communication (ibid.: 184), resulting in a change in travel and tourism behavior away from mass production and towards a focus on the consumer (Urry 1995). There is also an increased market segmentation and production of tourist products with shorter life spans, due to rapid changes in taste and fashion leading to a rapid turnover of tourist sites and tourist experiences (Urry 1995:151). This phenomenon is illustrated in the
increase in short and inexpensive travel within enclosed, isolated environments such as hotel resorts or cruise ships conceptualized as “tourist bubbles”.

### 3.1.2 The tourist bubble

Today’s mega-cruise liners devote more space to the “encapsulation” of cruise passengers (Wood 2000:362). This means that tourists are encouraged to spend their time and money on board instead of in the port (Klein 2005; Larsen & Wolff 2016; Weaver 2005a). Often cruise liners offer similar shops as on land, with lower prices and better offers (Weaver 2005a:173); thus they create a destination in itself, a “tourist bubble” (Jaakson 2004). Such a tourist bubble is a liminal space that combines tourism and leisure so that tourists can forget everyday problems back home (Yarnal & Kerstetter 2005:370). Tourist bubbles are also conceptualized as “environmental bubbles” or “total institutions” (Ritzer & Liska 1997). Jansson (2002:432) conceptualized them as “socioscapes”, places for a particular social interaction. A similar concept is a “resort enclave” (Freitag 1994), where tourists are detached from any social contact with the local population (Edensor 2000:329). Augé (1994) conceptualized these enclosed environments as non-places “Non-Lieux”, similar to an airport or a coach station. As such, they are placeless environments with their own inner tourist world (Jaakson 2004:45), where both tourists’ and the crews’ movements are scripted, scheduled and controlled (Weaver 2005b). Like hotel resorts, ships are partially owned by large US-based hotel chains like Hyatt (Royal Caribbean), Ramada or Radisson Hotels, offering “active and passive activities” (Yarnal & Kerstetter 2005:371) such as cafes, restaurants, casinos, bars, spa and sports (Klein 2005:127) as well as large atriums, shopping malls, golf courses and even ice-skating rinks (Wood 2000:350), climbing walls or Broadway productions. Moreover, consumer brands like Hermes, Lego and various food brands are part of the cruise experience, customized to the tastes of the passenger, from luxury to family-oriented and for all ages (CLIA 2015). Through the production of cruise ships with similar facilities, cruise companies ensure similar vacation experiences (Weaver 2005b:253). They offer standardized, efficient, calculable and predictable holidays, like the sameness of McDonalds restaurants (Ritzer & Liska 1997). Therefore, cruise tourists are members of “a community of consumers” (Urry 1995:126) within a limited space. They form a so-called “communita”, providing a sense of solidarity and belonging (Yarnal & Kerstetter 2005), also conceptualised as “space of compensation” for the loss of community values in Western societies (Minca 2012:785). The physical design of cruise liners promotes such social interaction and feeling of belonging, while mega-cruise liners are like theme parks, replicating historical sites from different countries or, from themed resort destinations (CLIA 2015). This phenomenon called “destinization” (Weaver 2005a:180), emphasizes the visual consumption of places, global miniaturization and “time-space compression” (Urry 1995:149). For example, Carnival Cruises introduced the “Fun-Ship” in the mid-70s (Wood 2000:349).

An increasing number of cruise liners have developed their own private clubs in ports of call as well as private island destinations (Weaver 2005a; Wood 2000), so that the local port is being left out of their itinerary. These islands have very similar features as mega-cruise ships (Weaver 2005a). They are controlled spaces where tourists are shielded from any negative situations. Therefore, spontaneous contact or experiences with the local community are avoided. They were designed to take cruise passengers back to the genuine, authentic Caribbean – one that only existed in the 1970s (Wood 2000:362). As such, the island experience becomes inauthentic and commodified to satisfy
the tourist’s expectations (Williams & Lew 2015:129). Increasingly local ports are also being transformed into fantasy environments similar to the ones on board; thus reproducing tourist enclaves on shore (Wood 2000:363). As a resident of Venice complained: “Venice is not a Disneyland” (Poggioli 2013).

Researchers have mentioned certain challenges facing the cruise industry regarding the ability of the destination to cater for increasingly larger ships (Weeden et al. 2011). Local residents of the British Virgin Islands complained about large cruise liners leading to overcrowding, traffic congestion, insufficient restrooms, reckless behavior such as “topless sunbathing near school” and a lack of local influence and control of such “visitor invasion” (Klein 2005:123). Similarly in Venice cruise ships have been perceived by locals as “alien creatures” and “monsters that obscure the city” (Poggioli 2013).

Overall, sociological and anthropological studies that include socio-cultural benefits and costs of cruise tourism have been little studied (Wood 2000:347). Therefore, it is important to examine socio-cultural impacts and imaginaries that are constructed by tourism intermediaries with their implications for the host society (Wood 2000:361). These imaginaries and changes over time lead to a discussion regarding socio-cultural impacts that influence the every-day lives of the host community. Some of these impacts will be discussed in the following section.

3.1.3 Socio-cultural impacts: “A nice place to live is a nice place to visit”

The scale of tourism has considerable consequences for the local community. For example, the scale of tourist numbers, the natural and built environment, the infrastructure and services has an effect on the community and its cultural and national identity as well as on other tourists. In some destinations during the peak season, tourists outnumber locals (Bohn Gmelch 2010:4f.). In tourism those who produce the tourism product and those who consume it come into direct contact with each other, which is different from other industries, where products are produced and consumed in different places. Tourists meet and interact directly with the local community who produce the tourism product, services and experiences that are then consumed by the tourists (Bohn Gmelch 2010:7). There has been an increasing shift from developing tourism for the tourist to the perspective of the local population (Krippendorf 1987). As a goal, tourism should be developed to contribute to the quality of life of the host community, according to the slogan “A nice place to live is a nice place to visit” (Jafari 2012:274).

Because of their numbers and their demands for the extension of home environments, Grabun (1989) argued that tourists who are travelling within their own “home-grown bubble” of life-style are likely to have the greatest impact on the culture and environment of the host community (ibid.:35). As a result the tourist changes little but the local host faces substantial changes (Bruner 1991:248). Negative effects of mass tourism such as overcrowding (Singh 2012:384) have been recognized in several places around the world. The effect of a large number of tourists in a particular destination has been conceptualized as a “shock loading” effect (Wilkinson 1999:277) or “people pollution” (Urry 1995:188). How locals cope with large numbers of people depends on how tourism is developed and whether they benefit financially or not (Bohn Gmelch 2010; Doğan 1989). For example, in Tonga locals are happy to receive cruise tourists; however, “they are even happier when the ships depart at dusk” (Urbanowicz 1989:113). The issue of other negative impacts of tourism have been raised regarding the “almost invasive nature” of cruise tourism, which has been “reaching alarming levels”
in the old town of Dubrovnik (Croatia) (Ljubica & Dulcic 2012:27), as well as in the small destination, Skjolden in Norway (Karreman 2013); or in Venice in Italy, where fragile old buildings are threatened by cruise liners. As a consequence, there is a growing resistance within the local community, who wants to ban large ships (Poggioli 2013). Similarly in Barcelona, local resistance is rising in the city of 2 million inhabitants that received 7.5 million tourists in 2013. Residents and shops moved to the outskirts because they could not afford to be in the center anymore: “Mass tourism can kill a city – just ask Barcelona’s residents” (Colau 2014). Because of promised economic impacts of tourism there is often “an unrecognized and unquestioned assumption by researchers that communities will willingly adapt to the socio-cultural changes that tourism may bring to their lives” (Williams & Lew 2015:126). Moreover, there are power struggles involved and local elites of the community who have the capital, influential connections and entrepreneurial knowledge typically benefit more from tourism (Bohn Gmelch 2010:9).

Different types of reactions to tourism have been conceptualized as “resistance”, “retreatism”, “boundary maintenance”, “revitalization” and “adoption” (Doğan 1989:232). While Doxey (1976) developed a four-stage irritation index, Getz (1983), Wall (1982) and O’Reilly (1986) introduced the “tourism carrying capacity” that measures the scale that the local community can absorb before negative impacts are perceived. The ideal is an even balance between the quality experience and the physical environment (O’Reilly 1986:254).

Within this context different kinds of carrying capacities have been identified: physical, perceptual or psychological, social and economic. The social carrying capacity shows the tolerance of the host community towards the acceptance of certain tourist behavior, the presence of tourists or the degree of crowding accepted by users (tourists/locals) (ibid.:256). The level of tolerance depends on the type of tourists and the characteristics of the destination and the host community. The carrying capacity also measures the rate of growth above which the growth process disrupts community life or the tourists’ enjoyment (ibid.:258). Saveriades (2000) argues, that the carrying capacity is not a fixed notion, but is flexible over time and dependent on the volume of tourism activities, which can be manipulated with management techniques (ibid.:155). Getz (1983) called for “constant attention to possible limits or thresholds” (ibid.:243), and a rather holistic approach regarding factors influencing the carrying capacity, such as tangible elements like accommodation, entertainment, financial factors, labor and transportation, but also intangible features such as the overall scenery, weather, the host community and the satisfaction of tourists. Any of these factors can be seen as limiting the carrying capacity. An analysis of similar tourism projects and their consequences over time could prevent negative impacts on the carrying capacity and if necessary introduce full or partial controls or limits (on it) (O’Reilly 1986:257).

While travelling, imaginaries (fantasies) and the reality of space are blurred and need to be seen together (Chronis 2012; Gao et al. 2011):“between place and story” (Chronis 2012:1798). In the following, another concept will be discussed that influences the tourist experience. These are fantasies or “imaginaries” created and distributed for example through intermediaries and the overall social construction of tourism space.
3 Conceptual Framework

3.2 Imaginaries and space

3.2.1 Imaginaries and the social construction of space

Imaginative geographies and social discourses that distinguish the dichotomy between “home” and “away” are important concepts in tourism (Crang 1997:145). Remote places with a romantic flavor in Western imagination such as Pacific Islands are promoted as "paradises", without considering the real every-day life, which may differ from those romantic images (Cohen 1978:217). Initially, tourists have a mental image of what the destination will look like. Tour operators organize trips accordingly, including these idealistic representations in their marketing material. During the journey, cultural mediators like tour guides have to ensure that tourists experience what they expect, receiving the images they booked prior to the trip (Salazar 2010:79). Through imagination and “phantasmagoria” (Jansson 2002:437) the tourism industry tries to increase the tourists’ interests, dreams and desires in order to increase the consumption. Social narratives in marketing material, the media, government bodies etc. can be traced back to the same “master narrative” (Salazar 2010:44f.), which blur imaginaries and the reality. “Mediated images are thus becoming the ‘originals’ against which experiences of simulated landscapes and socioscapes are measured”, thus a “symbolic authenticity” (Wang 1999). However, Jansson (2002) argues that the mediatization of images generates a regime of so-called imaginative hedonism through which viewers are attracted to experience tourism in reality (ibid.:441).

An underlying characteristics of tourism fantasies is the tourist’s motivation to travel to escape everyday life, to experience a different place and people as well as the ego-enhancement through self-realization (Krippendorf 1978:27), also conceptualized as a “total transformation of self” (Bruner 1991:239). Imaginaries are not free floating but linked to specific locations. They are not created from everyday life but from the circulation of collectively held imaginaries, which have been constructed and reconstructed over several centuries of cross-cultural encounter, giving meaning to the encounter between the tourist and the host (ibid.:240). Imaginaries socially create a place (Chronis 2012:1799), while reflecting the power of certain stereotypes used, “labelling” a destination (Palmer 1994). “Clichés are what people want and clichés they will get” (Krippendorf 1978). An example of a tourist cliché is the encounter with a yodelling, flag-waving, alphorn-blowing and cheese-carrying Swiss herdsman in his costume (ibid.:34). Within tourism to developing countries, those representations reflect images of Western ideas about how “the Other” is imagined to be (Salazar 2010:43). For example, as “unchanged, unrestrained and uncivilized” (Echtner & Prasad 2003). Tourists come to observe them, “the powerless and primitive” (Bruner 1991:240) or the “primitive and prehistoric” (ibid.:239). These imaginaries are usually taken from the Western media, literature, film or fine arts (Urbain 1993), thus reflecting power relations of colonialism and imperialism (Said 1993).

However, imaginaries are not only social narratives but also embodied, thus they are produced through engagement and social practice in reality (Chronis 2012:1798). Tourism places are not only imagined and performed, but tourists and tourism employees have to “act out a stage” (Crang 1997:146), embody a form of space that can influence the tourists performances. The tourists’ bodies are part of the tourist environment, therefore “the environment is embodied” (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:38). The walking practices vary from one person to another. Tourists involve and engage in the environment and play sometimes instead of only visually consuming or gazing at things (Haldrup...
& Larsen 2010:99). They play sometimes, e.g. while dressing-up and staging an “Oriental” person. This bodily involvement has been conceptualized as “emplaced enactments” or “doing the imaginaries” through embodied practices, transcending the story of the place (Chronis 2012:1808). Tourists are “encouraged to hear, smell, eat, dance and touch” (Haldrup & Larsen 2010:99), reflecting the sensual aspects of tourist spaces (Crouch & Desforges 2003). Often tourists use technologies such as a camera to “frame the world” and experience a place in a sensory way and visually through the lens (Crouch & Desforges 2003:13).

3.2.2 Oriental imaginaries

Throughout history the Orient has been compared to Eden or Paradise, an “Old World to which one returned” (Said 1999:58). Hence in the Orient, the geographical location including the Arab countries in North Africa, the Middle East and on the Arabian Peninsula, tourists wish to discover “legendary lands” (Echtner & Prasad 2003:669). Typical Western-influenced Oriental images of camels, Bedouins, desert, oases and the Arabian Nights are “fragments and materials for staging improvised play and often ironic performances and representations of the Orient” (Haldrup & Larsen 2010:99). Hence, the Orient has been encountered through typical ideas “the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemic confrontation” (Said 1999:58) while influencing the perception of the Orient, its people and the overall encounter between Orient and Occident. European travellers and writers like Gustave Flaubert in the mid-19th century are seen as observers who were “never involved, always detached” (ibid.:103). Hence, he argues that the Orient described by Europeans is not the Orient as it is, rather it has been increasingly “Orientalized” by the West (ibid.:104).

On the other hand, Turner (1994) argues because of increased mobility, tourism and migration “the Otherness has been “imported” and “domesticated” into Western societies, therefore, transforming the overall discussion about Orientalism and its opinions, rendering them “redundant” (1994:183). However, the tourist’s fantasies about the exotic “Other” and the search for other places has been also conceptualized as a search for authenticity, meaning a more genuine way of living (MacCannell 1999). Social practices in tourism are often different from those “at home”, which leads to a discussion about the roots of authenticity or originality of the tourist experience, the culture or the place visited.

3.2.3 Authenticity

In a highly organized industrial society, work has lost its dignity and significance for the individual, who then seeks to discover his own identity and sense of purpose during leisure time, for example while travelling (Bohn Gmelch 2010:8). This thought is in line with Heidegger’s philosophy as “being-in-the-world: Being with (Mitsein) and Dasein-with (Mitdasein)” (Heidegger 2010:114).

The concept of authenticity is seen as a projection of images or expectations of “the Other” or a certain tourist attraction (Bruner 1991). Therefore, the verbal and imaginary discourse looks into the future (Dann 1999:170). “It is the ‘you have to go to see this’ or taste or feel this that is the original moment in the touristic relation, which is also the basis for a certain kind of human solidarity” (MacCannell 1999:203). MacCannell’s concept of authenticity however has been criticized, since there are “no originals, only endless reproductions” (Bruner 1991:241). Urry (1995) argues that mass-tourists or so-called “post-tourists” are satisfied with experiencing inauthenticity. Accordingly,
people travel not to experience the extraordinary but to experience the same things they experience in their everyday lives. “The post-tourist finds pleasure in the multitude of games that can be played and knows that there is no authentic tourist experience” (Urry 1995:140). Tourist experiences are McDonaldized like the tourists’ every-day-lives (Ritzer & Liska 1997:99). Similarly, Turner (1994) argues that “tourism rules out the possibility of an authentic cultural experience” (ibid.:185). Tourists are searching for “a label attached to the visited cultures” (Wang 1999:355) an “object related authenticity”, a so-called “constructive or symbolic authenticity” (ibid.:352). Hence, things appear authentic not because they genuinely are, but because they are “constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives or powers” (Wang 1999:351). For example, a tourist who goes on packaged tours may find a kind of authenticity if the social environment in the destination corresponds to the media images seen before the holidays. However, what may be inauthentic for one individual may be considered authentic by a mass tourist (ibid.:353), who may consider the most standardized resort as being authentic (Jansson 2002:439).

People are searching for or are nostalgic about certain ways of life that they want to relive in the form of tourism at least temporally, empathically, and symbolically (Wang 1999:360). On the other hand, tourists search for an “existential authenticity”, which is an activity-related authenticity, in which they can encounter out of the ordinary activities, such as adventure sports activities while “involving personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities” (ibid.:351). Depending on the culture of the tourist destination, the tourist practices including their behavior require certain social elements of understanding, adaptation and openness, which will be discussed in the following part.

3.3 Ethics, cultures and challenges for local societies

3.3.1 The ethics of tourism

Mass tourism, being related to realizing the inner self and pleasure-seeking through fun, innocence and adventure, has been increasingly challenged by pessimistic views about moral rules that are necessary to protect the environment and the cultural diversity of host communities; thus they encourage mutual respect for other ways of life and are a critical reflection on the tourist’s own culture (Butcher 2003:7). The concept of “ethics in tourism” investigates issues of purpose and consequences such as the perceptions about what is viewed as “acceptable” and “unacceptable” in tourist behavior and the behavior of those working in tourism (Fennell & Malloy 1999:941). Hence, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism was issued by UNWTO in 2001. It mentions in article 1:

“The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism. Stakeholders in tourism and tourists themselves should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples and to recognize their worth.”

In tourism research, various concepts linked to ethics in tourism have emerged in recent years such as “ethical tourism”, “alternative tourism” and “eco-tourism” in addition to “responsible tourism” leading to a philosophical discussion about the “moral turn in tourism studies” (Caton 2012). Another emergent philosophical concept is “hopeful tourism”, which is rather seen as an “active hope”, committed to “co-transformative learning, social justice and the universality of human rights”
(Pritchard et al. 2011:950). Hopeful tourism advocates transforming the way of seeing, being and doing in tourism, so that a “transformation of self and others are hoped for” (ibid.:951). The ultimate goal is a more equal and sustainable world (ibid.). In the following parts I will address some socio-cultural, behavioral issues linked to more responsible tourism practices, while focusing on tourism in a Muslim country.

### 3.3.2 Intercultural behavior and adaptation

One of the main issues of globalization is how different religious and cultural values are accommodated. Depending on the scale of tourism and the stage of tourism development, the adaptation of the local community may vary. The more mature the tourism development, “the more tourism will be dominated by outside interests” (Din 1989:555). Moreover, the adaptation depends on the socio-cultural context including the type of traveler and his/her motivations, and the type of tourism communicated within a certain tourist practice, such as hedonistic, independent and responsible tourism (Caruana & Crane 2011:1510) as well as the social composition of the host community (Urry 1995:120). The adaptation will be different within a Muslim society compared to a Western European society, where people are little influenced by religious values.

Thus depending on the social distance between the host community and the tourists as well as the different socio-economic, cultural and racial identities. The concept of cultural distance defines the degree to which social norms and values differ from one society to another (Hofstede et al. 2010). These differences may “provide seeds for prejudice and resentment which can easily reinforce stereotyping of one another” (Din 1989:556). For example, there are various communication styles. Within a collectivist society, its members use a high-context communication style because “saving face and harmony” are very important in social life (Pearce 2010:132). The meaning is not evident for the outsider. On the other hand, within a low-context communication style, a straight-forward, direct communication is used, for example in European countries (Hofstede et al. 2010:104). Hofstede et al. (2010) argue that regardless of globalization and tourism there will be no cultural convergence over time. Therefore, values will remain diverse and only with an increase of wealth will countries become more individualistic. The embodied and verbal difference in communication styles may lead to difficulties experienced in everyday verbal and non-verbal communication with the host community, so-called “culture shock” (Pearce 2010) or “culture confusion” (Hottola 2004:448). For example, difficulties may arise from a lack of respect for the local culture and values in public spaces, such as the local dress behavior or restrictions on the consumption of alcohol. According to Pierce (2010:130) culture shock elements are divided into physical, orientation, cultural components and daily challenges. Hottola (2004) differentiates between stages of culture shock, including assimilation, adaptation, hostility, disillusionment and euphoria (Hottola 2004:448). Culture shock situations on both sides – the tourists’ and the hosts’ - can create “unavoidable tensions” between self-actualization of the tourist and social concerns of the host community (Caton 2012:1917). For example, it takes time for tour guides to change their perceptions and stereotypes about tourists (Salazar 2010:77).

In order to minimize the cross-cultural components of culture shock, Klein (2010) calls for the education of tourists especially those who are on a packaged tour such as cruise tourists who stay briefly in the destination and expect the local community to have the same values as them (Klein
Tourists often reject the formal values they stick to at home, because they enjoy a kind of “special status”, almost “immune” like diplomats (Krippendorf 1978:43). They are isolated from their home societies within an artificial environment (Turner & Ash 1975:91), a “tourist bubble”, described as a “liminal zone” where tourists adopt a “liminal behavior”, different to everyday life and where they can decide how to behave (Yarnal & Kerstetter 2005:370). According to the slogans “I want to have a good time; tomorrow we shall be gone again” rejecting responsibility for their behavior. Therefore, often there is no willingness to assimilate to the host culture (Hottola 2004:451). As a Western female backpacker in Thailand said: “You detach from routine, you can be anything you want” (Berdychevsky et al. 2013). As a consequence, the host community may see tourists as being ignorant and self-oriented. Especially when large groups of people behave in this way, it is “bewildering” for the local community (Krippendorf 1978:33). On the other hand, there is no “unitarian concept of freedom” (Caruana & Crane 2011:1510) as a motivation for tourism practices. Freedom is seen as being fluid. In other words, Mofakkir (2015) argues for the acceptance of difference, for the tolerance of diversity and for unconditional hospitality towards a different behavior, especially of veiled Muslim tourists in Europe (2015:21).

Such socio-cultural differences essentially form the basis of the tourist’s experience of “Otherness” (MacCannell 2012:185). To create more “sincerity of the encounter” between hosts and guests (Pearce 2010:143) as well as a respectful and mindful tourist behavior (Moscardo 1996), effective educative interpretation tools for tourists have been suggested. Similarly, Tasci (2009) argues that particularly visual information can reduce social distance between tourists and hosts, providing visual information about everyday life features of the local inhabitants, including their behavior (Tasci 2009:494). Mindful behavior requires active involvement and is “pre-conscious” rather than “under conscious control” (Pearce 2010:152). On the other hand, mindless tourists are rather careless, using existing routines while giving little attention to the setting (Moscardo 1999:25).

Hence, educative interpretation could lead to more mindful behavior from tourists, developing higher satisfaction, and greater understanding as well as increased learning outcomes for them (ibid.:383). In addition, it will enhance a positive behavior in the destination (Tasci 2009:495). To enhance mindfulness, tourists may receive written or visual instructions, for example, prior to and during their visits. Visual clues can increase familiarity with the place visited, raising positive socio-cultural perceptions, while reducing negative so-called “social defense systems” such as judging, stereotyping and developing social distance.

A positive perception through images can lead to a positive impact on pre-travel and post-travel behavior. It will also motivate the tourist to revisit the destination and reduce social distance (ibid.:502f.). Mindful tourists actively care about the places visited. They are more open-minded and aware of the consequences of their actions (Moscardo 1996:382). Mindfulness is also linked to a better learning-process and better decision-making and enjoyment (Moscardo 1999:112). However, it is also important to discuss the context of tourism in the Muslim world and how Western tourists are accommodated.
3 Conceptual Framework

3.3.3 Tourism in a Muslim country

“Our strength lies in the great traditions of our glorious Omani culture, and the teachings and laws of our Holy Religion. We must never let an obsession with material things and alien thoughts blind us to this fact.”

(His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on the occasion of the 10th National Day on 18.11.1980:80).

A deeper discussion on tourism in a Muslim country requires an understanding of the central role of the Qur’an (Jafari & Scott 2014:3). Like Christianity, Islam is based on the well-being of each individual and the conduct of a good life, in harmony with other people and with nature. Therefore, a Muslim perspective does not recognize a distinction between religious and secular life (Aziz 2001:152). In Islam, travel is part of a broader journey encapsulating the service to God. Thus, different to Western concepts of tourism, the relationship between the host and the guest is personal, directed towards the “submission to the way of God” (Din 1989:554). Tourism aims at promoting cross-cultural understanding, fostering unity among the nation of Islam, the umma. Travelers should be welcomed and accommodated with generosity (ibid.:559). Islamic Shari’a law stipulates what is halal and what is haram in life, including in tourism. “From a non-Muslim perspective, it may seem trivial, but within the Muslim world it is of paramount importance” (Scott & Jafari 2010:332). All actions of Muslims, e.g. what food and drinks may be consumed, how to dress, what entertainment shall be permitted and how to live and behave are categorized in five ways: “as commanded, recommended, left legally indifferent, reprehended, or else prohibited” (Jafari & Scott 2014:4). Hence, an understanding of Muslim values and do’s and don’ts is highly important for all stakeholders in tourism (Scott & Jafari 2010:332).

Governments in the Middle East have realized the potential of the tourism industry for their socio-economic development (Mansfeld & Winckler 2007:335), with Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco launching tourism in the 1970s. However, critics of Western-style tourism within a Muslim context have pointed out certain “sensitivities of the host community” (Din 1989). Western tourist behavior is seen as being offensive and unacceptable for local communities. This includes behavior such as “physical display of affection, drinking alcohol, wearing revealing clothes and sunbathing naked” (Henderson 2003:450), as well as the consumption of pork, gambling and other secular influences, initiated by tourism (Din 1989). Hence, it has been questioned, whether new Muslim destinations on the Arabian Peninsula such as Dubai are socio-culturally prepared for a rapid growth in tourist numbers (Stephenson & Ali-Knight 2010). It has been argued that there is a lack of communication and social contact from both sides, tourists and locals, preventing any understanding of the “Other” (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner 2004:174). On the other hand, there exists a lack of policy and control framework for the host community (Scott & Jafari 2010:332) including a lack of a ready-made “formula” to reach the ultimate goal, except one suggestion that the Muslim community tries out different alternatives in tourism (Din 1989:560).

Consequently, three dimensions of the host community’s adaptation have been identified in the Muslim world: “discouragement”, “laissez-faire attitude” and “accomodationist control”, where tourism is isolated from the local community (Din 1989:555). A “laissez faire attitude” is prevalent in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia and Indonesia. For example, in Malaysia, tourism
has been promoted with a laissez-faire attitude, as a “pleasure industry”, without consideration of religious values (ibid.:558). However, Din (1989) argues that the official policy has been strict and moderate at the same time regarding tourism regulations, thereby adopting “a double-standard policy” – one for local Muslims and another one for Non-Muslims. This implies that it is acceptable for non-Muslims to eat during Ramadhan as well to consume pork and alcohol (ibid.:558). In contrast, other countries such as Saudi Arabia have limited Western tourism, while on the other hand encouraging domestic tourism by Muslims from neighboring GCC countries (Scott & Jafari 2010:332). The concept of Islamic tourism includes strengthening Islamic religious values towards less consumption and Western cultural influences, a kind of Muslim community tourism, focusing on families visiting Islamic historical, religious and cultural sites (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner 2004:180) as well as “Islamic Village Tourism” with local community involvement based on Islamic values (Stephenson 2014:161).

From a perspective of a Muslim community the goal is to be aware of the spiritual aspect of travel (Din 1989:560). Hence, this calls for a need for cultural collaboration and responsible tourist behavior (Hofstede et al. 2010:473) in line with Heidegger’s (2010) thoughts of being aware, fully alive with care for the environment and mindful towards others and thus “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger 2010:203). In the following, I will briefly outline the process of local community empowerment.

3.3.4 Community empowerment

The involvement of communities through local ownership and responsibility in sustainable tourism development are key issues that can be achieved in the long term only. Empowerment is a condition and a process, whereby a transfer of control and social, political, economic and psychological power takes place (Timothy 2007). As a first step it requires raising awareness, and developing an understanding and knowledge of costs and benefits of local tourism development (UNWTO 2004:83). Through local empowerment, the community will obtain the right to have “a sense of ownership” (ibid.:83) and the right to act and decide over their resources, instead of central government authorities, multinational companies and/or external investors (Timothy 2007:200). Therefore, the phenomenon of elitism that existed at the national level may be transferred to the local and even individual level. However, the result may create disharmony and discontent among the local community (ibid.:211).

There are various forms of empowerment: political, social, economic and psychological empowerment. The political empowerment includes policy decision-making and local ownership of tourism projects. Social empowerment develops through enhancing indigenous, local knowledge to find solutions for more sustainable ways of using their resources whereby indigenous people are valued as guardians of the local environment. Through psychological empowerment and the protection of certain agricultural or handicraft skills a sense of belonging and commitment can be created within the community. Economic empowerment refers to the distribution of benefits among community members. Throughout the process an increased power transfer to the community at an individual level, including the empowerment of women, can create a division between its members. For example, the handicraft production empowers women to become more financially independent from their husbands or families. Through international eco-labelling of tourism products, entire local communities can be empowered, raising awareness about the destination, its credibility and
3 Conceptual Framework

branding. For the certification, international standards are used to certify and legitimate tourism activities. However, the risk is that eco-labelling may disempower other local stakeholders (ibid.:205).

Worldwide there are over 260 different types of certification: eco-labels, ethics codes, benchmarking, best practice manuals and prizes available (UNWTO 2004:318). Certification means measuring the improvements in environmental, socio-cultural and economic sustainability through indicators, usually by a third party. Such certification guarantees that a business complies with certain international standards. For example, an environmental certification targets sustainability of the transportation or tour operator services in the destination. One of the worldwide renown, environmental certification of beaches, is the Blue Flag, measuring water quality, environmental education and information, environmental management as well as safety and services (ibid.:253). On the other hand, “a self-evaluation without outside verification is called first-party certification, e.g. a hotel or a tour operator who promotes himself as “ecological” or “environmentally-friendly according to its own code of conduct and criteria” (ibid.:318). Entire destinations in Spain, in the US, in Antarctica as well as the Caribbean have adopted Sustainable Indicator Initiatives. For example, the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC) was created in 2001 in order to promote community involvement in different stages of tourism development, such as decision-making and planning (ibid.:360).

The conceptual framework has highlighted the main theoretical concepts in relation to tourism, space, culture and society, applied in my research papers. These concepts show the importance of a responsible planning, development and consumption of cruise tourism in Oman. In the next section, I will discuss the research methods applied.
4 Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methods which include a definition of a case study research, the reasons for choosing two case studies, the qualitative and quantitative data collection and their analysis as well as challenges faced during the research process.

So-called “rapid research” is conducted when researchers are flown into a country, collect the data and then fly back home (Patton 2002:392). However, in cultures where trust and time are important aspects of human relations, a hastened, rapid research may lead to closed doors, misinterpretation and miscommunication. Since I have been living in the Sultanate of Oman since 2004 and working as employed and freelance tour guide for German and French-speaking tourist groups, as well as a journalist for a local newspaper, a freelancer for the German media and as a PR manager at the German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech), this research is influenced by my work and life experiences in Oman. My practical experiences also helped to observe the changes that have occurred throughout the past twelve years and to analyze and interpret the different opinions. Constraints of the research were time, manpower and funding.

The literature on cruise liner tourism has acknowledged difficulties faced due to restricted access to a cruise liner (Weeden et al. 2011:28), which has been referred to as being a “social cocoon”, and “inaccessible for outsiders” (Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011:155). Thanks to my contacts and work experience, local tour agencies were supportive of the research and through their communication I received an approval to conduct two questionnaire surveys with the cruise liner management in Germany.

4.1 Approach and research questions

A mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods were used for this research. Their functions are explained in the table below (Table 10).

Table 10. Contribution of qualitative and quantitative methods to the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of the research</th>
<th>Qualitative Methods</th>
<th>Quantitative Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual</strong></td>
<td>Description of the nature of cruise tourism and its impacts.</td>
<td>Extent to which cruise tourism exists; characteristics of cruise tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of the tourist experience and of the tourist behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanatory</strong></td>
<td>The context in which cruise tourism exists in both places</td>
<td>Factors statistically associated with cruise tourism, characteristics and circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evalitative</strong></td>
<td>Appraisal of any interventions, e.g. to avoid crowding by the government in both places</td>
<td>The extent to which the places are used by cruise tourists and the extent to which interventions achieve results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generative</strong></td>
<td>Recommendations/strategies to cope with mega-cruise tourism</td>
<td>Prediction of future cruise tourism and the levels of provision to cope with the phenomenon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own compilation; adapted from Ritchie 2003:39)
A combination of contextual, explanatory, evaluative and generative approaches were applied. These included participant observation, a tourist questionnaire, counting, photography, in-depth interviews with German-speaking tourists, tour guides, with the local community and with government officials. Observations were supported by still photography. To provide a broader base for the research, the mixing of qualitative and quantitative methods was intended to blend with each other. The questionnaire gave an overview of the tourist experiences and imaginaries, while the qualitative interviews gave the findings more depth. From December 2011 onwards the two field studies were conducted, beginning with Souq Muttrah and followed by the oasis and the Sharquiyah Sands desert in 2013-2014.

Prior and throughout the entire research process, I conducted desk research, where I gathered and analysed statistical data from the government, newspaper articles from the local and international media and other secondary data. Moreover, the literature on imaginaries, cruise tourism, the tourist experience, community-based tourism and rural tourism in different parts of the world were studied in order to get a clear picture of the theoretical concepts and the existing research gaps. To analyze the importance of the media on the social construction of the tourists’ ideas and beliefs (Beeton et al. 2006:29), pre-travel information such as daily on-board newsletters, port information and excursion tickets from the cruise ships were studied, along with cruise travel brochures, the website of the Ministry of Tourism, travel guidebooks, travel magazines, and advertisements. This is a common approach when investigating imaginaries and the tourists’ pre-travel preparation (Leite 2014:265).

