

UNIVERSITY OF NICOSIA

‘Stakeholder engagement for sustainable visitor management:
Perspectives on Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters in
Cyprus’

Georgios Markatos

PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) in Business Administration

June / 2024



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Abstract

Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) serves as a crucial procedural tool in tourism and destination planning, gaining significance in the context of sustainable tourism development by determining the maximum number of tourists a destination can accommodate while preserving social, cultural, and environmental conditions. In the theoretical and practical framework of this study, we delve into the sociocultural impacts of tourism in Cyprus, assess existing TCC methodologies, and offer recommendations for policy-makers and industry stakeholders. The investigation begins with a comprehensive examination of whether TCC models are integrated into Cyprus' tourism and sustainable development strategies. Through in-depth face-to-face interviews with key stakeholders, the study explores the potential for collaboration in creating a TCC model and evaluates the impact of establishing a network of Tourism Clusters to implement carrying capacity models.

The research methodology involves 32 semi-structured interviews and 3 focus groups with diverse stakeholders, including local authorities, business owners, academics, and government officials. The findings reveal a notable absence of TCC models in current use in Cyprus, despite the recognition in the Strategic Plan 2030 of the adverse effects of mass tourism and seasonality. Stakeholders express varying perceptions of tourism's economic benefits and challenges, reflecting a divergence between profit-oriented and sustainable development approaches. Discrepancies also emerge in stakeholders' views on destination and visitor management planning, highlighting differing agendas and interests. Additionally, limited familiarity with Tourism Clusters is identified, attributed to a lack of data, industry fragmentation, and inadequate government support.

Despite these challenges, the study underscores the potential contributions of clusters to Sustainable Destination Management. The research findings offer valuable insights for developing sustainable tourism policies in Cyprus and provide recommendations applicable to similar destinations grappling with managing tourism growth while preserving cultural heritage. This study advances our understanding of TCC implementation, Tourism Clusters, and stakeholder perceptions, contributing to the planning and strategizing for sustainable tourism practices.

Keywords: Sustainability, Visitor Management, Tourism Carrying Capacity, Tourism Clusters, Overcrowding, Spatial Tourism, Stakeholders

To the 'angel 'of my life my baby girl Ariana

Acknowledgments

And yet it was ultimately a wonderful journey...

A journey that matured me scientifically but mainly as a human being. A trip with bonnets but also with storms, and I was very lucky because I always had experienced navigators and trusted friends by my side.

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I would also like to acknowledge the love and support I received from my daughter Ariana my mother Paraskevi and my brother Periklis and my partner Eirini throughout this learning journey.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this Thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Nicosia. This Thesis has been composed solely by me except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment. It has not been previously submitted, in whole or in part, to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Signed.....

Date 20/06/2024

Georgios Markatos



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ABBREVIATIONS INDEX

TCC: Tourism Carrying Capacity	RevPAR: Revenue per Available Room
SCC: Social Carrying Capacity	OCC: Occupancy Rate
ETAP: Company for Tourism Development and Regional Promotion	ARR: Average Room Rate
COVID-19: Coronavirus	ESG: Environmental, Social, and Governance
CTO: Cyprus Tourist Organization	PCC: Psychological Carrying Capacity
GDP: Gross Domestic Product	FCC: Facility Carrying Capacity
IQ: Interview Questions	ICC: Infrastructure Carrying Capacity
RQ: Research Questions	VEC: Visitor Experience Carrying Capacity
PAP: Priority Actions Program	SC: Social Capital
UNWTO: United Nations World Tourism Organization	EPC: Environmental Performance Certificate
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization	LAC: Limits of Acceptable Change
SDG: Sustainable Development Goals	VIM: Visitor Impact Management
VMP: Visitor Management Plan	STM: Sustainable Tourism Management
KPI: Key Performance Indicator	ECA: Environmental Capacity Assessment
MICE: Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions	EP: Environmental Protection
GIS: Geographic Information System	LTS: Long-term Sustainability
LCA: Local Community Associations	SSI: Site Sustainability Index
DMO: Destination Management Organization	CVSS: Comprehensive Visitor Satisfaction Survey
NTO: National Tourism Organization	VCI: Visitor Capacity Index
IATA: International Air Transport Association	AVC: Actual Visitor Count
WTO: World Trade Organization	SIA: Social Impact Assessment
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	TDA: Tourism Development Area
PATA: Pacific Asia Travel Association	IVM: Integrated Visitor Management
WTTC: World Travel and Tourism Council	
PATA: Pacific Asia Travel Association	
WTTC: World Travel and Tourism Council	
OTA: Online Travel Agency	
GIT: Group Inclusive Tour	
FIT: Free Independent Traveler	
VFR: Visiting Friends and Relatives	
ADR: Average Daily Rate	

Chapter: 1 Introduction



1.1 Prologue

Tourism stands as a cornerstone of economic development globally, providing substantial contributions to nations' economies and generating employment opportunities on a significant scale (UNWTO, 2019). Nevertheless, the unregulated proliferation of tourism poses considerable threats to destination environments, cultures, and societies. Issues such as overcrowding, cultural erosion, social tensions, and environmental degradation emerge as adverse consequences when tourism development lacks sustainability measures (Gössling et al., 2019). Despite these challenges, tourism remains an integral component of individuals' leisure activities and quality of life, safeguarded by legislation and extending access regardless of social status (Dwyer, 2022).

The scholarly pursuit of tourism analysis has evolved into an interdisciplinary endeavour since the early 1960s, witnessing contributions from diverse fields such as psychology, geography, economics, sociology, spatial planning, and political science (Christaller, 1964; Leiper, 1979; Brodksy-Porges, 1981; Konsolas, 1997; Brasoulis, 2000; Husar et al., 2023). Within this expansive landscape of tourism studies, destination management emerges as a focal point for research inquiry. Scholars delve into its multifaceted dimensions, striving to ensure equitable development across all facets of destination existence (Deng et al., 2014; Jeffries, 2001; Benítez, 2022).

Policymakers are tasked with scrutinizing each destination within their purview, aiming to foster social and economic growth, resource efficiency, and inclusive engagement from all societal strata to attain sustainable tourism development (IPCC, 2014; Higgins, 2018). As a result, sustainable tourism management has embraced essential concepts encompassing destination management, visitor management, Tourism Clusters, stakeholder engagement, the tourism life cycle, and the notion of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) and its associated limitations to tackle these pressing issues.. .

1.2 Background of the Study

The thesis titled "Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Visitor Management: Perspectives on Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters in Cyprus" delves into the intricate dynamics of Cyprus's tourism sector, which stands as a cornerstone of the nation's economy. It plays a pivotal role in driving national income, fostering employment growth, and stimulating

regional development (Ikkos, 2017). Moreover, tourism serves as a crucial mechanism for mitigating the balance of payments deficit by attracting foreign exchange.

However, despite its economic significance, Cyprus grapples with pronounced seasonality, primarily attributed to its reliance on Sun & Sea vacations, a dominant offering in the European tourism market. This seasonality, characterized by peaks and troughs in visitor numbers throughout the year, poses formidable challenges for sustainable tourism development (Ikkos, 2017). The concept of tourism seasonality encompasses various factors, including natural elements such as climate variations, institutional factors like school breaks and religious festivities, and societal influences like fashion trends and travel habits. These factors collectively contribute to the fluctuating patterns of tourist arrivals, particularly in destinations reliant on specific tourism products like Cyprus's Sun and Sea offerings.

Against this backdrop, the thesis aims to explore strategies for managing sustainable tourism development in Cyprus through stakeholder engagement. By focusing on the concepts of Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters, the study seeks to provide insights into how Cyprus can effectively harness its tourism potential while mitigating negative impacts on local communities, culture, and the environment. Cyprus's significance as a case study for this research lies in its unique position as a tourism destination grappling with the challenges of seasonality and the imperative of sustainable development. By analysing stakeholder perspectives and engagement strategies within the context of Tourism Carrying Capacity and clustering, the thesis endeavours to offer actionable recommendations for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and community leaders to foster a more sustainable and resilient tourism sector in Cyprus (Ikkos, 2017).

1.3 Research Problem

The research problem at the heart of this study delves into the intricate dynamics of sustainable tourism management in Cyprus, a destination renowned for its economic prowess in the tourism sector. However, amidst its remarkable economic contributions lie pressing concerns regarding environmental preservation, socio-cultural integrity, and economic resilience. As the allure of Cyprus for Sun & Sea vacations persists, the seasonal nature of tourism exacerbates these challenges, demanding strategic interventions for sustainable development.

Central to this research inquiry is the exploration of how stakeholder engagement can serve as a linchpin for fostering sustainable visitor management in Cyprus. In particular, the study endeavors to dissect the nuanced perspectives surrounding Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters, unraveling their significance in the realm of sustainable tourism advancement. Essential queries encompass stakeholders' perceptions of Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters, strategies for bolstering stakeholder engagement in pursuit of sustainable visitor management, and the alignment of such endeavors with overarching sustainability objectives.

Through this investigation, the research aims to offer profound insights into effective methodologies for navigating the complexities of tourism management in Cyprus, thereby curbing adverse impacts while propelling sustainable development forward. Furthermore, the study aspires to enrich scholarly discourse surrounding stakeholder engagement, tourism carrying capacity, and Tourism Clusters within the distinctive context of Cyprus, fostering a deeper understanding of sustainable tourism paradigms

1.4 Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

Tourism is a significant driver of economic growth for many destinations worldwide, including Cyprus. However, the rapid expansion of tourism activities poses challenges to the sustainability of local environments, communities, and economies. As Cyprus continues to attract a growing number of visitors, it becomes crucial to implement sustainable visitor management practices to ensure long-term ecological and social well-being. Central to this effort is the role of stakeholder engagement, which can serve as a pivotal mechanism for advancing sustainable tourism strategies. This thesis explores the potential of stakeholder engagement in enhancing sustainable visitor management in Cyprus. It addresses the core research question:

How can stakeholder engagement be a pivotal mechanism for advancing sustainable visitor management in Cyprus?