The research focuses on German-speaking cruise tourists, the local community in both places, as well as tourism representatives and government officials. The aim is to find answers to the following questions:

- What are the German-speaking cruise tourists’ imaginaries, on-site experiences and performances? How do German-speaking tourists consume the places? What do tourists buy? How much do they spend? How do they memorize their experiences?
- What are the perceptions of the local host-community regarding cruise tourism and its socio-cultural impacts in both places?
- Has tourism changed the understanding of the locals’ socio-cultural surrounding?
- What are the future plans for tourism development in both locations?

4.2 Case study research

A case study is a common tool in tourism research. If it is significant and of general interest for the public and/or has national importance in policy or practical terms. It combines the concepts of discovery and theory development (Beeton 2005:42). It is used to gain an insider’s perspective for certain issues in a specific place while analyzing it from different angles. A case study is seen as “a holistic empirical enquiry in order to gain an in-depth understanding of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence” (ibid.:42).

The focus of my research has been laid on two major tourism destinations for cruise tourists in the Sultanate of Oman, Souq Muttrah and an oasis on the edge of the desert and the Sharquiyah Sands desert in the North Sharquiyah governorate. Both destinations are part of the mega-cruise liner excursions packages. They were also chosen as two “Oriental destinations” visited while offering
different experiences compared to places in Europe. According to the AIDA tourist brochure, “on the Arabian Peninsula tourists can experience the century old tradition of Bedouins and visit story like mosques and stroll through Souqs, that invite for bargaining” (AIDA catalogue 2011/2012:123).

Both case studies assume a high political importance. The research was conducted just before the start of major large-scale tourism developments, the planned construction of the Waterfront Project in the next years, which includes a cruise liner port in Muttrah and the construction of a highway leading through the mountains to the Sharquiyah region, thus facilitating its access from Muscat. Mega-cruise liner tourism, which started in 2004, is a relatively new phenomenon in the Sultanate of Oman. It has been promoted locally through government institutions, the Ministry of Tourism and Muscat Municipality that initiated the Redevelopment Plan of Muttrah in 2012 as well as the Ministry of Transportation and Communication and Omran’s ongoing involvement in the redesign of the Muttrah Waterfront.

4.2.1 Souq Muttrah

Souq Muttrah is the oldest market in Oman, which developed into a mature urban tourist destination located opposite to the port in the capital Muscat (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Souq Muttrah, opposite to the port

(Source: own design)

Since 1970, at the start of the reign of Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said the country has experienced a dramatic socio-economic transformation through modernization. This included the construction of roads and supermarkets in new districts, which were more easily accessible by car (Scholz 1990:298). Consequently, Muttrah with its souq slowly lost its importance as a central commercial hub. Vendors lost their customers and some businesses moved to newly established business districts like Ruwi.
Scholz (1990) observed structural changes in Souq Muttrah during the late 1970s and 1980s when the souq developed from a local market where mainly textiles, food and household items were sold into a souq that catered more and more to the newly arriving expatriate community from Asia, other Arab countries and from Europe (ibid.:298). Nowadays the majority of the vendors in Muttrah are expatriates from Asia, from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Most of them live and work within walking distance. The multi-ethnic community appreciates the close distance and they buy their groceries in the souq. Due to cheaper prices, Omanis from other parts of the country come to shop for household items, local perfumes, textiles and readymade clothes, especially in the evenings and during the weekends. According to the Wali of Muttrah, around 800 shops are located in the souq and all shops are licensed by Muscat Municipality (Interview on 6 October 2012). In 2011 a total of 189,785 people lived in the wilayat of Muttrah which includes Muttrah city, greater Muttrah, Al Wattayah, Ruwi, Wadi Adai, Qurum, Mina Al Fahal and Eint. Four years later the number of inhabitants had increased to 233,515 including 24% Omanis and 76% Non-Omanis (NCSI 2015a).

Manual counting and a two-paged questionnaire survey in German were applied at the beginning of the research in Souq Muttrah.

Figure 2. The Corniche road in Muttrah, 2016

(Source: own photography)

**Counting**

Counting was used to get a broader picture of the number of people and the crowding in Souq Muttrah in the morning and afternoon when cruise tourists were in the port. The main entrance to the souq opposite to the port is predominantly used by cruise tourists who disembark from their buses at the Corniche. Some cruise tourists also walk from the port to the souq and pass through the main entrance. Sundays were chosen rather than other days during the winter season 2011/2012,
since this was when more cruise ships anchored at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat. These were usually AIDAblu and Costa Classica. The tourists were counted on three different Sundays during the cruise season in winter/spring. I counted for 15 minutes every full hour and results were noted down. Afterwards I compared the data of a certain time slot, and then an average number of tourists and expatriates that entered the souq at the main entrance was calculated. For the process of counting two hand tally counters were used, one for counting tourists and one for counting locals. Counting was always done at the main entrance of the souq, on the Corniche road. At the backside entrance of the souq - opposite the police station - no counting was done, since only locals use that entrance.

The tourist questionnaire survey

The tourist questionnaire was designed in German in November 2011, in order to get a precise picture of how people experience and consume both places. In the beginning a pre-test was necessary to evaluate the questionnaire. A pre-test shows whether the order of the questions and the overall structure of the questionnaire related to the actual research environment are correct. The aim is that the questions lead to results that are necessary to test the hypothesis (Reuber & Pfaffenbach 2005:85). The pre-test was conducted on six Sunday mornings, only for those tourists who had visited the souq. They were asked to fill in a draft version of the questionnaire and to highlight those items that were not clear or were ambiguous to them (Dong & Siu 2013:546). Prior to its distribution the questionnaire survey was approved by the cruise ship management. Additional permission to conduct the research was granted by the Ministry of Tourism. The first cruise liner, AIDAblu requested removal of the question about the total fare paid. The reason for the request to remove the question was that it was discussed with the captain who felt that it might provoke discussions among tourists. As a consequence, the question was deleted. Overall, the questionnaire was tested with a total of 32 tourists and then modified.

The first round of the survey was conducted on Sunday, 5 February 2012, when the survey was distributed among German-speaking tourists of AIDAblu cruise liner tourists embarking on Muscat City Tour buses. Prior to the distribution in the tour buses, I briefed the tour guides on the objective of the survey and the best timing of its distribution, after the visit of the souq and its submission at the end of the tour. They then received a folder with the questionnaires to distribute to the tourists along with a pen for each tourist. That day a total of 13 buses visited Souq Muttrah as the third stop of the half-day Muscat City Tour. Out of 520 distributed questionnaires a total of 434 people returned the questionnaire, thus a response rate of 83.4% was achieved.

The outcome of the first distribution of the survey was surprising and exceeded the initial expectations. The survey was conducted again in the same way four weeks later, after a second approval of the AIDAblu cruise liner. On Sunday, 4 March another 520 questionnaires were distributed. At that time a total of 396 tourists returned the questionnaire. The overall response rate was 76.1%, a bit lower than in February. In conclusion, a total of 830 tourists filled out the survey; a response rate of 80% was achieved. In the following part the research hypothesis and the way to operationalize, thus measure the variables, will be outlined.
Table 11. The questionnaire construction and measurement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Measured by / Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-travel information</td>
<td>Defined as the source of pre-travel information</td>
<td>Categories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- internet, tv, radio;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- guidebook;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- colleagues, family, friends;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- travel brochure;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- previous travels to the Gulf region;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I did not inform myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience of the tourist destination Oman</td>
<td>Number of trips to Oman</td>
<td>Respondents indicate the number of travels to Oman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-travel imaginaries</td>
<td>Defined as mental images or fantasies prior to the arrival</td>
<td>Respondents indicate their imaginaries from a list of 13 “Oriental” and “Non-Oriental” items and a rating scale: very strong, fairly strong, medium, less intense, not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-travel information received</td>
<td>Defined as pre-travel preparation regarding the social behavior; dress code, alcohol, showing affection in public</td>
<td>Respondents choose from: Yes, partially, no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of visit in the souq</td>
<td>Number of minutes spent in the souq</td>
<td>Six categories: around 15 min; 30 min; 45 min.; 60 min.; 90 min.; 120 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction of the souq experience / “multi-sensuous staging”</td>
<td>Overall satisfaction with multi-sensuous experience in the souq</td>
<td>Respondents indicate their satisfaction with seven categories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the Oriental atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the different smell/olfacture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the narrow streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- bargaining with the vendors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- product range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the direct contact with locals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The hospitality/restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rating scale between: very much liked, liked, neutral, not liked, not at all liked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consuming behavior / “experience intensification”</td>
<td>Defined as the type of products bought in the souq</td>
<td>Respondents chose from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/no agreement. If yes, they can choose between ten product categories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- spices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- frankincense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- khanjar (traditional daggar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- coffee, tea, juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- postcards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- gold/silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- pashmina scarfs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- dishdasha/turban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Indian textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monetary spending behavior / “experience intensification”</td>
<td>Defined as the approx. overall amount spent during the visit to the souq</td>
<td>Respondents choose from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- less than 5 Euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 6-10 Euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 11-20 Euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 21-30 Euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 41-50 Euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 51-100 Euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 101-150 Euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- above 150 Euros</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Immediate, recent overall embodied experience of the setting and the satisfaction / “staging of the souq”**

Defined as the embodied experience of the souq setting on the just completed visit and the tourist’s overall satisfaction with that experience.

Respondents indicate their multi-sensuous experience in the souq, choosing from a scale between agree very much, agree, neutral, do not agree, do not agree at all.

The following categories were given:
- The souq is an exceptional Orient experience.
- The souq is a sensuous experience.
- I feel like being in a different world.
- I feel being safe.
- There were too many people in the souq.
- The vendors were friendly.
- I had a chat with the vendors.
- I would like to recommend the souq.

**Visual on-site experience / “experience intensification”**

Defined as the kind of photos taken during the visit of Souq Muttrah.

Respondents choose from seven categories:
- nothing
- entrance to the souq
- frankincense vendor
- narrow streets
- harbor street
- vendors & shop
- Omani customers

**Previous experience of the same setting (souq)**

Defined as experience of a similar setting.

Respondents choose from six categories:
- no
- Cairo
- in Dubai
- in Istanbul
- in Tunis
- in Marrakech

**Overall travel satisfaction with the excursion “experience extension”**

Overall satisfaction with the travel destination souq/travel expectations fulfilled

Yes or partially or No, because____

**Gender**

Gender of the tourist

Categories: Male or Female

**Travel parties**

Defined as the number of travel companions.

- alone
- two
- in company of __ people

**Nationality**

Home-country of the tourist

Respondents choose a country: Germany, Austria, Switzerland or others.

**Age**

Defined as the age of the tourist

below 20, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+

**Level of education**

Defined as the highest educational background reached, defining the respondents educational level

Basic schooling, middle school, high school, college/university, PhD level

(Source: own compilation; adapted from Dong & Siu 2013:546; Pearce & Kang 2009:179)
Research question: What are the imaginaries of German-speaking cruise tourists?

The expectations of the tourist is operationalized through pre-travel imaginaries and the pre-travel information received.

Hypothesis: I assume that the pre-travel information plays a major role in the reproduction of stereotype Oriental imaginaries. Furthermore, it is assumed that the travel motivation will influence the imaginaries, on-site experiences and the overall evaluation and ranking of the visit to Souq Muttrah and the oasis/desert. The more stereotypical the expectations of the tourist, the more the tourist will rank the on-site experiences in the souq and in the oasis/desert in a negative way, e.g. by little consumption of souvenirs or food on sale.

In the questionnaire survey the different associations regarding travel imaginaries and the sources of information were asked as well as the visits to Oman and to other souqs or deserts.

Research question: How do German-speaking cruise tourists consume the place?

Hypothesis: The tourist’s consuming pattern will be evaluated through the consuming behavior (with all their senses) in Souq Muttrah and during the excursion to the oasis/desert. I assume the more positive the perception of the souq, the longer the tourist stays in the place, the more products are consumed and the more sustainable is the overall visit. It is of interest to analyse what kind of products are purchased, e.g. local products or from the global product range such as pashmina scarfs. It is assumed that through the presence of Omani frankincense vendors in Souq Muttrah many tourists buy frankincense or related local perfume mixtures.

Research question: What are the cruise tourists’ on-site experiences?

The on-site experiences will be evaluated through the rating of the souq or the oasis/desert and the tourist experience during the visit to both places.

Hypothesis: I assume that the overall on-site experience and the ranking and satisfaction of the on-site visit depend on the tourist’s imaginaries as well as on the duration of the visit, the number of souvenirs purchased, the number of photos taken and their overall embodied, multi-sensuous involvement in the site. The amount of tourist spending is an indicator for a positive on-site experience and the socio-economic sustainability of the visit. It is also assumed that a large number of people leading to overcrowding has a negative influence on the tourist’s on-site experience. Moreover, it is suggested if there is a lack of pre-travel information, tourists tend to dress less respectfully. This may result in a negative attitude of the local shopkeepers towards the tourists, which will impact the overall tourist experience. The concluding question regarding the travel expectations are a resumée of the tourist experience and the intention to return to the destination. Each tourist was asked to tick a rating of the intensity of the tourist experience within a semantical differential with five bipolar answers.

Table 11 shows the questionnaire construction for the case study in Souq Muttrah. It highlights the specification of the variables, their definitions and categories.

Participant observation

To learn more about the socio-cultural impacts of mega-cruise tourism and the tourist experience in both locations (souq and desert/oasis) and to complement the findings of the quantitative survey
and the in-depth interviews, observation was conducted between January to May, once or twice per week along with counting and interviews. This helped to better understand the environment over time, to “see through the eyes of the researched” and to record and analyze the behavior and interactions as they happen (Ritchie 2003:35). Observation was applied to understand the social world of tourists and of local communities experiencing the places. A “social constructivist perspective” used in sociology and social psychology was applied, which explores the behavior and roles of people and analyses how they interpret and react to the environment. Such a perspective recognizes that society influences an individual’s behavior, social values and attitudes, creating more than just one self (Yarnal & Kerstetter 2005:370). To produce a detailed description of people, culture and belief systems, participant observation requires an “immersion in the community” (Snape & Spencer 2003:12). This process can be described in three stages. First the researcher gains access to the community studied. Second, he/she lives and works among the people in order to understand their lives and world views. Third, the researcher writes an account of the community's culture and belief systems (Flowerdew and Martin 2005:168). Through participation in the tourist practices while on tour, the researcher gained “embodied, situational and practice-related knowledge” (Rantala 2010:251).

Compared to the impact of a questionnaire survey, the power of participant observation is that any changes can be traced throughout a certain time frame and not just at a particular moment (Bowen 2002:7).

The research literature distinguishes between overt observer, overt participant, covert observer and covert participant (Flowerdew and Martin 2005:175). In my research all four roles were taken at different times. The observation of tourists, their behavior, their interaction with the local community was conducted from inside or outside the frankincense shop, as a covert observer. To capture the insider view, the scene was observed from inside the shop. At other times, I was standing in front of the shop, like a tourist, observing the scene and approaching tourists or local customers as an overt observer. Since the local well-established vendor community knew me as a tour guide and a journalist, it was not difficult to be accepted as an observer. For example, six years earlier I had written a newspaper article about the frankincense shop and the vendors knew me since then. I had gained their trust and they invited me to sit inside the shop. Due to the vendors’ lack of English, I was seen as a mediator or facilitator and they expected me to promote frankincense and to translate from time to time from German, English, French into Arabic.

“Walking interviews” with tourists

In-depth interviews are used in social sciences to reveal thoughts about certain problems. During a standard interview about a place and the experience respondents usually recall memories and images of places without their direct visual, audible, olfactory or tactile stimuli. However, the physical movement through the place, which is being experienced can reveal many new and embodied aspects. As a result of a normal interview situation, some details, or layers of the on-site experience may be lost. "The encountered objects or situations may also trigger discussions about more abstract aspects of place" (Trell & Van Hoven 2010:99). Thus, it is necessary to see, hear, smell or feel a place in order to make sense of it and to communicate it to outsiders (ibid.:92).

A walking in-depth interview meant performing, interviewing and observing tourists while participating in their on-site experiences (Haldrup and Larsen 2010: 51). The walk facilitated interaction between the tourists and the place and between the researcher and the tourists (Trell &
Van Hoven 2010:9). Furthermore, it helped to understand how tourists experience the place with all their senses (olfactory, tactile, auditory, oral). It was easier to be immersed in the tourist performance (Chronis 2015) and to understand the meanings and the emotions during the embodied on-site tourist experience (Andereck et al. 2006:84). While walking, a natural conversation was held with the tourists. To get a deeper insight into the embodied tourist experiences I approached tourists from different cruise liner segments such as luxury cruises, contemporary mega-cruises as well as individual and group tourists. A total of 22 German-speaking tourist couples between 20-70 years were interviewed (Table 12):

Table 12. Type and number of tourists interviewed in Souq Muttrah, February - May 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of tourist</th>
<th>Number of tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mega-cruise liner tourists (AIDAblu, Costa Classica, Brilliance of the Sea)</td>
<td>9 couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury cruise liner tourists (MS Europa)</td>
<td>1 couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent tourists</td>
<td>7 couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group tourists</td>
<td>5 couples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own compilation)

The interviews were conducted on 15 Sundays between February and May 2012. They were not recorded as the interviewees were more relaxed and confident without a voice recorder. The cruise tourists interviewed did not participate in the questionnaire survey. An accidental sampling method was applied due to limited manpower. I approached the tourists during the peak tourist time, in the morning hours, between 10 am and 1 pm, beside the frankincense shop. In the evenings fewer tourists and especially no contemporary mega-cruise tourists visit the souq, since the ship usually leaves around 6 or 7 pm. The interviews took between 20 and 90 minutes, depending on their available time and the “saturation effect”. During the interviews the interviewees were engaged in a semi-structured dialogue about their travel motivations and their imaginaries as well as their overall on-site-experiences.

The following questions were part of the interviews:

- What made you travel to Muscat?
- Why did you choose the souq/the desert for sightseeing?
- How did you prepare for your trip?
- What were your pre-travel imaginaries?
- How do you experience the place with all your senses?
- Would you like to return to Oman?

Those questions served as a guideline and helped the later analysis and support the arguments. However, the actual conversation was more a natural flow. This technique was found very appropriate for spontaneous reactions, on the other hand there may have been a few things missed out.
In addition, five German on-board tour guides and two on-board lecturers from two different cruise liners were interviewed. They were asked about their own imaginaries and the pre-arrival preparation of the tourists on board the ship. All in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in German and the replies were noted down in a notebook, while walking. Limitations of this research method were that the route that the tourists chose was not planned ahead and limited to a certain time. All tourists interviewed had taken photos with digital cameras. At the end of each conversation I gave the tourists a business card and asked them to send me their favorite photos of the souq and the oasis/the desert, in order to analyse their visual consumption and the tourist-local relationships (Cohen et. al. 1992). Most of them agreed to do so, but the response rate was low. This may be an indicator for their superficial and fast travel mode within a short time frame. A total of nine tourist couples replied in Souq Muttrah.

Photography

Referring to the tourists’ visual consumption, it has been argued that “the tourist gaze” (Urry & Larsen 2011) is a replication of texts and pictures that proceed the travel (ibid.:100). A semiotic analysis (Albers & James 1988) describing the poses of the person photographed was chosen for the analysis of the tourist photos. In my third paper (chapter 5.3), I refer to categories such as the subject, the dress, the action and the context of the photograph as well as the focal position of the photographer (ibid.:149).

It has been acknowledged that visual autoethnography opens understanding where verbal discourse is limited (Scarles 2010:906). This method gave insights into how tourists visually, physically and spatially consume the place. Photography with my own digital camera was applied on most days when interviews were conducted. Through my long-term immersion (Chronis 2015:127) and photography of the tourist and guide performance, I captured the spatial and socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism, e.g. the tourist movement in space including the impact of crowding, the dress behavior and the physical transformation of space. It helped to document how the tourist destinations change throughout time, e.g. the relocation of shops in Souq Muttrah. The identity of the photographed persons was kept anonymous and faces were blacked out, if possible.

Interviews with the local community and with government officials

In order to get an insight into the context of cruise tourism a large number of in-depth interviews with different stakeholders of the local multi-ethnic community and with government officials were conducted between 2012 and 2014. I started interviews with the local community at the end of the tourist season, in April 2012.

In the beginning, the interview partners were shop vendors, business owners, customers, local and expatriate tour guides, representatives of tour-operators and a shipping agent. Moreover, a total of eleven local tour guides were interviewed in Souq Muttrah at the end of the tourist season, between April and June 2012. Through their guiding practices cultural brokers play an important role in forming the tourist experience (Salazar 2010:80). Eleven tour guides of different nationalities (Omani, Indian, Sri Lankan, German and Austrian) were interviewed in English or in German. They had all been guiding German-speaking cruise tourists. I usually asked the tour guides during the interviews with tourists if I might interview them later on. Then towards the end of the tourist season, I called them and met them in the souq or at a coffee shop beside the souq. The in-depth and semi-
structured interviews were open. Since I knew most of the interviewees through my work as a tour guide, I did not need to build trust, which facilitated the flow of the interviews and they were more confident to speak and share their own views and experiences about mega-cruise tourism, its development in recent years and the impacts on guiding through the souq.

Inside the souq a total of 45 interviews in 45 shops were conducted with shop vendors or owners of different age groups (25-75 years) and of different nationalities. They included 25 Indian, 16 Omani, 2 Bangladeshi, 1 Pakistani and 1 Syrian. The shops were new or up to 250 years old and located along the Corniche road, along the main “tourist street” as well as along the small street, connecting the Corniche and the main street of Souq Muttrah. These shops covered a variety of products such as local perfumes, halwa (local sweets), handicraft, a pharmacy, spices, groceries, kummas (traditional hats for men), pashmina scarves, foodstuffs and household items.

In a first stage, I approached shopkeepers from the retail part, beginning with the frankincense shop and followed with those shops visited during the walking interviews with the tourists. In the beginning of an interview, I introduced myself and showed a letter of support from GUtech. Then I started the interview. If the person did not have time, I fixed an appointment for another day. The interviews were conducted in Arabic with Omanis and in English with expatriates. At times it was challenging and for interviews with Indian and Pakistani vendors Hindi or Urdu would have been an asset. The interviews included questions about the history of the shop, their own personal history, the product range, the perception of tourism development and especially cruise tourism in Souq Muttrah, the previous tourist season, suggestions for further development, the tourist behavior and difficulties faced, the dress code and the cross-cultural interaction. The owner of a local coffee shop beside the main entrance and the manager of a restaurant were also interviewed. In a second stage, wholesale shops were covered. Unlike in the retail part, the interviews in the wholesale market followed a snowballing sampling (Ritchie et al. 2003:94). Therefore, the first person interviewed introduced me to the next person, and so on. In this way, I was able to meet the community of the Banyan traders, originating from India, having lived and worked in Muttrah for several centuries. While I was sat in their offices, I was able to listen to their life stories. To get more a dialogue situation, I conducted semi-structured interviews along with a questionnaire but I always kept space for their stories. Due to the close social structure of the multi-ethnic community in Souq Muttrah and to allow critical views all interviews were taken anonymously.

Moreover, I interviewed the Director of Bait Al Baranda Museum, located in Muttrah who helped as a gatekeeper for other local community members. I also interviewed eight local customers and seven Omani residents, living in the residential area close to the souq. They were interviewed either in the souq while shopping or inside the enclosed residential district facing directly the harbor, Sur Al Lawatia. The district was visited on those days when a mega-cruise liner was in the port. Since the access to Sur Al Lawatia is extremely restricted for non-residents and guarded, it was extremely difficult to conduct interviews. However, through my contacts I got access to members of the Omani business elite who have houses in Sur Al Lawatia and who gather at their homes with family members on weekends. A businessman promised to arrange further meetings with other elder residents, but this did not happen. Compared to other local community members, not all interviewees expressed their opinions as open as expected. A few mentioned that they did not want to be quoted in the thesis, which reflects their fears of expressing their own opinion and a critical
view towards tourism. This also explains the so-called “researcher’s gaze”, where interviewees “feel self-conscious or threatened knowing that anything they say may be written down and used in evidence against them” (Flowerdew & Martin 2005:179). Follow-up interviews with members of the local community, and observation at the main entrance of Souq Muttrah were conducted in 2013 and at the beginning of 2014, when AIDA Cruises and Costa Cruises, were in the port.

Figure 3. Mixed methods applied in the case study

| Participatory observation and travel ethnography | Questionnaire survey (N=830 tourists) | Walking interviews with 21 tourist couples |
| Photography | Counting on 3 Sundays | In-depth interviews with 5 German onboard tour guides and 2 onboard lecturers |
| Content analysis of cruise brochures, websites, media articles etc. | In-depth interviews with 9 government officials (ministers and the Wali) | In-depth interviews with 1 shipping agent and the local tour agency |
| In-depth interviews with 8 customers | In-depth interviews with 45 shop vendors and shop owners | In-depth interviews with 11 local tour guides |
| In-depth interviews with 7 Omani residents of Muttrah |

Source: (own design)

Moreover, nine government experts and high-ranking officials were interviewed, who were selected based on their knowledge of tourism as well as their involvement in tourism development. The Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs, the Assistant Grand Mufti and the Wali of Muttrah as well as other officials who wished to remain anonymous were interviewed. They were asked about tourism planning, the development of mega-cruise tourism and its impacts in Muttrah and in the oasis and Sharquiyah Sands desert as well as the tourists’ pre-travel preparation. Furthermore, an official of the Public Authority for Consumer Protection was asked about business practices and consumer protection in the souq. The Wali of Muttrah was interviewed about the history and development of the souq as a tourist destination and a shopping destination for locals. Interviews were conducted after one or two initial meetings, in English or in Arabic and then transcribed into English.

4.2.2 An oasis and the Sharquiyah Sands desert

In North Sharquiyah, governorate of Al Qabil, which is the location of the second case study, the oasis and part of the Sharquiyah Sands desert, the total population accounted for 22,311 with 83% Omanis (16,386) compared to 27% Non-Omanis (5,925) in 2015 (NCSI 2015a:21). The area has developed as a so-called "transit destination", where tourists mainly pass as visitors. The ancient trading oasis Al Muthairib in the governorate of Al Qabil, which is a new tourist destination, on the
edge of the desert is located in the periphery, about 3 hours from Muscat and is a place for heritage tourism and nature tourism. The oasis offers a privately-owned heritage museum, a falaj system (ancient irrigation system) and an old souq (market), built of traditional sarooj building material, which dissolves with each rainfall. According to Gaube & Gangler (2012) a very large number of oasis settlements in Oman are currently undergoing such deterioration. If the process continues, it would be “an immense loss for mankind in general and for Oman in particular, since the architectural heritage is closely linked to the socio-historical identity of the Omani society” (Gaube & Gangler 2012:2). Over the past five millennia oases settlements as a strategy of human adaptation to the harsh environment have played an important role on the Arabian Peninsula. Their importance has reduced dramatically since the oil boom in the 1970s and the rapid socio-economic developments in Oman (ibid.:2). In the past the oasis was the main source of living for the local population, who moved inside the cooling greenery of the oasis during the summer months. Lüdeling & Bürkert (2010) have identified 2,430 oases in northern Oman, classified as the traditional oases, once consisting of mud-, mud and stone or stone-built settlements and palm plantations, which were transformed into wide-spread settlements. In many oasis settlements such as Al Muthairib, new government-planned development areas with villas have been constructed a few kilometers away from the old buildings (Figure 5).

Figure 4. The Sharquiyah Sands desert and an oasis close to the desert

(Source: own design)

Those built-up areas inside the oases settlements (Figure 5 below) have increased by ten times in the last twenty years, whereas the population has increased only three times (Gaube & Gangler
Often these new areas have caused more traffic and an increased water consumption, which is no longer provided by the traditional falaj system (ibid.:320). However, as Timothy & Nyaupane (2009) note, public funding for conservation and preservation is an issue in developing countries. Often main cities and the home towns of the elite are favored in the distribution of budgets dedicated for conservation.

Moreover, there is a lack of “holistic management” and cooperation between different entities involved in the management of heritage sites (ibid.:31). In the long run responsible and slower tourism activities may help in securing the heritage of the oasis.

Figure 5. The old city wall and new houses in Al Muthairib, February 2014
Figure 6. Dune driving in Sharquiyah Sands desert, March 2013

(Source: own photography)

The case study in the oasis and in Sharquiyah Sands desert was conducted in a similar way as the first case study including a large-scale questionnaire survey. This was followed by in-depth interviews with tourists, local community members including cultural mediators, local residents and government officials in Muscat. The survey by questionnaire was conducted with German-speaking tourists of another contemporary mega-cruise liner brand, which requested to be unnamed. The two-paged survey was distributed between January and March 2013 during nine full-day tours. Further methods included participant observation and in-depth interviews with tourists until a “saturation point” was achieved. Similar to Souq Muttrah, participant overt observations during the excursion were supported by still photography.

**The tourist questionnaire survey**

Prior to the distribution of the survey a pre-test was conducted among 58 German-speaking cruise and group tourists immediately after they had visited Sharquiyah Sands. As a consequence, the questionnaire survey was modified several times. The management of the cruise liner approved the final version of the questionnaire and its distribution that started end of January 2013. Along with pens, the questionnaire was distributed to each person after lunch in the desert camp, prior to the departure to Muscat. The tourists were also briefed about the research and its purpose. On their way back to the port the tourists had time to fill it out. The questionnaire began with a short introduction followed by the same questions as in the questionnaire conducted in Souq Muttrah, regarding the tourists’ travel preparation, their travel motivation, their imaginaries and their awareness about the
local behavior including the dress code and the on-site experiences. The questionnaires were collected immediately upon return to the port. Out of 390 questionnaires distributed a total of 235 tourists returned their survey form, achieving a high response rate of 61%. Further details about the design of the tourist questionnaire survey with its key variables, their definitions and categories are shown in the table below (Table 13).

Table 13. Specification of the variables and questionnaire construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Measured by/ Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience of the tourist setting in Oman</td>
<td>Number of trips to Oman</td>
<td>Respondents indicate the number of trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-travel Imaginaries</td>
<td>Defined as images prior to the arrival</td>
<td>Respondents indicated their imaginaries, choosing from a list of 13 Oriental and Non-Oriental imaginaries and a rating scale: very strong, fairly strong, medium, less intense, not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations for the excursion</td>
<td>Motivations for conducting the tour to the desert</td>
<td>Respondents choose from seven categories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to discover nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to experience the Orient</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to know more about the desert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to travel with 4x4 through the dunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to understand the way of living of Bedouins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- to spend some time with my family/partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I do not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-travel information received</td>
<td>Defined as pre-travel preparation regarding the social behavior; dress code, alcohol, showing affection in public</td>
<td>Yes/ partially/ no answer to a question on the pre-travel information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous desert experience</td>
<td>Defined as visits to other deserts in the Middle East</td>
<td>Yes/no agreement or disagreement to a question on deserts visited before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experiences in the desert</td>
<td>Defined as visits to other deserts in the Middle East</td>
<td>Respondents choose from a list of six countries and/or one open category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction about the excursion „multi-sensuous and communicative staging“</td>
<td>Overall satisfaction with the excursion</td>
<td>Respondents indicate their satisfaction with seven categories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the oasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the sand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the fascinating wide landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the drive through the dunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the contact with locals/Bedouins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- plants and animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the desert camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rating scale between: very much liked, liked, neutral, did not like, did not like at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel interpretation</td>
<td>Defined as the type of interpretation received during the excursion</td>
<td>Respondents choose from: Yes/no agreement and between different categories: the development of the desert, resources in the desert, water, increasing desertification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel interpretation</strong></td>
<td>Defined as the type of interpretation received during the excursion</td>
<td>Respondents choose from: yes/no agreement and categories: accacia, ghaf tree, snakes, dromedary, goats, scorpions, insects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immediate, recent overall embodied experience of the setting and the satisfaction „experience intensification“</strong></td>
<td>Defined as experience of the desert setting on the just completed excursion and the satisfaction with the experience</td>
<td>Respondents indicate their experience, choosing from a scale between agree very much, agree, neutral, do not agree, do not agree at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                          |                                                                  | - The desert is an „Oriental“ experience.  
- The desert is a nature experience.  
- I feel like being in a different world.  
- There were too many people in the desert.  
- The place was dirty.  
- He guide/driver were friendly.  
- I would like to recommend the excursion. |
| **Visual experience „experience extension“** | Defined as the kind of photos taken during the excursion | Respondents choose from nine categories: No photo taken; sand dunes; oasis; group photo; travel partner; dromedary; plants; beduin tents; our cars |
| **Overall travel satisfaction with the excursion** | Satisfaction with the travel destination; expectations fulfilled | Yes/No or partially reply to a question on the travel expectations |
| **On-site interpretation during the excursion** | Defined as the type of information to be improved | Respondents choose from different categories: |
|                          |                                                                  | - the desert  
- Bedouins  
- the oasis  
- mobile app on geotourism  
- a visitor center at the entrance to the desert |
| **Future interest in the destination** | Defined as the level of interest shown in the destination | A rating scale between Yes/No or maybe |
| **Demographic data: Travel parties** | Defined as the number of travel companions | Categories of: |
|                          |                                                                  | - alone  
- two  
In company of ____ people. |
| **Gender** | Gender of the tourist | Categories: Male or Female |
| **Nationality** | Home-country of the tourist | Respondent chooses a category: Germany, Austria, Switzerland and others |
| **Age** | Defined as the age of the tourist | Under 20, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+ |
| **Level of education** | Defined as the educational background of the tourist | Basic schooling, middle school, high school, college/university, PhD level |

(Source: own compilation; adapted from Pearce & Kang 2009:179; Dong & Siu 2013:546)

**“Walking interviews” with tourists and participatory observation**

To understand how German-speaking cruise tourists experience the oasis and the desert I travelled together with the tourists on nine-day excursions. During those days the questionnaire survey was
conducted as well. Through open participant observation and ethnography I explored the behavior of the group members (Yarnal & Kerstetter 2007:371) applying a “social interactionist” perspective (ibid.:370). Similar to the souq, I actively participated in the excursion as part of the group, which helped to participate and be immersed in the entire setting (ibid.:371). Moreover, in-depth interviews during the excursions, e.g. during a short walk through the oasis or in the desert, were used to “give voice to the multiplicity of views”, adding further depth and understanding (Jennings 2005:114). During the interviews, the tourists were asked about their pre-travel preparation, pre-travel imaginaries, their overall travel motivation and their motivation to go on the excursion, their actual on-site experiences, their level of satisfaction at the sites visited and whether they wished to return to the destination. In the end, the respondents were asked about their professional background. Twelve cruise tourists were interviewed individually. Moreover, I interviewed three couples, who counted as one voice, as well as five German on-board tour guides, an on-board lecturer and an on-board pastor. In addition, seven couples travelling with a group and individually were interviewed about their on-site experiences at different desert camps and in the desert. Different age groups of tourists, male and females between 25 and 82 years, were represented. The cruise guides and the on-board pastor were interviewed in the car, along the road.

**Interviews with the local community, government officials and environmental experts**

In-depth interviews were conducted with the local community living in close proximity to the tourist attraction in the old center, the souq area of the oasis. As with the situation in the residential area beside Souq Muttrah, I encountered difficulties in getting access to the community and their thoughts within an “emic approach” (Pearce 2011:10). Therefore, a high-ranking official from Muscat who originates from the region, introduced me in the beginning to one of the sheikhs in the oasis. The sheikh then acted as another gatekeeper to the community. The community was very friendly but it was difficult to interview a large number of people. Generally, the community in the periphery is traditionally reserved and conservative and at times I experienced barriers. For example, I encountered a few negative incidents where residents approached by the sheikh refused an interview, though they had been introduced to the research and its purpose.

Asked about the reasons a female resident said: “People do not want to speak to foreigners, especially if they do not know what they want.” This can be interpreted as a result of being afraid of a “foreign intruder” of their community and of fears of expressing views towards someone outside the community. Similar to Tsibiridou (2014) who describes her field work experience as a researcher in the Interior of Oman as being stereotyped as “English” (ibid.:191), meaning being judged from her “Otherness” as a female, European researcher, who speaks English and has a different appearance than the local community. Therefore, to reduce the fears and to decrease the cultural gap between the locals and myself, it was important to establish the community’s trust through my appearance and my Arabic language skills. During interviews with male community members, I always wore a scarf which was loosely wrapped around my hair, in order to show respect towards the local culture and to be more respected as a young but experienced female researcher. Moreover, to comply with local customs that prohibit a conversation between a man and woman outside the family circle, I was accompanied most of the time by a male Omani tour guide or a female teacher who acted as gatekeepers and sometimes assisted in translating the Arabic dialect into English. A snowball approach was employed for the semi-structured interviews, following a conversational style.
I finally interviewed a total of twenty-one members of the local community including six female residents and two male sheikhs (heads of the community). To get a broader picture of the community involvement in tourism in the oasis and in the desert two employees of the government owned Handicraft Authority in the oasis, one freelance male musician who works in the evenings at a tourist desert camp and a coffee man who originates from another town and serves coffee to cruise tourists in the oasis were interviewed. Moreover, five male Omani and expatriate managers of four tourist desert camps were interviewed as well as a Bedouin family that has been receiving tourists on a daily basis in their family desert tent during the winter season. Female residents were interviewed in their living rooms at home and males were interviewed in a public space, such as the market square or in their offices or tourist camps. Twice I was invited for lunch with female residents of the oasis, a very welcoming gesture of Omani hospitality.

Figure 7. Mixed methods applied in the case study

(Source: own design)

Furthermore, to gain a deeper insight into the social values of the community, high-ranking government officials were interviewed, including the Assistant Grand Mufti of Oman. He was interviewed about the role of travel in Islam as well as social and religious values. The Assistant Grand Mufti requested to review the interview, which was sent to him and returned with a few modifications. In addition, the elected male representative of one wilaya in the Majlis Al Shura (parliament) was interviewed in Muscat as well as the Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs, who replied with written answers. In contrast to the situation in Muttrah, the Wali (governor) of the oasis governorate rejected several verbal requests and an official written enquiry in Arabic including all the interview questions. He then asked me to get an approval from the Ministry of Higher Education first. However, at this stage, I decided not to proceed with the interview request. Furthermore, other experts in the field of environmental protection were interviewed in-depth
including the UNESCO Ecologic Science advisor and representative in the GCC region, Dr. Benno de Boer as well as a European botany expert and the Corporate Social Responsibility Manager of Omran, Badriya Al Siyabi. The expert interviews were conducted in English or in German and recorded.

4.2.3 Transcription and data analysis

The interviews with tourists, on-board guides and German experts were conducted with ease in German, noted down word for word and transcribed into English. I also noted as many observations and comments as possible that occurred on the sidelines and during the interviews, e.g. knocking on the desk while answering a question or other body language. Here Reuber & Pfaffenbach (2005) suggest the use of a postscriptum, notes and impressions taken during the interview (ibid.:160f). Sharing the same language and the same cultural background was found very helpful in “understanding the participants’ accounts” (Lewis 2003:65). Nevertheless, the majority of the interviews were conducted in English, which is not my mother tongue nor that of the majority of the persons interviewed. Since “words can take on a very different meaning in other cultures” (Patton 1990:392) some aspects may have been left out or some misunderstandings may have occurred on both sides during the conversation. Answers in Arabic were immediately translated into English, noted down and later on transcribed.

The key concepts of the qualitative research were found through the research process and through content analysis, by comparing the interviews with each other and creating a research frame along with the observation. The interviews were divided into a spread-sheet according to the category of stakeholders - tourists, shopkeepers/owners, tour guides, residents, customers, government officials and experts and then compared with each other according to the questions and research hypothesis. After the interview transcription including the notes taken, I reread through the texts and manually noted headlines on top of each paragraph and then gathered the answers according to the concepts found: travel motivation, cruise tourism, tourist bubble, imaginaries, Otherness, dress behavior, social values, consuming behavior, pre-travel preparation, mindfulness, multi-sensuous on-site experience, socio-cultural impacts.

To minimize bias in the research process and to get a holistic approach with different angles of on-site experiences, practices and sociocultural impacts in both places, triangulation was applied (Creswell 1998). Therefore, I used quantitative and qualitative research methods and a wide range of information, such as government statistics, media reports, theoretical perspectives, findings of other ethnographic studies, conversations with gatekeepers and key-informants of the local community as well as with dissertation supervisors, reviewers of my papers submitted to journals and other researchers encountered during international geography conferences. This process ensured the verification of the qualitative research and holistic research results (Creswell 1998). The quantitative data of the questionnaire survey was coded first then inserted into the SPSS system and analyzed according to the research questions, mainly descriptive and using cross-tabulation.

4.3 Power relations and gender issues

Interviewing German-speaking tourists was not an obstacle, since the tourists regarded me as one of them, someone who shares their language and was seen as a facilitator or mediator who could also provide more in-depth insight they could not get through their own tour guides.
However, the gender segregation and cross-cultural interviews with the local communities added various "layers of complexity to the already-complex interactions of an interview" (Patton 1990:391). The majority of the community members interviewed were male, which also reflects the patriarchal structure of the society in Oman, where 65% of the population are male (NCSI 2015a:7). One male Omani resident said about the souq: "This is a men’s world." Until 1970 only men went shopping to the souq, women remained at home. Elder shop owners who lived in the souq area also said that I could not enter the residential district without wearing a scarf and abaya. However, this is not an obligation for female Non-Muslims in public places in Oman. Moreover, "men interviewing women and women interviewing men will gain differing insights from a man interviewing a man and a women interviewing a woman" (Jennings 2005:111). In traditional patriarchal cultures including Arab cultures it is seen as “a breach of etiquette” for an unknown individual to request for an interview with the opposite sex (Patton 2002:393). Therefore, a male Omani tour guide from Muscat helped in mediating with male community members in the oasis. However, during the interviews in Souq Muttrah I was on my own all the time.

Thus, I sometimes faced “gender issues” and stigma against women. I encountered negative feelings while conducting interviews with the young male South Asian community in Souq Muttrah. Those members of the community who had been working in the souq for a long time were very hospitable. They invited me to sit down and offered sweet Indian milk tea. At times, I had the impression being female and European was positive and there were more chances for interviews. However, newly arrived expatriate Asian vendors were usually suspicious about what I was doing and my questioning. As a consequence, several shopkeepers did not want to be interviewed. I assume this was due to a lack of communication or fear of being critical. At times, I felt there was an air of formality as if I was regarded as a kind of policewoman. I was not offered to sit down, but had to stand during the interviews. In some shops, I also felt obliged to buy something e.g. a pashmina scarf in return for the interview and the information given. Whereas in other Omani shops I was offered a gift in return for the interview. For example, in the halwa shop, I received a pot of fresh halwa or the frankincense shop offered frankincense and other local perfumes. During the interviews with the local community in both locations my Arabic knowledge helped to get access to them. "I tell you this because you are one of us," said an Omani interviewee clearly. However, being familiar with the terrain, also meant that there were expectations, such as facilitating the sale of products to tourists, facilitating governmental support, realizing a tourism project, promoting the area to tourists and getting involved in sales operations of a desert camp. However, it was not possible to meet all these requests in the course of my research.

I have been visiting Souq Muttrah regularly in the past years. The longer I became immersed into the research environment, the more interesting the entire research, including the stories of the individuals and the development of the community became. In contrast, due to the research barriers faced with the local community in the oasis and in the desert, I felt relieved to finalize my research in 2014. Moreover, I realized that there is a stricter gender segregation in everyday life in the oasis, compared to Muttrah, where this phenomenon was more blurred.
5 Research Papers

In this chapter the content of all published or accepted research papers are summarized briefly.


Twelve years ago mega-cruise tourism started in Oman, when the first mega-cruise liner AIDA arrived. Since then the phenomenon has increased in scale and in numbers. In 2012 a total of 135 cruise liners carrying 257,000 tourists docked in Oman. As a consequence the number of cruise tourists visiting Muscat’s prime tourist attraction Souq Muttrah opposite to the harbor, which is the oldest and main market place in Oman, has increased in recent years. What are the socio-cultural impacts for the local Omani and expatriate community? What are the effects on the lifestyle and quality of life of the community? The research is based on fieldwork conducted between 2012 and 2014 in Souq Muttrah. In the first stage, quantitative methods included a large-scale questionnaire survey among cruise tourists and counting of tourists and locals. To capture some socio-cultural impacts, qualitative methods including walking in-depth interviews with German-speaking cruise tourists and interviews with the local community and with high-ranking officials were applied.

Results indicate that mass cruise tourism has changed the social and cultural identity of the souq. Overcrowding, a lack of parking space and traffic congestion has become a major problem and local residents avoid shopping in the souq while a cruise liner is in the harbor. On the one hand, the place became the core of a “tourist bubble”, where shops and restaurants in the core of the bubble have adjusted their products to the demand of the mass cruise tourist. On the other hand, a large number of cruise tourists surveyed were low spenders; they either did not buy any souvenirs or bought cheap imported products such as fake pashmina scarfs. As a result, newly arrived expatriate vendors started selling imported items in the tourist bubble and became more aggressive in their selling attitude. Well-established Omani and Indian vendors, who rather cater for the local community, tend to leave their businesses for good or relocate their shops to the inside of the souq. The paper fills a research gap on socio-cultural impacts of mega-cruise tourism in a new cruise destination in a little researched geographical area of the Arabian Peninsula.

Staging the Oriental Other: Imaginaries and Performances of German-speaking Cruise Tourists, accepted in Tourist Studies (2017; see appendix).

For European tourists an Oriental market (in Arabic: souq) is an exotic place representing the “Otherness”. The paper aims to answer the questions: What are the tourists’ imaginaries and social narratives? What is the role that cultural brokers play during a visit to Souq Muttrah? Gaining insight into the imaginaries and on-site experiences of German-speaking cruise tourists will contribute to the discussion of imaginaries and embodied performances in general as well as the mediation and the construction of space within an Oriental environment. The paper is part of a larger field study conducted between 2012 and 2014 in Souq Muttrah. Furthermore, participant observation and travel ethnography were conducted in addition to photography, in-depth interviews with different types of tourists and with cultural brokers. Results indicate that predetermined Oriental imaginaries are misleading, creating stereotypes and impacting the tourist-host encounter.
The cruise tourists travel backwards in time and their multi-sensory, on-site performances, e.g. at the frankincense shop, are enhanced by The Arabian Nights. Cultural brokers play an important role, performing along with the tourists at different stages, similar to a visit to a theme park.


Tourist photography is an integral part of the tourist performance, similar to collecting souvenirs and organizing the travel itinerary. A tourist consumes the place and produces mobile, embodied memories through digital photography, thus creating the “Otherness” of the place and the people visited. This paper aims to answer the question of the German-speaking tourists’ social representations in one of the main tourist sites in the Sultanate of Oman, Souq Muttrah. For this research, qualitative methods were conducted such as participant observation and in-depth interviews with different types of German-speaking tourists visiting the souq during the tourist season in 2012 and 2013. After the visit, the tourists were asked to email their favorite photo of the souq to the researcher. A total of nine tourist couples replied. The majority of the photographers were group or independent travelers who had spent more than one day in Oman. Content analysis was used to analyze the photos and they were contextualized within the interviews.

Results show that photography plays a major role in enhancing the tourists’ on-site visit and reproducing Souq Muttrah as an imaginary, “unchanged” and “Oriental sight”. Tourist photography is an embodied experience; the tourists stop, take time for a photo with a digital camera and then move on. Group and independent travelers received more interpretation from their tour guides and they chose uncommon and close perspectives for their photographs, while emerging in the “Otherness”. This was reflected in the dress, the frankincense, jewelry and henna drawings, realizing a "romantic gaze" of the Omani people and their culture. Therefore, it emphasized the importance of the local population as part of their experience. In contrast, mega-cruise tourists, who had limited time for their visit, took general views of the souq.

Cruise Tourist Dress Behaviors and Local-Guest Reactions in a Muslim Country, published in Tourism Culture & Communication (2016), Vol. 16, No 1/2, 15-32 (see copyright agreement in appendix)

Communication between people from high-context cultures with low-context cultures, who have a different value system, contributes to culture shock situations and an increase in stereotypes and stigma. The paper analyses the cross-cultural communication and the ethics of tourism between mega-cruise tourists and the local community in two tourist attractions in the Sultanate of Oman. The main goal is to identify the tourist behavior while focusing on the dress behavior of cruise tourists and applying the concept of “mindfulness”. Furthermore, the paper attempts to analyze the perceptions and values of the resident community and other tourists visiting the places, as well as the pre-travel information and the social construction of the travel media.

Two questionnaire surveys were conducted with German-speaking cruise tourists in two destinations in 2012 (N=830) and in 2013 (N=235). Moreover, in-depth interviews were conducted with tourists, on-board tour-guides and an on-board pastor. In addition, pre-travel information was studied and
the local community was interviewed in both locations about their perceptions of tourist behavior. The Assistant Grand Mufti was also interviewed.

Results indicate a mindless dress behavior has been facilitated by pre-travel information and cultural brokers on-board the cruise liner, who avoid giving restrictions and promote the spirit of freedom. Moreover, local cultural brokers who communicate in a high-context style give unclear information to tourists and tourism providers. Hence, the tourist wants to realize his or her freedom and the community reacts with tolerance, accommodating the tourist behavior within a “laissez faire attitude”. However, for some members of the local community, the increase in the number of mindless cruise tourists exceeds their level of tolerance, creating culture-shock situations and stigmatizing tourists.

Therefore, suggestions for avoiding culture-shock situations and creating a more mindful tourist behavior will be given. This paper fills a major research gap in applied research on the cruise tourists’ behavior in a Muslim country and on cross-cultural communication.
5 Research Papers

5.1 Socio-Cultural Impacts of Large-Scale Cruise Tourism in Souq Muttrah, Sultanate of Oman

5.1.1 Introduction

Cruise tourism has been expanding worldwide. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), emerging cruise destinations, like the Arabian Peninsula, are gaining ground during the winter season and are competing with the Canary Islands and Azores in the Atlantic (UNWTO 2010:60). Especially the Emirate Dubai is seen as an “emerging cruise hub” (Rodrique & Notteboom 2013:36). “Globally the 13 million cruise passengers recorded in 2004 are expected to increase to 25 million by 2015” (UNWTO 2010:73). The trend is to increase especially the number of affordable cruises in the so-called “contemporary” and “budget” segment. Contemporary cruises are sold as “holiday-at-sea packages” (UNWTO 2010:61), which are similar to tourist resorts.

Research focusing on cruise tourism and its economic, social and environmental impacts is limited (Stefanidaki & Lekakou 2012:81) including the impact of cruise tourism on local communities (Weeden et al. 2011:28; Satta et al. 2014:54). There is a particular lack of sociological and anthropological studies of cruise tourism (Wood 2000:347) whereas business, management and economics of cruise tourism have been studied more extensively (Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011). Existing sociological research on cruise tourists’ behavior, for example by Foster (1989), focuses on the behavior of cruise tourists on a small cruise liner in the South Pacific while Papathanassis (2012) analyzed the guest-to-guest encounter of German-speaking cruise tourists.

This paper explores the socio-cultural impacts of contemporary cruise tourism in a little researched, emerging cruise destination, the Omani capital Muscat. The paper analyses crowding, and the concepts of cruise tourism as an “environmental bubble” or “tourist bubble” and the “social carrying capacity”, i.e. the acceptable social limit of growth (Getz 1987). The concept of the “environmental bubble” introduced by Cohen (1978) focuses on the social, physical and built environment, separated from the surrounding environment. Cohen (1978) mentioned the environmental limits of tourism development. He distinguished four types of factors having an impact on the environment: the intensity of the tourist-site use and the accompanying development of the site, the resilience of the environment, the short-term perspective of the tourism developer and the transformational character of tourism developments (Cohen 1978:220).

Cohen’s concept was further developed by Foster (1989) and Jaakson (2004) as the “tourist bubble”. Foster (1989:223) explored the social interaction of tourists on board a small cruise liner, described as an “air-conditioned bubble”. Jaakson (2004) analyzed the tourist environment beside the port in Zihuatanejo (Mexico). His concept of the “tourist bubble” emphasizes the physical and psychological environment of the tourist with his motivations, attitudes and belief system. “A cruise ship is an extreme form of a closed bubble” (Jaakson 2004:57), where cruise tourists travel in a safe environment of the ship – a floating comfortable place like home. A cruise ship has been described as a “floating tourist resort, rather than a means of transport” (UNWTO 2010:1). Weaver (2005a) even described cruise liners as a space of containment, a destination on its own, where tourists spend all their money and time. He also compared the mass-consumption on board a cruise liner with a McDonald's restaurant (Weaver 2005b). According to the UNWTO (2010:1), the concept of resort-like cruise ships has been very successful in the Caribbean, but cannot be replicated in other regions. Compared to travelling with a group in a bus or car, cruise tourists are in almost total isolation on the sea, except when the tourists leave their ship to visit a shore. Wood (2000:365) mentioned that
cruises only “touch down” briefly in their port of call, but spend most of their time in non-territorial waters. One of the activities included in the cruise itinerary are on-shore excursions, organized by local tour operators and conducted in sightseeing buses. Tourists can also stay on board or explore the destination on their own. However, when they leave the cruise ship they may enter another “tourist bubble” (Jaakson 2004:57): “Within a bubble there are likely to be significant variations in the concentration of tourists, facilities, services, and activities”. According to Jaakson the “tourist bubble” can consist of a single peak representing a core and gradually diminishing contours around it. The periphery zone or the contours may be more complex consisting of multiple peaks (Jaakson 2004:57).

Most cruise liner research has focused on the economic impact of cruise tourism especially in the Caribbean. According to Wilkinson (1999:278), cruise tourists in the Caribbean purchase little local products. Similarly cruise tourists in Antarctica (Klein 2010:67), and Norway (Larsen et al. 2013), stay several hours in the port and spend less money than individual or group tourists who stay longer and spend more money throughout their entire stay. Also Henthorpe (2000) found out that those tourists who spent the least amount of time in a market place spent little money. According to Dwyer and Forsyth (1998), the economic impact of cruise tourism can be attributed to the passenger-related expenditure, crew-related expenditure and company-related expenditure. They examined the economic impact of cruise tourism in Australia where tourist expenditure from local cruise liners is higher compared to international cruises. Satta et al. (2014:72) found out that “there is a positive relationship between word of mouth and the overall satisfaction, and the impact of port-related attributes on the overall satisfaction in Italian cruise ports”.

For many countries tourism development can be seen as a process and an important tool to build communities that are economically, socially and culturally prosperous (Wahab & Pigram 1997:281). Thus, countries are developing tourism primarily to create jobs and generate further income (Vanhove 1997:74). However, tourism and particularly enclave tourism is not equally beneficial for all communities. As Cohen (1978:219) argued, “the development of tourism brings a large number of people, accustomed to a relatively high standard of amenities, to a previously secluded natural or cultural environment”. Regarding cruise liner tourism Klein (2010:66) mentioned that cruise ship tourism has an impact on culturally sensitive locations such as Antarctica, where cruise ship tourism is incompatible with the lifestyle, facilities and services of the community. Similarly, in Tonga (Polynesia) (Urbanowicz 1989:113) and in Dubrovnik (Croatia) the increase in tourist numbers in the old town has been ascribed to the “invasive nature of cruise tourism” (Ljubica & Dulcic 2012:27). This phenomenon of a large number of people spending a limited time in the destination has also been called “shock loading” effect (Wilkinson 1999:277).

Tourism should have benefits for the local community. Therefore, negative effects on the quality of life should be limited (Krippendorf 1987:115). The impact of tourism development is defined as “a change in a given state over time as a result of an external stimulus” (Hall & Lew 2009:54). To reduce the impacts of tourism, the concept of sustainable tourism has gradually evolved as a social and economic process involving the progressive improvement of conditions and the fulfillment of the potential local community (Wall 1997:34). The social impacts are effects that influence the values of the community, their behavior patterns, the structure of the community, the overall lifestyle and their quality of life (Hall & Lew 2009:57), for example as a result of a large number of tourists. The ways in which local communities cope with the increase in tourism activities depend on the level of
the touristic development and if they are affected by it negatively or positively (Doğan 1989:225). Reactions to tourism are formed through different attitudes such as resistance, retreatism, boundary maintenance, revitalization and adoption (Doğan 1989:232). According to Doxey's (1976) four-stage irritation index, the host community changes its attitude towards tourism according to the intensity of the tourism development and the number of tourists visiting the place.

An important indicator for the wellbeing of the local community is the number of tourists. As Smith (1989:14) mentioned, the stressful interactions between hosts and tourists appear to increase proportionately to the larger numbers. According to Smith (1989), the critical point in the development of a tourist industry is achieved when tourist facilities are implemented: e.g. special parking for tourist buses, tourist hotels and tourist restaurants. As a consequence, large numbers of tourists can be handled only by industrial methods, for example with standardization and mass production (Krippendorf 1987:42).

To compensate for negative impacts, Jafari (1987:158) suggested that tourist-generating regions should get financially involved and “pay for some of the impacts of the vacations taken in someone else’s backyard”. He argued that Europe, for example, owes much to Tunisia and Senegal as their preferred and recreative tourist destinations.

A concept that measures the social, economic, environmental and physical sustainability of a destination is the carrying capacity, defined as “the maximum use of a place without causing negative effects on the resources – the community, the economy and its culture or reducing the visitor satisfaction” (Wahab & Pigram 1997:281). The definitions of the physical carrying capacity include numbers of tourists that an area can absorb without negative impact on the physical environment and its limited natural resources and the quality of the tourist experience (O'Reilly 1986; Wall 1997), in addition to the values of the community and (changing) perceptions (Saarinen 2006:1126). Getz (1987) analyzed six different approaches regarding carrying capacity, one of them was the “social carrying capacity” by using attitudes and tolerance levels of the local community towards tourism development. On the other hand, Saveriades (2000) argued that there is no finite carrying capacity in the number of tourists, since the carrying capacity depends on the overall management of the site, the changes within time and the overall volume of tourism. Saveriades also mentioned that it is difficult to measure the attitudes of the local community in an objective way. Regarding cruise tourism, crowding and congestion were identified as the main social factors influencing the community (Karreman 2013:66). According to Schemmann (2012), Mediterranean cruise destinations are becoming less attractive as they are often overcrowded in the tourist season. Similarly, ports in Antarctica suffer “people pollution”, i.e. the number of cruise passengers exceeds the capacity of the town, thus causing overcrowding (Klein 2010).

In the next sections the rapid development of tourism in Oman will be outlined, followed by the history of Souq Muttrah and an analysis of the research results, including its “tourist bubble”, and of the perceptions of the local community and the German-speaking tourists. The term “local community” is used to refer to shop vendors in Souq Muttrah, business owners, Omani and expatriate customers visiting the souq, local Omani and expatriate tour guides, local tour-operators, residents of the area beside the souq and local government officials including the Minister of Tourism and the Wali (governor) of the district of Muttrah.
The objective of this research is to conceptualize how locals and tourists perceive large-scale cruise tourism and how they deal with this fast changing phenomenon. Results indicate that crowding has become a major problem and that the perceived social carrying capacity in Souq Muttrah has been reached. This study is valuable for tourism scholars and tourism managers in emerging cruise destinations, especially on the Arabian Peninsula.

5.1.2 Tourism development in Oman

The Sultanate of Oman is an emerging tourist and cruise destination on the Arabian Peninsula, which has experienced fast economic development since the 1970s. During the 1980s, the country opened its doors for international tourism.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Tourism (2014a) in Oman, in 2013 the number of international tourists increased to 2.18 million. This indicates a growth of 5.9% between 2012 and 2013. The direct contribution of travel and tourism to the country’s GDP was 3.0% of the total GDP in 2013 (WTTC 2014). The government has been building large-scale tourism infrastructure in order to further increase the number of international tourists to 12 million annually by 2020 (Muscat Daily 2013), which is in line with the neighboring Emirate Dubai that aims to attract 15 million visitors annually by 2015 (Stephenson & Ali-Knight 2010).

Between 2005 and 2012 the number of cruise liners arriving in Muscat increased more than 80-fold. According to the Ministry of Tourism (2012a), a total of 109 cruise vessels carrying over 170,000 passengers arrived in 2011, which was nearly equivalent to the total population in Muttrah, the location of the port. There the total number of inhabitants amounted to 189,785 in 2011, only 25.39% of them being Omani. In 2012, the number of cruise tourists increased again by 51% to a total of 257,000 arriving in 135 cruise liners at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat. In 2013, the number of cruise tourists decreased to 202,159 passengers arriving in Muscat (Ministry of Tourism 2015c).

The majority of the mega-ships such as AIDA and Costa are on a seven-day trip around the Arabian Peninsula, arriving from Dubai and carrying between 2,500 (AIDAblu and AIDAdiva) and 3,780 (Costa Favolosa) passengers plus 600-1,000 crew members every week in winter. They stay for around nine hours and then continue their journey via Bahrain, Abu Dhabi and back to Dubai. The vision is to “promote Oman internationally as a quality cruise destination” (Times of Oman 2015b) in cooperation with Abu Dhabi and Dubai as part of a “Cruise Arabia Alliance”. Through this cooperation, it has been projected to attract 1.6 million cruise tourists yearly by 2020 and 2.1 million by 2030 (Oman Tribune 2015).

Currently, two or three large cruise liners are in the port at one time. In the coming years the government will transform Port Sultan Qaboos into a cruise liner port, including a marina, a large hotel, a shopping mall and other facilities, in order to accommodate a maximum of 33,000 cruise passengers at one time. All current cargo activities will be shifted to the port in Sohar by 2014 (Oman Daily Observer 2013). Due to tourism projects, new jobs have been created. A total of 106,731 employees worked in tourism in 2013, most of them in restaurants and coffee shops. However, only 11.2% of them were Omanis (Ministry of Tourism 2015b).

The Oman Development Plan 1996–2020 specified in the Vision 2020 “aims at achieving sustainable development through the diversification of the economy, without relying solely on oil as the major source of income” (Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs 2012:10). The Development Plan
focuses on a transition from an oil-based economy to a knowledge-based economy through on-going human development programs in different sectors, including tourism. This is in line with the vision of the Minister of Tourism who wishes “to involve Omani as a principal pillar in tourism” and to further promote high-end tourism. “We want quality tourism and not tourism of numbers,” said Ahmed bin Nasser Al Mahrzi, Minister of Tourism, while adding that Oman wants to preserve its rich history and culture and offer a unique tourist experience (interview, 18 July 2012). This view reflects the general strategy communicated in the local media. However, this is contrary to the ministry’s recent marketing efforts that openly promote an increase in large-scale cruise tourism together with Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. It appears, therefore, that there is lack of a common tourism strategy at the moment.

Furthermore, different stakeholders in the government are involved in the decision-making and execution of tourism development in Oman. Thus, the development of the cruise tourism port and other infrastructure projects such as the airports is overseen by the Ministry of Transportation and Communications. An official of the ministry who chose to remain anonymous said in an interview in July 2014, that the idea is:

“to boost sea-tourism in general, including private yachts. The number of private ships has increased and sometimes they have a difficulty in finding a place. There will be a museum connected to the new fish market, where Omani handicrafts will be showcased. Muttrah will become a nice and safe place to be and to enjoy the sea,”

the official said, thus implying a romantic version of a rather small-scale and high-end city port, avoiding large-scale tourism.

Figure 8. Map of the district of Muttrah, including Souq Muttrah and Port Sultan Qaboos
5.1.3 Research setting – the history of Muttrah

Traditionally, Souq Muttrah (Figure 8) has been divided into two parts – one for retail and one for wholesale where food, household items, textiles and traditional Omani clothes are sold. Muttrah district has been the main commercial hub of Oman since the Portuguese occupation in the 16th century (Gaube 2012:4). Due to its commercial activities, Muttrah had a very multi-ethnic population consisting of Arabs, Africans from East Africa and Zanzibar, Baluchis from Baluchistan (province in Pakistan) as well as Persians and Indians. Because most of its inhabitants migrated to Oman in the past, the historically multi-ethnic population of Muttrah has been very welcoming and open to tourism.

Since the 1970s and the reign of Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, the exploration of oil and gas has been followed by the rapid economic development of the country and also the introduction of supermarkets. As a result, Muttrah lost its importance as a commercial hub. Vendors lost their customers and some businesses moved to other districts. Scholz (1990:298) observed structural changes occurring in Souq Muttrah during the late 1970s and 1980s when the souq developed from a traditional market predominantly providing textiles, food and household items for locals to a souq that catered more and more to the Asian, Arab and European expatriate community. Nowadays the large majority of the vendors in Muttrah are expatriates from Asia, mainly from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Most of them live and work in Muttrah. Until today many Omanis and expatriate residents living in Muttrah buy their groceries in the souq. Due to cheaper prices, Omanis from the Interior of the country also come to shop for household items, local perfumes, textiles and readymade clothes. According to the Wali (governor) of Muttrah, around 800 shops are located in Muttrah and all shops are licensed by Muscat Municipality (interview, 6 October 2012).

5.1.4 Research methods

The research was conducted in different stages, starting in 2012 with participatory observation and the counting of tourists and locals at the main entrance to the souq on the harbor street (the Corniche), from where the majority enters. There the researcher positioned herself in front of one of the local perfume shops and counted in the morning and afternoon hours with two hand-tally counters in each hand – one for the tourists and the other one for the locals entering during a time-span of 15 minutes per each hour.

Furthermore, in-depth interviews with different stakeholders of the multi-ethnic community were conducted in 2012 and 2013. The interview partners included the local resident community such as shop vendors, business owners, customers, tour guides, tour-operators and government officials including the Minister of Tourism. They were interviewed in English, Arabic and German during 2012 and 2013. The shops were chosen according to prior visits with German-speaking tourists during a walk through the souq. Those shops that were visited along with the tourists were chosen for in-depth interviews. The shops covered the wholesale and retail sectors, selling different products: local perfumes, halwa (local sweets), handicraft, pharmacy, spices, groceries, kummas (traditional hats for men), pashmina scarves, foodstuffs, and household items. The owner of a local coffee shop and the manager of a restaurant beside the souq were also interviewed. A total of 45 shops were covered. The shops were up to 250 years old. In addition, interviews were conducted with the local shop vendors and owners of different age groups (25–75 years) and different nationalities, including 16
Omani, 25 Indian, two Bangladeshi, one Pakistani and one Syrian. Six Omani customers from other districts in Muscat were interviewed. 11 Omani and expatriate tour guides of German-speaking tourists and seven Omani male and female members of the resident community living beside the souq were interviewed about cruise tourism in Muttrah. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, English and German and followed a semi-structural guideline. The district was visited on days when one or two cruise liners were in the port. Since the access for non-residents is very restricted, it was very difficult to conduct interviews. Due to the close social structure of the multi-ethnic community in Muttrah and to allow critical views, the interviews with the local community were taken anonymously and noted down immediately. Follow-up interviews with members of the local community, and observation at the main tourist entrance of Souq Muttrah were conducted at the beginning of 2014, when two contemporary cruise liners (AIDA Cruises and Costa Cruises) were in the port. To capture the impacts visually, photography was applied. Furthermore, the content analysis of local media articles was used and official statistics were analyzed.

A large-scale questionnaire survey among German-speaking contemporary cruise tourists travelling with AIDAblu was conducted at the beginning of 2012. According to a local shipping agency, AIDA Cruises has been transporting around 2,500 passengers every week to Oman, from November until April. The first large AIDA cruise liner arrived in Muscat in November 2004 and Costa Cruises followed two years later. The type of tourist carried by AIDA cruise ships is typically the average German-speaking tourist, the so-called “contemporary segment” (UNWTO 2010:91), representing a couple or family of various age groups with an average income. The research sample was limited to German-speaking cruise tourists from Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Luxembourg. A total of 830 tourists filled out the survey, representing 79.8% of the surveyed cruise tourist sample. German-speaking tourists represent the majority of cruise tourists visiting Oman. Since the researcher is German national, the research focuses on German-speaking tourists. Moreover, Germans are leaders in traveling. According to the UNWTO (2013), Germany ranked second in international tourism expenditure in 2012 and first in 2011. Since the researcher has studied Arabic and has been living in Oman since 2004 where she worked as a tour guide for German and French-speaking tourist groups in Oman and United Arab Emirates, as well as a reporter for an English and Arabic newspaper and as a PR manager at the German University in Muscat, her research is influenced by her experience. Her insider perspective also helped her to analyze and interpret the different opinions and to observe the changes that have occurred in Souq Muttrah within the past years, from an “insider perspective”.

5.1.5 Results

Cruise tourists visiting Souq Muttrah

According to local tour operators and a newspaper, Souq Muttrah is the most popular tourist spot in Oman (Times of Oman 2015a). Referring to Jaakson’s (2004) analysis of the “tourist bubble”, the core area of the “tourist bubble” in Muttrah is the waterfront with its harborstreet, the walking promenade (the Corniche) and Souq Muttrah. Along the Corniche road there are ancient trading houses, part of a residential walled district, built around 200 years ago, including a mosque with a blue dome and views to the surrounding mountains (Figure 9 below).