To comprehensively answer this question, the study delves into several critical sub-questions:

1. What are stakeholders' perceptions of tourism carrying capacity and tourism clusters in Cyprus?
2. What are the barriers and facilitators for stakeholder engagement in sustainable visitor management in Cyprus?

3. How effective are existing stakeholder engagement strategies for sustainable destination and visitor management in Cyprus?

1.4.1 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate stakeholder engagement as a pivotal mechanism for advancing sustainable visitor management in Cyprus, with a specific focus on the perspectives pertaining to Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters.

1.4.2 Research Objectives

This research explores key aspects of sustainable tourism in Cyprus through the lens of stakeholder perceptions. It aims to examine how stakeholders view Tourism Carrying Capacity and its impact on sustainable tourism management. Additionally, it will analyze perspectives on Tourism Clusters and their role in creating sustainable visitor experiences. The study will also assess the effectiveness of current stakeholder engagement strategies in promoting sustainable practices and mitigating negative impacts. Furthermore, it seeks to identify barriers and facilitators to stakeholder engagement in sustainable visitor management initiatives. Ultimately, the research aims to develop recommendations for improving stakeholder engagement to achieve sustainable tourism in Cyprus.

1. To examine stakeholders' perceptions of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its implications for sustainable tourism management in Cyprus.
2. To analyze stakeholders' perspectives on Tourism Clusters and their role in shaping sustainable visitor experiences in Cyprus.
3. To assess the effectiveness of existing stakeholder engagement strategies in promoting sustainable tourism practices and mitigating negative impacts on the environment, culture, and society in Cyprus.
4. To identify barriers and facilitators to stakeholder engagement in sustainable visitor management initiatives in Cyprus.
5. To develop recommendations for enhancing stakeholder engagement processes to achieve sustainable tourism outcomes in Cyprus.

Each research objective addressed through a set of specific research questions, guiding the investigation and analysis of stakeholders' viewpoints, challenges, and potential solutions related to sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. Through rigorous inquiry and empirical investigation, this study aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of sustainable tourism and stakeholder engagement, ultimately supporting the development of policies and strategies that promote the long-term sustainability of Cyprus's tourism industry.

In the context of this doctoral thesis, establishing a clear connection between the research objectives and the ensuing research questions is imperative for elucidating the study's purpose and direction. This alignment is crucial as it ensures coherence and clarity in addressing the overarching aim of the research endeavor. Therefore, it is paramount to delineate how each research objective directly contributes to the attainment of the overarching aim, thereby providing a comprehensive framework for the subsequent investigation.

1.4.3 Areas of Exploration

This thesis research aims to delve into the multifaceted perceptions and roles of stakeholders in sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. The study is structured around five key objectives that comprehensively explore the dynamics of stakeholder engagement and its impact on sustainable tourism.

The first objective of this research is to examine stakeholders' perceptions of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its implications for sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. To achieve this, the research will explore how stakeholders perceive the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity within the context of Cyprus. It will investigate the beliefs stakeholders hold about the influence of Tourism Carrying Capacity on sustainable tourism management practices. Furthermore, the study will identify the various factors that stakeholders consider when assessing Tourism Carrying Capacity in different regions of Cyprus. Additionally, it will examine how stakeholders perceive the balance between tourism growth and the preservation of natural and cultural resources, providing a holistic view of the challenges and considerations in managing Tourism Carrying Capacity effectively.

The second objective focuses on analyzing stakeholders' perspectives on Tourism Clusters and their role in shaping sustainable visitor experiences in Cyprus. This part of the research will delve into stakeholders' views on Tourism Clusters, including their formation and development

across different regions of the island. It will investigate how stakeholders perceive the role of these clusters in enhancing sustainable visitor experiences. Moreover, the study aims to identify the main characteristics of successful Tourism Clusters as seen by stakeholders, providing insights into what makes these clusters effective in promoting sustainable tourism.

The third objective of the research is to assess the effectiveness of existing stakeholder engagement strategies in promoting sustainable tourism practices and mitigating negative impacts on the environment, culture, and society. This will involve evaluating the current stakeholder engagement strategies employed in Cyprus to promote sustainable tourism. The research will assess the extent to which stakeholders feel involved in decision-making processes related to sustainable tourism. It will also identify the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the existing stakeholder engagement mechanisms. Analyzing stakeholders' assessments of the outcomes of past engagement initiatives will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting sustainability within the tourism sector.

The fourth objective aims to identify the barriers and facilitators to stakeholder engagement in sustainable visitor management initiatives in Cyprus. This involves identifying the main barriers that hinder effective stakeholder engagement. The research will explore stakeholders' perceptions of the level of collaboration and cooperation among different stakeholder groups. Additionally, it will investigate the factors that facilitate effective engagement in sustainable visitor management initiatives. By extracting lessons from successful stakeholder engagement experiences in Cyprus, the study will provide practical insights that can inform future initiatives.

The fifth and final objective is to develop recommendations for enhancing stakeholder engagement processes to achieve sustainable tourism outcomes in Cyprus. Based on the research findings, the study will propose improvements to enhance stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism management. It will explore ways to optimize engagement processes to address the specific challenges and opportunities faced by sustainable tourism in Cyprus. The research will also focus on implementing strategies to ensure greater inclusivity and representation of diverse stakeholder perspectives in decision-making processes. Finally, it will devise strategies for the effective implementation and monitoring of these recommendations to achieve tangible improvements in sustainable tourism outcomes.

In conclusion, this thesis research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions and roles of stakeholders in sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. By exploring these key areas, the study seeks to offer valuable insights and practical recommendations for enhancing stakeholder engagement and promoting sustainable tourism practices in Cyprus. The table 1 below consolidates the aim, research objectives, and the research questions per objective:



Table 1: Aim, Objectives & Areas to explore

Research Aim	Research Objective	Areas to explore
To investigate stakeholders' engagement as a pivotal mechanism for advancing sustainable visitor management in Cyprus, with a specific focus on the perspectives pertaining to Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters.	Objective 1: To examine stakeholders' perceptions of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its implications for sustainable tourism management in Cyprus.	Exploring stakeholders' perceptions of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus. Investigating how stakeholders believe Tourism Carrying Capacity influences sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. Identifying the factors stakeholders consider when assessing Tourism Carrying Capacity in different regions of Cyprus. Examining stakeholders' perceptions of balancing tourism growth with the preservation of natural and cultural resources in Cyprus
	Objective 2: To analyze stakeholders' perspectives on Tourism Clusters and their role in shaping sustainable visitor experiences in Cyprus.	Exploring stakeholders' perspectives on Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. Investigating how stakeholders perceive the formation and development of Tourism Clusters in different regions of Cyprus. Examining the role stakeholders believe Tourism Clusters play in enhancing sustainable visitor experiences in Cyprus. Identifying the main characteristics of successful Tourism Clusters according to stakeholders in Cyprus.
	Objective 3: To assess the effectiveness of existing stakeholder engagement strategies in promoting sustainable tourism practices and mitigating negative impacts on the environment, culture, and society in Cyprus.	Evaluating the effectiveness of current stakeholder engagement strategies in Cyprus for promoting sustainable tourism practices. Assessing the extent to which stakeholders feel involved in decision-making processes related to sustainable tourism in Cyprus. Identifying the perceived strengths and weaknesses of existing stakeholder engagement mechanisms in Cyprus. Analyzing stakeholders' assessments of the outcomes of past engagement initiatives in promoting sustainability in Cyprus's tourism sector.
	Objective 4: To identify barriers and facilitators to stakeholder engagement in sustainable visitor management initiatives in	Identifying the main barriers hindering stakeholder engagement in sustainable visitor management initiatives in Cyprus. Exploring stakeholders' perceptions of the level of collaboration and cooperation among different stakeholder groups in Cyprus.

Research Aim	Research Objective	Areas to explore
	Cyprus.	Investigating the factors that facilitate effective stakeholder engagement in sustainable visitor management initiatives in Cyprus. Extracting lessons from successful stakeholder engagement experiences in Cyprus to inform future initiatives.
	Objective 5: To develop recommendations for enhancing stakeholder engagement processes to achieve sustainable tourism outcomes in Cyprus.	Developing recommendations to improve stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism management in Cyprus based on the findings. Optimizing stakeholder engagement processes to address the specific challenges and opportunities in sustainable tourism in Cyprus. Implementing strategies to ensure greater inclusivity and representation of diverse stakeholder perspectives in sustainable tourism decision-making processes in Cyprus. Effectively implementing and monitoring recommendations for enhancing stakeholder engagement to achieve tangible improvements in sustainable tourism outcomes in Cyprus.

Source: author's own

1.5 Delving into Key Research Areas

Destination management and visitor management play pivotal roles in the sustainable development of tourism destinations. Destination management encompasses planning, development, and promotion to ensure sustainable tourism, while visitor management focuses on responsible tourist behaviour. Both are vital for economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Collaboration among stakeholders is crucial, involving government bodies, tourism organizations, and local communities. Sustainable development, another critical aspect, emphasizes responsible tourism practices. Tourism Clusters, geographic concentrations of tourism-related businesses, enhance destination competitiveness and attractiveness. Collaboration within clusters fosters innovation and enriches visitor experiences. Effective destination management supports cluster development, ensuring alignment with sustainability goals. Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) regulates sustainable visitor numbers. Its multidimensional nature considers physical, socio-cultural, and economic aspects. However, operationalizing TCC poses challenges, including defining and perceiving capacity limits and balancing use levels with desired conditions.