This urban landscape creates a sense of nostalgia of an untouched, postcard-like image of Arabia, different from what tourists see in the other ports of call on the Arabian Peninsula. As Cohen (1978:218) noted “traditional towns and neighborhoods, untouched by ‘progress’, suddenly become
economic assets”. In the past years, the destination Oman including its main cruise liner port in Muscat, has been promoted by the Ministry of Tourism with the slogan “Beauty has an address”. German-speaking crew members of a contemporary cruise liner mentioned that they recommend Souq Muttrah as a traditional Arabian souq and a “shopping destination”.

Figure 9. Map of Souq Muttrah, including the residential area

On board of the contemporary cruise liners, small maps are distributed. However, they are not precise, showing only the “tourist bubble” with the harbor street, the souq and old Muscat, located in the next bay. It was observed that tourists were not using the maps.

Many cruise tourists who want to explore the city on their own take a shuttle bus to the gate of the port and walk along the harbor street to the souq. Some tourists also visit the local fish, fruit and vegetable market next to the port and some venture towards the commercial business district of Muscat and others visit a heritage museum close by the port. However, according to the director of the museum only a few tourists from mega-cruise liners pass by the museum. The large majority walks along the harbor street, where tourism retail shops selling souvenirs, small restaurants and coffee shops have opened in recent years, and then enters the souq area.

At the harbor street, the main entrance to Souq Muttrah has a large watch-tower with the words “Souq Muttrah” inscribed on it. The tower was built around eight years ago with the arrival of large contemporary cruise liners in Muscat. The tower has a tourist restaurant on the top floor, thus creating a kind of “hyper-reality”. Along the waterfront and in the souq area there are open spaces, an “open tourist bubble”, shared by locals, residents and tourists. However, the walled residential district beside the harbor road is a closed space, with very limited access.
The researcher’s participant observation revealed that, once a cruise liner is in the port for one day, the morning hours between 11 am and 1 pm are the peak timings in Souq Muttrah. Those tourists who have booked a Muscat sightseeing bus tour on board of the cruise liner visit the souq as part of the excursion. According to local tour operators, those tours are the most popular. Regardless of the number of tourist buses, the tour always follows the same itinerary including Souq Muttrah as the last stop before the return to the harbor. For the tourists’ convenience, the buses drive along the one lane Corniche street and stop in front of the main entrance to the souq. Most tourist buses arrive between 11 and 12 noon. As soon as a group of tourists gets in or out of their buses, the road is blocked to traffic entirely. In addition to the large tour buses, smaller buses and 4x4 cars queue for passengers along the street and create further congestion.

On a Sunday in January 2014, when a Costa cruise ship and an Aida cruise liner were in the port, carrying more than 4000 passengers and crew, participant observation at the entrance to Souq Muttrah revealed that eight large 40-seater buses stopped in front of the main entrance to the souq at noon. At the same time, a large crowd of cruise tourists was waiting in the sun to be picked up by the buses. This incident revealed a lack of adequate parking for buses. Manual counting of tourists, entering through the main entrance at the harbor street every full hour for 15 minutes (Table 14), showed major crowding at noon, when the number of tourists was three times as many as the number of tourists arriving at 11 am and at 1 pm. In addition, the number of tourists entering the souq exceeded the number of locals by 88%.

Table 14. The number of tourists and locals entering and leaving Souq Muttrah during a time-span of 15 minutes per each hour, main entrance, harbor street, 26 February 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Number of tourists</th>
<th>Number of locals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:00 AM</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 PM</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 PM</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own survey)

Further manual counting on three Sundays in January and February 2012, when two large contemporary cruise liners with a total of more than 4000 tourists were in the port revealed that on average 1371 tourists and 372 locals passed through the main entrance of Souq Muttrah in the
morning, between 10 am and 1 pm, during a 15 minutes count each hour. The majority were tourists from contemporary cruise liners. Figure 10 illustrates the physical crowding of the space, with cruise tourists walking in both directions along the narrow main street of Souq Muttrah around noon.

Figure 10. The main street in Souq Muttrah, around noon, 26 February 2012

(Source: own photography)

_Perception of the tourists in Souq Muttrah: “There are more tourists than locals”_

Inside the souq different types of tourists meet in close proximity: cruise tourists, individual and group tourists, as well as different nationalities. Whereas contemporary cruise tourists did not socially distinguish themselves from other types of travelers, individual tourists wished to distance themselves, escape from the crowd and venture on their own beyond “the tourist bubble” to its periphery. They were the type of traveler defined by Jaakson (2004:56) as the so-called explorers or elite and off-beat (Smith 1989:12) that adapt fully or well to the local environment. The reaction of escape and social distinction as a consequence of crowding was observed among most group and independent travelers. For example, an individual tourist, a retired medical doctor in her 60s said that she was shocked to see the large number of tourists inside the souq. “I thought the locals are overwhelmed, it is awful. I really feel sorry for them,” she said referring to the local community and their tolerance level towards the large number of tourists. “Oh these Italians!” remarked another German-speaking tourist, irritated by a crowd of loudly-chattering Italian cruise tourists.

A retired lawyer in his 70s, travelling with his wife compared the number of tourists and locals inside the souq: “There are more tourists than locals”. For him the crowding generated a negative experience and the souq became inauthentic and staged. He also complained about cheap souvenirs: “It is like in Königswinter”, he said, referring to a popular tourist attraction beside the river Rhine in Germany. To avoid the crowd, he and his wife along with their tour guide explored the backside of the souq (periphery) where more local shops are located.
A few weeks later, the main street of Souq Muttrah was very crowded, creating a hot, sticky atmosphere: everybody was trying to find their way out. On the edges, some people stopped to look at the souvenir shops. “I need to get out, this is crazy here”, said an Austrian lady, starting to panic in the crowd, being afraid that she would not reach the bus back to the ship. Thus, the crowding created lack of safety. This incident confirmed the outcome of the questionnaire survey, where 88% of the German-speaking cruise tourists surveyed experienced the souq as being too crowded (Table 15).

Table 15. Attitudes of German-speaking cruise tourists (N=721) for a statement in Muscat, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agreed strongly</td>
<td>28.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agreed</td>
<td>32.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>27.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagreed</td>
<td>9.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagreed strongly</td>
<td>1.8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own survey)

As a result of crowding, the sanitation facilities were not sufficient for the cruise tourists, who were queuing in front of the few public toilets, located at the entrance to the souq. Some tourists were using the facilities of a hotel or coffee shops along the harbor street. “More than 2000 people are using one or two toilets only,” said an expatriate manager of a coffee shop. Thus, he has introduced a “toilet fee”, generating an additional income. New tourist infrastructure has been set-up including additional souvenir shops and tourist restaurants with large colorful signboards, artificial grass carpets, wooden chairs and a water fountain, serving international food by expatriate waiters during the tourist season 2013/2014. Cohen (1978:221) argued that “a concentration of tourist facilities increases the scale of staging functions”. Through these visual features, the area has become more and more divided into a “tourist bubble” or a “core area” (Jaakson 2004) in the front, close to the port, and a rather local souq in the back and inside the narrow side streets (the periphery).

**Attitude of the local tour guides: “Everything has to be fast”**

Unlike group and individual tourists who are usually guided by a tour guide through the souq, cruise tourists are not guided, due to the limited space, time, crowding and increased competition. “With cruise liners everything has to be fast. If I have enough time, I explain the souq in the bus. I only go along with the tourists if it is a small group”, said a German-speaking tour guide. Thus, the tour guides remained outside and cruise tourists received limited interpretation of the place. During a city tour cruise tourists have around 30–45 minutes time for their visit of the souq. Most cruise tourists remained along the main street of the souq, fearing getting lost inside the street labyrinth. Consequently, they were also not able to locate certain shops, on their own. “Because they have no orientation, the tourists sometimes do not find the spices”, said a German-speaking tour guide. Therefore, cruise tourists bought from the product range offered in the “tourist bubble”. Tour guides mentioned that they were instructed by their employer, not to go along with the group through the souq. “The shopkeepers think we only direct the tourists to certain shops” said one guide.
Perception of the local shopkeepers: “The tourists are just looking”

Since the start of large-scale cruise tourism in Muscat in 2004, the business community has noticed a sharp increase in tourist numbers. “Sometimes about 3,000 tourists pass here in this small street”, complained one member of the long-established business community. Another Asian shop manager said: “There are so many tourists. It is difficult to walk”.

The shop owners and sellers in Muttrah are disappointed about the tourism development in the souq. “These are not the tourists we were told are coming to Oman. We are focusing on numbers rather than on quality. But the number of tourists reduces the quality of tourism”, said an Omani. The cruise tourists buy souvenirs along the main street of the souq, they gaze and they take photos: “They just do a tour and then go”, said a local shop owner. Other vendors expressed similar disappointment. “We have only had two customers from a cruise liner”, said an Omani in the gold souq, located on the backside of the souq, in the periphery of the “tourist bubble”. Omani taxi drivers who are located close to the main entrance to Souq Muttrah complained that the main profit of cruise liner tourism goes to the local tour operators, shipping agents and to the port authority. They mentioned that cruise tourists were not interested in taking a taxi and ventured on their own along the Corniche road.

Nevertheless, the majority of the interviewees of the local business community mentioned being in favor of the planned cruise liner port, but on a much smaller scale: “Three large cruise liners per week, not per day”, were suggested. Moreover, there is a wish for a common tourism development plan in Souq Muttrah: “We need a common vision. How will we cope with the influx of tourists in a couple of years when the port will be a tourist port? We are already struggling now with more than 100 tourist ships in the winter season”, said a shop-owner of the long-established Indian trader community. Due to overcrowding and lack of parking, local Omani and expat customers who went shopping in Souq Muttrah in the past now avoided the souq. “When cruise liners are in Muscat, I do not visit the souq anymore”, said an expatriate resident.

With the increase in large cruise ships, the shop vendors have observed a change in the tourist spending behavior. “They are tourists, but without money”, said a well-established Indian shop owner. An Indian vendor from the harbor street complained: “The tourists are just looking, they do not buy anything. Only those who come by airplane buy here”, he said. This confirms the results of a low-spending behavior of cruise tourists, discussed by Wilkinson (1999), Henthorpe (2000), Weaver (2005a), Klein (2010) and Larsen et al. (2013). Shops located inside the souq on the periphery of the “tourist bubble”, in the small narrow side streets of the souq, do not benefit as much from cruise tourism. Only the “new vendors” from Asia, who have started working in the souq recently, since the arrival of large-scale cruises, valued the large number of tourists as “a business opportunity, rather than a loss of culture” (Hall & Rath 2007:18). They have adapted their product range to the taste and budget of the cruise customers.

A pattern of low spending among German-speaking cruise tourists was confirmed in the questionnaire survey. Table 16 (below) shows that 40% of the cruise tourists who responded did not spend anything in Souq Muttrah (N=760) and nearly 60% have spent only a small amount. 32.7% spent less than 20 Euro, while just 1.7% spent more than 100 Euro. Thus cruise tourists were not primarily interested in buying local and more expensive souvenirs. This was confirmed in interviews: “We have already bought a lot in Istanbul. We will not buy anything here”, said a 30-year-old
Austrian cruise tourist from Costa. A German couple travelling with MS Europa luxury cruise liner said that “they do not need anything” and that the shops were selling the same items as in the popular tourist destination Spain. “They are selling pashminas in large quantities in Spain”, he said.

Table 16. Spending behavior of German-speaking cruise tourists (N=760)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure of cruise tourists in Souq Muttrah</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>40.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than 5 Euro</td>
<td>5.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Euro</td>
<td>10.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Euro</td>
<td>17.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 Euro</td>
<td>9.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 Euro</td>
<td>5.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 Euro</td>
<td>5.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100 Euro</td>
<td>4.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-150 Euro</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 150 Euro</td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own survey)

According to the survey, the majority of the German-speaking tourists from the mega-cruise liner (N=691) had bought small and less expensive souvenirs, most of them not locally made: 43% had bought pashmina scarves (usually replicated pashminas made in China), followed by Omani frankincense (22.3%), postcards (21.8%) and other small items (16.5%) including belly dancing dresses, dates, oil lamps, perfume oils, medicine from the pharmacy, key-chains, magnets, ashtrays and T-shirts (Figure 11 below). Typical Omani products that are also bought by locals, such as a dishdasha and turban (6.5%), gold and silver (7.3%), or khanjars (2.0%) were rarely purchased by the cruise tourists surveyed. These results also confirm the results of previous research such as Larsen et al. (2013) who found that cruise tourists are low spenders compared to other tourists who stay longer in the destination. Klein (2010:67) also stressed that the onshore spending of cruise tourists has declined in the past years.

Due to the rising demand, the number of shops selling cheap, imported items has increased inside the “tourist bubble” (Figure 11). “Unfortunately they are selling pashminas and elephants from Thailand. It has become like a textile souq. We see more T-shirts with ‘I love Oman’ or Indian saris”, complained an Omani tour guide.
As a consequence of the tourists’ low spending behavior, the vendor community has changed their selling approach and become more aggressive, which annoys some German-speaking group and individual tourists. “Vendors along the main street approached us in a very aggressive way. We were not interested in their items. We just wanted to leave”, said an individual tourist. In January 2014 along the “tourist bubble” young Asian vendors who had worked only from inside their shops in recent years started hiring additional sales people who were to hawk their items outside the shop: “Madam, look pashmina scarf! Frankincense, saffron and perfume”, Asian vendors call out in English, German and Italian while holding a scarf along with a perfume bottle (Figure 12) in their hands.

In Oman it is known that Asian businessmen have a rather aggressive selling behavior whereas Omanis have a softer selling approach (Gutberlet 2008). “If someone is interested in my shop I say welcome, but I don’t pull him inside the shop”, said an Omani who owns a shop in the “tourist bubble”. The growth in the number of expatriate vendors has lead to ethnic tension and stereotyping: “I do not go in the street to sell, only Indians are doing this”, said an Omani vendor. Some tourists who were guided appreciated the kind approach and hospitality of the local Omani vendors: “The locals are very friendly, not so pushy like in Turkey. They ask first whether you want to buy anything and then they explain everything”, said an individual traveler in his 50s, who was guided by a local tour guide. As a consequence of the expatriate vendors’ aggressive selling practices, in March 2014 local vendors along the harbor street were officially instructed by the inspectors of Muscat Municipality to remove their items from outside the shops, otherwise they would be fined (Times of Oman 2014). As a result it was observed that the expatriate vendors had adopted a more passive approach.
Figure 12. An expatriate vendor approaches a female tourist with a scarf, 2014

(Source: own photography)

Silent resistance

The remaining well-established Omani and expatriate businessmen in Muttrah have developed a silent resistance and passive attitude towards tourists and mass tourism products. As a consequence of this resistance, shops that cater for Omanis and their product range of groceries, embroidery, halwa (Omani sweets), dishdasha (Omani male clothing), kummah (male cap) and masar (turban) and other accessories are relocating from the main street to the interior, the periphery of the “tourist bubble”. This phenomenon was observed at the entrance to the main street, where a local shop owner selling perfumes, textiles and embroidery for the local community (Figure 13) for the past 40 years moved to the inside of the souq in 2014 and converted into a tourist shop, selling pashmina scarves, Indian textiles, postcards, carpets and belly dancing costumes (Figure 14).

Figure 13. Shop for the local community at the tourist entrance to the souq, 2013
Figure 14. The same local shop was converted into a tourist shop, one year later, in 2014

(Source: own photography) (Source: own photography)
The Indian vendor, who has been working in Muttrah in the second generation, continues selling items for the local Omani market from his shop inside the souq. Similarly, in the same year another Omani shop on the main street selling khanjars and locally produced items, was converted into a shop selling mainly pashmina scarves. Also the Omani owner and vendor left his shop and expatriate vendors took over. The change in the social structure has been described as a long-term process: “Before 1970 the shop keepers were 100 per cent Omani. That has changed, now less than 5 per cent are Omanis, the majority are foreigners,” said an Omani owner of a traditional halwa shop, who is in his 60s.

A 150–200-year-old Omani herbal and spice shop in the center of Souq Muttrah closed in 2013. The shop was very popular among Western tourists and locals, due to its authentic interior and a variety of local items. It was renovated at the beginning of 2014 and the shop was offered for rent for banking ATM machines. “We have to move on”, said the owner, thus stressing the need to transform the souq into a modern shopping street. Two years earlier, however, the same shop-keeper had mentioned in an interview that the shops and their identity in Souq Muttrah need to be protected. With an increase in the number of tourists visiting an Omani souq, a high ranking government official claimed in an interview that: “If foreigners go to the local souq, they will kill it,” referring to the loss of local identity. This reflects the fear of being overwhelmed by the large number of tourists and of losing their cultural identity.

All these observations are significant. Translated in Doxey's (1976) irritation index, the business community shows a desire to escape and a degree of irritation. In addition, there is a decrease in the number of shops selling products for the local community, so the “tourist bubble” has been extended. The attitudes of the local established business community who own the shops reflect their views towards getting the greatest financial benefits out of tourism development. On the other hand, such transformation of businesses had already occurred in the past in Souq Muttrah. Scholz (1990:257, 384) mentioned that local food products and turbans were still sold in Muttrah during the early 1970s, but also recorded the rapid economic and social changes that occurred from the 1970s onwards, with the increasing demand for “new imported products”.

**The attitude of local residents**

To protect themselves from the large number of tourists walking in front of their houses, some residents have created further physical and social boundaries. The old residential walled district opposite the port, which is featured in many tourism advertisements, with its ancient and beautiful trading houses has a guard sitting beside the entrance gate. The guard refuses access to those who do not belong to the community. However, the entrance from the backside of the souq has no guard. Furthermore, a signboard “Residential Area” indicates that entry is restricted. During the annual religious month of Al Muharram, celebrated by the resident Muslim Shia community, which has taken place during the busy tourist season in the past years, the community has set up a white wall in front of the entrance gate (Figure 15 below), in order to maintain their privacy and to protect themselves from curious onlookers. This observation of creating boundaries was reinforced whenever the place was entered and the researcher was asked to leave the place: “This is a residential place, shopping over there”, said an Omani lady, indicating a clear refusal to have sightseers inside the historic walled district. That was confirmed by Omanis who do not belong to the community, who mentioned that they are also unwelcome inside the district.
Figure 15. An additional white wall (center) was set up in front of the residential district, the Corniche road, 2013

(Source: own photography)

Furthermore, the researcher was asked by local male Omani residents who work in Souq Muttrah to cover her hair when entering the walled district, which is not an obligation to female expatriates and tourists in Oman. This indicates a conservative attitude and reinforcement of the community’s values. Moreover, four signboards have been set up beside the entrance of the mosque, thus preventing non-residents from entering the residential area and non-Muslims for entering the mosque, located on the harbor street, opposite to the port. Therefore, the community has clearly defined a distinction and draws additional borders between the residents and the outsiders – non-residents and tourists alike. “The families are more religion-minded and not tourism-minded”, explained a member of the community, indicating that there is no interest in opening the district for outsiders.

An official measure against the congestion of the public space in Muttrah was the setting up of a large red signboard by Muscat Municipality in front of the souq, just before the tourist season 2013/2014. The signboard prohibits local vendors and customers from loading and unloading trucks during the peak timings in the mornings and in the afternoon, thus restricting the purchase of local customers who buy in large quantities during that time.

5.1.6 Conclusions

Although this research is a snapshot taken during a particular time and location, it is important since it reflects the views of both the local community and of tourists at a time of substantial increase in tourist numbers, in particular cruise tourists. This research has been conducted right before the start of a major large-scale tourism development – the cruise liner port, which will be built opposite the souq, doubling the number of ship berths and raising the overall capacity for passengers enormously. As a consequence, the social and cultural pressure on the local community will increase as well. As a result of this research it has become clear that due to the influx in cruise tourism in the past years, the historic district along the harbor road and Souq Muttrah have been commodified and become a reflection of the “tourist bubble” (Jaakson 2004), a “place to be” for cruise tourists, absorbing and
processing a large number of tourists during the cruise season. Therefore, the district has lost its “simple charm” and is generally avoided by local residents when a large cruise liner is in the port. It is evident that the souq is divided into a “core tourist bubble” in the front, close to the harbor and along the main street of Souq Muttrah, and a local souq for the Omani and expatriate residents in the back, on the periphery of the “tourist bubble”. The front section of the souq has become a reflection of MacCannell’s (1992) “Empty Meeting Grounds” where tourists do not meet locals, but a kind of “Show-Souq” with cheap, foreign commodified mass products and “new Asian vendors”, who represent Oman.

Furthermore, the souq has become overcrowded when two large contemporary cruise liners are in the port. Crowding has occurred due to the spatial and temporal distribution of the cruise tourists, the limited urban geography and the limited number of tourist sights close to the port. It seems that the increase in the number of cruise tourists arriving by cruise liners in Muscat has been unexpected and surprising for the local community in Muttrah and for other tourists, both group and individual, without considerations regarding the social, cultural and physical impacts and the limited space and infrastructure.

According to the majority of the community and the tourists surveyed, there is “no more room” for more tourists inside the souq. Thus, locals mentioned that the authorities should limit the number of annual visitors, since their accepted level of tolerance and “perceived social carrying capacity” has been reached. As a consequence and translated in Doxey’s (1976) irritation index, the local population escape, either by withdrawing from the core of the “tourist bubble” or by creating borders to protect themselves from curious onlookers. Referring to a transformation into a tourist place, Orbasli (2000:109) mentioned: “Citizens may become alienated as the old towns are transformed into tourist attractions with the focus on visitors, ‘outsider’ needs rather than those of residents”. Currently, negative impacts such as overcrowding, the sale of cheap mass-products, and an increasing loss of Omani identity seem to outweigh the economic and social benefits for the majority of the local community.

To avoid crowding and to release the pressure on the local community, a quota for large-scale cruise liners arriving in Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat should be set up and strictly monitored. Visits to Souq Muttrah should be controlled at the entrance and other sightseeing options should be included in sightseeing tours, for example a special Tourist Souq could be set up inside the port to ease the congestion outside the port. To increase the revenue for the local community, only small, luxury cruise liners that do not offer all-inclusive holidays on board, should anchor in Muscat. Moreover, cruises should be encouraged to stay overnight. This would also allow for additional excursions around Muscat. In addition, as Safari (1987) suggested the tourists and cruise companies should compensate negative effects on the community and should get financially involved. For example a daily tourism tax for cruise liners could be introduced, e.g. 10 Euro per person per day, which could then be reinvested into local community development. A pro-active management plan and regulations need to be implemented, under local control and results continuously updated. “The local people and communities should have the right to choose their way of life and preferences” (Saarinen 2011:155). Commercial pressure dominating the development of the souq, including the changing product range on sale, leads to the loss of local heritage, and should therefore be avoided. Responsible tourism planning should include the development of tourism with dignity for the local community. This includes controlling the carrying capacity and the development of the local
production of goods by supporting independent local businesses. Moreover, this could include the re-branding of the souq as a multi-ethnic place including e.g. ethnic supermarkets and book shops (Hall & Rath 2007). Thus, a social, cultural and economic empowerment of the entire multi-ethnic community inclusive of all stakeholders should be set up, through the creation of special committees such as Muttrah Tourism Committee and a “local cruise committee” (Hull & Milne 2010:187). Members of such a committee should include The Port Authority, the Municipality, the Ministry of Transportation and Communication, Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Tourism, the Public Authority for Handicraft, shipping agents, tour operators, tour guides, business owners and vendors in Muttrah. Through open participation such “local cruise committee” could then develop a set of sustainable tourism development indicators (Torres-Delgado & Saarinen 2014). These social indicators should reflect the needs of the local community, including for example the number of cruise tourist arrivals per day, the ratio of tourists and locals, the sale of local products and the employment rate. Moreover, to ensure valuable positive results for the community it is necessary to implement and monitor the indicators continuously.

This research has certain limitations arising from the research methodology. While a broad range of members of the local community in Muttrah were interviewed, in particular the shop vendors and owners, no quantitative survey was conducted among the community. Also the number of tourists interviewed can be seen as small and insufficient for generating conclusions. However, despite these limitations, from the survey and the in-depth interviews, interesting issues on large-scale tourism in Muttrah have emerged and suggest further research in the field in Muttrah, e.g. including more shops along the Corniche road and among more female members of the community. Due to the fast pace of the tourism development in Muttrah, it would be interesting to record the changes through regular, continuous field research and participant observation. This research can be seen as an exemplary case study that can be applied to other tourism developments in Oman in the future.

A businessman and owner of a group of companies in Oman who grew up and lived in Muttrah until the 1970s said: “We need more time for local people to become aware that tourists are not going to attack them but admire.” However, the time is very limited and meanwhile the number of cruise tourists will continue to increase. For the tourist season 2014/2015 a growth of 10–15% is expected in cruise tourism (Times of Oman 2015b).

Feb. 2012, 6 pm: The ship’s bell rings, the sun is disappearing over the horizon as the large Costa cruise ship moves towards the exit of the port. It is peaceful in the souq. Omanis go quietly about their business. The ship is brilliantly lit with lights from every porthole, and flashlights illuminate the darkness around it as the last photos of Muttrah are taken by the departing tourists. The muezzin calls the faithful to prayer. The ship leaves the port and turns left towards Fujairah and Dubai. The cruise tourists will soon proceed to their dinner. Along the waterfront expatriate workers take a few photos of the cruise liner with their mobile phones. The ship has left the harbor and the sun has set. The souq belongs to the local community again.
5.2 Staging the Oriental Other: Imaginaries and Performances of German-speaking Cruise Tourists

5.2.1 Introduction

This paper seeks to continue earlier research on tourist imaginaries and performances through a case study of an “Oriental” destination, the Sultanate of Oman, and from the perspective of German-speaking cruise tourists, their on-board guides and other local cultural brokers. In line with Salazar (2006; 2010), Chronis (2012; 2015) and Tucker (2010), I examine guided tours of Souq Muttrah, located opposite to the port, conducted by tour guides who contribute with their narratives and bodily involvement to the tourist experience. Those local guides, together with onboard guides and vendors, contribute to the construction of space, the reconstruction of marketing material and the tourists’ mental imaginaries. The aim of this paper is to deconstruct these imaginaries of German-speaking cruise tourists and their embodied performances in a geographically new, emerging cruise destination on the Arabian Peninsula. Oman within its current boarders did not experience German colonialization in the past; however, in the 19th century Zanzibar which belonged to Oman was temporarily colonized by Germany, contributing to a legacy of cultural imaginaries which broadly embrace Oman and the Arabian world. The multi-ethnic vendor community in Souq Muttrah consists of Arabs, Africans from East Africa, and Baluchis as well as Iranians and Indians (Gutberlet 2016a).

The Omani government is planning to construct a special cruise liner port within a $1.29bn Port Sultan Qaboos Waterfront project (Times of Oman 2016). Therefore, research on tourist imaginaries, narratives and on-site performances of cruise tourists is timely. I argue that cultural brokers frame the tourists’ imaginaries and performances as well as the tourists themselves through “refiguration” and their German “narrative dispositions” (Chronis 2012).

Tourism can be seen as a “means of practicing spaces” (Crouch 1999:2) while engaging in a kind of “self-transformation” (Crouch 1999:4; Bruner 1991). When tourists visit places of interest, their consuming practices such as gazing, sociality, multi-sensuous encounters and talking influence their own embodied on-site experiences (Crang 1997:150). Therefore, they are involving “metaphors of performance” such as practice and rehearsal, scripting and staging (Chaney 2002:3910). Often pre-determined social definitions of the tourism setting, e.g. as a spectacle influence the on-site performances (Crang 1997:143). Such a “body-space interplay” (Chronis 2015:137) becomes even more important through the involvement of cultural brokers and their “storytelling” (communicative staging) as well as through “monuments, landscape and other artifacts” (material staging) (ibid:137). With the help of various representations and myths, the tourist’s imagination is directed and framed (Urry and Larsen 2011). Cultural brokers support the “tourist’s (re)construction of the experience as well as the (re)presentation of that experience” (Jennings and Weiler 2006:58). As such they manage embodied experiences as “choreographers who strategically use their bodies in the construction of a particular tourism stage” (Chronis 2015:138). Through these stages they produce shared sensory “knowledges” and “affectivities” that connect the body with the place (ibid:138). Hence, cultural brokers like tour guides often shape and control the interpretation of tourist places (Salazar 2010:87).

Tourism imaginaries or fantasies are attached to a certain place which can have multiple imaginaries, thus “endowing it with a certainty” (Chronis 2012:1809) while reinforcing its character through “commercial staging” (material markers) (ibid:1811). Imaginaries often circulate historically inherited stereotypes, based on dreams (Salazar and Grabun 2014:8). Like a kasbah (fort in Morocco), a souq
(Arabic for market) is part of a traditional neighborhood in the Middle East and North Africa, representing a “materiality of colonial imaginings” (Wagner and Minca 2015) while offering special experiences (Wu et al. 2014). Throughout history Oriental markets have played an important role as symbols of “the exchange of cultures between civilizations” (Pourjafar et al. 2014:11). Once inside the souq a labyrinth layout provides different opportunities for encounters and walking performances (Edensor 2000:331). As such, a souq has been conceptualized as a “socioscape” (Jansson 2002) and as a “heterogeneous space” (Edensor 2000:331), where facilities co-exist with small businesses, shops, street vendors and housing. Tourists are attracted to such a “glocal(ized) quarter” with its Western amenities and local life (Salazar 2005:635).

The above applies to Souq Muttrah, the oldest market in the Sultanate of Oman, located in the bay of Muttrah, opposite to the port in Muscat. The souq is surrounded by an ancient fort, residential areas and scenic volcanic mountains. Before the 1970s, Souq Muttrah was the central trading hub between Asia, Africa and the interior of Oman. Merchants from Baluchistan, India, Pakistan and East-Africa sold dates, sugar, oil, coffee, cotton, silk and household items (Scholz 1990). However, the ascension of Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said to the throne in 1970 and the exploration of oil and gas resulted in major investments in urban development and the diversification of the economy. With the introduction of supermarkets, the souq lost its role as a local market and trading hub (Gutberlet 2016a). As a consequence, the souq has slowly become a tourist attraction and has been promoted as an iconic site. Similar to other markets worldwide, Souq Muttrah is increasingly dominated by a mixed ethnic, non-Omani vendor community. In the evenings, residents from the Interior of Oman and from the neighborhoods come to shop here. They enter from the back of the souq, where the product range is different from the main tourist streets, the “core tourist bubble” (Gutberlet 2016a).

Figure 16. Symbols of Omani heritage in the domes of the ceiling, 2012

(Source: own photography)

The souq is one of the tourist sites within walking distance of the cruise liner terminal. Many tourists stroll along the Corniche to the souq. With the arrival of mega-cruise liners in Muscat, Souq Muttrah
was “beautified” with a wooden ceiling along the main street. Colorful glass panes were inserted in some parts, with symbols such as a frankincense burner, khanjars (daggers) or silver jewelry (Figure 16) reflecting Omani heritage; the effect was to visually stage the souq as an imaginary site for the tourist gaze. In addition, at the entrance to the harbor, a replica Omani watch tower bearing the name “Souq Muttrah” was constructed in 2006, incorporating a tourist restaurant (Gutberlet 2016a:52). The construction of the structure thus marked the souq as an attraction, “commercially staging” it through material (Chronis 2012). This process of commodification is similar to a street in Disneyland, which became more attractive to visit compared with any normal street (Williams & Lew 2015:128). In this context, authenticity is linked to notions of “nature, truth, tradition, originality and integrity” (ibid:4035). An objective authenticity is described as being part of the local flow of life and therefore original and genuine (Cohen 2012:251f). Here the souq entrance became commodified and distinct from the original local flow of life, becoming inauthentic for some visitors.

5.2.2 Cruise tourism in Oman

The opening of the Sultanate of Oman to international tourism happened within the late 1980s; prior to that time the country was officially closed to Western leisure tourists (Feighery 2012). Since then Oman has followed the strategy of focusing on “attracting high-spending tourists from the Occident – the conceptual and historical West” (ibid.:269), while promoting the country as a complement to more modern destinations such as Dubai or Abu Dhabi.

A total of 1.1 million international tourists visited Oman in 2005. With 2.2 million tourists arriving in Oman in 2014, the number had doubled (Ministry of Tourism 2015b). After British, German-speaking tourists from Germany, Switzerland and Austria are the second largest group of leisure tourists in Oman (Ministry of Tourism 2015c). They are also the largest number of cruise tourists arriving in the country (NCSI 2015b).

Worldwide cruising is seen as one of the fastest growing segments of tourism (Lee and Ramdeen 2013). Mega-cruise liners are large cruise liners conceptualized as “super-sized” (Weaver 2005) or “mega-liners” (Weeden et al. 2011), having a maximum capacity more than 2000 passengers and crew. Generally, the cruise liner market has been segmented into luxury, premium, contemporary and budget cruise liners (UNWTO 2010). The luxury segment with mainly European clientele, such as MS Europa or MS Deutschland has small ships with more personalized services and on shore itineraries (UNWTO 2010:61). These luxury cruise liners offer longer itineraries involving different continents, sometimes even around the world, providing authentic and special experiences. In contrast, contemporary cruise tourists like Costa and AIDA spend less money for a trip and have a lower spending behavior on shore (Gutberlet 2016a) as well as having less awareness of local values and cultures (Gutberlet 2016b). Contemporary cruise liners are selling standardized floating resorts, “holiday at sea packages”. Oman is seen as an important and “emerging cruise destination”, where German-speaking cruise liners like AIDA show a strong interest (UNWTO 2010). Around US$ 26 million was invested in ports in Oman (ibid:60). With the arrival of the first mega-liner AIDAblu in 2004 (Gutberlet 2016a), Oman became easily accessible for mass tourists, especially from Germany. These tourists had previously travelled with AIDA to established destinations such as the Mediterranean or the Caribbean. The number of ship arrivals in Oman rose from four ships in 1996 to 135 ships carrying 256,721 tourists in 2012, the time when this survey was conducted. In 2014 the number of cruise tourists decreased to 125,375 and 100 cruises (Ministry of Tourism 2015b) due to
the Arab Spring and military conflicts in the region. Nevertheless, Oman has been projected to attract 1.6 million cruise tourists yearly by 2020 and 2.1 million by 2030 (Oman Tribune 2015). According to the Ministry of Tourism cruise liners that carry predominantly German-speaking tourists like AIDAblu, Costa Classica, Mein Schiff 2 and Costa Atlantica arrived between 15 to 22 times in Muscat during this study in winter 2012/2013. The ships depart from Dubai and arrive in Muscat on the second day where they stay for around ten hours. Then they continue their seven-day journey to Bahrain, Abu Dhabi and back to Dubai. Due to the success of cruise tourism in Oman, the Mina Sultan Qaboos Waterfront project will be realized in the coming years. After the development of Muscat International Airport the $1.29bn (OMR 500m) Waterfront Project will be the second biggest infrastructure project in the country. It will comprise an area of 64 hectares including docking facilities for cruise liners and for ferries. The first phase shall be completed by 2020 (Times of Oman 2016). When overnight tourists arrive at the UAE/Oman boarders or at Muscat International Airport, they are distributed over the entire country. Cruise tourists, however, specifically arrive in the port in Muscat, located in the spatially limited bay of Muttrah with its 240,000 inhabitants (Gutberlet 2016a) compared to 1.2 million inhabitants in Muscat governorate (NCSI 2016b). As a result, overcrowding occurs, so that other types of tourists and residents avoid the souq. The cruise tourists’ performances are different than overnight tourists. For example, cruise tourists stay only briefly in the souq (Gutberlet 2016a).