Destination Resource Inventory (DRI) provides insights into destination assets, guiding sustainable development. By cataloguing resources, DRI informs decision-making, infrastructure development, and visitor management strategies.

Sustainable tourism development integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions. It aims to maximize benefits while minimizing negative impacts. Understanding TCC is vital throughout the Tourism Destination Life Cycle (TDLC), which outlines stages from exploration to stagnation. Tourism indicators, spanning economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects, help monitor tourism development and guide sustainable practices. They provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders. It also requires effective destination and visitor management, collaboration within Tourism Clusters, informed decision-making using TCC and DRI, and monitoring through tourism indicators. These elements synergize to ensure long-term sustainability and enhance destination competitiveness and visitor satisfaction.

1.5.1 Destination and Visitor Management

Destination management is defined as "the process of planning, developing, and promoting a destination to ensure sustainable tourism" (UNWTO, 2018). Its objective is to attract tourists while minimizing negative impacts on the destination's environment, society, and culture. Visitor management, on the other hand, involves "managing tourist behaviour to ensure they act responsibly and respect the destination's environment, culture, and local communities" (Newsome et al., 2012, Kebete & Wondirad, 2019). Both destination management and visitor management are essential for the long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability of a destination (Albrecht et al., 2021). Destination management involves a comprehensive approach to developing, promoting, and managing tourist destinations to maximize their economic, social, and environmental benefits (Foris et al., 2020). It also involves the planning, development, and implementation of strategies to ensure the sustainable development of tourism destinations (Ruhanen et al., 2016; Kebete & Wondirad, 2019). It entails the collaboration of various stakeholders, including government bodies, tourism organizations, local communities, businesses, and residents (Kebete & Wondirad, 2019). The primary objective of destination management is to improve the attractiveness, competitiveness, and sustainability of a destination, thereby attracting and satisfying tourists. Sustainable development is another critical aspect that destination management and Tourism Clusters aim to address. Destination management emphasizes the adoption of sustainable practices and responsible tourism, and clusters can facilitate the implementation of sustainable initiatives (Romão et al., 2021). By collaborating, businesses within the cluster can work towards minimizing their environmental impact, preserving local culture and heritage, and supporting the well-being of local communities.

Destination management and Tourism Clusters are integral components within the realm of tourism. As tourism continues to grow and evolve, the management of destinations and the emergence of Tourism Clusters have become crucial for enhancing competitiveness, sustainability, and overall visitor experience. (Soares et al., 2022).

1.5.2 Tourism Clusters

On the other hand, Tourism Clusters refer to geographic concentrations of interconnected tourism-related businesses, organizations, and institutions within a destination (Sotiriades et

al., 2016; Yalçinkaya & Güzel, 2019). These clusters emerge when multiple tourism enterprises and support services locate themselves in close proximity to one another (Mirčetić et al., 2019). Tourism Clusters encompass a wide range of entities, such as accommodation providers, restaurants, transportation services, tour operators, attractions, and other relevant businesses (Al-Saad et al., 2023). The concept of clustering is based on the premise that by collaborating and sharing resources, these entities can create a more appealing and competitive destination. The relationship between destination management and Tourism Clusters is highly symbiotic (Serra et al., 2017). Collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders within a destination, which are inherent in destination management, are naturally facilitated within Tourism Clusters. Businesses and organizations within clusters work together, sharing knowledge, resources, and engaging in joint marketing efforts. Tourism Clusters also contribute to the competitive advantage of a destination (Perkins et al., 2020). By concentrating a diverse range of tourism products and services in one area, clusters provide visitors with a comprehensive and enriched experience (Ma et al., 2022). This concentration enhances the overall attractiveness of the destination and its competitiveness within the tourism market. Destination management and Tourism Clusters are interdependent concepts within the tourism industry (Trusova et al., 2020). Effective destination management practices support the development and success of Tourism Clusters, while well-organized clusters contribute to the overall goals of destination management, including enhanced competitiveness, sustainability, and visitor satisfaction (Muangasame & Amnuay, 2020). The following sections will delve deeper into the various aspects and implications of destination management and Tourism Clusters, shedding light on their significance and potential for driving tourism growth and development (Alonso et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Tourism Clusters foster innovation, creativity, and knowledge-sharing within the industry (Garanti & Stylianou, 2022). The close proximity and interaction among businesses in a cluster create an environment conducive to exchanging ideas, best practices, and innovations (Franco et al., 2020). Destination management organizations often play a crucial role in facilitating this process by organizing workshops, training programs, and networking events, stimulating growth and development within the destination (Foris et al., 2020). Effective destination management is necessary to ensure that Tourism Clusters contribute to sustainable tourism development by managing the physical, economic, environmental, and social aspects of the destination (Gössling et al., 2020). This includes managing the growth of Tourism Clusters to ensure that they do not cause negative impacts on the destination's natural

and cultural resources (Gössling et al., 2019).

Tourism Clusters are geographic areas that contain multiple tourism-related businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, and attractions (Gao et al., 2020). These clusters can play a vital role in the sustainable development of tourism destinations, as they can increase economic opportunities and enhance the visitor experience (Korstanje, 2017). The effective management of Tourism Clusters is essential to ensure that they contribute to sustainable tourism development (Buckley, 2012). The relationship between destination management, visitor management, tourism carrying capacity, and Tourism Clusters is critical for achieving sustainable tourism outcomes (Paskova, 2021). Effective management of Tourism Clusters can increase economic opportunities and enhance the visitor experience, but this must be balanced with the need to manage the impacts of tourism on the destination (Rodrigues et al., 2023). Destination managers must manage the growth of Tourism Clusters to ensure that they contribute to sustainable tourism development and do not cause negative impacts on natural and cultural resources (Mousazadeh et al., 2023). The destination management process identifies and promotes the unique selling points of the destination, which are further amplified through the clustering effect. The destination management organization (DMO) plays a pivotal role in coordinating and supporting the activities of the tourism cluster, ensuring alignment with the broader destination management objectives.

1.5.3 Tourism carrying capacity

Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) is a tool used to manage and regulate the number of tourists that a destination can sustainably accommodate (Leka et al., 2022). According to Weaver (2010), TCC refers to "the maximum number of people that a destination can accommodate without causing unacceptable impacts on the destination's environment, society, and culture." TCC and destination management are closely related concepts in sustainable tourism development. Effective destination management requires the cooperation and coordination of all stakeholders involved in tourism, including the government, tourism industry, local communities, and tourists (Panse et al., 2021; Neupane, 2019). The government can set policies and regulations for sustainable tourism development, the tourism industry can develop sustainable practices, local communities can provide insights into the impacts of tourism, and tourists themselves have a responsibility to behave responsibly (Roxas et al., 2020). By understanding the carrying capacity of the destination, destination managers can develop

strategies to manage visitor flows and minimize negative impacts on the environment, society, and culture (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015).

In discussing the impact of tourism, it is essential to consider multiple dimensions of carrying capacity, as emphasized by scholars such as Pásková (2003, 2008), Saarinen (2006), Zelenka and Pásková (2012), Salerno et al. (2013), Coccossis (2022). These dimensions are related to various physical or social characteristics of the tourism system. Pásková (2008) and Bertocch and colleagues (2020) have identified several types of carrying capacity, including psychological/perceptual carrying capacity, physical carrying capacity, socio-cultural carrying capacity, economic carrying capacity, and organizational capacity, which are related to the natural and socio-cultural features of the area, tourist infrastructure, and visiting community. The dynamic nature of carrying capacity is also emphasized by scholars such as Saveriades (2000), Pásková (2003, 2008), Salerno et al. (2013), Weitzman and Filgueira (2020), and Muler et al. (2018), as potential limits should be considered as a guideline and comprehensively acknowledged, along with other standards. The interdependence of destination management, visitor management, tourism carrying capacity, and Tourism Clusters is essential to achieving sustainable tourism outcomes and minimizing negative impacts on natural and cultural resources (Moreno et al., 2021). Effective management of Tourism Clusters by destination managers is crucial to enhancing the visitor experience and contributing to sustainable tourism development, while managing visitor behaviour and impacts to maintain long-term sustainability. Part of this study focus is to identify the importance of recognising the right key performance indicators for carrying capacity that vary from destination to destination (Elche et al., 2018).

Through an analysis of studies by Cole (2004), McCool and Lime (2001), Monz (2006), Pásková (2008), Salerno et al. (2013), and Simón et al. (2004), several conclusions can be drawn about the concept of carrying capacity. Firstly, carrying capacity has multiple dimensions that depend on the area in question, including factors such as essential criteria, purpose, and visitor preparedness. Secondly, while the number of visitors is a crucial variable in determining carrying capacity in tourism, other factors such as their activities, behaviour, and the state of tourist infrastructure also play a significant role. Thirdly, carrying capacity is a dynamic concept that changes over time depending on the speed of change, and the impact can be enhanced by positive feedback in ecosystems and social systems. Lastly, carrying capacity depends on many changing conditions, and if these conditions change, it may be necessary to

re-evaluate the maximum load of the environment (Mekuris et al., 2021).

1.5.3.1 Limitations of Tourism Carrying Capacity

Although Tourism Carrying Capacity has been understood and accepted at the conceptual level, it raises many difficulties at an operational level (Williams, 1998). In an overview, Lindberg and Eijgelaar (2016) summarized the limitations of Tourism Carrying Capacity under three points. The three points then relate to another two issues, namely, capacity and the perception of capacity. The first limitation is that carrying capacity definitions often provide little guidance for practical implementation. They indicate difficulties in measuring tourism impacts. There are difficulties in determining how much impact is too much, or what is the maximum amount of utilization can be acceptable without causing crowding or some other conditions or impacts (Manning, 2007). In respect to this point, it is noted that tourism carrying capacity, or sustainability, need to be perceived as guiding frameworks (Shelby & Heberlein, 1986). Then carrying capacity can deal with each case separately, since it is not necessary to measure carrying capacity by using an approach. A framework provides guidelines for planning and managing tourism and research needs to focus on local characteristics and particularities.

The second limitation is related to the perception of carrying capacity. Carrying capacity reflects to an extent the expectations and goals of various actors, including individuals and groups (tourists), as well as managers or regulators (Williams, 1998). Tourists' different perspectives can lead to varied satisfaction levels (Lindberg et al., 1997). These differences cause different desired conditions, therefore affecting the measurement of tourism carrying capacity. Tourists may be unaware that their activities can be threats to a particular area; they may perceive impacts improperly or underestimate their significance; they may underestimate the impacts which they cause compared with the impacts caused by other groups; and they may also not understand the difficulties faced by managers (Stewart & Cole, 2003). Research on visitor satisfaction indicates that the limitation of the level of use may affect tourists' satisfaction (Lindberg et al., 1997).

For determining social carrying capacity, a more precise tool than satisfaction can be used, that is perceived crowding. Research has reported that in some cases people complained about crowding, and felt that carrying capacity had been exceeded, yet the satisfaction levels recorded were quite high (Marzetti et al., 2005; Shelby & Heberlein, 1986). So, it means that crowding

perceptions alone are not all important and other psychological factors tend to be more influential in overall appraisals of settings (Lee et al., 2021). As carrying capacity is perceived through different standards, such approaches should be carefully assessed and monitored, by explicitly seeking standards and norms (Vaske et al., 1986, 1993). In such cases, carrying capacity is not a unique unchangeable number but varies with time and it can be altered by management action (Saveriades, 2000).

The third limitation is that carrying capacity focuses on use levels or number of visitors, but management objectives concentrate on conditions (Lindberg et al., 1997). Tourism Carrying Capacity needs to take into account the relationships between use and impact and focus on measures to determine what kinds of conditions should be set for any specific place (Ahn et al., 2002). The identification of desired conditions is the key point of tourism destination management. As environments, including both natural and human ecosystems, are dynamic and adaptable, and furthermore people influence and modify the environment, ecological capacities are difficult to define (Coccossis & Mexa, 2004). In other words, it is difficult to link in turn, numbers of users or visitors to levels of impacts, to the conditions after use and then to the impacts on tourists' satisfaction. In some circumstances the identification of a desired number of tourists or limits on the number of tourists can be a quick and ready to use tool in management. Subsequently, the core concern of management can be monitoring the desirable condition of environments and user satisfaction, based on the set number of users as an indicator of pressures. In certain cases, especially in small areas, it is necessary to identify maximum appropriate numbers of users, and moreover, limits on the amount of development needs to be promoted in order to avoid overuse, misuse and abuse of resources (Butler, 2020c).

1.5.4 Destination Resources Inventory

DRI and TCC are closely interrelated concepts in tourism planning and management. DRI provides a comprehensive assessment of a destination's resources, including natural, cultural, and built assets, which are vital for understanding the destination's potential for tourism development (Fyall, Garrod & Wang, 2012). This inventory serves as a foundation for identifying the carrying capacity of a destination, which refers to the maximum number of visitors that can be accommodated without causing negative impacts on the environment, culture, and local communities (Inskip, 1991). It also helps destination managers and stakeholders gain a comprehensive understanding of the destination's assets and their potential

for tourism development (Santana et al., 2021). By conducting a DRI, destination managers can gain insights into the availability and condition of resources, allowing them to determine the capacity limits and thresholds for sustainable tourism development (Mowforth & Munt, 2015).

The information gathered through the DRI can inform decision-making processes related to visitor management, infrastructure development, and the design of tourism experiences that align with the carrying capacity of the destination (Butler, 1999). Therefore, the DRI serves as a valuable tool for assessing and managing Tourism Carrying Capacity, contributing to the sustainable and responsible development of tourism destinations, resource allocation, development priorities, and sustainable tourism practices (Aas et al., 2005). By systematically cataloguing and assessing destination resources, DRI serves as a foundation for strategic planning, product development, marketing initiatives, and destination branding efforts (Fyall, Garrod & Wang, 2012)

1.5.5 Sustainable Development

Destination management, visitor management, and sustainability are interconnected concepts that are vital for sustainable tourism development. Sustainable tourism development aims to promote economic, social, and environmental benefits for destinations and local communities while reducing negative impacts on the environment, society, and culture (Bramwell & Lane, 2005; Chen & Teng, 2016; Da Silva et al., 2020). However, assessing the success of sustainability initiatives, such as those in 1992 and 2012, has remained a challenge due to the economic crisis of 2008, which overshadowed much of the momentum created to address sustainable development issues (Edgell, 2016; Guerra et al., 2019). Unfortunately, economic imperatives often take priority over sustainability imperatives (Reaser et al., 2021). Tourism is of particular interest to sustainability due to production and consumption occurring in areas vulnerable to natural or man-made resource depletion, such as natural beauty areas, coastal areas, and cultural heritage sites (UNWTO, 2020b; Gossling et al., 2013; Nicholas et al., 2009). Sustainability is a widely discussed concept in tourism development (Peet & Hartwick, 2015; Stoddard et al., 2012; Zhong et al., 2015; UNRIC, 2019), yet its definition remains debated by academics and professionals (Kurecic & Kokotovic, 2017). The analytical framework of sustainability covers economic, environmental, socio-cultural, ethical, and equality issues (Verstegen & Hanekamp, 2005; Videira et al., 2006; Bramwell & Lane, 2005; Ministry of

National Defence, 2019; Pan et al., 2018).

Sustainability also involves setting limits to development to avoid depletion of non-renewable energy sources like oil, which is the primary industry source and critical to the economy on a global scale (United Nations, 2019b; Parapairis, 1993). In the context of tourism, the carrying capacity concept determines the limits of development (WTO, 1991). The sustainability concept encompasses economic, social, psychological, and ecological dimensions, and its application to tourism covers tourism investments and the number of visitors in one place (Lagos, et al., 2015; Wray, 2011; Kalantzi et al., 2016). TCC studies have analysed the impact on sustainable tourism development, tourism planning, economic development, destination development, and destination sustainability (Komilis & Vagionis, 1999; Spilanis, 2000; Antonakakis et al., 2015; Butler, 2020c; Basiago, 1995; Anfuso et al., 2014, Zekan, et al., 2022).

1.5.6 Tourism Destination Life Cycle

TCC is closely related to the Tourism Destination Life Cycle (TDLC) theory, as the carrying capacity of a destination may change at each stage of the model. In the early stages of the TDLC, a destination may have a low carrying capacity, as there may be limited infrastructure and resources to support high visitor numbers (Gössling et al., 2021). As the destination develops and matures, its carrying capacity may increase as infrastructure and resources are developed. However, at the later stages of the TDLC, the carrying capacity may decrease as the destination becomes overdeveloped and unable to sustain high visitor numbers without causing negative impacts on the environment, society, and culture. Effective management of TCC is important throughout the TDLC model to ensure the sustainable development of tourism destinations. In the early stages of the TDLC, destination managers need to assess the carrying capacity of the destination and ensure that tourism development is in line with the destination's environmental, social, and cultural constraints (Paskova et al., 2021).

As the destination develops and matures, destination managers need to monitor and manage visitor flows to ensure that the carrying capacity is not exceeded. In the later stages of the TDLC, destination managers need to focus on maintaining and improving the quality of the destination's tourism products and services, while managing the impacts of high visitor numbers. The TDLC model identifies the different stages that a destination goes through from

its initial development to its eventual decline. The carrying capacity of a destination may change at each stage of the TDLC, and effective management of TCC is important throughout the model to ensure the sustainable development of tourism destinations. Destination managers need to assess and manage the carrying capacity of the destination to ensure that tourism development is sustainable and beneficial for the environment, society, and culture of the destination (Wang et al., 2020).

To ensure the sustainable development of tourism destinations, effective destination management requires the cooperation and coordination of all stakeholders involved in tourism. This involves ensuring that tourism provides economic, social, and environmental benefits to the destination and its local communities, while minimizing negative impacts in order to maintain the tourism destination's life cycle (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Herrero et al., 2022). TCC and the tourism destination life cycle (TDLC) are two essential concepts in ensuring the sustainable development of tourism destinations. According to Butler's model (2020a), TDLC refers to the various stages that a tourism destination undergoes from its inception to its eventual decline. The TDLC model outlines five stages in the development of a tourism destination: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, and stagnation (Igoumenakis, 1999; Butler, 2020b; Paunović, 2020). Each stage presents unique challenges and opportunities for the destination as described next.

During the exploration stage, the destination is characterized by limited tourism products, low visitor numbers, and insufficient infrastructure. In contrast, during the involvement stage, visitor numbers rapidly increase, and tourism infrastructure and services begin to develop. Scholars have conducted several studies on the effects of the development of tourism destinations and concluded that the development path of a tourist destination is evolutionary, following "stages" (Li et al., 2019).

The term "stages" refers to the successive phases of the touristic development of an area, in which specific characteristics regarding the socio-economic structure and the type of touristic infrastructure and services are formed (Hatzivgeris, 2003; Nesticò & Maselli, 2020). The development stage is marked by the maturation of the destination, with increased competition and specialization in tourism products. The consolidation stage involves the stabilization of visitor numbers, with a focus on maintaining and enhancing the destination's competitiveness. Finally, during the stagnation stage, the destination experiences a decline in visitor numbers and a loss of competitiveness (Schuhbert, 2020).