Although cruise tourism has developed rapidly in the past decade in Oman, studies about imaginaries and cruise tourist performances are rare during stopovers in Asia. On-site experiences of Western (European, North American) and Asian tourists in various places around the world have been studied extensively (Chronis 2015; Edensor 1998; Pearce et al. 2013; Quinlan Cutler et al. 2014; Rakić and Chambers 2012; Rantala 2009; Ryan 1995; Tung and Ritchie 2011; Wu et al. 2014). Chronis (2012 and 2015) examined imaginaries and the body-space staging of tourists at the US National Military Park. However, the social construction of imaginaries and performances of German-speaking mega-cruise tourists visiting an “Oriental” site on the Arabian Peninsula while highlighting different perspectives of tourists, cultural brokers and locals have not been studied yet. Hence, these aspects make this paper an addition to the current research body. Through the primary use of qualitative methods and the analysis of narratives and performances of tourists, cultural brokers and local shop vendors, the relationships between mental imaginaries of German-speaking cruise tourists, social narratives and the reality “in situ” can be better understood. The paper will start by exploring the context of this study with its concepts and then proceeds with the methodology, research results and final conclusions.

5.2.3 Theoretical background

Mediated Imaginaries

“Every tour begins with a desire” (MacCannell 2011:64). Prior to a trip, tourists develop fantasies or dreams, so-called “imaginaries”. According to MacCannell, for each journey, “millions are imagined” (ibid.) in the tourists’ fantasies, in the media and in marketing materials. MacCannell (1999:98) was one of the first researchers who revealed the importance of visual tourist images and imagined concepts realized through linking a site, a visitor and a marker. Similarly, Di Giovine (2014) argued that imaginaries serve to frame a tourist site and that there are “as many tourist imaginaries as there are tourists” (2014:167) and that these imaginaries are constantly reformed (ibid.:151). Worldwide,
people and places are “endlessly reinvented as tourism creates powerful socio-cultural representations around them” (Salazar 2006:848). However, they are not neutral. Power issues and ideologies are constantly involved while representing “Something by Someone to Somebody” (Saarinen 2004:170). Tourist places often reflect an artificial, “staged authenticity” (MacCannell 1999) engaging the imagination, in “imaginairiums” (Swain 2014:103). However, “imaginaries are authentic” (Di Giovine 2014:151), because they are genuine or real. Swain (2014) agrees with Di Giovine (2014) that imaginaries try to construct “authentic feelings and knowledge” (ibid:104). This power of mass-mediated imaginaries to market certain tourist expectations has been utilized by tourism promoters (Beeton et al. 2006). Mass-media influences “worldviews, directing to specific destinations” (Salazar and Grabun 2014:7) while constructing the social reality through standardized symbols, e.g. natives dressed in traditional costumes (Beeton et al. 2006:29) and storytelling (Chronis 2012). The tourists perceive the destination in terms of this image. Moreover, the tourist experience has become more mediated by the mass-media (Jansson 2002), enabling people to be a kind of “virtual tourist” without being physically present, conceptualized as “mediatized mediascapes” (Månsson 2011:1635). Thus, the gaze has become interwoven with the consumption of mediatized images (Jansson 2002:431).

It is not the physical place of a destination that is sold to tourists, rather, the place narratives and the material staging (Chronis 2012:1799). According to Chronis (ibid.), during the process of “refiguration” tourists shape their imaginaries through “the emplacement”, the bodily presence while being there at the site, the “individual narrative disposition” of each tourist, their “emotional connection” with the site and their “moral valuation”, which leads to an “ideological reinforcement”, shaping overall group identities (Chronis 2012:1810). The guided tour around the US memorial site studied by Chronis is symbolic, unreal, imaginative and reconstructed from history.

Imaginaries often inhabit an ideological role (ibid.:1812). In the relationship between the West and less developed countries, they are based on a dependency between the core and the periphery, within a postcolonial discourse (Tucker and Akama 2010). Therefore, social realities may create barriers preventing communication, raising false expectations and “potentially dangerous assumptions” (Beeton et al. 2006:34). Ferraris (2014:179) stresses the impact of a time-space compression applied in marketing material about Cambodia, where the geographical distance between the destination and the tourists’ country of origin “evoke a lust for the exotic”. Therefore, imaginaries adapt to global markets, politics and local identities, “combining cultural and political capital into multiple imaginaries” (Swain 2014:120). Imaginaries are formed through continuous experiences. “The tourists’ experiences include feedback and “reverse gazes” from destination communities, from tour guides and other mediators” (Salazar and Grabun 2014:7). Therefore, cultural mediators assist “in sense making and in the tourist’s (re)constructions of his or her experience as well as the representation of that experience” (Jennings and Weiler 2006:58).

Edensor (2000) distinguishes three types of tourist performances. The first is the “disciplined ritual”, where tourists are directed and their performances are restricted and repetitive. The second type is an “improvised performance”, which is more reflexive and directed by the tourists themselves and thirdly, the “unbound performance” appears in unfamiliar scenery, such as a souq. Because the visual sense has been overemphasized in tourism research other bodily senses have been neglected (Crouch 2002:4268). Imaginaries are produced through the body (Chronis 2012) and the senses (Crouch and Desforges 2003; Rodaway 2002); through encounters between people and between
expectations, experiences and desires (Crouch 1999:1). Imaginaries and their reality of space should be considered together (Chronis 2012; Gao et al. 2011). Chronis (2015), Edensor (1998; 2000) and MacCannell (1999), argue that tourists are performing on stages. On the other hand, Bærenholdt et al. (2004) note that the tourist’s consumption of places is more than stages for performances but a form of “networking material, social and cultural elements” (ibid.:31). In performances the body is used as a sign to communicate cultural and social knowledge, transforming the surrounding space into front-stages (ibid:52). In this regard, tourist spaces have five dimensions: the physical environment, embodiment, sociality, memory and image (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:32). This paper will focus on the image created by the media, the embodiment and performance in the souq as well as the sociality of tourists, cultural brokers and vendors in space.

Oriental Imaginaries

Said (2003) described in “Orientalism”, how postcolonial discourses and visual representations created by the Occident defined “the Orient”. He therefore argued that both “Orient and Occident are man-made” (Said 2003:5), while “exercising power over and producing 'the Orient' as a (material, embodied) reality” (Haldrup and Larsen 2010:79). In an “Oriental” context, images like harems, minarets, souqs and mint tea have been perceived as being exotic since the 19th century (De Botton 2003:78). While travelling to destinations in the Middle East and most of Asia, the Western tourist expects to go “back in time and space to a world of ancient civilizations,” (Echtner and Prasad 2003:669), to discover “the unchanged”, “the uncivilized”, “legendary lands”, with “mystical secrets”, “exotic people”, while wondering at “their opulence” (ibid.). To experience the “Eastern mystery versus Western rationality”, where the Western concept of “home contrasts with the Eastern dream space” (Edensor 1998:77). A common feature of Western Orientalism was to legitimate “a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient” (Said 2003:19), where locals are described as existing in the past (Palmer 1994:805), as “childlike” and “innocent”, so that quasi-parental power can also be exercised by Western tourists (Morgan and Pritchard 1998:230). Comparing British and French Orientalism, that was “real and experienced” due to their colonial histories, German Orientalism was shorter and rather scholarly. Said (2003) referred to a German “classical Orient” which was made “the subject of lyrics, fantasies and even novels” (ibid.:19) and experienced through “the journey, the fable, the stereotype” (ibid.:58). One of the most famous classic German works of literature about the Orient is Goethe’s collection of poems “West-East Divan” (Goethe 2003). However, Goethe never travelled; his poems developed in his fantasy, while travelling through Germany, at the beginning of the 19th century. Hence, the aim of German Oriental scholarship was “to refine and elaborate techniques whose application was to texts, myths, ideas, and languages almost literally gathered from the Orient by imperial Britain or France” (Said 2003:19). Writers like Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant and Isabelle Eberhard experienced the Orient as “mytical, erotic and savage” (Jovicic 2000:115). For Flaubert, Oriental imaginaries correlated with places he visited, conceptualized as “tourist habitus” (ibid:106). As for writers who published in German, Princess Sayyida Salme, the daughter of Sayyid Said ibn Sultan Al Busaidi who ruled Oman from Zanzibar in the 19th century, created in her autobiography “Memories of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar” (Ruete 2004) Oriental imaginaries about her life in an “Oriental family palace” with its harem from her native Zanzibar perspective. The princess married a German and took the name Emily. Her imaginaries are conceptualized as “counterimaginaries” (Leite 2014). Extracts of her fairy tale biography are read by an AIDAblu onboard lecturer. Zanzibar and other parts of East Africa were colonized by Germans
between 1897 and 1916, when German East Africa was a colony (Tanzanian Government 2016). Especially in Africa discourses of post-Orientalism, colonialism, and imperialism seem to form the basis for tourism dreams (Salazar and Grabun 2014:8). Often those imaginaries have little to do with reality, but with the country’s colonial past, creating “stereotyped ethnic and cultural images” (Palmer 1994:796). Therefore, they impact the tourist-host encounter, while stereotyping or “labeling” the destination (ibid.:805). Host communities may find themselves trapped in such a post-colonial setting (Hall and Tucker 2004:12) and “frozen in their archaism” (Chauvin-Verner 2007:78).

**Authenticity**

On the other hand, MacCannell (2011) argues that tourists are searching for "originality" or "authenticity", which is a cultural value that concerns representation and performance. For Western tourists their search for “authenticity” has shifted the representation of “the Other” during World Exhibitions and in the media to the tourist destination itself (Wels 2004:90). Authenticity describes whether a practice is appropriate or not (Chaney 2002:4086). For example, a church that is open for tourism is “objectively authentic”, being part of the local flow of life, compared to a museum, showcasing a “staged authenticity” (Cohen 2012:253). Authenticity can be regarded as a process of social construction, depending on the amount of control the actor has over its cultural production. With little control and less credibility, the performance becomes commodified (Kaul 2010:200). A “symbolic authenticity” is realized when a place meets the tourist’s ideas of what the destination is about, according to its mediatized image (Jansson 2002:439).

Many researchers have studied visual or mental imaginaries (Chronis 2005, 2012, 2015; D’Hauteserre 2011; Di Giovine 2014; Gao et. al 2011; Jovicic 2000; Pink 2007; Salazar 2006; Salazar and Grabun 2014; Urry 1995). Salazar (2006, 2010) has studied the imaginaries and guiding narratives between local guides in Tanzania and Indonesia and European tourists. As Salazar (2012:868) notes, it is not easy to deconstruct the origins of imaginaries and how they influence the broader public. Cauvin Verner (2007) analyzed the French tourists and local guide interactions in the Moroccan Sahara, a place that is inscribed by French post-colonial imaginaries. Similarly, Edensor (1998) researched European tourist-local imaginaries and performances at the Taj Mahal, a site with British colonial imaginaries. Chronis (2005; 2015) conducted research in Gettysburg, a US memorial site, where social values, patriotism and unity were reinforced through guided tours. Haldrup and Larsen (2010) examined place images and embodied performances including photography of European tourists in Bornholm, Denmark. However, the role of mediators was left out. Tucker (2002) examined imaginaries and performances of Western tourists and locals in a small community in Turkey that has been transformed into a hybrid tourism space. In addition to imaginaries and experiences along the Kasbah Route in Morocco (Wagner and Minca 2015) and imaginaries produced in marketing materials about former colonies like India and Egypt (Echtner and Prasad 2003) there is little research on imaginaries and narratives between tourists and service providers (Salazar 2010:80).

There is no research of German-speaking tourists performing in an Oriental context, at a port on the Arabian Peninsula. This study aims to contribute towards filling a gap in the discussion on Western postcolonial Oriental imaginaries in a little explored geographical location. As well as the creation of tourist spaces of German-speaking cruise tourists and their performances through the embodiment of their imaginaries. The cruise tourists originate from a country without direct colonial history to Oman, rather, it was only in East Africa that there was German colonial influence (Tanzanian Government Portal 2016). Some members of the Omani society originate from East Africa. Arguably,
this means that the tourists were indirectly influenced by postcolonial discourses and imaginaries. The tourists’ Oriental imaginaries in Souq Muttrah are realized in different stages, an area which is currently under-researched (Chronis 2015; Rakić and Chambers 2012). The following research will analyse different perspectives of cruise tourists, tour guides, vendors as well as the local population. To get a deeper insight into these perspectives, a multi-method approach was chosen, while focusing on qualitative methods, to be outlined in the following.

5.2.4 Research methods

The paper is part of extensive field research that was conducted to analyze the tourist experience and socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism in Souq Muttrah (Gutberlet 2016a, 2016b) as well as the visual gaze of tourists through photography (Gutberlet 2016c).

To understand the tourist imaginary, narratives and performances, research was conducted in Souq Muttrah during the winter seasons between 2011 and 2014. First a tourist questionnaire survey in German was conducted which presented the basis for the development of the questions asked in the qualitative interviews. Therefore, the interviews were complemented with data results of the survey. The mixing of methods was intended to blend with each other. The questionnaire was not distributed to those cruise tourists who were interviewed. It supplied an overview of the imaginaries and experiences in the souq, while the qualitative interviews which were conducted during immersion in the souq, gave the findings much more depth. A quantitative approach was seen useful to validate results of large samples such as mega-cruise tourists. During the tourist season 2012/13 AIDAblu docked fifteen times in Muscat carrying between 1,800-1,900 tourists plus crew (Ministry of Tourism 2013). The questionnaire survey was handed to all tour guides of each half-day Muscat coach tour, prior to the departure of the buses. The tour guides were also briefed about the survey and its distribution. It took around five minutes to fill in the survey inside the bus after the visit to the souq. In total, 830 tourists completed the questionnaire, out of some 1,040 approached. The survey was followed by in-depth interviews, participant observation, travel ethnography, including long-term immersion and photography of the tourist and guide performance in the place. The research presented in this paper shows primarily the qualitative research data. References to the results of the questionnaire serve as a background information.

Since the tourist experience is linked to the visual gaze, visual ethnography was seen as an additional research method “to overcome limitations of verbal discourse” and to access “the embodied experiences of tourists’ encounters with place” (Scarles 2010:906). Another common approach of imaginaries is to analyze representations of a destination in brochures, advertisements, postcards and elsewhere (Leite 2014:265), which reflect the “real-false moments of first contact” mediated by cultural brokers (Bensa 2007). Therefore, promotional brochures and websites of mega-ships that stop-over in Oman carrying predominantly German-speaking cruise tourists such as AIDAblu, Costa Cruises, Mein Schiff and Brilliance of the Sea were studied prior to the design of the questionnaire and throughout the field research. Moreover, media articles in the German-speaking print media, guidebooks and brochures as well as the website of the Ministry of Tourism were studied. These materials have been selected throughout the field research and included a wide range of different information such as onboard newsletters and, cruise guidebooks in German. The author had requested them from tourists and onboard staff. These materials originated from Germany or were distributed in Germany, e.g. by the Ministry of Tourism. As a consequence, a mix of rather
“stereotypical images” and of “modern images” such as skyscrapers and migrants were identified. In the questionnaire survey a question regarding the pre-arrival imaginaries offered a set of thirteen different images along with the statement: In your view, which images did you have prior to travelling to Oman with the cruise liner? The following statements were given.

“Oman is a country of: The Arabian Nights, with a sultan, with colorful markets, migrants from Asia, with an oasis, with frankincense, with camels, with sand desert, with skyscrapers, with veiled women, with Bedouins, with petrol and with minarets.”

The two-page questionnaire survey offered further questions regarding the tourist’s pre-travel preparation, the multi-sensuous experience, such as the smells and crowding and demographic data. The researcher’s work experience in tourism, journalism and public relations since 2004 along with her Arabic language skills facilitated an easier access to local stakeholders in tourism and in the Souq Muttrah.

Qualitative methods were applied when one or two mega-cruise liners were in the port. The qualitative approaches are positioned within a social constructivist approach, meaning exploring the world as it is constructed through a person’s experiences and practices within space (Crouch 2005:75). Knowledge is constructed through the interview. “The interviewer is seen as a traveller who journeys with the interviewee” (Legard et al. 2003:139). They collaborate with each other and the interviewer plays an active part in the experience. Such an approach acknowledges “the everyday production of knowledge and the subject’s subjective processes, which are fluid, contingent and complex” (ibid.:74). In-depth interviews were held on 15 Sundays between February and May 2012 in order to be immersed in the tourist performances (Chronis 2015). The researcher was socializing, performing and observing along with the tourists while participating in their on-site experiences (Haldrup and Larsen 2010, Salazar 2012). The walk along with the tourists offered a process of learning through shared experiences, creating a kind of intimacy with the research interviewees’ experiences of place (Pink 2009:30) while consuming smell, sounds and visual displays in the souq. The walk followed similar ethnographic research conducted during a walk through a garden (Pink 2002) or through an urban space (Pink 2008), involving a continuous comparison of the present material and multi-sensory experiences, while on the other hand creating a sense of place “in situ” and an imaginary tourist space in the tourist’s minds, without using video but with a camera and in-depth interviews. Within this research approach, remaining objective or “semi-objective” means being positioned as a semi-detached observer and “in between” with regard to the interviewees practices and experiences. This was at times difficult given the researcher’s expertise as a tour guide and her long-time immersion in Souq Muttrah during the fieldwork. Thus, the researcher sometimes acted as an additional cultural mediator, answering questions about the place while interviewing and observing the tourists and actions of other research subjects in space, e.g. vendors, residents and other tourists. The tourists wished to enjoy themselves and the atmosphere and it was important that the interview should not be too disruptive (Crouch 2005:78). Since the researcher is German, it was easier to socialize and connect with the tourists. The interviews were conducted in German and the anonymity of the interviewees was assured. Replies were immediately noted down in a notebook or recorded with a voice recorder while walking with the tourists through more quiet areas of the souq and then translated into English shortly later on.

Moreover, while referring to the individual talk, the researcher stresses the importance of their actual quote (ibid.:80). Those tourists interviewed were not part of the questionnaire survey.
Twenty-one German-speaking tourist couples of different age groups, from twenty to seventy, who stopped at the shop were approached by the researcher during the peak tourist timings between 10.00 a.m. - 1 p.m. The duration of the interviews varied between 20 and 90 minutes, depending on their available time and the “saturation effect”. Due to limited manpower and time an accidental sampling method was applied. Accidental refers to the sample population for the interviews that was generated through a flow population (Ritchie et al. 2003: 94) approaching those tourists who were at the frankincense shop at the peak tourist arrivals. There German-speaking tourists who arrived as couples were approached. A large majority of 88.2% were travelling with a partner, representing different age groups. A frankincense shop was chosen due to its popularity and location at the entrance to the souq, and tourists were approached from there. The interviews were taped into word documents and analysed manually without the use of software for data analysis. Key concepts were found through content analysis, by reading repeatedly, highlighting the concepts used. The data was then gathered in separate files within “thematic charts” with concepts like the tourist experience, travel motivation, behavior, imaginaries etc. (ibid.:230). Each respondent had a vertical row in the matrix and each concept had a horizontal row. The files were printed out and compared with each other manually. Finally, a central chart was constructed in order to understand the emerging phenomena of each case in the data set (ibid.:250).

Participant observation and photography were applied on Sundays, between 2012 and 2014. The inside of the frankincense shop was chosen as the ideal location for observation and photography, with the researcher standing or sitting on a chair overlooking the street, as well as along the main alley of the souq, where most cruise tourists were walking. Photography was applied to “record the moment (the reality)” (Pan et al. 2014:60), as well as the tourist and guide performances along the main street and from inside the elevated frankincense shop.

Table 17. Interviewees and the number of interviews conducted, 2012-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of interviewee</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual traveler</td>
<td>7 couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group traveler</td>
<td>5 couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruise tourist from a luxury cruise</td>
<td>1 couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruise tourist from mega-cruise liners AIDA, Costa or Brilliance of the Sea</td>
<td>8 couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-board tour guides from mega-cruise ships</td>
<td>5 individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-board lecturers from two mega-cruises</td>
<td>2 individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local tour guides of different nationalities (Omani, Indian, Sri Lankan, German, Austrian)</td>
<td>11 individuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own compilation)

The analysis of the content of images requires a certain reading, where images need to be regarded as objects (Banks & Zeitlyn 2015:2). These features are important for the analysis (Banks 1997:9); the
context of the souq and the frankincense shop being surrounded by male and female cruise tourists and a cameraman who are either photographing or listening and observing the Omani tour guide and his explanations of frankincense. Photography also reflects the “photographer’s inner motions” (ibid.:60). While taking the photos, the author tried to reflect the context of the tourist performance, e.g. from the inside of the frankincense shop, maintaining a rather “local”, semi-detached position. Photos were taken from different angles, eye-level (Figure 17) and from a high angle (inside the shop) overlooking the scenery (Figure 18). The author considered ethical issues when taking photographs of tourists. When the tourists were in front of the frankincense shop, some took a photo of the shop with the tour guide and the shop vendor (Figure 18). At the same time to represent the overall social context in the souq, the author took a photo of the tourist group and the tour guide, like a ‘reverse gaze’, from the opposite direction. A wide-angle perspective (Banks 1997) was taken from far away to get a view of the context of the guiding practices in front of the frankincense shop. Since the author was sitting close to the tour guide who was talking to the tourists, the tourists realized clearly that they were being photographed and they had some time to leave the scene in case they preferred not to be included in the photo. Therefore, one can assume that the tourists implicitly agreed, although they were not asked directly (Figure 18). Similarly, in Figure 17 the overall context of the tourist practices within the port environment was photographed.

On another occasion, the tourists who were part of a small group, an “Oriental dressing up”, were asked by the author if they could be photographed (Figure 19). Here the author was standing just beside a tourist group, on the same level. Therefore, this photo was a “collaborative and directed image” (Banks 1997), framed according to the author’s visual aesthetics and at the same time a concretization of social facts. This was realized through the agency of the male Indian shop vendor, who explained to the German tourists how to tie an Omani turban, regardless the fact that it is part of the Omani identity and not Indian. Such a scene was not often observed in the souq, compared to scenes of predominantly male tour guides explaining the various types of incense available there. Similar to the interviews, where the identity was kept anonymous, the tourists, tour guides and shop vendors were blacked out (as per Chronis 2015). In the following part, the research results will be outlined.

5.2.5 Research results

To contextualize the sample population, the demographic results will be outlined briefly: 94% were German, 4% Austrian and 2% were from other European countries. The large majority of mega-cruise tourists were first-time visitors to Oman and 61% had consulted guidebooks and travel brochures prior to travelling (Gutberlet 2016b). 56% were female, most of the tourists were over fifty years of age: 27% (50-59 years), 29% (60-69 years) and 15% (over 70). This correlates with the literature on cruise tourism, e.g. in the study of Larsen et al. (2013:146) the cruise tourists’ mean age was 50 years.

Mediated Imaginaries – Preparing for the Fairy Tale

The cruise liners’ itineraries are called “Dubai & the Orient”, promoting the modern and the fairy tale. In interviews, cruise tourists mentioned that their main motivation was to experience Dubai, the primary “trendy” destination and the Orient along with sunny weather. Oman was crucially seen as just a part of the trip.
Prior to their arrival, the tourists’ imaginaries were mediated by narratives in cruise brochures (Leite 2014). According to Salazar (2006) and Wels (2004) Europeans in Africa want to discover the landscape and the people just as they read about it in fairy tales and as it was during colonial times (ibid:90). The same applies to German-speaking cruise tourists visiting Souq Muttrah. “In the Orient the most beautiful dreams of The Arabian Nights will come true” (AIDA 2014, AIDA 2011/12). With the slogan of The Arabian Nights, AIDA “labels” the destination (Palmer 1994:805) as a fairytale country, simultaneously relying on “fictional worlds of literature, film and fine arts to give authenticity to the people and places” (Salazar 2012:827). It is therefore not surprising that 67.2 % of the cruise tourists mentioned that Oman represented a country of The Arabian Nights to them. The tourists consequently expected to explore “legendary lands” (Echtner and Prasad 2003: 669), which referring to a cruise brochure “set the stage for the adventure stories of Sindbad the seafarer, who embarked on his travels from here” (Mein Schiff 2012/2013a). The inside front page of a cruise guidebook pictures an Omani boy in dishdasha and kumma (ethnic cap), entitled “the successors of Sindbad the seafarer”, labeling Omani children as inheriting the legacies and reconstructing the “embodied Oriental Other” as a child, who is inferior to the tourist. A quasi-parental power can be exercised (Morgan and Pritchard 1998:230). On board the cruise, Oriental narratives were reinforced through excursion videos, lectures and conversations with employees. On two different German-speaking mega-liners, on-board lecturers and other staff were reading The Arabian Nights. For children, stories like Aladdin were read in the Kids Club. A male lecturer recounted erotic stories of The Arabian Nights while explaining the history of belly dancing as a prelude to an actual live performance by a female dancer. “We were around forty people inside a cosy, intimate room. There was a large interest in attending. The average age was fifty-five,” he said. However, belly dancing is not part of the Omani culture and it is not an Omani dance, thus raising “potentially dangerous assumptions” (Beeton et al. 2006:34) and eroticizing the Oriental female. A female lecturer from AIDAblu mentioned that she read parts of the autobiography of Princess Salme from Zanzibar (Ruete 2004) and she advised the tourists about the next destination. “She had told us that Muscat will be the highlight of the trip. We should get up early. We got up at six o’clock to see the sunrise. At around seven we arrived in the harbor, which was very beautiful,” said a female tourist in her 20s, recalling her first actual sight of the imaginary country Oman. Upon arrival in the port, the German captain broadcast through microphone an invitation to explore “the most beautiful and most Oriental place of the entire journey,” remembered onboard guides. “Compared to Dubai or Abu Dhabi, where you should not expect the Orient, we praise Muscat as a typical Oriental port,” said an on-board guide. Hence, on-board lecturers and guides have been directing the tourist gaze, shaping the tourists imaginaries about Muscat as an Oriental site.

“Tourists come to Muscat to visit a typical local market”

Accordingly, Souq Muttrah has been promoted as an Oriental shopping experience onshore. Marketing brochures, German magazines and the Omani government mediate the tourists sensuous imaginaries of a souq that has “a mysterious atmosphere and exotic smells and products” (AIDA 2015/16) or “an Oriental atmosphere similar to a fairy tale” (Elle Magazin 2013). 77% of the mega-cruise tourists had very strong or fairly strong images of “colourful markets” in their minds. The souq is praised as an embodied icon, as “the most famous” (Ministry of Tourism 2014a:9), the “best protected in the entire region” (Time Out Muscat 2012), representing a traditional shopping experience (Ministry of Tourism 2012a:21), where visitors “take the pulse of an Omani town”,

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“handed down the centuries” (Ministry of Tourism 2014a:11); thus representing an unchanged, timeless space (Echtner and Prasad 2003). “Many tourists come to Oman to visit a typical local market. We recommend Souq Muttrah. There is no comparison to other souqs in Dubai or Abu Dhabi, which are partially rebuilt.” The souq is seen as “objectively authentic” (Chaney 2002:3945). However, through modification in the architecture the souq has been modernized and homogenized for tourism purposes (Gutberlet 2016a), representing a “staged authenticity” (Wels 2004:91). Those narratives were supported by imaginaries of a white frankincense burner labeled as “the symbol of the city” and “in the surrounding landscape frankincense trees are planted” (Mein Schiff 2012/13b:124). A large majority (70%,) of the tourists had strong or fairly strong images of frankincense in their minds. These imaginaries were misleading (Beeton et al 2006). Frankincense only grows in the south of Oman. In the past, frankincense was valued as a highly-prized commodity like gold in the Roman Empire and in Greece (Vine 1995:46). Hence, those “collective narrative articulations” (Chronis 2012:1809) about the people, the souq, the landscape and frankincense are “molded to suit stereotypical mass market package expectations” (Daye 2005:612), converting the destination into a commodity and a tourist attraction (Chronis 2012:1809). However, expatriate male vendors and Omani women were excluded from these mediated representations in marketing materials, confirming Feighery (2012:273) who notes that predominantly Omani men and Western women are represented in social narratives in the promotional video of Oman, entitled Welcome to My Country. While also referring to Feighery’s analysis, in the following sections, imaginaries and embodied performances (Edensor 1998:62) will be analyzed in different stages of the experience.

**Leaving the Cruise Liner along with a Local “Other”**

Most cruise tourists go on coach tours, a collective performance and a “disciplined ritual” (Edensor 2000:334) within a safe enclosure, similar to the cruise liner itself. While descending the ship ramp the tourists were photographed (Figure 17), sometimes along with a local “Other”, a staged and directed performance, similar to a theme park. These photos produce symbols of memories while shaping the tourists’ imaginaries.

One day cruise tourists were observed being photographed beside a female cruise employee wearing a black abaya (a long over-dress for women worn on the Arabian Peninsula), a scarf and a face veil. “This is a promotional joke,” said the photographer. The excursion manager explained: “In the US they are welcomed by Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. It is just a publicity gag,” referring to a “commercial staging” similar to the US, confirming that the local culture with its narratives and performances is promoted as a commodity to mass audiences (Chaney 2002:3945), however decontextualizing it from local realities.
The intention was to embody a “local Other”. However, this misrepresents local (authentic) practices and fuels stereotypes (Daye 2005) about veiled women. “In Muscat a face veil is rarely seen,” the researcher argued. “They do not know that,” the photographer said, referring to the cruise tourists’ low cultural knowledge. Suddenly the veiled employee said: “I do not want to show my face. I do not want to be on each photo, hanging on the walls of their living rooms,” thus confirming her intention of veiling and protecting her own identity. Due to the misrepresentation of the Oriental Other influenced by onboard staff, it is not surprising that 86% of the mega-cruise tourists had strong or fairly strong images of veiled women in their minds.

**Performing in Souq Muttrah**

One morning eight buses stopped in front of the souq. Germans, Dutch, Austrians, French and Italians stepped out and flocked into the souq in groups of 20-48 people. All the tourists had stickers with their bus numbers on their shirts. They entered through the main gate, the “replica watch tower”, where the majority of the tourists were walking or strolling within “the tourist bubble”, having the same visual experience (Gutberlet 2016a). Strolling or walking is seen as “a central activity in tourism” (Edensor 2000:105), which is here performed within a group, linking together individuals (Chronis 2015:138) along with “gazing” at the shops, their outlets and the vendors. Urry and Larsen (2011:101) note that people gaze at ideal representations and internalized views from different representations. While walking along “the tourist street” shops and their young male vendors were realizing an obvious “male gaze” (Maoz 2006). They were staring or gazing at the tourists passing by, appropriating the Western “Other”, while staging the Orient by approaching the tourists aggressively, sometimes in German and trying to sell Oriental “material imaginaries” (Chronis 2015) such as belly dancing costumes, fake pashmina scarves, carpets and other imported items, on display for tourists, as well as local frankincense. Although the items showed little differentiation, a majority of 55.3% of the mega-cruise tourists liked the product range as well as the “light Oriental” features
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Such as the narrow streets. The tourists interviewed also liked tangible Oriental features such as the ethnic dress, the dim light and the way of displaying the items in open shop stalls, a direct contact with the “Otherness”.

**Smellscape and Staging the Oriental Other**

At the frankincense shop cruise tourists encountered a “smellscape” (Edensor 200:340) of incense, burnt in two small clay pots at the open outlet of the shop. Among Arabs, “the ability to smell the other person and to be smelled by them is important” (Rodaway 2002:57). Two young male Omani, wearing a local dress (dishdasha) and a turban, embodying the “Oriental Other”, sold frankincense and other perfume mixtures (bokhur). Those were piled up to the ceiling in the back of the small elevated shop without windows, realizing an Oriental shop and abundance (Echtner and Prasad 2003). The frankincense shop is a place where the senses are entangled with social narratives, “enabling an embodied imagination of ‘difference’” (Haldrup & Larsen 2010:101), while gazing at the tour guide and his performance. “It smells so nice,” said a female cruise tourist, leaning over a frankincense burner and wafting the fumes towards her nose and entire face. Olfaction is especially evocative of emotional responses, but it differs from one culture to another (Rodaway 2002). Through their senses the tourists were “making sense” of the surrounding space, “engaging in space in an embodied way” (Crouch 1999:263). The multi-sensory performances induced the feeling of being away from everyday life (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:53), while taking “possession of difference” (Haldrup and Larsen 2010:101) in a leisure space, reinforcing the dichotomy between “home” and “away” (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:31). “This is different than in Dubai”, said a male tourist in his 60s, while gazing around in front of the frankincense shop, visually collecting Oriental sights. “We wanted to see Arabia. We prayed that Oman will be less modern than Dubai”, he said referring to nostalgic imaginaries of “the old and unchanged” (Echtner and Prasad 2003), a fairy tale country, compared to the modern city of Dubai, visited the day before. Therefore, it is not surprising that 80.2% (N=707) of the mega-cruise tourists strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I felt as if I was in a different world”, away from home. Cruise tourists linked crowding and the distinctive olfactory experiences with the authenticity of space. “Many different perfumes and many people. The souq is more authentic than in Dubai,” said a tourist in her 20s. A total of 68% of the cruise tourists enjoyed the smells, that produced a new sense of place. The smell created a certain Oriental environment and determined their relationship to its materiality (Pink 2009:20) and own identities, developing a spiritual connection with the souq. For some tourists the use of frankincense revived memories, which is similar to remembering childhood at the Taj Mahal (Edensor 1998:146). “I just know frankincense from the church,” said a male cruise tourist in his 60s with a smile while moving his right arm back and forth, imitating a priest’s movement with a frankincense burner during a catholic ceremony. For him the strong olfactory experience revived memories of the church service. When asked whether he wants to buy some frankincense he said: “Not now, in Salalah. It is the next stop of our cruise liner”. He linked frankincense with Salalah as being the more authentic place where frankincense grows in Oman, compared to Muttrah where it is only stored, sold and consumed. On the other hand some tourists were observed obviously rejecting or avoiding the strong olfactory experience. They turned their heads away from the fumes or started to cough. Other tourists with positive memories of frankincense were curious about its application and its usage. However, they needed some further interpretation.
An Omani German-speaking tour guide with his group of cruise tourists including a cameraman (Figure 18) stopped at the frankincense shop performing another “disciplined ritual”, where tourists are directed (Edensor 2000), while labeling (Chronis 2015:128) the shop as a significant place. The guide walked a few steps up, overlooking the crowd, directing their performances and gazes, to realize a romantic and collective gaze (Urry and Larsen 2011). He was the director of a “disciplined ritual” (Edensor 2000). The shop turned into a stage set (MacCannell 1999:101) showcasing “a minitheatrical event” (Wu et al. 2014:104) where cultural brokers “perform, play, enact and stage: they are stagers of sensations” (Urry and Larsen 2011:53). The tourists immediately took out their cameras and started taking photos, experiencing the place “through their lens” and preserving the scene for “future practices” (Crouch and Desforges 2003:13).

Figure 18. Tourists and guide “staging” at the frankincense shop, 2012

(Source: own photography)

The cameraman started recording the scene for a travel diary, sold on board. Photography is an “essential ritual” of vacationing, along with sightseeing and buying souvenirs, a “compulsion of the performance” (Edensor 2000:334). It is a performance that “produces memories, social relations and places” (Bærenholdt et al. 2014:69). Photography also reflects a wish to arrest time or a magical moment (ibid.:117) and to “shoot” the best photo, similar to a competition (Salazar 2006:839). While recording and taking photographs, the group was staging a theatre where they “perform various scripts, roles, technologies, relations and places to and for themselves and for a future audience” (ibid:69). Tourists transformed themselves from distanced spectators into participants in form of directors and actors, producing “new realities” (ibid:70), linking the destination with everyday life at home (Edensor 2000). 80% of the cruise tourists used photography during their visit to the souq and many took photos of a frankincense vendor, the “Oriental Other”. However, the Omani vendor was not asked if he agreed, transforming him into a passive object of the tourist gaze and exercising power over him. The tour guide had to mediate between the vendor and the tourists, creating the gaze and affirming Oriental imaginaries that were sold to them (Salazar 2006:840), while reaffirming solidarity within the group (Chronis 2015:138). The guide was the only local with whom the tourists
interacted most of the time (Salazar 2006:835). There was no signage on the products and the Omani vendor could not communicate in their language. Therefore, the vendor moved to the back of his shop, refilling frankincense and serving local customers. He literally gave his shop, the “tourism stage” (MacCannell 1999) to the guide. The local guide interpreted the site, while the tourists were “glancing”, in a sort of dialogue with the guide, but “on equal footing” (Chaney 2002:4008), without appropriating the object of the gaze, the tour guide.

“The green frankincense is more expensive, it costs five rials”, he said while explaining its everyday use and that it is possible to dissolve it in water. “Myrrh is a gum, the best quality is from Salalah”. “How do you burn frankincense?” asked one lady. “With charcoal”, said the guide while pointing at a piece of charcoal and a colorful clay pot. “This is a frankincense burner. You put the charcoal on top,” he said. A woman replied: “We have frankincense and myrrh, now we just need gold”.

The tourists received interpretation and stories (communicative staging), while forming their own German interpretation of the site, as “a narrative disposition about the meaning of the past”, in effect a process of “refiguration” (Chronis 2012:1811). Referring to imaginaries derived from Biblical accounts of the three Holy Kings offering gold, myrrh and frankincense to Jesus. Here it is obvious that people learn to associate certain images such as frankincense with certain meanings that are highly context dependent (Banks & Zeitlyn 2015:10). The tourists found themselves in the center of a “mystical place”, adjusting the cultural production of frankincense to their German imaginary. Within the guiding practices, the local guide turned into a cultural mediator, a “key actor in the process of localizing – folklorizing, ethnicising and exoticising a destination (Salazar 2005:629), producing “shared sensory knowledges and affectivities that connect” (Chronis 2015:138).

“It’s like medicine, you can dissolve the frankincense in water and drink it,” the guide explained, opening a small box of frankincense. Some tourists took out a piece and tasted it. Then the guide placed the frankincense burner on the floor, underneath his dishdasha, to show how Omanis perfume their clothes with frankincense.”

Hence, through embodiment (Chronis 2015:134), the body of the guide is used as a sign to communicate cultural and social knowledge (Baerenholdt et al. 2004:52), while the personal display of living Omani cultural tradition becomes a cultural commodity (Hall and Tucker 2004:11). The tourists seemed happy about all the “tourism tales” (Salazar 2006:841; Chronis 2012), framing their visit through embodiment, with the smell, taste, photography and their visual gaze of the products on display.

As a consequence of the familiarization of this new environment through “transcultural frames” which translate the Otherness with an image known in the tourist culture (Salazar 2010:90), tourists bought frankincense. The older tourists especially bought frankincense in order to create a certain olfactory environment at their homes, linked to their Christian identities and moralities (Pink 2009:22). “We bought frankincense for our father. He likes to perfume the house with incense at Christmas time,” said a woman from Austria. Other tourists bought some for their pastor at home. An Austrian couple from a cruise liner said that they bought frankincense in order to burn it along with a candle, instead of charcoal as used in Oman, thereby aligning the experience with their own environment and identities at home. In addition to tourists, local residents and Arab tourists, e.g. from Yemen or Dubai bought frankincense in the same shop. The frankincense vendor said that he
sells around 30-50 kilogrammes of frankincense per day, predominantly on Thursdays. “We buy frankincense as a special gift from Muscat for our families. But we have frankincense in Yemen as well, in the North and South,” said a male Yemeni tourist in Arabic. A tourist from the United Arab Emirates said: “In Dubai we can buy frankincense, but Oman is the country of origin. That is why I buy it here.” An Omani customer from Muscat said: “I come here 2-3 times per month. I usually go to the fish market and then to Souq Muttrah. I buy bokhur, which is used by the females in our family to perfume their abayas (black overcoat)”. Therefore, among locals and Arab tourists frankincense is appreciated as an original, authentic Omani product, reflecting their identities and being used as an everyday perfume at home.

Scarves, frankincense and postcards were favorite souvenirs for cruise tourists (Gutberlet 2016a:57). Because they felt reassured, and comforted by their “glocalised” guide (Salazar 2005), they did not bargain. The questionnaire showed that 58.4% very much liked or liked having contact with locals such as the guide. These results correlate with the research results of Wu et al. (2014) in the Silk market in Beijing, who note that the social interaction is enhanced through the mediation of a local: “the sense of threat and concern about being sold inferior goods may be reduced and the social interaction enhanced” (ibid.:104).

Next to the frankincense shop an Indian vendor showed a group how to fold the Omani turban (Figure 15, see below), thus engaging the tourists in a playful way, dressing up, staging and embodying the “Oriental Other” (Haldrup and Larsen 2010:99) away from everyday routine.

Some mega-cruise tourists mentioned in the interviews that they kept the dress for an Oriental Carnival Night on board the ship, while some male tourists were observed wearing an Emirati head cover and a dishdasha, in order to dress like the “Oriental Other”. “This is like the Austrian leather trousers at home,” said an Austrian cruise tourist, thus comparing, “framing” and localizing the Omani dress with a symbol from home. Some female tourists were observed wearing a black abaya.

In a separate incident, a young Omani tour guide of a group of cruise tourists took a hair clip with a large plastic flower, which is used to elevate the shape of the scarf of local women. “Look there are flowers for the hair,” the guide said while fixing the hair clip in the tourist’s black hair. The lady in her sixties seemed amazed, the tourists started laughing. Then a female on-board cruise guide wanted to get a flower as well, so the tour guide had to choose one for her.

Finally, the women bought rose clips and then the group moved on. This shows that the tour guide is essential in interpreting, “localizing” the tourist setting and that the tourists embodied experience is important in grasping the sense of the place. As a German cruise tourist explained: “Our Omani tour guide is very convincing. He is guiding us from his inside”. His wife added: “It’s just great. He even recited some Quranic verses for us.” Thus, an authentic, spiritual environment was created through the “Oriental Other”.

The majority of the cruise tourists stayed up to 30 minutes inside the souq, which is a short time for reaching “the core of the place” (Tucker 2002:3032). Nevertheless, 85% of the cruise tourists agreed with the statement “the souq is an exceptional Oriental experience”.

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Figure 19. Staging the “Oriental Other”, 2012

(Source: own photography)

It shows that the tourist’s individual perception of an “objectively authentic” space with their embodied performances and narratives was realized according to the mediated pre-travel imaginaries. In addition to frankincense the tourists’ linked imaginaries of an Oriental souq with old buildings, small box-like shops, items for sale displayed randomly, dim lighting, and “exotic” local people. A German retired lawyer in his 70s said: “The souq has a special life of its own. You can learn about the mentality of people and their trading.” Another cruise tourist in his forties commented that the souq is “a great place to experience an exchange of different cultures”, thus valuing the ethnic diversity of Souq Muttrah.

5.2.6 Conclusion

This paper is about the creation and distribution of tourist imaginaries and the relationship between tourists, cultural brokers and vendors through their narratives and performances in Souq Muttrah. The creation of an “Oriental space” is analysed in the media and in a plurality of situations, from a German perspective, which happened to have no direct colonial involvement in the country although it did so in East Africa from where parts of the Omani population originate.

Results show that the souq is marketed by the government, the media and by tourism providers as a traditional, mystical place and therefore as an authentic “Oriental” market. It is not the physical place that is sold to tourists, but the place narrative and discourse (communicative staging) and the presence of materiality, the market place, its architectural features and the products on sale (material staging) (Chronis 2012:1799). Therefore, the souq is staged through a network of representations in the media, materialities, bodies and stories of different stakeholders (Haldrup and Larsen 2011). It is transformed into a stage for performances (Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Chronis 2015) where imaginaries of the Oriental Other, frankincense and colorful markets are created within a multi-sensuous experience. Cruise tourists and their tour guides perform on “tourism stages”, where the guide turns into the main actor in “localizing” and exoticizing the destination (Salazar 2005). Through the guide’s body-space interplay, “shared sensory knowledges and affectivities” (Chronis
2015:138) are communicated, for example at the frankincense shop, where the “smellscape” induced an embodied, spiritual experience mixed with memories of home. The guide’s mediation appears essential towards reconstruction and manipulation of the tourist performance (Jennings and Weiler 2006:59). Due to the directed nature of the visit and the mediated imaginaries, the tourists’ imaginaries and embodied performances become united (Månsson 2010). Tourists shape their imaginaries through the bodily presence and movement in space, “being there at the site”, the physical “emplacement” (Chronis 2015), walking, gazing at the shops and the vendors, smelling frankincense, taking photographs, staging the “Oriental Other” and being a local through their clothes. Therefore, the “individual narrative disposition” of each tourist and their emotional connection with the place leads to an “ideological reinforcement”, shaping a group identity of German-speaking contemporary cruise tourists, a “cruise communita”.

Through the tourists’ imaginaries, they wish to discover the exotic destination in the same way they were instructed to do so through pre-travel information, guidebooks, the mass media and through on-board cultural brokers and their readings of the Arabian Nights and the “Memories of an Arabian Princess” from Zanzibar. These exotic imaginaries of cruise tourists are similar to tourists visiting Indonesia or Tanzania (Salazar 2010), Göreme/Turkey (Tucker 2010), the Taj Mahal (Edensor 1998) or the Egyptian Sinai (Haldrup and Larsen 2010). Similar to Göreme (Tucker 2010) and Tanzania (Salazar 2010) it seems that “fake and real” are present. On the one hand, Souq Muttrah is a place for shopping for locals, while in the area nearest to the harbor it has been commoditized for tourism. Similar to Göreme, in Souq Muttrah its locals have become commodified, staging identities of the “Oriental Other”. Cruise tourists experience a staged authenticity while socializing with vendors and tour guides “on an equal footing” (Chaney 2002), who engage them in Oriental tourist narratives and imaginaries. Locals adjust themselves within traditional and Oriental identities. These playful performances enacted in Souq Muttrah as authentic stage plays in which tourists participate reflect the concept of an “Arabian Disneyland”.

The cruise tourists themselves are directors as well as photographers and actors, staging the exotic “Other” in a rather curious, innocent way, without imposing themselves on locals. Referring to that innocence, I agree with Williams and Lew (2015:128) that the cruise tourist finds authenticity in any place or experience. However, I disagree with MacCannell (1999) and Di Giovine (2014) that there are millions or many imaginaries; but there are, in Souq Muttrah only a few stereotyped Oriental imaginaries being circulated and realized through the media, marketing material and on-board narratives, in sum, frankincense, a colourful market, veiled women and the “Oriental Other”. These narratives are the narratives which are performed by German-speaking cruise tourists, cultural brokers and local vendors.

However, these imaginaries of the Arabian Nights and of post-Orientalism do, to some extent, misrepresent current local practices. They have little to do with the reality and instead create “stereotyped cultural images” (Palmer 1994), impacting the tourist-host encounter, labeling the destination Oman and its people as being “backward” and “old”. Local communities may find themselves trapped in an ancient Oriental setting. Currently the tourists’ imaginaries and experiences screen out the local “flow of everyday life” in the souq, e.g. the non-Omani vendors, the smell of spices, the taste of halwa (local sweets) and the sale of groceries in small shops.
The local community actively confronts the tourist imaginations. The Omani government is planning to construct a special modern Tourist Souq named “Souq Al Mina” (Souq of the Port) inside an enlarged cruise port (Muscat Daily 2016b). With a continuous increase in mega-cruise tourism and the extension of the current port, it will be a challenge to create and circulate new images and discourses that replace the traditional imaginaries without losing the sense of place and the original local “charm” of the place.

Hence, research on the cruise tourist experience in the existing souq is timely. Since other cultures and other types of tourists may imagine and perform differently in the souq, this paper has its limitations. It has focused on German-speaking mega-cruise tourists only. I hope my findings will inspire more research on local “counter-imaginaries” (Leite 2014:267) and “gendered imaginaries” as well as the imaginaries and performances of other types of tourists.
5.3 Tourist Photography in a Bazaar - Souq Muttrah / Sultanate of Oman

5.3.1 Introduction

Until the early 1990s it was assumed that knowledge is acquired primarily visually and that “people travel to 'see' the world” (Adler 1989:8), whereas in the past 20 years the tourist experience has been analyzed more holistically, including all human senses (Rodaway 1994). Nevertheless, photography has played a central role in “developing the tourist gaze and tourism more generally; these are not separate processes but each derives from and enhances the other, as an ‘ensemble’,” (Urry & Larsen 2011:186). The tourists' vision and experience is influenced by photography; “complex places are consumed as lightweight pre-arranged photo-scenes and experiencing is akin to seeing, seeing reduced to glancing and picture-making to clicking” (ibid.:187). Thus, a number of researchers have discussed the importance of the visual sense for the construction of tourist imaginaries developed through the media and advertisement and their impact on the tourists' memories; such as photos (Sontag 1977; Chalfen 1979; Albers & James 1988; Adler 1989; Urry 1995; Crawshaw & Urry 1997; Edensor 2000; Urry & Larsen 2011; Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Selby 2004; Salazar 2012). Inspired by these researches, the goal of the following paper is to examine photographic representations and how German-speaking tourists visually experience the oldest Omani market place, Souq Muttrah.

Throughout the past ten years, Souq Muttrah (the “bazaar” or market in the district of Muttrah) has been promoted by different stakeholders in the Omani tourism industry as one of the main tourist spots in the capital Muscat. Especially when cruise liners arrive between October and April at the harbor opposite to Souq Muttrah, cruise tourists stroll in large numbers through the lively labyrinth streets of the souq. Until the beginning of the 1970s the souq was the central market place in Oman, a meeting place for the community. Up to today locals from neighboring districts and from the Interior of Oman buy household items, textiles, jewelry and locally made perfumes in Souq Muttrah. Due to this mixed use of the place, its extensive promotion by different stakeholders as a “traditional” Omani attraction, the souq has become a tourist attraction where tourists can explore the local Omani culture and go back in time, in a kind of “living museum without walls”.

5.3.2 Theoretical background

In the early 16th century travel was practiced by European elites as an art. The aristocratic traveller “went abroad for discourse rather than for picturesque views or scenes” (Adler 1989:9). This notion changed in the 17th century, in favor for the “eye” and the silent “observation” (ibid.:11). With the introduction of group travel by Thomas Cook in the UK, the railway technology and the invention of the camera, the “tourist gaze” emerged in the 1840s (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:142). Since then tourists have been taking photos of themselves, their fellow travellers and the places they visit. According to Edensor (2000:335) photography is an integral part of the tourist performance, similar to souvenir collection and the organization of travel itineraries. “Most tourists feel compelled to put a camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable they encounter” (Sontag 1977:10). Thus, tourists wish “to retain strange, interesting, and exotic sights such as the unfamiliar costumes and rituals of people entirely foreign to them” (Cohen et al. 1992:214). Craik (1997) argued that the main goal of tourism is “seeing, talking about and learning about great sites and sights (historical, cultural and environmental)” (Craik 1997:131), whereas intercultural communication between the tourists and the locals is a secondary. For this research, tourist photography comprises photos taken by
tourists. A tourist is defined as a person who travels away from home seeking to experience something different from the everyday at home. Thus “tourists are attracted to difference, or to otherness” (MacCannell 2011:212). On the other hand, they may also seek comfort and amenities like at home.

Visitors to a tourist site experience the tourist landscape and produce representations such as photographs, to be enjoyed instantly and upon their return home (Selby 2004:171). As Urry mentioned, travel photos are "to be cherished and consumed well after the journey" (Urry 2011:156), for example by sending them via email to friends or sharing them via social media or on a blog. Many photos are also sent immediately via mobile phones to people around the world. Thus, tourist photography and also traditional postcards help tourist memories to construct their travel (Crawshaw & Urry 1997:179). Tourists see objects and especially built environment in part constituted as “signs” (Urry & Larsen 2011:17) or as tourist clichés. As Jovicic (2000) mentioned the visual experience is rather reconstructed, the product of “fantasies”: “le produit du phantasme lié à un certain territoire” (Jovicic 2000:115). Initially, place consumers are influenced by images produced by marketing experts, who rely on the so-called “imaginaries to represent and sell dreams of unspoiled destinations where tourists are invited to imagine being in a paradisiacal like surrounding” (Salazar 2012:865). Those commercial images are also called “induced images” (Selby 2004:69). Imaginaries are intangible; they become visible and tangible through discourses, for example through what people say and do and through images consumed, such as photography (Salazar 2012:866). These non-commercial images are also called “organic images” (Selby 2004:69). Images, discourses and ideas about tourist destinations have certain origins. “Many of them are marked by distinctly Western genealogies” (Salazar 2012:868). They are replicated and are continuously moving globally. “Tourism images and ideas easily travel, together with tourists, from tourism generating regions (which are also destinations) to tourism destination regions (which also generate fantasies) and back” (ibid.). Through the circulation of images, discourses and fantasies, they help to create the “otherness” of people and places around the world.

As for Arab countries, the Western discourses and fantasies are primarily rooted in a historical and Western “Oriental discourse”, as described by E. Said in Orientalism (2003), “reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness” (Said 2003:7). Thus, tourism images refer to different myths created by the Occident/the West, such as the myth of the “unchanged”, the myth of the “unrestrained”, and the myth of the “uncivilized” (Echtner & Prasad 2003). For example, “Oriental countries are distinctly characterized by an atmosphere that combines the themes of mystical, opulent, strange (exotic), and past versus present” (ibid.:665). It has been argued, that these atmosphere themes are largely applied to ancient sites such as gateway cities, which are meeting places for the old and the modern. Thus, Oriental tourist destinations appear to remain unchanged for the tourist gaze where “tourists are encouraged to relive the journeys and experiences of colonial explorers, traders, treasure hunters, archaeologists etc.” (ibid.669).

Urry & Larsen (2011) differentiate between the sociality of the tourist and between different roles tourists take while sightseeing, visually consuming or “gazing” at a sight. “The gaze must be directed to certain objects or features which are extraordinary, which distinguish that site/sight of the gaze from others” (ibid.:114). The “romantic gaze” is a semi-spiritual gaze which occurs in solitude and privacy, involving vision, awe and aura. The “collective gaze” is a communal and directed visual experience, for example with a tour guide who frames the gaze of the site. The “collective gaze” is a
shared visual experience, such as gazing at the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Furthermore, there is the “spectatorial gaze”, a communal activity, involving a number of short encounters; for example the visual experience of sites seen passing by from the window of a tourist bus (ibid.:19). The “mutual gaze” is realized when both tourists and the person photographed gaze at each other and thus exercise power at the same time (Maoz 2006:225). It has also been argued that there is a difference in gender, between the “female gaze” and the “male gaze”, where the sight/site or experience is more objectified. However, a number of researchers have argued that the gaze is not restricted to the sight but involves the entire body and its movements, where performance has been developed as a cultural product and a producer of culture (Salazar 2012:867). Edensor (1998 & 2000), Urry & Larsen (2011:21) and Bærenholdt et al. (2004) discussed that tourists engage in a corporal and social involvement between bodies while visiting a site. However, it has been argued that the visual sense is the organizing sense, which organizes the place, role and effect of the other senses. Thus, this research will conceptualize different tourist gazes, while focusing on photographic representations and the discourse of German-speaking tourists, who visited Souq Muttrah. In the following part the research methods will be outlined.

5.3.3 Research methods

Photography can be used as supplementary data to describe the visual experience at the tourist site. It can also be used as a source of understanding of the form, meaning and process of the image representation (Albers & James 1988:135). Tourists engage in a variety of practices (Edensor 2000) and may take different photos, reflecting their relation with the host community and the foreign environment. As Bærenholdt et al. (2004) mentioned in their study of a tourist site on the Danish island Bornholm, different types of tourists focus on their favorite attraction and produce different tourist gazes. The representations are read visually and “people will differ in the representations they encounter, depending on factors such as their lifestyle, interests, age etc.” (Selby 2004:171). Thus, to examine the tourists’ own accounts of their visual experience inside Souq Muttrah, German-speaking tourist couples or families (from Germany, Austria and Switzerland) were interviewed in German by the author (a native German), while visiting the souq during the tourist season 2012/2013. The tourists represented different types of travelers and different age groups, between 20-65 years. Two couples travelled with a cruise liner, three couples travelled with a group and four couples were independent travellers. German-speaking tourists were chosen since they are one of the largest groups of European tourists visiting Oman and due to the researcher’s own nationality and professional background in tourism in Oman. At the end of the interviews the tourists were asked to email their favorite photo to the author. A total of nine tourist couples replied, and the favorite memories of three female and six male photographers will be analysed below.

For the content analysis of the photos I will refer to different categories: the subject of the photo, the dress and action and the surrounding (Albers & James 1988:145). Sociologically tourists can be segmented into different sub-categories as suggested by Valene Smith (1977): The explorer, the off-beat, the unusual, the incipient mass tourist, the mass tourist and the charter tourist. Each tourist category adapts to the local environment to a different extent, e.g. the explorer accepts local norms whereas the mass tourist and the charter tourist expect Western comfort (Smith 1977:12). Erik Cohen (1972) differentiated between the organized mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer and the drifter. In the following research I will refer to a differentiation between the cruise
tourist, the group (bus) tourist and the independent traveller and their visual representations of Souq Muttrah.

5.3.4 Research results

**Visual Representations of Souq Muttrah**

The souq is located opposite to the port on the harbor street. The entire landscape scenery - the sea, mountains, the fort and the white houses and a small mosque along the harbor street, create a nostalgic and postcard-like scenery. From their ship, cruise tourists see the main entrance to the souq with its modern replica of a traditional tower.

Observation revealed that tourists who visit Souq Muttrah arrive by car, bus or walk to the entrance on the harbor street. From there they walk in couples or small groups along the main street, while only a few of them venture alone and into the smaller streets and deeper into the souq. Participant observation and interviews revealed that the majority of the tourists stayed between 30-60 minutes inside the souq and the majority of them took photos with a digital camera or with a video camera.

The photos seen below were taken with a digital camera and not with a smartphone. This assumes that the photos will be viewed, changed and developed later on the computer in the hotel or at home. Thus, the photos were not sent out to their social network over the mobile phone, which encourages a simultaneous, instant sharing and dissemination of the images. It was observed that the tourists walk along the main street and photograph, similar to what Bærenholdt et al. (2004) mentioned: “Cameras immobilize tourists’ mobile vision in practice, gazing-while-walking. They are not photographing while walking. This gives shape to the experience: stop, take a photograph and move on. Strolling and picturing rarely go together” (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:82).

Figures 20-28 (see next page) show the favorite tourist photos along with the type of tourist and their discourse about the visual experience in the souq. Observation, interviews and the photos also reveal that different gazes were realized. As Bærenholdt et al. (2004) suggested, different photographic experiences can be realized in the same space.

The “collective gaze” was realized by the first two photographers (Figures 20 and 21), who took different general views of the built environment, at the entrance of the souq, a busy scene with Western tourists, gazing at the shops and the expatriate vendors. Figure 21 reveals a perspective from the top of the entrance tower to Souq Muttrah. Both interviews also revealed that those tourists had limited information about the souq.
The following photos (Figures 22, 25, 27 and 28 below) in particular focus on Omani people and their “Oriental Otherness”, realizing a close perspective, a “romantic gaze”. In figure 22 the Omani shop owner of an antiquity tourist shop poses proudly for the picture. The Omani portrayed here is one of the few young Omani shop owners in the souq, wearing an Omani khanjar (dagger) and a belt around the ethnic white dress, called dishdasha. Usually khanjars are worn on special occasions, e.g. weddings. For the tourist the dishdasha is a symbol of the Oriental “Other”. Similar to being in the center of a stage the shop owner is standing in the middle of the street, in front of his shop. For the photo, he poses in a still position, while in the back an expat shop vendor, maybe one of his employees, is gazing at him and observing the scene, like an onlooker with a “disciplinary gaze” (Edensor 2000:327). In this photo, the workplace becomes a stage and their work has stopped for a moment. It is obvious that the photo has been “scripted” as if the male tourist photographer and the photographed are both choreographers of the scene (ibid.:326). They both gaze at each other, realizing a “mutual gaze”. “Photographing often involves teamwork and audiences. (...) and it is typified by complex social relations between photographers, posers and present, imagined and future audience” (Urry & Larsen 2011:213).
Figures 23 and 24 show “spectatorial gazes”: two open tourist shops (without windows). These are typical features of a bazaar, showcasing abundance, without clear organization. Here the abundance is represented by shops filled with natural stones, necklaces, rings, silver coins, and other jewelries and lamps as well as antiquities collected from the region and sold as souvenirs, hanging from the ceiling and the walls and on display on the floor and on shelves. The shop in figure 23 (above) has elephant tusks at the entrance, an unusual sight and a banned “souvenir” in many countries. Thus, the male photographer wanted to stress those exotic and “primitive” features of the shop. Both male photographers have focused on a similar type of shop, reflecting the “unchanged”, old shop without windows on the one hand and the abundance of items on display. Similarly figure 26 (below) shows the “otherness”, a “spectatorial gaze” at a gold jewelry shop inside the souq, in the gold souq, at the back of the souq, in a small street. The photo reveals the hidden, opulent and rich treasures as well as the difference in taste between Western and “Oriental” jewelry. Mass tourists rarely reach that location. From the female tourist discourse it is obvious that the tourists wanted to gaze at the “Otherness”, the female local customers. The photographer mentioned that she likes to edit the photos to make them more artistic, realizing a kind of “play” by changing the photos and using photoshop software later on on her computer. On the other hand this stresses the importance of the long term photographic memory and souvenir.

For realizing figure 25 (next page) the tourist photographer was kneeling down towards the frankincense, the frankincense burners and charcoal on display. The clay frankincense burners are in the center, whereas the vendor is not clear, serving as a kind of “backdrop”, but elevated through this angle. Like the previous photos taken in a “romantic gaze”, the photo resembles a postcard, requiring a “photographic eye” and skills. As the interview revealed, this tourist couple was comparing symbols in the souq with other places visited.
The Omani female hand pictured in figure 28 (above) reveals an artistic henna drawing, applied for special occasions such as weddings. The photo has been staged and carefully choreographed by a female photographer and in privacy, realizing a “romantic gaze” inside a shop, on the edge of the crowded streets. The female photographer wanted to capture an exotic view of the place and a female representation, also given the fact that the souq is a male dominated place, where few women work. The photo was realized in a conscious, mindful way, recognizing the cultural
constraints of Muslim females, who sometimes do not want being seen on a photo by a stranger. It was observed that before taking the photo, the tourist bought some items in that shop. The tourist photographer also returned the following year and handed over a printed photo to those she had photographed during her last visit in the souq. This reveals a symbolic gesture of cultural involvement and openness towards the Omani culture and the community, reflecting an “aesthetic cosmopolitanism” (Urry 1995). The female photographer wanted “to return a moment”, taken away. Here it becomes also evident that female tourists captured “female gazes”.

It is also not surprising that the majority of the photographers were group and independent travelers, who had spent more than one day in the Sultanate. Their photos show that they were visually and physically more involved. Independent and repeat travelers have chosen uncommon perspectives that required patience and time. They seemed to indulge in different myths and the “Oriental Otherness”, reflected in the difference in dress, perfume (frankincense), jewelry and henna drawings. Their close perspectives are in contrast to the general views of the built environment, taken by the cruise tourist, who rather seemed to glance at the scene and reproduce “induced images” of the advertising material. The shops selling food, textile and household items in the back of the souq are not part of the photographic tourist gaze, as well as expatriate workers who predominate the souq. One reason may be their lack of “Oriental Otherness”.

5.3.5 Conclusions

The author has conceptualized the tourist gaze by examining nine gazes realized by different types of tourists. The paper shows that “photography and tourism are major social practices through which people in the contemporary image-saturated world produce their own storied biographies and memories” (Bærenholdt et al. 2004:102). The outcome of the tourist photos emphasizes that Souq Muttrah caters for various “gazes”. The results also emphasize the dominant reproduction of the built environment and the “myth of the unchanged”: the old bazaar with its mystical, opulent and exotic representations. The primarily male hosts are seen as objects, as mentioned by Echtner & Prasad (2003). Therefore, the intercultural interaction between the photographer and the locals remains low and superficial.

There are limitations in this research, such as the number of tourists interviewed and the number of photos received. Further research should be done to analyse multiple visual representations, by using the internet and comparing them with tourist photos, taken by tourists of different nationalities. Finally, it would be of interest to investigate how the local community visually experiences the souq.
5.4 Cruise Tourist Dress Behaviors and Local-Guest Reactions in a Muslim Country

5.4.1 Introduction

The existing available literature on the theory of ethics and ethical behavior in tourism can be viewed as a series of responses to tackle an increasingly important issue. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) advises: “Learn as much as possible about the destination and take time to understand the customs, norms, and traditions. Avoid behavior that could offend the local population” (UNWTO 2005).

There is a “moral turn” in tourism reflecting the relationship between ourselves and others and the responsibility we may hold (Caton 2012:1922). In recent years, researchers have emerged with various concepts of “just tourism” (Hultsman 1995), “ethics of tourism” (Fennell & Przeclawski, 2003; Fennell & Malloy 2007; Fennell 2015; MacCannell 2012) “responsible tourism” (Goodwin 2011; Grimwood et al. 2015), “mindful tourism” (Moscardo 1999), “hopeful tourism” (Pritchard et al. 2011), and the “moral economy” (Su et al. 2013). Caton (2012) defined morality as “how things should be” instead of “how things are” (Caton 2012:1907). Philosophically, “tourism can be seen as an ideal metaphorical context for the messy collision of Self and Other in life more generally” (ibid.:1921). An increasing concern for host communities is whether their “local culture is treated respectfully by the tourists” (Klein 2011:113). There is a lack of applied research regarding Western tourist behavior in a Muslim country. Su et al. (2013) studied how economic activities influence the moral norms of Chinese tourism entrepreneurs who “compromise their moral sentiments with profit making” (Su et al. 2013:232). Jafari and Scott (2014) have stressed the potential for conflict in tourism between Muslim and European value systems. Stephenson and Ali-Knight (2010:290) called for an urgent need to examine the tourism impact on the Emirati society. In particular, mass tourism “characterized by hedonism, permissiveness, lavishness, servitude, foreignness, with a lack of cross-cultural understanding and communication” (Din 1989:551) is different from tourism within Islam, which promotes purposeful travel (ibid.:552), cross-cultural understanding, and hospitality (ibid.:559). Henderson (2003) cited in her research the contradictions between Islamic values and Western requirements in tourism in Malaysia, where commercial objectives aiming at maximizing revenue through providing a leisure environment based on the Western concept of the tourism industry may take precedence over local Islamic values (Henderson 2003:451). According to Said (1989), there is a need for a more Islamic-oriented development. “Western attitudes of cultural superiority reinforce an alien system of values and thus accelerate the displacement of already weakened Islamic cultural norms” (Said 1989:619). Said’s suggestion is “to reconstruct an Islamic concept of development” (ibid.:619). On the other hand, Din (1989) argued that “Muslim societies have been so deeply immersed in the Western capitalistic economy that the ideal expectations of the individual Muslim appear to be somewhat wishful” (Din 1989:560). Moreover, individualism and rationality do not correspond well to “the exploration of moral issues, which are often collective in character” (Caton 2012:1909). Caton noted that there is an “unavoidable tension in tourism between self-actualization (or more basely, self-gratification) and social concerns” (ibid.:1917). Moufakkir (2015) noted in his analysis on the stigma of Arab and Muslim tourists in the Netherlands: “What is normal to immigrants becomes labeled as abnormal by the ‘mainstream other’ and perceived as undesirable” (Moufakkir 2015:17), referring to Goffman’s (1963) categorization of stereotypes that stigmatize all members of that community in order to devalue the person. As a consequence, the
tourists’ individual behavior conflicts with the morals, values, and the behavior of the host community. The roots of such behavior, can be found in the behavior of three groups - the tourists, the community visited, and the brokers (Fennel & Przeclawski 2003:140).