1.5.7 Tourism indicators

Tourism indicators are essential tools used to measure and assess various aspects of tourism development, impacts, and sustainability. These indicators provide valuable information for policymakers, researchers, and industry stakeholders to monitor and evaluate the performance of tourism destinations. Indicators can cover a wide range of dimensions, including economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects of tourism. For instance, economic indicators may include tourism revenue, employment generated, and investment in tourism infrastructure (Brida & Scuderi, 2019). Social indicators could encompass measures of visitor satisfaction, community involvement, and local cultural preservation (Hall & Page, 2019). Environmental indicators may focus on indicators such as energy consumption, waste management, and the conservation of natural resources (Fennell, 2019). Cultural indicators may examine the impact of tourism on local traditions, heritage, and identity (Richards, 2019). These indicators help in understanding the current state of tourism, identifying trends, and guiding decision-making processes towards sustainable tourism development (Brida & Scuderi, 2019).

1.5.8 Stakeholders' involvement

Stakeholders' involvement plays a crucial role in the assessment and management of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) in destinations. Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organizations with a vested interest or influence in tourism development and its impacts. In the context of TCC, stakeholders can include local communities, government agencies, tourism operators, non-governmental organizations, and visitors themselves. Their involvement is essential as they possess valuable knowledge, perspectives, and concerns related to the destination's capacity to sustain tourism activities. Engaging stakeholders in the TCC process helps to ensure that diverse viewpoints are considered, leading to more informed decision-making and the development of strategies that balance tourism growth with the preservation of environmental, socio-cultural, and economic resources (Mowforth & Munt, 2015). Stakeholders' involvement can take various forms, including participation in consultations, collaborative planning processes, and monitoring and evaluation initiatives. By actively involving stakeholders, a more inclusive and sustainable approach to managing Tourism Carrying Capacity can be achieved. It is important for researchers and practitioners to take a multidimensional approach to development and to consider the different perspectives and values of stakeholders involved in development efforts (Campbell et al., 2021). By doing so, a

more comprehensive understanding of development can be achieved, and efforts towards sustainable development can be more effectively pursued.

1.6 The knowledge gap

Due to the nature of TCC, various researchers (for example, Bjørn et al., 2016; Lerario, 2018; Aall and Koens, 2019) have focused on researching the topic while seeing it as an absolute number, such as how many tourists a country or a destination as an absolute number that will not adversely affect can tolerate. It is a number that varies due to its nature. The concept of carrying capacity was originally developed with the purpose of environmental protection from investments that exceeded the ability to meet the needs of locals and tourists. Thus, the definitions given for TCC focused on the maximum number of tourists that the area can accept without noticeable and irreversible damage to the natural environment. Gradually, the concept was generalized, and issues related to the socio-cultural and economic elements of the region were integrated into the definition. The knowledge gap regarding the implementation of TCC in Cyprus in relation to the existence of Tourism Clusters is significant. Although Cyprus has made efforts towards implementing TCC, there is limited understanding of how regional Tourism Clusters can help in the successful implementation of TCC. Research studies suggest that Tourism Clusters can play a crucial role in coordinating tourism development and ensuring that tourism is sustainable in the long term. However, in the case of Cyprus, there is a lack of research on the role of regional Tourism Clusters in the implementation of TCC. There is also a lack of understanding of how regional Tourism Clusters can be integrated into the TCC strategy of Cyprus. While the existence of Tourism Clusters can provide an opportunity for effective stakeholder engagement, there is limited research on how the TCC strategy can be aligned with the Tourism Clusters' goals and objectives. The limited understanding of the relationship between Tourism Clusters and TCC in Cyprus creates a significant knowledge gap that needs to be addressed. This knowledge gap needs to be filled to ensure that tourism development in Cyprus is sustainable in the long term. By identifying the role of regional Tourism Clusters in TCC implementation, stakeholders can develop effective strategies that promote sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

1.7 Thesis structure

The thesis begins with a conceptual explanation and the preferred need to fill the research gap. Next, it proceeds with the theoretical part and the bibliography, while then providing the

methodology, results, and their discussion, and finally the conclusions and implications. Specifically, the first chapter is an introduction. This chapter establishes the study's location and contains the thesis's principal goal, objectives, and research questions. It also provides crucial information on the background of the investigations in relation to the company in question. A short discussion of the theoretical and practical contributions is also carried out. The second chapter is devoted to a review of the literature. The evaluations and summaries in this chapter present the knowledge and thoughts on the topic under examination. It formulates the research questions after identifying relevant gaps and inconsistencies inside the applicable notion. The first conceptual framework is developed and provided in this manner. Chapter 4 explains the broad approach taken by this thesis. It begins by stating the researcher's philosophical perspective and defining the study's layout as well as the technique for gathering statistics. Finally, the chapter provides specific information about the approach of the research methods and the way of selecting the interviewees. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the most important statistic for answering the research questions and achieving the thesis objectives. The statistics are evaluated and discussed with the help of a growing number of relevant subjects and categories. Conclusions and future research are discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter summarises the main findings for each study's question and provides the final conceptual framework. It also goes through the importance of the contribution to theory and practice, the study's limitations, and a few options for further research.

1.8 Contribution to theory and practice

The research topic is an important issue that must be addressed if the tourist sector is to remain competitive and appealing. Since the invasion, which partitioned the island and damaged much of the old infrastructure, the industry has seen tremendous growth (e.g., Famagusta). Pafos, Famagusta, Limassol, Nicosia Troodos, and Larnaca are among the most developed regions (clusters) in the industry. The first issue that has arisen is how the industry should move forward. Second, should big, all-inclusive resorts and heavy reliance on tour operators be pursued? Should tourist destinations (e.g., Limassol) continue to develop man-made attractions and high-rise buildings? Finally, the most important question is what kind of tourism development and tourists the society wish to attract. TCC may be the tool that establishes SCC as the framework for attracting the maximum versus the lowest number of tourists to a destination, or vice versa. Is the SCC as a TCC element, included in that precise absolute number? What role does the socio-cultural perspective play in TCC within the Cyprus Tourism

Clusters?

The recent health crisis has increased the pressure on tourism locations and authorities to reassess their development strategies. Cyprus, according to popular view, has reached a developmental stage that requires a paradigm change toward quality (Report by the Cyprus 2015 Initiative). It will also acquire tourism characteristics that will become more robust and greener and that will cater to all engaged stakeholders (society, local), not only businesses but also financial rewards. This crisis provides the opportunity to reconsider Cyprus's tourist priorities. In this context, the goal of this study is to provide the facts and tools necessary to show that if such a change occurs without TCC policies, it will result in a more inclusive tourist sector, eventually leading to mass tourism and over-tourism. Cyprus must make a significant adjustment in its strategy without losing its current clients, of course. It is a difficult exercise, but if done correctly, it can yield significant results. It is a study that has never been done on such a large scale or at such a local level, and it seeks to cover the entire island and all its districts.

1.9 Research focus

The overarching research focus is to investigate the integration of regional Tourism Clusters into the Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) strategy in Cyprus. The study aims to comprehensively explore the theoretical background, methodology, and case applications of destination management tools for sustainable tourism development within the context of Cyprus. Specifically, it seeks to identify the role of Tourism Clusters in facilitating effective stakeholder engagement and aligning the TCC strategy with the goals and objectives of these clusters. Additionally, the research aims to assess stakeholder perceptions and develop a generalized operational tool for destination management in Cyprus.

Furthermore, the study aims to identify the most appropriate TCC model for Cyprus tourism and examine how Tourism Clusters can support the application of the TCC model. Moreover, the research delves into the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating regional Tourism Clusters into the TCC strategy in Cyprus, exploring strategies to overcome these barriers. Overall, the thesis aims to contribute to a holistic understanding of sustainable tourism development by integrating regional Tourism Clusters and TCC strategies in the Cypriot context. The present study aims to explore the theoretical background, methodology, and case

applications of destination management tools for sustainable tourism development. In particular, it focuses on the assessment of stakeholder perceptions and the development of a generalized operational tool for destination management in Cyprus.

This research conducts a comprehensive examination of the Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) concept and its potential applicability in the context of Cyprus. It scrutinizes the imperative for stakeholder involvement, contribution, and perceptions in the development of a generalized operational Destination Management tool supportive of tourism planning and policy actions, with a specific emphasis on TCC. The investigation aims to identify effective strategies for fostering cultural sustainability and visitor management planning within the Cypriot context, evaluating the feasibility and acceptability of these strategies among diverse stakeholder groups. Moreover, the study intends to assess the existing state of destination and visitor management planning in Cyprus, with a keen focus on identifying any existing gaps or areas in need of improvement. Drawing upon these assessments, the research aims to provide recommendations geared towards the promotion of a sustainable and economically viable tourism industry in Cyprus. These recommendations are rooted in the findings of the study, emphasizing aspects such as stakeholder engagement, sustainable tourism development, and long-term planning considerations. The research also endeavors to scrutinize the impact of stakeholder perceptions on tourism development in Cyprus, seeking to identify strategies for addressing any negative perceptions that may arise. To attain these outlined objectives, the study adopts a qualitative research approach, which takes into account the social-demographic, cultural, and economic components inherent in the TCC model. Additionally, the research accentuates the use of parameters as indicators for a more flexible approach to TCC limits, advocating for the application of permissible limits as safety valves tailored to different tourism complexes. Furthermore, the study posits TCC not as an immutable numerical value but as a strategic policy tool amenable to modification and adjustment.

Moreover, the study investigates the potential barriers to effective integration of Tourism Clusters into the TCC strategy, and strategies to overcome these barriers. The research identifies a prevailing research gap in this domain and aims to provide insights into how regional Tourism Clusters can be integrated into the TCC strategy in Cyprus to promote sustainable tourism development. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the significance of the Social Carrying Capacity (SCC) related to tourism, and how it can be utilized in the context of Cyprus tourism. The study carried out a pilot study to identify if there is currently a study in

Cyprus on the development and establishment of a monitoring system of the parameters that compose the sustainability profile of both tourism and other productive sectors at the destination level.