In this article I attempt to integrate the ethics of tourism in the study of the behavior of German-speaking contemporary cruise tourists visiting Oman. The main goal is to analyze the dress behavior of the tourists and secondly to analyze the voices and values of the resident community. Contradictions between those values, the pre-travel information, the social construction of the media, and the tourist’s physical dress behavior will be identified and suggestions for avoiding conflict situations will be given. The local community includes shop-owners, shop-keepers, residents, local cultural brokers, and government officials.

Travel Motivations

The travel motivation is an important force influencing the tourist’s behavior (Iso-Ahola 1982). One motivation is the tourists’ search for the unexpected, for serendipity, the knack of the happy surprise (Ryan 2002c:59). During the holidays the tourist acts within a physical, social, and psychological environment (Ryan 2002d). The tourist is not simply a passive consumer but a proactive partner in the holiday experience (ibid.:61), described as a liminal (“threshold”) experience that happens at the borders between places, situations, or social roles, leading the tourist to a new identity and more openness (Hall & Lew 2009:168). This holiday experience may create potential for behavior that would not occur at home (Ryan 2002d:76). Sometimes the tourist wears a mask that hides his identity, transforming into a new identity, the “touristhood” (Jafari 1987:153). The tourist may break social rules but “quickly excuses himself, he is only a tourist, he does not know any better” (Jafari 1987:153). As Jafari notes this can lead to a self-realization that is possibly at the expense of others.

For early tourism researchers like Turner and Ash (1975) Jafari (1987), Krippendorf (1987), and Grabun (1989), many travel motives of tourists are self-oriented. Turner and Ash (1975) stated that a change in the nature of tourism would have to be preceded by a fundamental change in the attitudes of tourists and their neurosis (Turner & Ash 1975:206). During the holidays a leisure tourist wishes to behave and being treated as a “king” or “queen”. They are mainly interested in the natural environment: “The beautiful landscape and the climate are the main attractions. The fact that there are people living there is almost irrelevant” (Krippendorf 1987:44). The so-called “mindless tourist” is using his old routine, paying little attention to the setting and having little or no interest in new information (Pearce 2006:151) and doing “irrational things” such as getting drunk (Ryan 2002c:58). Similarly, MacCannell (2011) noted that those tourists express an attitude of “cool indifference”. They remain in a “cocoon of their own cultural beliefs and standards of comportment” (MacCannell 2011:222). Cohen (1996) categorized the tourists as “recreational and diversionary tourists”, within a phenomenology for different tourist experiences according to the tourist’s own understanding of the world and his spiritual center.

The concept of “mindfulness” versus “mindlessness” introduced by Moscardo (1999) describes the awareness and the behavior of a tourist to minimize negative impacts within the community visited. “Mindful visitors actively think about where they are and what they are doing” (Moscardo 1999:19). According to Moscardo (ibid.) they are also more open-minded, adapt to the new environment, and therefore they are more likely to learn new things, change their behavior, and enjoy the holidays. Krippendorf (1987) calls those tourists “emancipated”, which is in line with Heidegger’s (2010) thoughts about creating awareness of the environment and a fulfillment of being alive and “being-in-
the-world”. Less responsible, mindless tourist behavior arises because “tourists are under-skilled, mentally and physically underprepared for the challenges to be met” (Pearce 2006:139). To promote a mindful behavior the communication and interpretation needs to have a clear structure and correspond to what visitors already know (Moscardo 1999:153). Visitors also need to be aware of the impact of their behavior, “they need to care about the place visited” (ibid.:16), their behavior is “rule-forming”, and “engaged in creating categories and distinctions” (Ryan 2002c:58).

Social rules and cultural patterns are beliefs that regulate behavior (Pearce 2006:124). The social representation theory includes values, beliefs, attitudes, and explanations and it connects individuals to their social and cultural worlds (Pearce et al. 1996). One way for developing a tourist “care ethic” is to provide positive, memorable tourist experiences through, for example, quality interpretation tools and quality pre-travel information. Such information constitutes guidance, similar to medical information (Pearce 2006). However, this does not guarantee an improved tourist behavior. “If the communication has a clear structure matched to what visitors know, then learning, understanding and satisfaction should result” (Moscardo 1999:112). Ryan (2002b:26) noted that tourism is an “educative process” and Klein (2010) called for teaching cultural sensitivity especially to cruise passengers, who “visit far reaches of the world and expect people to have the same values and accouterments that the passenger has at home” (Klein 2010:64).

Communicating with people who have a different value system and communication style can contribute to various “culture shock situations” (Pearce 2006:130) or “culture confusion” (Hottola 2004). Those situations can affect a normally competent individual and turn him into “a dazed and inept performer” (ibid.:131) and a “stigmatized person” (Moufakkir 2015). Depending on the length of stay in the destination, the type of tourist, and the cultural differences between the tourist and the resident, the intensity and duration of culture shock stresses may vary (Carmichael 2006:129). In order to avoid culture shock, the tourist needs to ensure that his “behavior is consistent with the authentic self, but also the culture in which one is interacting” (Fennell & Przeclawski 2003:143). On the other hand, Moufakkir (2015) called on the personal freedom of the tourist and adaptation of the host community towards the tourist and his/her clothes, in this case the veil. According to Moufakkir, the acceptance of (physical) difference calls for tolerance of diversity, and unconditional hospitality (2015:21). Tourism and vacationing within an open and free spirit, as it is known today in the West, is “a result of and a contributor to the democratization of Western societies” (Ryan 2002b:15). However, to what extent does the local community in Oman needs to adjust to the Western cruise tourist dress behavior? Din (1989:555) has classified the attitudes of Muslim destinations towards tourism as “discouraging” and “laissez faire” attitudes, as “accommodating” or as “isolating” tourism from the host community. Doxey (1975) developed the Iridex model for residents describing various stages of the resident’s reaction to tourism: euphoria, apathy, annoyance, antagonism. “Hosts experience culture shock when they are confused by the behavior of tourists” (Hall & Lew 2009:172). This is especially the case when the number of tourists exceeds the “cultural carrying capacity” of the hosts (ibid.:172) and when the social values of the tourists are different to their hosts.

**Social Values in Oman**

Omanis have unwritten, strictly followed social rules linked to the religion; called adat in Arabic, they are similar to other traditional communities such as Kyrgyz (Kochkunov 2010). The religion is deeply rooted in Oman, since the Sultanate was one of the first countries to embrace Islam in the 7th century (Al Salimi et al. 2008). "Oman – and particularly its inland region – show a resilience of forms
and customs which have defied foreign influence over long periods" (ibid.:3). Moreover, Arab societies are collective societies, dependent on in-groups, on power figures, while having a larger power-distance (Hofstede et al. 2010:103). The individual has to adjust to the community (Arabic: umma), its values, and its patriarchal structure, where the head of a family or of a company exercise a moral authority. Traditional values and norms restrict women’s movement in public including her travel behavior, limited to travel with family or acceptable companions, and religious travel (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez 2001:12). Religious values also guide the host-guest relation and forbid excessive display of wealth through dress and material possessions (Sönmez 2001:128).

Non-Muslims are expected to adjust their behavior and manners. This includes especially behavior in public spaces such as the dress code, the prohibition of alcohol and showing affection. The dress is part of the national identity and culture. "Great importance is laid on the traditional dress in Oman. Together with a women's jewelry and a man's weaponry, it is emblematic of tribal, regional and national affiliation and fulfills the basic human requirement of self-expression" (Richardson & Doerr 2003:486). In public Omanis are fully covered, from the ankles to the wrists. Omani males wear a turban or a kummah (small cap) and a dishdasha (long dress), which is officially white and women also wear a long dress or a black abaya (dress) and a lihaf (headscarf). To stress the importance of the official Omani male dress, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has issued a warning to companies who do not stick to the official dress code (Oman Daily Observer 2014). As Said (1993) notes, culture is “a source of identity, and a rather combative one in that we see in recent ‘returns’ to culture and tradition” (Said 1993:141). In Said’s view these “returns accompany rigorous codes of intellectual and moral behavior that are opposed to the permissiveness associated with such relatively liberal philosophies as multiculturalism and hybridity” (ibid.).

The Islamic dress code aims at “protecting the person’s dignity and modesty and giving them respect. In principle Muslims should not wear clothes that accentuate the body shape” (Women in Islam 1999:6).

**Communication Style**

People who belong to a collectivist culture tend to use high-context communication styles, where participants have to interpret the meaning. This is in contrast to low-context, direct communication styles used, for example, in German-speaking countries, that are more individualistic societies with low power-distance, and where people are more independent from “in-group members” and powerful others (Hofstede et al. 2010:104). In the following research I will also refer to these communication styles and the role of the mass media including pre-travel information and narratives of cultural brokers, who construct and mediate a sense of reality for the Western tourists.

**5.4.2 Methods**

Field work was conducted over the winter seasons 2011/2012 and 2013/2014. Two questionnaire surveys in German were distributed to cruise tourists from a contemporary cruise liner who went on two different sightseeing tours. Prior to the distribution, the German cruise liner management and the captain of the ship approved the questionnaire, but requested slight amendments. Permission for interviews with the local community was granted in advance by the Ministry of Tourism.

In February/March 2012 a questionnaire survey was distributed to cruise tourists from AIDAblu who went on a half-day Muscat city tour by bus. This tour was identified as the most popular tour among
contemporary cruise tourists. The questionnaire was distributed at the port to all tourists on board the coaches. They were asked to return the survey by the end of the tour. The questionnaire covered questions with check lists regarding the tourist’s travel preparation, the number of trips to Oman, and the pre-travel information about the dress code. Questions regarding the behavior in public were given in a very structured way, as the tourists could tick “Yes”, “Partially” or “No”. Questions were asked about the tourists’ perception and experience during their visit to the souq and general demographic data regarding age, gender, and their educational attainment. In order to measure the degree of their agreement or disagreement with a given statement, the survey included questions based on the Likert psychometric and analytical method. The scale offered a five-point range from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, to strongly disagree. A total of 1,040 questionnaires were distributed and 830 cruise tourists returned the survey, representing a high response rate of 80%. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS21.

Between April and July 2012 the local Omani and expatriate community in Souq Muttrah were interviewed. A total of 45 shop vendors or owners were interviewed in English or in Arabic. Further interviews were conducted with cultural brokers like tour guides, tour operators, and a local shipping agent. The researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews on her own. The interviewees were asked about cruise tourism and how they perceived the tourist dress code in the souq. Because the community is small and closely integrated, the majority of the respondents did not want to be recorded. Thus, the interviews were noted down immediately and completed with observations and thoughts of analysis afterwards. Later on the text was transcribed into the computer.

The author has been working in Oman since 2004 - as a tour guide for German and French speaking tourists, as a reporter for a local English/Arabic daily, and as a PR manager for the German University of Technology in Oman. Consequently, the research is influenced by her emic insights and observations. Her Arabic language skills, her contacts, and engagement with the community have helped her to establish trust and credibility within the community and to gain access to decision-makers. On the other hand, at times she felt it was difficult to remain an objective “outsider”.

Due to the cultural sensitivity of the topic, the researcher encountered “gender issues” and negative feelings while conducting interviews especially with the male, South Asian shopkeeper community. As described by Jennings (2005:111) “Men interviewing women and women interviewing men will gain differing insights from a man interviewing a man and a woman interviewing a woman”. At times she felt that the expatriate community was scared of her questions, although the interviews were anonymous. On the other hand, she encountered openness and curiosity for her research among the Omani and long-established South Asian trading community.

In-depth interviews with 21 tourist couples (cruise, group, and individual tourists) were conducted on 15 Sundays at the entrance to the souq between February and May 2012, when mega-cruise liners were in the port. Observations were conducted between January and May 2012 and repeated on several Sundays at the beginning of 2013 and in December 2014 when one or two contemporary cruise liners were in Muscat.

A second survey by questionnaire was conducted with another contemporary cruise liner, unnamed at the company’s request, between January and March 2013. The two-page survey was distributed during nine full-day tours with four-wheel-drive cars to an oasis and the desert in the interior, around 250 kilometers from Muscat. The questionnaire survey included the same questions regarding the
dress code and the overall experience. The questionnaires were distributed prior to the tour at the port and were collected immediately after the tour. Out of 390 questionnaires distributed a total of 235 tourists returned their survey form, achieving a response rate of 61%. Moreover, 22 cruise, group, and individual tourist couples were interviewed about their travel preparation while five cruise tour guides, one onboard lecturer and one onboard protestant pastor were interviewed during the tour. Further methods used included participant observation and in-depth interviews with tourists, until a “saturation point” was achieved. Observations were supported by still photography.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the local community living in close proximity to the tourist attractions in the oasis, in the interior of Oman. Here the researcher encountered difficulties in getting access to the community and their thoughts within an “emic approach” (Pearce 2011:10). The community is traditionally reserved and conservative. During the interviews with male members in the interior, the researcher was wearing a scarf - loosely wrapped around her hair, in order to show more respect and to be more respected. To comply with local customs, the researcher was accompanied several times by a male Omani tour guide and a female teacher who acted as gatekeepers and sometimes assisted in translating the Arabic dialect into English. The male tour guide helped in mediating with male community members. A snowball approach was employed for the interviews. A total of 21 members of the local community, including six female residents and two male sheikhs (heads of the community) were interviewed. Females were interviewed in their living-room at home and males in a public space such as the market square. Most interviews were semi-structured and followed a conversational style. To gain a deeper insight into the social values high-ranking government officials including the Assistant Grand Mufti of Oman were interviewed. He requested to review the interview, it was sent to him, and returned with few modifications. The qualitative data was compiled and additional notes transcribed. The key concepts of the qualitative research were found through the research process and content analysis, by comparing the interviews with each other and creating a research frame along with the observation. To analyze the importance of the media on the social construction of the tourists’ ideas and beliefs (Beeton et al. 2006:29), pre-travel information such as daily newsletters, port information, and excursion tickets from the ships were studied, along with online brochures, the website of the Ministry of Tourism, guidebooks, and travel magazines.

5.4.3 Results

During winter, when day temperatures fall to around 25 degrees Celsius in Oman and when it is below zero in Europe, it is difficult to avoid encountering Western tourists at key tourist attractions. Cruise tourists walk along the Corniche road to the main entrance of Souq Muttrah, or they visit the souq as part of an excursion. Along their way, they walk into shops or they sit in coffee shops. Referring to Pi-Sunyer (1989), who comments on the behavior of tourists in a Spanish coastal town between the 1960s and 1980s, a similar phenomenon can be observed in Souq Muttrah. “Virtually every tourist has great visibility and proclaims his alienness through dress, speech and manners” (Pi-Sunyer, 1989:189). The local community in Oman is rather conservative, and their language, values, and dress code are different from Western tourists. The “degree of their mutual compatibility” and the number of tourists (Saveriades 2000:149) can cause a decreasing tolerance towards visitors, resulting in a high level of irritation and culture shock stresses, conceptualized in the “cultural carrying capacity” of the community (Hall & Lew 2009:172). In both places, in the Spanish town and
in Muttrah, tourism is a new phenomenon – large-scale cruise tourism started in Muscat around 10 years ago. Since then the number of cruise tourists who arrive in Muscat has increased dramatically. According to the Ministry of Tourism the number of ships has increased fivefold - from 25 ships carrying 7,683 tourists in 2005 to 134 cruise liners carrying 12,375 tourists in 2014 (Ministry of Tourism 2014a). The majority of the cruise tourists are from Europe, mostly from Germany.

The peak tourist arrival in Souq Muttrah is around noon (Gutberlet 2016a). On a Sunday in February 2012 about 20 per cent of the female tourists from two mega-cruise liners who entered the souq within 15 min. were wearing shorts or mini-skirts with tight, sleeveless tops and deep cleavages. Moreover, female cruise liner staff was wearing their “uniform”, blue miniskirts and white semitransparent blouses. Thus, female tourists and cruise employees were failing to cover their bodies and adhere to the local dress code.

In the first survey 86% of the tourists were visiting Oman for the first time (Gutberlet 2016a) and 94% during the second survey. The large majority was from Germany. In the first survey the tourists’ (N=736) main sources of information prior to the trip were guidebooks (34%), travel brochures (27%), the internet, TV, radio, and newspaper (25%) and to a lesser extent reports from colleagues, friends, or family (15%). More than one-half (56%) of the tourists surveyed were female and 40% had basic 10 years secondary schooling. During the first survey, 98% (N=738) affirmed that they were advised to cover their knees, cleavage, and shoulders while only one male tourist mentioned he did not know about the dress code at all. The second survey showed that a total of 85% knew about the dress code, 12% were only partially informed and 4% were not informed at all (N=235). This shows a high degree of awareness about the dress code.

These results were confirmed in 2013 and 2014 during follow-up observations and interviews. During the 21 interviews with German-speaking tourist couples in the souq, 80% of the female tourists and all male tourists observed the dress code. Mindless dress behavior during the tour was observed among only a few male cruise tourists. During a city tour by bicycle some male tourists were wearing short, tight biker trousers and shirts while walking through the souq. Separate observations were reported in 2013 – a man wearing only his underwear standing on the balcony of the cruise ship, observing the tourists disembarking and on another day again a man in revealing clothes standing on a balcony, facing the harbor. None of the cruise staff were seen to react to these incidents, which confirms the “carefree spirit” on board the cruise.

Referring to Pearce (2005), those cruise tourists were too “unskilled” and “inexperienced” to inform themselves in advance. A female tourist wearing a mini-skirt mentioned: “We like being surprised while travelling.” Thus, they did not inform themselves in advance about the destinations to keep a surprise factor, assuming that they are familiar with the mega-cruise liner and the destinations to be similar to others visited previously in the Mediterranean. Through incorrect information given by cruise staff, the tourists were reaffirmed in their behavior, which confirms findings of Klein (2011:114). “The captain told us, no mini-skirts and cover the shoulders,” said one lady wearing a long, semitransparent white skirt with a back slit above the thighs. Similar incidents were observed in both destinations. To visually illustrate the tourist’s “mindless dress behavior”, Figures 29-31 (below) show tourists of different age groups at the entrance and along the main street of the souq.
Participant observation and informal conversations revealed that some tourists were more mindful, some complained about a lack of information received: “On board the Costa they don’t inform us,” said a couple.

Figure 29. A cruise tourist along with her Omani tour guide, 2012

Figure 30. Female cruise tourists at the main entrance of Souq Muttrah, 2012

(Source: own photography)

(Source: own photography)

Figure 31. A group of cruise tourists at the entrance to Souq Muttrah, 2014

(Source: own photography)

**Prearrival Communication**

Prearrival information was communicated to the cruise tourists in various steps by the shipping agency, through information brochures, by the tour operator, the cruise brochure, and the website as well as onboard communication.

In line with the concept of unconditional hospitality, neither the official website of the Ministry nor any of the various brochures produced by the Ministry of Tourism explicitly mentioned a female dress code for travelers. On the website of the Ministry a dress code for the visit to the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is stipulated. “Visitors are asked to dress modestly and in a way befitting
places of worship. Women are also required to cover their hair” (Ministry of Tourism 2016b). However, except for a visit to the Grand Mosque women do not need to cover their hair in public. To stress the dress code during the Muscat city-tour and the guidelines inside the Grand Mosque, a ship excursion ticket stipulated "long sleeves and trousers! Own scarf!" Apart from these specific occasions, clear guidelines for female travelers are not given. Only a separate 1-page leaflet entitled Tourism Guidelines mentions “Men and women should cover knees and shoulders” and “Respect local codes of behavior and traditions of dress” (Ministry of Tourism 2012c). The leaflet was freely available inside the port building in 2013, but it was not seen to be distributed to the cruise tourists.

Focusing on the male dress only a Ministry brochure distributed during international travel exhibitions mentioned, "Oman is a Muslim country so it is important to observe a certain dress code and behave sensitively…The dress code in Oman is comparatively relaxed, but extremely revealing and inappropriate clothing may be considered offensive. Men should wear long trousers and shirts." Travel magazines published in Oman are also vague in their advice: "Omanis are renowned for their laidback lifestyle. Not surprisingly the dress code is relaxed, although as is the case with its Gulf neighbors, inappropriate clothing will most likely be considered offensive" (Scott 2012:5).

Travel advice uses adjectives like “modestly,” “conservative,” “extremely revealing,” “inappropriate,” and “offensive,” to describe the dress. For a European tourist who travels to Oman for the first time, these guidelines assume pre-travel knowledge about Omani culture. Expatriate tour-operators use an equally vague language when dealing with their European counterparts. "We always mention not to wear transparent, revealing clothes, and the dress code for the mosque," said a male Indian manager. Similarly, a male Indian manager from a shipping agency argued that “common sense” should be applied. He stressed:

“They (the cruise liner) ask us do we all have to wear a scarf when we come here? We say no, you can go to the beach and sunbathe (...) The only thing is when you go to the Mosque, you cannot go inside with short sleeves or sleeveless. You need to respect the culture.” However, there are no official guidelines. “They are not telling don’t wear shorts... No, they are saying ‘decent dress’”.

He further explained,

“You are in an Arabian country, where the people wear abaya and scarf. At least you have to wear something knee-length, ‘a proper dress’. You can wear a transparent shirt, but you must be decently dressed. Nobody needs to explain what decent means”.

Referring to Hofstede et al. (2010), people who belong to a collectivist culture, such as Asian countries, use high-context communication styles where participants have to interpret the meaning. On the other hand, the German representative of the Omani Ministry of Tourism in Berlin mentioned clearly: "Women are recommended to cover their knees and shoulders. The further you travel into the interior, the less skin you should reveal. Therefore, long trousers are recommended" (Personal e-mail conversation, October 15, 2012). In the following section dress code guidelines given on board the cruise liner will be analyzed.

“They do not Want to Think”

Tourists receive information about the dress code onboard and from several sources: an introduction, an evening presentation, a daily newsletter and an onboard TV programme. A slide-
Presentation about day excursions is held by onboard tour guides in the main theater of the ship just before its arrival in Muscat.

“For Oman we show the Golden Rules, including the dress code. The tourists are advised to dress modestly, as part of the culture and an on-board swimming-pool for nudists on one cruise liner is closed during the entire travel cruise,” said an onboard tour guide.

The excursion brochure distributed onboard the AIDAblu states, “Since these are Muslim countries, please always cover shoulders and knees.” The excursion brochure of the second cruise ship surveyed conveys misleading visual information. It shows right in the introduction a full-page photo of a “tourist couple on excursion” within a European built environment:

The female tourist pictured wears Bermuda-shorts above the knees and a semitransparent, sleeveless top with a deep cleavage and a small scarf around her neck. The male tourist wears a nontransparent polo T-shirt and long trousers, hugging the woman while walking. The same tourist couple is pictured again on the next page along with a group of tourists.

In tourist brochures “the body is a referent for both the tourist and the local – tourists and locals are placed on the same biopolitical plain/plane” (Minca 2012:1005), thus showcasing a misleading assumption of a free dress behavior throughout the cruise travel. This confirms the often misleading information given in cruise brochures (Klein 2011:114). The excursion brochure then mentions on page 20 some recommendations regarding behavior in a Muslim country. “Women should also be covered. Short skirts, crop tops, tight shorts and tight clothes should be avoided since they may offend the religious and cultural values of the community.”

Representatives of the tourism industry play an important role in forming the overall holiday experience by acting as role models and cultural brokers. “The tourist experience is a staff experience” (Hollinshead 2002:211). Onboard guides mentioned that they could only remind the tourists about the dress code in Oman, “but not force them to stick to it.” Onboard restrictions are openly avoided: “We do not give any rules,” said a German male onboard tour guide, while referring to the free dress code on board. It also shows a lack of accurate information provided by cruise staff (Klein, 2011:114). Some employees did not adhere to the dress code either. “We have shorts for the cruise employees. We only wear them in the Mediterranean and in Israel. A few colleagues also wear them during this trip, but they have already been reminded not to do so,” said an onboard female tour guide. A male onboard guide mentioned that the local community should adapt and accept the tourist culture:

“If they want to have cruise liner tourism, they have to accept that not every tourist will adhere to the dress code. When the tourists see the relaxed dress code upon arrival in Dubai, they think it is not so important to stick to the rules,” he said.

This confirms that the cruise ship with its “carefree” holiday-spirit is the main travel destination (Weaver 2005:166) and has the power to dictate the rules on shore. According to the slogan: “Enjoy the feeling of being at home everywhere around the globe,” said the CEO in the cruise brochure 2015/16. “You decide! Only when there is space for individual holiday wishes, the feeling of well-being starts,” said the CEO in the introductory message in its cruise brochure 2016/17.

The tourists are on holidays. “They do not want to read but to relax and take things as they come...they do not want to think,” said a male German onboard guide regarding mindless attitude of
the tourists. "They do not want to do a study-trip and get over-involved in the country. The tourists gaze but they do not understand," the guide concluded. This confirms that the tourists wish to stay in a well-known “comfort zone”. The carefree type of tourist is in contrast to luxury ships which have a “different category of traveler,” and a strict on board dress code, referring to the tourists’ higher cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu 1984). In the following section, the reaction of the local community to the tourist dress behavior will be analyzed.

“When the Cruise Liners Came, it Started with Shorts”

According to members of the long-established business community in Souq Muttrah, the arrival of large cruise ships in the port marked a turning point in the tourist’s “care ethic” for local customs. Since then, the community has recognized significant negative changes. They feel that the instructions regarding the tourist behavior were stricter and tourists behaved more responsibly in the past.

“When the cruise liners came, it started with shorts,” said a well-established Indian shopkeeper. Like others he could mention a time frame within which changes had occurred, "It started around 2001. Before then, tourists used to wear respectful clothes," he said. Others confirmed that changes appeared 5 to 6 years previously (in 2006/2007), along with the increase of the number of cruise liners. “When they enter the souq, they do not care about anything,” said the owner of a gold shop.

In-depth interviews with shopkeepers and owners (Table 18) revealed that 20 shopkeepers did not want to comment on the tourist dress code. In particular the well-established Omani and Indian shopkeepers of the wholesale market and the elder Omanis, who have been working in the souq for many decades, did not want to share their views. The dress code seemed a taboo that one should not comment on out of respect for the tourist or because they were afraid of expressing a critical view. As one Omani shop owner said: “We cannot tell them what to wear. Our religion tells us to respect everybody.”

Table 18. The shopkeepers’ views about the tourists’ dress (N=40) in Souq Muttrah, May-Aug. 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In your view, are the tourists dressed respectfully?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, the tourists dress respectfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, the tourists do not dress respectfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not want to comment on their dress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: own survey)

During the interviews, a total of 12 shopkeepers mentioned that the tourists’ dress is not respectful, while on the other hand eight shopkeepers said the tourists’ dress conforms to local customs. Though they were unwilling to voice their opinions, elder members of the well-established community described the female dress as “revealing,” “open,” or “night dress,” while adding that the dress behavior will harm the image of Oman and the cultural values of the society. “Europeans are used to revealing dresses, but this is not the right country,” said an Omani shop vendor. According to the community the tourists should be informed in advance. “When you go to Venice nobody talks
about the dress code, but here it is a cultural component,” said the director of a museum. “The cruise liner does not care. They just wear a top and little hot-pants and come out. They do not care about the culture,” he said. Similarly, a government employee from the port said that most tourists “do not listen and ignore local customs. They just get in the bus, and nobody tells them.” Female tourists in Oman do not need to wear an abaya like local females, but they are requested to cover themselves. The relaxed tourist dress code in neighboring Dubai, has negative repercussions on the tourists in Muscat. “In Dubai you can walk around in T-shirt and shorts, in Bahrain as well, but in Abu Dhabi they are stricter,” said the government employee. Most local tour guides think that tourists need to inform themselves and that they need to adapt and dress and behave like Omanis. “Women should only show the face and their hands,” said an Omani guide. A sheikh (community leader) mentioned: “We wish tourists would dress respectfully.”

As a result of the current “laidback,” “laissez faire attitude” (Din 1989:555), and a lack of reinforced official guidelines, aggression against tourists on the one hand and an “imitation” and adaptation of the tourist behavior by the younger generation is feared, especially by the elder male community members. “The souq is a man’s world,” said a former male resident of Muttrah. Thus, European tourists travel from an individual, gender-mixed environment to a collectivist, male-dominated society, which can create further potential for tension and culture shock stresses - for both sides. “The locals are very sensitive and get aggressive against too much physical exposure,” said an expatriate shop-owner, while adding that young males especially come to the souq “to look at tourists”. This was confirmed during observation: Three tourists entered the souq, one wearing a miniskirt and a sleeveless top with deep cleavage. “Look at those girls,” said a young vendor, addressing his friend. They both stared at them, a male gaze, a behavior that is socially not acceptable. This behavior shift has been increasingly observed in other public places such as shopping malls where young males gaze at females.

The increase in the number of mindless cruise tourists who do not respect the local dress behavior exceeds the “social carrying capacity” (Hall & Lew 2009), the level of acceptable tolerance of the local community towards the visitors and has created “culture shock stresses” for the locals. Shopkeepers expressed feelings of rejection and an increase in stereotypes against tourists, which confirms earlier research (Din 1989; Saveriades 2000). An Indian shopkeeper in the souq recalls: “Sometimes I am ashamed. I cannot talk about it. The ship people are very bad,” he said angrily. “Once a lady wanted to buy a shirt and removed her clothes in front of the vendor. She was doing this three times,” he said. The tourists acted mindlessly on the one hand or intentionally on the other hand to attract the locals’ attention. Removing clothes in public is not acceptable in Europe either.

With this influx of inconsiderate tourists, local customers especially from the Interior may stay away. “The people from the villages will know, when we come to Muscat we will see many things. In the villages, they will not accept shorts. Here in Muscat people try to follow the modern lifestyle,” said a 26-year-old Omani tour guide. Translated into Doxey’s Irriindex especially older, well-established shopkeepers expressed their annoyance. “If they are not respectful it is not good for our country. Sometimes they even kiss each other. Their clothes are open - that’s not good,” said an Omani shop-owner in his 60s in Arabic. He felt powerless and has changed his view about Western tourists. “We don’t say anything, what shall we do? Shall we call the police? But we carry it in our hearts,” he said. Some locals express their anger. “People in Souq Muttrah are getting more intolerant and tell the tourists to their faces that they are not dressed properly. This gives a bad impression,” said an
employee from the port. Thus, with the growth of cruise tourism, stereotypes may be applied to all tourists without the corrective factors that were normally applicable when tourists were few (Pi-Sunyer 1989:195). Stereotyping or stigmatization is more likely to occur when the length of the stay is short and the number of visitors is high, which applies to cruise tourists arriving in Muscat (Gutberlet 2016).

**Cultural Brokers Mediate**

To avoid culture shock stresses for the host community, some local tour guides take responsibility and educate the tourists: They check, inform and prepare the tourists for their excursion. “If they wear shorts, I tell them that they need to return to the ship and change,” said several Omani and European tour guides. An onboard protestant pastor who was accompanying a group openly reminded the cruise tourists that they had to stick to the local dress code:

> “Oman has a different society, where the umma (community) is very important and not the individual...A Muslim knows that he is part of the community, and there are certain rules he has to stick to,” said the pastor adding that “women have to be protected from the view of men”.

As a consequence, female tourists asked him whether they were dressed correctly. In his view, due to an increasing lack of social values in Europe, negative values have been generated, reflected in the individual tourist behavior abroad. “Some tourists are not open to learning,” he said. Some local guides also mentioned that female tourists especially were ignoring their advice, which can be seen as a mindless and a defensive reaction towards the cultural differences of the host country (Hottola 2004:458). On the other hand local guides and drivers were not trained to inform the tourists directly. Some argued that the stricter dress code applies to the Grand Mosque only and “everybody is free to wear whatever he/she likes,” said a taxi driver. In particular young, male tour-guides in their 20s felt too shy to address female tourists. “For our culture it is too direct. It is a taboo. The tourists have to inform themselves and the staff of the cruise ship should ensure that the tourists cover themselves,” said a local tour guide. The concept of “mutual respect” of the other culture and “reciprocal hospitality” (Din 1989:553) are essential. “Our religion tells us that we are free at home, but in public we need to follow certain rules, for example the dress code...When we show respect for another person, we are also respected,” said a sheikh in the oasis.

According to Sheikh Kahlan, Assistant Grand Mufti of Oman, the second religious leader, foreigners need “to respect the family, to observe their culture, their religion, their traditions” (Interview conducted on January 6, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to inform visitors.

> “People do feel offended, if women are half dressed, visiting their inner societies and if they are in public places”. According to Sheikh Kahlan, tourists are not expected “to absorb themselves in the other culture” and “to give up their own culture” (Interview conducted on January 6, 2013).

To raise the importance of Islamic values within the local community, awareness campaigns have been launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Awqaf, including a Conference on Values and Ethics held in 2014. Moreover, weekly live interviews with the Grand Mufti or Assistant Grand Mufti were broadcast on Oman TV.
During the day excursion to the oasis cruise tourists were observed wearing shorts (Figure 32) or transparent, revealing clothes. In the oasis cruise tourists stay for up to 1 hr, wandering around the old part with its old mud brick houses and looking at watch towers and the irrigation system. The number of visitors is much lower and the direct contact is very limited, due to a lack of touristic sites compared to the capital and in Souq Muttrah, where tourists were pedestrians most of the time and seen as potential consumers of souvenirs.

Thus, the community in the oasis suffers less irritation from a mindless dress behavior. Residents observed the tourists as passersby, sitting in the car or walking through the small roads of the oasis, with little or no social contact between the tourist and the locals.

Figure 32. Cruise tourists in the oasis, 2013

(Source: own photography)

Those working in tourism and having economic benefits from tourism were in favor of an open behavior. An Omani pointed out the increasing influence of globalization on the changes in the values of Omani society. “Nowadays you see people in shorts on TV. In the past it was a problem. For me it is not a problem,” said a retired Omani, who works part time for cruise excursions. This confirms the concept of mutual respect and on the other hand it shows that increased economic benefits promote the acceptance of a loss of cultural values, which confirms the results of Saveriades (2000). Similarly, a government official said: “Many think that tourism is bad because we see tourists wearing shorts. But it's not only about wearing shorts or a bikini. The tourists come from a different culture.” He suggested raising the number of good tourists from luxury cruise liners, where knowledge is transferred and therefore “Omanis can learn from them.”

**Spill-Over Effects**

It is important to point out that a relaxed female dress code has also increased in public places such as shopping malls, restaurants, or during mixed sports classes where female expatriates are seen in revealing clothes.

In April 2015 a European lady wearing a minidress with a slit in front was approached in front of a supermarket in Muscat by the researcher, who reminded her to cover her knees. The lady replied furiously, “I have been living here for 15 years. I think I am respectful.” On the other hand, also the
May 2, 2014 (issue 5, Fashion Show) edition of the English print media Hi Weekly published photos of females in short, revealing minidresses in a shopping mall and during the annual international biker race “Tour of Oman” all cyclists cycle in their biker costumes around the North of Oman.

This may be seen a result of globalization and as a “spill-over effect” from the neighboring Gulf countries, indicating that a Western lifestyle is slowly imposing itself on the conservative values of the community.

Local Reactions

As a result of a “laissez-faire dress code” in UAE, two Emirati women launched a twitter campaign for the protection of their social values and their conservative dress code (Agence France-Presse 2012). The women suggested that everybody who does not follow the dress code should pay a fine. Similar actions are reflected in a blog Other Oman (2008), where a local woman advises what to wear in Muscat.

As an official consequence of a “relaxed dress code” behavior in Oman, a number of signboards were set up especially in Muscat (Figure 33 and 34).

Figure 33. A signboard at the entrance to a shopping mall in Muscat, 2014

![Customer Service Desk for details.](image)

- Please wear conservative clothing. For example: shoulders and knees should be covered.
- No kissing or overt displays of affection.
- No smoking in the mall.
- No dangerous activities. For example: sports games, rollerblading or skateboarding

(Source: own photography)

The signboards convey a similarly vague message, promoting a respectful and conservative dress behavior. Referring to Hofstede et al. (2010) for low-context cultures the information needs to be direct, clear, and precise and the context should be explained. Through active personal intervention, so-called reengineering, the tourist behavior can be influenced in a positive way (Pearce 2011:106). For example, more interpretation, such as visual signboards (similar Figure 35, next page) should be given on board the cruise liner in addition to quality pretravel information with images.
A detailed dress code stipulated on the back of each opera ticket and the “dress check” at the doors of the Royal Opera House Muscat offer a good example. The Opera House has also introduced an Omani dress rental service. Similarly, tour operators and their tour guides could distribute abayas to those female cruise tourists who are not dressed according to the local dress code.

Figure 35. A visitor signboard in front of Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi, 2013

(Source: photography by Carmella Pfaffenbach)

5.4.4 Conclusion

This research has shown the importance of ethics in tourism by analyzing on the one hand cross-cultural communication through the travel preparation, the media and tourism intermediaries and
on the other hand the actual dress behavior of German-speaking cruise tourists in two destinations in Oman, which creates culture shock for some locals. The results reflect the views of the local community and the tourists at a time of dramatic increase in cruise liner tourism in the Sultanate of Oman. Referring to Din’s (1989) categorization regarding local attitudes towards tourist behavior, the “accommodationist” and “laissez faire attitude” is currently prevalent in Oman, despite some “rejectionist” voices in the community. However, although official guidelines for the dress code respect the freedom and well-being of the tourist, this freedom of dress behavior in public spaces may lead to further disharmony. The results indicate a tendency and a significantly, negative trend which may be taken as an early warning of future problems. The research has limitations, such as the number of cruise liners surveyed and its focus on contemporary German-speaking tourists only. It is recommended, therefore, that further research should be undertaken in various destinations in Oman. Furthermore, due to the cultural sensitivity of the topic, it would be interesting to see the outcome if interviews were conducted by a male researcher among the male-dominated community. Also, a questionnaire survey of the local community, including more females along with more in-depth interviews and focus group discussions should be conducted on other popular destinations, where locals and tourists share the same space.

All stakeholders in the cruise sector “need to recognize and identify that the tourist behavior creates a problem for the local population” (Pearce 2006:144). The results indicate that a high-context communication style between the tourists and the host community contribute to negative social experiences such as culture shock. A mindless dress behavior has been facilitated by cultural brokers on board and on shore, who do not stress explicitly the local dress code, thus confirming the concept of mutual tolerance towards the Western tourist and on the other hand promoting the cruise liner as being an isolated destination, encapsulating the guest and promoting well-being and individualism. The tourists’ dress behavior can be seen as a reflection of the post-tourist, who is seeking for his/her individual authenticity. Described by Minca (2012:576) as

“a sort of mindless mobile subject who wonders the globe seeking distilled forms of well-being or personal enhancement; who walks our cities for the mere ‘pleasure’ of doing it and out of ‘curiosity’.”

Among the local populations stereotypes against tourists are on the rise. The older generation especially feel that their values are harmed, which confirms earlier research results by Saveriades (2000) in Cyprus and by Henderson (2003) in Malaysia. Moreover, the number of cruise tourists has reached the accepted level of tolerance of the community inside the souq in the past years (Gutberlet 2016a). It is indeed difficult to assess the influence of cruise tourism compared to globalization, mass media and foreign travel in the development of changes in the values of the local community (Saveriades 2000). Moreover, neocolonialist relationships should not be reinforced by imposition of Western views and behavior, decreasing “their free agency even further” (Timothy 2001: 246). On the other hand, there is no ready-made formula to achieve the goal of an “ideal Muslim host” (Din 1989:560) and of an “ideal non-Muslim visitor” either. However, agreement should be reached by the local community regarding their cultural/social carrying capacity, what is acceptable for tourists’ dress, in other words, the degree of deviation from local cultural norms which can be tolerated by the hosts.
6 Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions: Mega-cruise tourism and the commodification of imaginaries, space and society

Tourism in the Sultanate of Oman is restructuring the economy from an oil-based towards a more service-based economy, creating business opportunities and new jobs for some. The discussion of this thesis and the theory presented have been led by large-scale cruise tourism and its socio-cultural impacts for the local community as well as tourist imaginaries and embodied multi-sensuous experiences and performances. My research was conducted in two main tourist destinations in Muscat (Souq Muttrah) and during an excursion to the desert and an oasis in the Interior of the country. The thesis is based on a new phenomenon that has not been researched in Oman. My research highlights various tendencies in mega-cruise tourism within space and society. It is place-based and the extensive field work including pre-tests was done between 2011-2014. Moreover, the research is timely since it was conducted during a period of dramatic increase in cruise tourist numbers, reaching it’s historical peak in Oman in 2012/2013.

The Sultanate of Oman is a young country with a predominantly young population which has developed from a remote, under-developed country to an oil-producing nation within the past forty-seven years, since 1970. In this context Oman opened up for high-end tourism only in the 1980s. Since then tourism has been marketed as a commodity which entails a system of producers, suppliers and intermediaries. However, throughout history Omanis have practiced genuine hospitality towards visitors that has been free of charge by virtue and by religious belief. Since 2004, the year when the first mega-cruise ship arrived in Oman, the rapid rise of large-scale cruise tourism has put the Sultanate on the international cruise tourist map. Most mega-ships stay for around ten hours in the port. In 2005 a total of 25 cruise liners with 7,683 tourists arrived in Oman, while in 2013 there was a five-fold increase with 135 ships carrying a total of 257,000 tourists. Despite this dramatic increase in tourist numbers, creating ample business opportunities within a young societal context, the social, cultural and environmental impacts need to be considered as well. Mass-cruise tourism can destroy a “paradise” or “virgin”-like destination with its unique tangible and intangible heritage features: its natural, built environment, its culture, and its religion with its morals and values. In this context the cruise tourism development can be seen as a form of governing and restructuring local environments while having implications for livelihoods and their lifestyles, socio-political networks, and local cultures, as well as equal access to their natural resources (Saarinen 2016).

For the local community in both case studies their perception of genuine Omani hospitality has changed. It has been associated with the allocation and distribution of benefits materialized in money and knowledge creating power issues between the center and the periphery as well as among different stakeholders and their knowledge networks, resulting in winners, losers and rivalries. “Many people eat from the cake – the Bedouins, the camp owners, the car rental services, the petrol stations. Tourism is like that for the community,” said an Omani camp owner in Sharquiyah Sands desert.

From a tourist perspective, travelling with a mega-cruise liner means travelling comfortably through the “imaginary Orient”, visiting four or five destinations in one week without having to change the hotel and transportation. On board and on land the tourists move within hybrid, customized Western-style tourist enclaves or “tourist bubbles”. Within these “bubbles” tourists are disconnected
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from the local natural and socio-cultural environment. This disconnection creates challenges and potential for conflicts with the host-community including cultural brokers and with other types of tourists. These “tourist bubbles” have developed along the main streets of Souq Muttrah, located just opposite to the port in Muscat, and within a customized oasis setting and a luxury desert camp in the Sharquiyah Sands desert. The main questions in this thesis regarding the commodification of the tourist site, the overall mass tourist consumption of the destination and the socio-cultural impacts on the local community were analyzed from different angles.

How do cruise tourists imagine the destination and how are their on-site experiences and performances?

As shown in my paper on the tourists’ imaginaries and performances in Souq Muttrah (chapter 5.2), Oriental imaginaries or fantasies of the “Other” play a key-role in promoting and defining the destination Oman and the Omani people. They shape the on-site performances and experiences of cultural brokers and tourists alike. Through Oriental discourses in marketing brochures and advertisements circulated by cruise companies in Germany and the Ministry of Tourism in Oman, as well as through local cultural brokers, imaginaries of a fairy-tale, Oriental country of “The Arabian Nights” are defined. For example, information material showcasing Omani children as “the successors of Sindbad the seafarer”, labeling Omanis, and reconstructing an “embodied Oriental Other” within unequal power relations about “us” and “them”, can mislead the tourists. Due to a lack of awareness and local control over these marketing discourses and narratives in pre-travel information, cruise tourists do not fully understand the destination Oman as it really is, but wish to find a confirmation of preconceived imaginaries of the “Oriental Other”. Consequently, especially Omani and expatriate male cultural brokers and vendors who get in contact with tourists are stuck in imaginative roles of the past. As shown in my paper on tourist photography in Souq Muttrah (chapter 5.3), ancient Oriental imaginaries of an “old and unchanged” souq are materialized in tourist photography taken inside the souq. Most tourists take a stereotype “romantic gaze”, reconstructing imaginaries and shaping power relations between tourists and locals, creating myths and “museumizing” the local community. These mediated imaginaries of “The Arabian Nights” and of post-Orientalism are romanticizing the destination Oman. They have little to do with the reality but create stereotype ideas while impacting the tourist-host encounter, leading to an “indirect form of imperialism” (Daher 2007:9). Referring to Foucault’s (1980) concepts of knowledge and power, knowledge is disseminated through the distribution, extraction or retention of ideas. Within tourist experiences in Souq Muttrah, Omani women as well as the diverse male expatriate community are missing in the creation of these imaginaries and embodied on-site experiences of mega-cruise tourists. Referring to these imaginaries, the following questions lead to further examination of ethical tourist behavior.

How do cruise tourists behave in both destinations and how does the local community perceive cruise tourism?

My findings on the dress behavior of mega-cruise tourists in a Muslim country and local tourist reactions (chapter 5.4) indicate that many mega-cruise tourists who visit Souq Muttrah and Sharquiyah Sands desert show little interest and openness towards local values and ethical norms, due to their self-centered travel motivations. They wish to realize their own selves as individuals or realize an intra-personal authenticity within their group members, the “cruise communita”. As a consequence, mega-cruise tourists react mindlessly and primarily wish to experience the imaginary
Orient. The lack of adequate, explicit information about the dress code is exacerbated by a lack of understanding of local morals and values. The tourists’ low context communication style leads to inappropriate behavior while in public. Even cultural brokers like local Omani and Asian tour guides who speak various languages, tour operators and shipping agents are unprepared to communicate in a low context communication style with the tourists. An “accomodationist attitude” (Din 1989) that adapts to the behavior of the mega-cruise tourists is prioritized. This attitude is linked with an expectation that mega-cruise tourists spend a substantial amount of money and may return to Oman for a longer stay. However, due to their self-centered or intra-personal travel motivation, only a few mega-cruise tourists indicated their interest to return to Oman for longer holidays.

What are the socio-cultural impacts of mega-cruise tourism and how does the local community cope with these impacts?

My analysis of the socio-cultural impacts of cruise tourism in Souq Muttrah (chapter 5.1) has shown that mass cruise tourism has created a “core tourist bubble” along the main streets of the souq. This tourist bubble is linked with negative impacts for the local community and for group and individual tourists. Those impacts are heavy traffic congestion, a lack of parking space, uneven distribution of tourists within the souq and therefore overcrowding of space along the narrow main streets during the peak cruise tourist visits in the mornings. Moreover, the mega-cruise tourists’ low-spending behavior has resulted in a different product range on display. Hence, there has been a decrease in genuine, Omani souvenirs and a rise in imported, cheap mass-products such as fake pashmina scarfs, belly dancing costumes or fridge magnets. Those souvenirs are sold by newly arrived Asian vendors who have a different, more aggressive selling attitude compared to their Omani and Indian well-established colleagues. Moreover, activities which involve the observation of hosts like in Souq Muttrah are prone to produce high levels of social stress to local communities (Urry 1996). As such, the social carrying capacity may pass a level of tolerance after which it is perceived to be a "shock event" (Lew 2014:18). Within the “core tourist bubble” of Souq Muttrah acceptable limits of growth have been reached. These limits are related to physical, economic and social aspects of the destination (Getz 1987). As a consequence, well-established, historical shops in Souq Muttrah which have been established for up to sometimes several hundred years ago, either close down or relocate to areas inside the souq, where locals buy their everyday groceries, clothes, household items and jewelry etc. Moreover, the local community on the Corniche road is escaping from the “core tourist bubble” protecting themselves from curious onlookers by the setting up of borders, signboards and guards. In addition to the physical carrying capacity, the increasing presence of cruise tourists with different values and morals is becoming less accepted by the local multi-ethnic community and by religious leaders. Hence, overcrowding, a threat for the Omani identity and a loss of values seem to outweigh the economic and social benefits of mass cruise tourism for the local community including residents, shop vendors and owners.

In comparison, as shown in my paper on the tourist dress behavior (chapter 5.4) the number of tourists conducting an excursion to Sharquiyah Sands desert and to the oasis is much smaller than in Souq Muttrah. Local residents experience tourists as “passers-by” and critically observe their behaviors, especially in the oasis, where the community is conservative and where women primarily remain inside their homes. Only a small number of local entities such as the Port Authority, shipping agents, local tour operators, tour guides, transportation companies, shop owners and vendors,
restaurants, tour guides, a coffee man and his helpers, drivers, the desert camp, and a few Bedouin families are actively involved in tourism and profit from it.

With a steady increase in the number of tourists visiting both destinations and driving through the oasis and the desert or strolling through Souq Muttrah without respecting local values and without direct and indirect linkages between the tourists and the local population, a “culture clash” between the cruise tourists and the multi-ethnic population is fuelled. As a consequence, there is a competition for space, knowledge and access to tourists. A “social stress” similar to that observed in Souq Muttrah has developed in the oasis town and in the tourist spots of the Sharquiyah Sands desert with the result that the social carrying capacity has been reached. Without reducing the physical and social pressure on the environment and by changing the practices and behavior of different stakeholders, tourism activities exert enormous pressure on the socio-cultural and natural environment. This creates potential for conflicts between different types of tourists, between tourists and locals, as well as between the local well-established vendor community and other tourism providers, e.g. tour guides, newly arrived Asian shop vendors and taxi drivers. However, to what extent are these impacts tolerated by the local community? This question implies that certain tourism activities have different kind of limits of growth and that certain stakeholders in tourism have different abilities to cope with negative impacts.

Currently the problem of mega-cruise tourist numbers is solved by industrial methods, leading to a “MacDonaldization” and a rather “dehumanizing” experience (Ritzer & Liska 1997:97) through standardization, mass production of souvenirs and food and the overall setting-up of high-capacity facilities and infrastructure. With the realization in the coming years of the mega-infrastructure project, the Waterfront in Muttrah, the built environment will create a simulacra Disney park-like “tourist bubble”, where tourists consume signs within Integrated Tourism Projects (ITCs), thus avoiding culture-shock situations and ensuring a standardized visitor experience without any novelties. Hence, local citizens may become alienated as the place with its local identity is transformed into a homogenous “tourist bubble”, focusing on the tourists’ needs instead of the needs of the local resident community.

6.2 Recommendations: A community-based sustainability

While there seem to be good intentions from the Omani government to include forms of sustainability in mass cruise tourism development, problems have become clearer. The rapid pace and large scale of cruise tourism results in conflicts regarding its sustainability for the social, cultural and natural environment. What kind of tourism does the Sultanate want to promote in the long-term?

Currently a resource-based tradition of sustainability aims at the quantitative growth of tourism, deriving from livestock studies that relate to the maximum number of grazing animals without damage to the stock or grazing resources (Dasmann et al. 1974). Since tourism is a dynamic activity that is in constant change, always causing some negative impacts, such a resource-based idea is difficult for the tourism industry and its development. This concept has resulted in impact studies in tourism activities related to overcrowding, the physical carrying capacity and the authenticity of space. According to the UNWTO (1993) a sustainable approach towards tourism development aims to consider the needs of the local host community and current tourists while at the same time protecting and enhancing opportunities for future generations. Therefore, as shown in chapter 5 of
my thesis, sustainability is closely related to the scale of tourism within a certain space without damaging the natural, economic and socio-cultural features of the destination. Hence, the setting-up of limits to growth through active negotiations and participation of the local host community forms a community-based sustainability. It is necessary to implement and continuously monitor a responsible, ethical use of the natural and cultural environment and its resources, while being rooted within a global-local nexus. Since the community is heterogeneous, the community-based approach of sustainability is related to knowledge and power relations (Saarinen 2006). Such a community-based approach aims to empower first the host community with its various stakeholders, since a positive support of tourism increases with the community’s benefits and trust in government institutions and policies (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon 2012). The aim is that tourism benefits all - not only the elite and those community members with access to knowledge and power, usually geographically located in the capital. It ideally promotes a better quality of life and a protection of resources for all stakeholders. On the other hand, it has been argued that a “true” form of sustainable tourism, e.g. holistic, equitable and future-oriented is difficult to achieve or even unachievable. The main reasons are the imperialistic, dependent nature of the global North-South (center-periphery) tourism production, the consumer-centered promotion and the large-scale consumption of tourism, which do not fit into an endogenous, rather small-scale, community-led development (Sharpley 2000:14). Therefore, only when the entire tourism industry accepts a more responsible, sustainable utilization of all resources can a form of sustainable tourism be achieved.

Furthermore, in Oman, such a Western approach of socio-cultural sustainability needs to be realized within hierarchical, patriarchal, tribal structures of the society. Currently, the primary interest of tourism businesses involved in cruise tourism is the short-term growth of their businesses and investment opportunities, creating extensions of hybrid customized “tourist bubbles” on shore, which are enforced by the local tourism legislation that focuses only on investments and business opportunities. However, a successful, long-term responsible form of tourism is not about enlarging the tourism infrastructure, modernization and economic development only, it is about an equal involvement and distribution of space and power for locals and tourists within their various backgrounds, cultural values and beliefs. This could be enhanced through pro-active communication, while fostering mutual understanding and respect between cultures at the same time as promoting cooperation and commercial partnerships. As for mega-cruise tourism, in both case studies the power distribution was found to be currently centered on the cruise company, based in Europe, the local and international tour operators, the local shipping agents and other businesses in Muscat.

Within the context of imaginaries and the construction of tourism spaces, the planned realization of a RO 500m hyper-real Waterfront Project in Port Sultan Qaboos, including an Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) opposite Souq Muttrah will represent an extension of the “core tourist bubble” and a kind of commodified “manufactured heritage site”. This will create an imaginary identity of Oman similar to other places worldwide, while decontextualizing time, space and culture. The project will create a new, modern identity of the Corniche and Souq Muttrah. These future development plans will change the entire socio-cultural environment in the area and beyond, enhancing an imaginative experience and the extension of an artificial “tourist bubble”, while shielding tourists from the local community and vice-versa.
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6.3 Moving forward: Small and slow is beautiful

A positive relationship with the destination and the people depends largely upon the scale of tourism and the typology of the tourists, their travel motivation and their behaviors. The tourist motivation impacts on how the individual cares about the place and is willing to respect the local community, its values, traditions and the natural environment. To transform tourists into mindful tourists, it is recommended that stakeholders in tourism take responsibility, educate and inform mega-cruise tourists within a low context communication prior and during their travel, on board the ship and while on tour. It is suggested to introduce a code of conduct, including even the signing of a “code of conduct agreement” for stakeholders working in tourism so that they inform the tourists correctly. Through a process of re-engineering “imagineering” (Daher 2007:8) of geographical spaces and discourses through new, modern imaginaries, so-called “counter-imaginaries” (Leite 2014) new relations between the West and the Orient can be disseminated while considering their historical linkages. Due to the current empowerment of the tourists and the engineering of space and culture by outsiders, it is important to involve the local community and their understanding of the destination. Therefore, reshaping the power of Oriental imaginaries according to their understanding of their identity, culture, history and today’s space.

Moreover, through the introduction of forms of slower and more responsible travel the Omani culture and people can be understood better and negative impacts on the local community and the tourist experience can be mitigated. Slower tourism can be seen as an essential process of globalization on the one hand and localization on the other (Singh 2012). According to the motto “small and slow is beautiful”, a slower travel mode and an enhanced appreciation of the local culture and nature should be of utmost importance for all stakeholders.

Similar to other emerging cruise destinations with unique socio-cultural and natural environments, such as Iceland or the Antarctic where large numbers of cruise tourists need to be managed during the tourist season a “Port Readiness Programme” could be established (Hull & Milne 2010). Such a programme offers more cooperation between the different stakeholders and capacity building for the local community in support of a sustainable tourism development. Key-indicators limiting the number of cruise tourists and cars or busses driving through the Corniche road in Muttrah or through the oases and the desert should be introduced as well as a crowd management scheme. In this context, the news that one of the mega-cruise liners surveyed had cancelled its excursion to the desert and the oasis during the last cruise season was welcome. However, a long-term sustainable development cannot be reinforced unless there are strict regulations and laws.

The ultimate aims are the “readiness” and broad approval of the community, within their culture and environment, and that all tourists behave ethically. Oman as a destination could be certified according to social, environmental and cultural sustainability indicators, e.g. the Kuoni Code of Conduct (Kuoni 2014) or an international certification, rating or eco-labeling system of tourism products such as excursions. Moreover, UNWTO indicators (2004) could be introduced in order to promote, monitor and realize responsible tourism practices, as guidelines for tourists and local stakeholders in tourism. They should not only be informed but included as active voices and members, e.g. within a Muttrah Tourism Committee. The local community with its different stakeholders of male and female residents, business people, shop vendors, environmentalists, religious leaders and sheikhs (community leaders) should be involved through partnerships in all monitoring stages, in the decision-making and the implementation of tourism indicators. As long as
there is a perception that public open spaces within a natural environment are free-of-charge and unlimited, it will be difficult to promote a more responsible use of space. Here a tourism tax could be applied for each mega-cruise tourist and for each destination visited in Oman and financial profits should be shared within the local community.

Considering the overall impacts of cruise tourism, its real costs and benefits for local communities and other types of tourists within the overall socio-cultural structure, my analysis suggests that in the long-term, the Omani government should reconsider and continuously limit seasonal, day mega-cruise tourism. If that is not possible, tourists should stay longer in the destination, so that the economic benefits increase for locals. If more tourists made their travel decisions based on the sustainability of the destination that they choose, businesses that rely on a lack of responsible practices would be penalized and those who adopt socio-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability would be rewarded. In addition, similar to other emerging cruise destinations on the Arabian Peninsula, the aim should be a tourism industry, where “ethnic distinctions” are also addressed, in order to resolve these social distinctions and to develop more socially harmonious environments (Stephenson & Ali-Knight 2010:289). At the moment the great majority of the labor force in tourism in Oman, especially in the interior of the country, relies on expatriates from Asia and increasingly from Africa, thus fostering ties to some former Omani territories.

6.4 Final thoughts

The importance of this research topic has become evident through the continuous positive, nearly daily media coverage on tourism development in Oman. On 5 January 2016 all eight English and Arabic newspapers featured the Port Sultan Qaboos Waterfront Project as lead-stories on their front pages, pointing out that through the project 12,000 direct jobs will be created. However, as a consequence of the relocation of its cargo operations from Port Sultan Qaboos to Sohar Port and a major reduction in the number of vessels and cargo handled, 252 port employees had been laid off in 2015 (Khan 2016). In addition, there is a plan to convert Muttrah into a “Smart City” with a digital infrastructure. This could improve the tourists’ geographical orientation and facilitate walking tours through Muttrah.

In future, the overall challenge will be to maintain a sustainable approach to mega-cruise tourism while balancing economic benefits and its impacts on the local community, and preserving the cultural and natural beauty of Oman - a place that is also prone to negative effects of global climate change through increased heat waves, desertification and flooding. It would be imperative to monitor the socio-cultural impacts on the local community, the tourist behavior, their imaginaries and the tourist experience within space in a continuous manner and in both destinations. I am sure there are interesting research topics to explore, for example socio-cultural impacts on other tourist sites such as a local Friday market in the interior of Oman, female tourist experiences in male dominated spaces, the environmental impacts of day cruise tourism as well as the social and emotional stress for local residents. Mega-cruise tourism in a cross-cultural context is an emerging topic that requires further passionate research involvement, while also considering the historical links between the Sultanate of Oman and other continents.

While writing these last lines of my thesis, it is my heartfelt wish that the Sultanate of Oman and its people can preserve their natural hospitality, charm and atmosphere that attracts tourists from around the world, while limiting the numbers of mass-tourists, focusing instead on quality tourism.
experiences within “slow tourism”. Once the tourism infrastructure is completely set up and tourist numbers further increase the local perception towards tourism may change. It is to be hoped that the change in perception will be more positive.

On a personal final note, no research is complete, there is always space for more thoughts and further analysis. Any errors, misunderstandings or misinterpretations in this research are mine. I wish that my research will be the start of something more so that on the one hand it will contribute to discussions about a holistic approach and understanding of tourist imaginaries and on-site experiences of German-speaking tourists. On the other hand, I hope that it will contribute specifically to critical thoughts about a holistic approach and understanding of the impacts of mass-cruise tourism and the construction of tourism spaces in an emerging cruise destination within a fragile socio-cultural and natural environment such as the Sultanate of Oman.
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Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Doktorarbeit ist eingebettet in die Diskussion über die schnelle Entwicklung von Destinationen für „Mega-Kreuzfahrtschiffe“, sogenannte Club-Schiffe, die weltweit „all-inclusive Urlaub auf See“ anbieten (UNWTO 2010). Diese Schiffe tragen mit Erlebniswelten und Imaginationen zur kulturelle Globalisierung des touristischen Raumes in den Destinationen bei. Hintergrund für diese Dissertation bilden die Prozesse, die die diversen sinnlichen und körperlichen touristischen Erlebnis erfahrungen prägen sowie die sozio-kulturellen Auswirkungen im Hinblick auf die Begegnungen zwischen Einheimischen und Touristen und deren Machtverhältnisse im touristischen Raum. Folgende Forschungsfragen wurden untersucht:

- Welche Imaginationen, Erlebniserfahrungen und Performanzen haben die deutschsprachigen Kreuzfahrttouristen?
- Was sind die sozio-kulturellen Auswirkungen des Mega-Kreuzfahrttourismus und wie reagieren die lokale Bevölkerung und Regierungsoffizielle darauf?
- Hat der Tourismus das Verständnis für die sozio-kulturelle Umgebung der lokalen Bevölkerung verändert?
- Welche Pläne gibt es für die Tourismusbildung - insbesondere in Bezug auf den Kreuzfahrttourismus?


Methoden


Ergebnisse

Während der Reise mit einem Mega-Schiff sind Raum und Zeit stark komprimiert. Die Touristen bewegen sich auch an Land in einer „tourist bubble“ oder „Touristen-Enklave“, ein physisch und sozial-geographisch geschlossener Raum, der an ihre Bedürfnisse angepasst ist und ähnliche Merkmale wie ein Club-Schiff aufweist. Infolgedessen erleben die Touristen die Destinationen „dekontextualisiert“, d.h. losgelöst von der sozialen und kulturellen Umgebung.

Aufgrund der großen Anzahl von Kreuzfahrttouristen, die Souq Muttrah in den Wintermonaten besucht, hat sich entlang der Hauptstraßen im Souq eine „geschlossene tourist bubble“ gebildet, welche die


Summary

The thesis is grounded in the discussion on the rapid increase in international mega-cruise tourism “club ships” or “holiday-at-sea packages” (UNWTO 2010) which promote cultural globalization of tourism space through their practices and worldwide circulation of imaginaries. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the processes that shape the tourists’ multi-sensuous and embodied experiences and the socio-cultural impacts within the host-guest encounter.

The following research questions were examined:

- What are the German-speaking cruise tourists’ imaginaries, on-site experiences and performances?
- What are the socio-cultural impacts of mega-cruise tourism and how do the local community and government officials cope with these impacts?
- Has tourism changed the locals’ understanding of the socio-cultural surrounding?
- What are the future plans for tourism development, and in particular for cruise tourism?

The Sultanate of Oman is an emerging cruise destination in Asia. The first mega-cruise ship AIDAblu arrived in Muscat in 2004. The number of ship arrivals in Oman rose from 25 cruise ships and 7,783 tourists in 2005 to 135 cruise ships carrying 257,000 tourists in 2013. Most of the cruise tourists are German-speaking; they originate from Germany, Austria or Switzerland. Mega-cruise ships are large ships, having a maximum capacity of more than 1800 passengers and crew.

Methods

Two prime tourist destinations have been examined as case studies: Souq Muttrah, an urban, heritage attraction located opposite to the port, and the Sharquiyah Sands desert, together with a nearby oasis which is a nature and cultural destination on the periphery. These places exemplify on the one hand “Oriental imaginaries of the Otherness” and on the other hand the dramatic socio-cultural changes that emerging cruise destinations are currently undergoing. The thesis considers the voices of different stakeholders in tourism: tourists, local communities and government officials. Fieldwork was conducted between 2011 and 2014. The research methods applied were two large questionnaire surveys among German-speaking cruise tourists of two different mega-cruise liners as well as participant observation, travel ethnography, counting, photography, walking interviews with different types of tourists and in-depth interviews with a large number of local stakeholders. These stakeholders included local and onboard tour guides, tour operators, the resident community, day visitors, business owners, shop vendors, environmental experts, as well as high-ranking decision-makers in the government: the Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs, the Assistant Grand Mufti, the Wali of Muttrah and other officials. Moreover, guidebooks, newspaper articles, websites of cruise companies and onboard newsletters were analysed together with the website and official statistics of the Ministry of Tourism. In addition, favourite souvenir photos taken by the tourists interviewed were analysed for their content.

Results

During the travel with a mega-ship, time and space are compressed so that tourists experience the places within a short time, thus decontextualizing the social and cultural environment. In addition, the Omani government is promoting the tourism development of the port in Muttrah with the extension of the cruise terminal and the relocation of its cargo activities to Port Sohar, as well as the relocation of the wholesale part of Souq Muttrah to Barka, outside of Muscat.

Due to the large number of cruise tourists who visit Souq Muttrah during the winter season, a tourist enclave or an “enclosed tourist bubble” similar to the cruise liner itself has developed along the main streets of the souq. This tourist bubble forms a unique space in itself, existing apart from the host-society. Therefore, the identity of the souq has changed dramatically. Local residents who live close to the souq
feel socially excluded from the tourism development and create physical or social boundaries to protect themselves from the crowds of tourists. As another result of crowding and social distinction, individual and group tourists avoid sharing the same space with mega-cruise tourists. Similarly, local customers who sometimes come from far-away places for shopping avoid the souq when a mega-ship is in Muttrah. As a consequence, well-established shop owners and vendors relocate their shops to other places on the periphery of the “tourist bubble”. They are replaced in the “core bubble” by young Asian vendors who open up similar shops, offering cheap imported items like pashmina scarves with a more aggressive selling attitude. Nevertheless, my analysis has shown that most tourists perceive the souq as an unchanged, old, traditional and Oriental space. The majority of mega-cruise tourists surveyed enjoy the visual consumption of the place, but they buy little or nothing. The “tourist gaze” or the visual consumption pattern of tourists memorizing their visit in Souq Muttrah through photography is diverse. They reproduce romantic images of the souq and the “otherness” of the people. For most photographers the local people are seen as objects of the gaze. However, there is little involvement of the local community in the on-site tourist experiences. In addition to tourist photography this thesis analyses the multi-sensuous, embodied tourist experiences and performances in Souq Muttrah. The concept of performance refers to narratives, practices and the reproduction of space through mediated imaginaries about the exotic “Oriental other”. As such, the souq represents a stage, presenting mediated imaginaries, materialities, bodies and stories such as “The Arabian Nights” including “Sindbad the Sailor”, or the autobiography of “Princess Salme from Zanzibar”. The media, marketing material and cultural brokers label Oman as a fairy-tale country that is enacted in the souq as a kind of theme park, an Arabian Disneyland designed for consumption by the mega-cruise tourists, but with the social exclusion of locals and other tourists.

Oriental imaginaries and power relations between the West and the Orient result in inconsiderate, mindless tourist dress behaviour and local reactions of culture shock. This demonstrates the conflicts which arise in cross-cultural communication when two cultures with different morals and value systems, as well as low and high context communication styles, meet within the same space. Furthermore, my results indicate that mega-cruise tourists are not sufficiently prepared for their visit, since local cultural brokers and the marketing material avoid clear information regarding local morals and values, including the conservative dress code for females. Imaginaries communicated on land and on board focus on social narratives about a sunny, “paradise-like” imaginary country. As a consequence, tourists wear revealing clothes while local people experience culture shock situations. Thus, the Sultanate officially promotes tolerance towards Western, non-Muslim tourists but within an “accommodationist” (Din 1989) approach towards a revealing dress behaviour. As a consequence, the tourist destination is transformed into a tourist-centred space, a “tourist bubble”, a commoditized place for consumption, preventing cross-cultural contacts and guarding against negative influences from the tourists and from the local community.

In conclusion, the fast increase in cruise tourism and the arrival of Western mega-cruise tourists represent a socio-cultural “invasion” with negative impacts for the country and the host-communities. Hence, the impacts of mega-cruise tourism are in contrast with the vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, promoting responsible tourism.

Mega-cruise tourism is a challenge for the community, creating a potential for overcrowding space and socio-cultural conflicts for other tourists, the local, mainly conservative Muslim community, cultural brokers and government officials. Therefore, the large scale of cruise tourism and the Western concept of “hedonistic tourism” should be reconsidered. The guiding concept should be a “community-based tourism”, legally regulated and focussing on the long-term well-being of the local multi-ethnic community, in accordance with the motto: “A nice place to live is a nice place to visit” (Jafari 2012: 274).