In conclusion, the aim of this research is to conduct a comprehensive examination of the Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) concept and its potential applicability in the context of Cyprus. It seeks to scrutinize the imperative for stakeholder involvement, contribution, and perceptions in the development of a generalized operational Destination Management tool that supports tourism planning and policy actions, with a specific emphasis on TCC. The investigation aims to identify effective strategies for fostering cultural sustainability and visitor management planning within the Cypriot context, evaluating the feasibility and acceptability of these strategies among diverse stakeholder groups. Moreover, the study intends to assess the existing state of destination and visitor management planning in Cyprus, with a keen focus on identifying any existing gaps or areas in need of improvement. Drawing upon these assessments, the research aims to provide recommendations geared towards the promotion of a sustainable and economically viable tourism industry in Cyprus. These recommendations are rooted in the findings of the study, emphasizing aspects such as stakeholder engagement, sustainable tourism development, and long-term planning considerations.

The research also endeavors to scrutinize the impact of stakeholder perceptions on tourism development in Cyprus, seeking to identify strategies for addressing any negative perceptions that may arise. To attain these outlined objectives, the study adopts a qualitative research approach, taking into account the social-demographic, cultural, and economic components inherent in the TCC model. Additionally, the research accentuates the use of parameters as indicators for a more flexible approach to TCC limits, advocating for the application of permissible limits as safety valves tailored to different tourism complexes. Furthermore, the study posits TCC not as an immutable numerical value but as a strategic policy tool amenable to modification and adjustment.

1.10 Initial exploratory Literature Review

The literature review that is carried out in the context of this thesis explores the breadth and diversity of methodological approaches and tools that have been used over time to evaluate tourism activity in a destination. The traditional analysis approaches are briefly presented, and

the newly proposed tools are highlighted with a focus on the evaluation of both the individual dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of the tourism industry and their potential synergies. Subsequently, the available evaluation approaches and recommendations regarding the relatively new concept of tourism sustainability are explored. Although there is wide acceptance of the concept for about two decades and the international consensus on the importance of its measurement, the literature review suggests that the assessment of tourism sustainability is still a rather problematic and complex process. Despite any conceptual shortcomings and methodological limitations, achieving tourism sustainability remains essentially a purely design, management, and political process.

Surpassing the designated carrying capacity has been identified as a factor contributing to the deterioration of the final product and the overall guest experience, as articulated by Tokarchuk (2022). Notably, the trajectory of development in the tourism industry has historically prioritized quantity over quality, resulting in a diminished economic value for the host community and posing a threat to the sustained success of the destination, as emphasized by Sanchez et al. (2019) and Saveriades (2000). This trend underscores a critical need to shift focus towards a more sustainable and balanced approach that preserves the integrity of the destination. Moreover, the responsibility for addressing grievances related to tourism businesses, encompassing hotels, tourist accommodations, leisure centres, travel agencies, and guides, falls under the purview of the Cyprus Tourism Office (CTO). It is noteworthy that, with the transition to the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, the scope of complaints has expanded to include various domains beyond its previous jurisdiction, such as rental cars, taxis, cleaning services, airlines, and issues related to noise pollution. This shift underscores a broader governmental engagement in overseeing and managing diverse aspects of the tourism industry, necessitating collaboration with relevant government departments to ensure comprehensive and effective resolution of issues beyond the conventional spectrum of tourism concerns.

1.11 Conclusions

Tourism undeniably stands as a linchpin in the economic landscape of Cyprus, with the hospitality industry assuming a central and pivotal role in its contribution. The trajectory of substantial growth in this industry underscores the imperative to meticulously safeguard the trajectory of tourism development to ensure enduring and sustainable benefits. Within this context, the salience of the Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) concept becomes apparent as a

pivotal and indispensable factor in navigating the course toward sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. Despite commendable efforts towards the implementation of TCC within the country, a discernible gap persists, signalling the need for substantial improvements.

This research addresses this critical knowledge gap by embarking on a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted roles played by TCC, stakeholder engagement, and regional Tourism Clusters in propelling sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. The overarching aim is to enrich the theoretical landscape by providing nuanced insights into the intricate dynamics of TCC implementation in Cyprus while concurrently offering pragmatic recommendations to augment its efficacy. The absence of a unanimous consensus on the most apt TCC model for Cyprus prompts a thorough review of existing literature, a meticulous examination of diverse TCC models, and a probing exploration into the utilization of parameters as indicators to usher in a more adaptable approach to carrying capacity limits. Moreover, the study delves into the symbiotic relationship between stakeholder engagement and the strategic alignment of the TCC framework with the objectives of Tourism Clusters.

Against the backdrop of the burgeoning hospitality industry in Cyprus, the research pivots to a granular analysis of the challenges and opportunities entwined with the integration of regional Tourism Clusters into the overarching TCC strategy. This entails a comprehensive comprehension of potential barriers impeding effective integration, coupled with the identification and delineation of strategic pathways to surmount these impediments.

In summation, this study aspires to be a torchbearer in the trajectory of sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. The thesis, meticulously structured to encompass an introductory phase, an exhaustive literature review, a transparent presentation of the methodological framework, an in-depth discussion of findings, pragmatic recommendations, and a comprehensive conclusion, serves as a holistic endeavour to not only refine the implementation of TCC in Cyprus but also to herald a more sustainable and resilient future for the nation's vibrant tourism industry

Chapter: 2 A Brief Review of the Tourism Industry and Destination Management in Cyprus

2.1 Introduction

The present study investigates integrating regional Tourism Clusters into the Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) strategy in Cyprus. It explores stakeholder engagement, aligning TCC with cluster goals, and identifying an appropriate TCC model. The study also assesses stakeholder perceptions and develops a practical destination management tool for sustainable tourism in Cyprus, addressing challenges and opportunities in integrating clusters into the TCC strategy. This research contributes to the existing literature on sustainable tourism development and management tools by presenting a comprehensive analysis of relevant concepts, definitions, and practical applications. One of the key areas of investigation in this study is the assessment of stakeholder perceptions. Many researchers have highlighted the importance of stakeholder involvement and collaboration in sustainable tourism development (e.g., Gursoy et al., 2020; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Tolkach et al., 2019). Also the research studies the various approaches to stakeholder engagement and discusses their advantages and disadvantages. In addition to assessing stakeholder perceptions and developing a generalized operational destination management tool, the topic of Tourism Clusters creation could also be incorporated into the comprehensive research on sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

Cyprus is a modern country in which European culture is effortlessly married with the magic of historical and archaeological memory, as well as the reflection of how Cypriots feel about their country and is one of the safest countries in the world. However, what further intrigued the researcher to carry out the research based on Cyprus is, first of all, the fact Cyprus is at key stage of transformation and vigorous development. Following the previous with the fact that researchers have not come up with a commonly accepted definition of development, instead using objective indicators (change, progress, management, etc.) to quantify the concept of development (Angelides, 2000, Stamatidou & Psaltaki, 2013), the study of the carrying capacity is necessary. By examining the case of the Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, this study purposes to shed light on the socio-cultural dimensions of TCC. It seeks to identify the existing TCC models and their applicability within the context of Tourism Clusters, while considering the contribution of socio-cultural indicators to assessing and managing TCC. Through in-depth research involving focus group discussions and interviews, this study aims to provide insights into the sustainable development of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, considering socio-cultural perspectives and the involvement of various stakeholders. The paradox is that while it is considered inextricably linked to viability, a lot of money was wasted on conducting studies

that were not completed. Therefore, the researcher investigates possible reasons and/or blockades, which prevented the creation and implementation of any previous studies.

2.2 The Significance of the Hospitality Sector in Cyprus

After the invasion and occupation of its northern part by Turkish troops in 1974, Cyprus faced significant challenges and disruptions. To counteract the economic impact and foster recovery, the southern region, controlled by the Republic of Cyprus, heavily promoted itself as a prime tourist destination. This region capitalized on its abundant natural assets—such as plentiful sunshine, beautiful sandy beaches, and warm, inviting temperatures—to attract a large number of tourists. These attributes were marketed as unique selling points, providing a competitive advantage over other Mediterranean and global destinations. In the decades following the invasion, substantial investments were made in tourism infrastructure, including the development of luxury hotels, resorts, and amenities catering to international visitors. The government and private sector worked collaboratively to enhance the appeal of the southern coastlines, historic sites, and cultural attractions. This concerted effort helped establish Cyprus as a favored destination for sun-seekers, beachgoers, and those looking to enjoy the Mediterranean climate. Additionally, global marketing campaigns emphasized the island's scenic beauty, rich cultural heritage, and modern facilities, further boosting its profile as a top-tier tourist destination.

By focusing on these strengths, the Republic of Cyprus successfully transformed its southern region into a thriving hub for tourism, which played a crucial role in the country's economic recovery and development. This strategic shift not only mitigated the economic losses caused by the division of the island but also fostered a resilient and growing tourism industry that continues to be a vital component of the nation's economy. Several studies have been conducted to evaluate various aspects of the tourism industry in Cyprus. These include the overall health of the tourism sector, its broad impact on the island's ecology and environment, its growth potential, its economic contribution to the country's GDP, and its effects on the local population (Sharpley, 2003; Sharpley, 2001; Katircioglu et al., 2020). These analyses have focused on the areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus, offering insights into the development and challenges of tourism in the southern part of the island. It should be noted that this industry has been largely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which appeared in early 2020 (Lock, 2021).

Therefore, despite the WTO predicting international tourist arrivals to reach more than 1.5 billion by 2020, due to COVID-19 and the government lockdown, this forecast changed (Stafford, 2020). As a result, the industry's contribution to the GDP of the global economy fell by 3.7% in 2020 and lost 62 million jobs globally in 2020 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021). Fortunately, the current decline in numbers is anticipated to reverse, as per the World Tourism Organization (WTO). By 2030, it is projected that international arrivals will increase significantly, reaching 1.8 billion (W.T.O. Projected Review 2030). This implies that in the next two decades, a daily average of 5 million individuals will be crossing international borders for purposes such as leisure, business, or visiting friends and family. Given other challenges facing the industry, such as the adoption of new technologies and the constant evolution of consumption and travel behaviours (Kansakar et al., 2019), many researchers acknowledge the need to continue experimental and rigorous research in this industry (Stafford, 2020).

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean, with a population of 888,000 at the end of 2019, according to national statistics services and the latest records (Ministry of Finance, 2019). The fusion of various positive factors such as the island's geographical location, high-quality service, sun and sea combination, and other natural and cultural resources attracts a significant number of tourists from countries around the world (KPMG, 2019). Approximately 4 million tourists arrived in Cyprus in 2019, according to the official national statistical services agency (Statistical Services, Republic of Cyprus, 2019). Based on the latest data from January to December 2019, the number of tourist arrivals reached 3,996,777 compared to 3,938,625 in the same period in 2018, which is considered a significant increase (Ministry of Finance, 2019). Therefore, tourism is an industry characterised by significant sustained growth in terms of revenue (KPMG, 2019). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism arrivals witnessed a significant decline, falling to approximately 600,000, as reported by YSTAT.

However, there is an optimistic outlook for the future, as a resurgence is expected in 2024, with a projected rebound to 3 million visitors. Furthermore, there are predictions of a remarkable 33% growth compared to the previous year. It is important to note that these projections are subject to change, depending on the dynamic circumstances surrounding the pandemic, including travel restrictions and prevailing economic conditions¹. For many years, tourism has

¹ <https://www.cystat.gov.cy/en/SubthemeStatistics?id=51>

been recognised not only as one of the most important sectors of Cyprus's economy but also as the backbone of the island's economy. Due to tourism's significant contribution to Cyprus's GDP, the island's economy is heavily dependent on this industry (Marnerostal, 2020).

In January 2024, Cyprus experienced a 2.9% reduction in international tourist arrivals compared to the same period last year, marking the first decline since March 2021. Data from the Cyprus Statistical Service (Cystat) revealed that 87,961 individuals visited the island last month, slightly lower than the 90,549 visitors in January 2023. Notably, the United Kingdom, Poland, and Greece remained the primary source markets. Over 60% of visitors came for leisure purposes, while 21.2% visited friends and relatives, and 17.2% travelled for business. Concurrently, Cyprus welcomed 153,499 returning residents from abroad in January, indicating a 12.3% increase over the previous year, with Greece, the UK, Poland, and Russia being the top destinations. Roussounidis acknowledged the industry's resilience but cautioned that reaching the performance levels of 2023 might prove challenging amid ongoing adversities such as the COVID-19 pandemic, rising energy costs, inflation, and higher interest rates. Pasyxe emphasized the importance of government support to attract workers, particularly amid staffing shortages.

Responding to warnings of potential shortfalls in tourist arrivals from the Association of Cyprus Tourist Enterprises (Stek), Deputy Minister Koumis assured that measures had been implemented to mitigate losses, aiming to minimize any shortfall of half a million visitors. He acknowledged the significant impact of factors such as conflicts in the region and challenges in the global airline industry but reassured ongoing negotiations with carriers to increase flight capacity.

Koumis highlighted additional challenges, including Germany's economic downturn, the UK's contracting economy, and supply chain disruptions affecting maritime shipping vital for tourism. According to Cystat, tourist arrivals declined by 2.9% last month, breaking nearly three years of continuous growth. This trend, if prolonged, could impede the sector's recovery. Despite recording over four million visitors in 2023, a record high, the Cyprus Hotel Association (Pasyxe) reported a growing preference among tourists for short-term rentals or accommodations in Occupied Cyprus instead of licensed hotels. Pasyxe President Thanos Michaelides attributed this trend to unfair competition from unregulated rentals and estimated that approximately 8% of all arrivals are directed to the part of Cyprus under Turkish control, where different regulations enable lower costs. Michaelides highlighted the societal impact of

high rental prices, exacerbating housing shortages and creating tensions within communities.

While tourism earnings rebounded to pre-pandemic levels in 2023, increased operational costs and higher loan interest rates reduced profitability for businesses compared to previous years. Michaelides attributed the record income in 2023 to inflation and pent-up post-lockdown travel demand but cautioned against overlooking declining bottom-line profitability. He advised stakeholders to diversify source markets to reduce reliance on traditional markets like the UK, Russia, and Israel.

In response to these challenges, the Deputy Tourism Ministry introduced a program for 2024 aimed at enhancing the quality of beach infrastructure, recognizing Cyprus' coastline as a significant attraction. The program encourages local authorities to improve amenities such as umbrellas, walkways, waste bins, and wheelchair-friendly facilities through funding opportunities until March 29th. Referencing the Tourism Strategy 2030, the ministry emphasized sustainable beach development and ongoing efforts to reduce plastic pollution. As Cyprus seeks to join the Schengen Area, fluctuations in tourism may influence EU discussions regarding the forthcoming European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS), prompting potential adjustments to visa policies to stimulate demand. Any alterations in immigration policies may impact travellers registered with ETIAS planning future visits to Schengen countries.

By 2030, it is expected to lead all subregions with 293 million arrivals, surpassing Southern and Mediterranean Europe (264 million) and Western Europe (222 million). Following closely is South-East Asia (187 million), Central and Eastern Europe (176 million), the Middle East (149 million), and North America (138 million). Western Europe, Southern and Mediterranean Europe, and Northern Europe maintain their lead in terms of the number of international arrivals relative to population size. Even though significant investments have been made in the infrastructure of the island's tourist destinations in recent years, there are still substantial shortcomings in their management (Smith, 2020). The development of tourism, like any human activity, has both positive and negative impacts on both the natural and man-made environment (Jones et al., 2019).

The concept of TCC is considered particularly useful in the context of sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. TCC helps to define the limits within which a destination can be

developed without significant negative implications (Hall, 2008). By incorporating the concept of TCC into tourism planning and management in Cyprus, the hospitality and tourism sector can ensure that the growth and development of the industry are balanced with the preservation of natural and cultural resources, as well as the well-being of local communities (Lee et al., 2021).

The capacity of each system to assimilate the existing changes is a key factor for sustainable development (European Commission et al., 2002). It is therefore clear that boundaries must be set, which is one of the basic principles of sustainable development (Butler, 1999). The impossibility of setting boundaries, the reckless activity of man, and the rapid growth of tourism have caused significant disasters in recent years. Sustainable tourism takes full account of current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, while at the same time considering the needs of visitors, the environment, and host communities (Treimikiene et al., 2021). It is not a specific form of tourism; rather, all forms of tourism can strive to be more sustainable. Tourism is widely recognised as a human activity that depends on natural resources, while contributing to the depletion of these same resources (Hall, 2019). The interdependence of tourism with these resources can be direct or indirect, and although all tourism activities are ultimately local, they are phenomena of global importance. At the same time, however, tourism can also raise public awareness and environmental values. Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all stakeholders as well as strong political leadership to ensure broad participation and consensus building (Vu et al., 2021). Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and requires monitoring the impacts and introducing the necessary preventive and corrective measures whenever necessary. It must also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience for tourists, raising awareness of sustainability issues while promoting sustainable tourism practices (Chilufya et al., 2019).

2.3 The Primary Directional Endeavor of Cyprus' TCC

Over the years, Cyprus's tourism policymakers have focused on diversifying its traditional beach holiday image to show the world it has a lot more to offer than just the sun and sea. In Cyprus, since the after-invasion revival of local tourism, it has always been looked at as an activity that simply provides economic support to the area, without the need for it to be nurtured, developed, and maintained or even improved (Loizides, & Samitas, 2017; Panayiotou

& Ioannides, 2019; Ioannides & Debbage, 2020). To this end and looking at tourism as a pillar offering income generation and massive foreign exchange increase, Cyprus has unfortunately been tempted to respond to the sudden massive influx of incoming tourism by “*rapid development [...] experienced by many destinations in a casual and unplanned manner*” (Saveriades, 2000, p.146-147; Surak, 2023).

The concept of TCC has evolved over time, reflecting the changing perspectives and management approaches within the tourism industry. In the case of Cyprus, a Mediterranean island known for its tourism sector, the Chronological Evolution of TCC highlights the historical development and progression of its understanding and application within the context of tourism management (Saveriades, 2000; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004); Filimonau, & Dickinson, 2011). During the early stages of tourism development in Cyprus, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a strong focus on attracting large numbers of tourists without much consideration given to TCC as a management concept. This period was characterized by the rapid growth of mass tourism, driven by the development of infrastructure and accommodation facilities to accommodate the increasing visitor demand (Smith, 2019). However, concerns about the environmental and social impacts of tourism started to emerge in the 1980s and 1990s. Cyprus, like many other destinations, experienced overdevelopment, strain on infrastructure, and degradation of natural resources (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015; Cassar, 2021). As a result, there was a growing recognition of the importance of managing tourism growth and incorporating TCC considerations into tourism planning and development strategies (Leka et al., 2022). Subsequently, in the 2000s and 2010s, Cyprus began to develop frameworks and methodologies to assess and manage TCC. This involved conducting studies and research to determine the carrying capacity limits for different tourism-related resources, such as beaches, archaeological sites, and natural areas (Ioannides & Debbage, 2020).

The establishment of TCC indicators focused to allow for more effective monitoring and control of tourism activities to ensure sustainable tourism development. Moreover, the evolution of TCC in Cyprus has seen a shift towards a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to tourism management. The development of sustainable tourism strategies has become a priority, focusing on balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and social well-being (Hall, 2011). Stakeholder engagement and collaboration among government bodies, tourism organizations, local communities, and businesses should have played a crucial role in shaping sustainable tourism practices and TCC management as

supported by Coccossis & Mexa, (2004). Continual monitoring, adaptation, and evaluation of TCC are integral to its evolution in Cyprus. Regular assessments of tourism impacts are conducted to adjust TCC limits, if necessary, and ensure that tourism development remains within sustainable thresholds (Hadjikakou et al., 2015). This iterative process should allowed for the refinement and improvement of TCC management practices to ensure the long-term sustainability of tourism in Cyprus.

The main form of tourism, developed since the 1970s, stemmed mostly from the geographical and climate availability of the sun–sea combination and thus provides an opportunity for mass tourism, which, however, has led to intense pressure on the natural resources of the area (Hampton et al., 2020) and has therefore led to a product decline stage, in need of revival. In some popular destinations on the island, the seasonal concentration of people alongside their tourism-related activities has interfered with the usual lifestyle of residents and has proven to negatively affect their well-being, including restricting them from using the country's infrastructure and availability of local resources (Belia et al., 2022). This conflict of interest has led to disturbances in the cost–benefit analysis of Cypriot tourism and has also damaged the symbiosis between foreign and domestic populations (Costa et al., 2021). The earliest time when an in-depth study took place in Cyprus concerning TCC was in 2000 by Prof. Saveriades, who first researched the practical implication of TCC from the social perspective. Continuously, an outsourced independent organisation appointed by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, RAI (2005), purposed to investigate the social consequences of tourism in Cyprus.

Moving on the chronological order in 2005 Talos and business architect's consultancy with the support of the University of Aegean (external organisations) prepared an in-depth investigation of measuring TCC for Cyprus's rural areas. It was part of a major plan whose main purpose was to investigate sustainable tourism standards for Mediterranean destinations, particularly for the East Mediterranean. Following up the mentioned reports, an assessment of the carrying capacity for tourism for the Larnaca district was conducted in 2007. It was the first action plan in terms of TCC developed by Klaric and colleagues (2007). The objectives of this research were: the concept of carrying capacity; Larnaca district and southern Larnaca coastal area as the subjects of a carrying capacity assessment (CCA); the methodology used in the CCA; and the CCA of Larnaca district as part of integrated coastal area management.

In 2007, with the support of the appointed national consultant Mr. Nikolaides and a ten-member team (government officials), suggested an activity as part of a generic Mediterranean action plan: *CCA for tourism of the Larnaca district, Cyprus, with special focus on the Southern Larnaca coastal area*. The preparatory report of the CCA in Cyprus described the main objectives and the immediate activities needed to be taken in the plan, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Larnaca's TCC Assessment

-To review and elaborate on the present land use, commercial enterprise, infrastructure development, and environmental issues within the coastal space of the Larnaca district and especially the Southern Larnaca coastal space relevant to the prevailing international, national, and native institutional and policy frameworks
-The production of inputs helpful for the overall strategic and designing documents dealing with commercial enterprise in Larnaca district and Cyprus as a whole
-The development of pointers for operation of the CCA methodology in Cyprus and their application to a pilot case study in the southern Larnaca coastal space in the Larnaca district
-The Development and submission of a sensible proposal for the incorporation of CCA for the Larnaca district at intervals in the Cyprus policy framework (Klaric, 2007, p. 7)

Source: Klaric 2007

According to the projected activities, the authors of this research hoped to prove the pertinence of the priority actions programme methodology for Carrying Capacity Assessment for the Larnaca district and thus to serve as a model that will weaken the negative elements which stand as barriers.

The main conclusions of this research, was the fact that in order to achieve sustainable tourism development, several political priority actions should be taken. There are two main recommendations for the coastal area of South Larnaca (but also for Cyprus in general) *Firstly was the separation of hotels and similar facilities from secondary residences throughout the design system, particularly regarding market incentives for investment and secondly the Restriction on the issuance of permits for secondary residences only in areas far from the coast (at least 500 meters and preferably one kilometre)* (Klaric, 2007, p. 51). The findings of the research concerned the political-economic (design) parameters/indicators and specifically the decision-making intention regarding the degree to which the further development of secondary

residences will be allowed. The problem mentioned above, is especially sensitive because in Cyprus 'tourism' objectives in land use planning are covering both the development of hotels and similar establishments and the development of secondary residences according to Klaric et al. (2007). In simple terms, the research focuses on the need to marginalise micro-policies and the creation of a control mechanism in the creation and licensing of tourist accommodation based on tourist sustainability. Further research was conducted much later.

In 2017, THR Consultancy prepared a general survey promoting a tourism strategy. During the research, there was extensive reference to the tourism capacity. The destinations were divided into tourism regions (Nicosia, Larnaca, Famagusta, Limassol, Paphos). In this report, in addition to the separation of regions, one of the suggestions of the current situation of each area was an upgraded policy on the creation of tourism strategies. It suggested the separation of tourism destinations (cities, locations, territories) into wider regions, suggested for the first time in reporting the creation of Tourism Clusters representing these regions. Business clusters is the set of businesses that are active in a specific area and have as their goal the development of the economy. The tourism cluster society consists, like any business cluster, of businesses with different elements and activities but always with a common goal of increasing and optimising tourism in the geographical area where the cluster operates. This cluster can include services of tourism businesses, such as accommodation, travel agencies, aquariums, theme parks, and public transport. Also, the infrastructure and supporting services are optimised (Yalçinkaya & Güzel, 2019). The mentioned research suggested to be expanded as a principle to the other clusters e.g., tourism industry, accordingly. Therefore, it is emphasised for the first time that competent bodies play a decisive role at the local or state level regarding the private sector (Klaric, 2007).

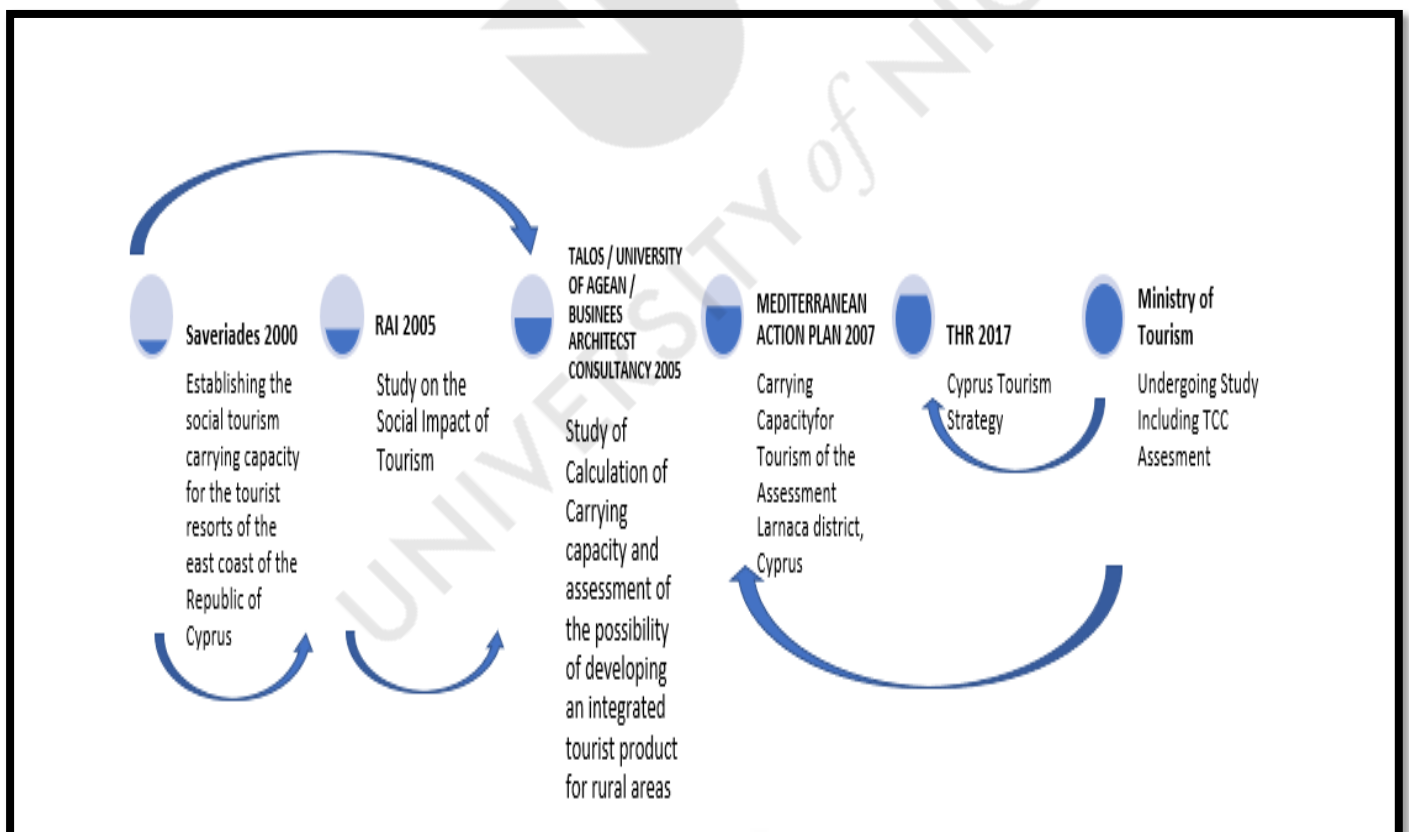
This led to the conclusion that the existing political "carousel" should find solutions, and important decisions must be made. Carefully studying the Cyprus Tourism Strategy Study THR (Barcelona, March 2017) and especially its summary, the researcher noticed some failures of the text, creating many gaps and raising questions. Initially, the Cyprus study of 2007 had no difference compared to the previous study. On the contrary, there are signs of weaknesses in the tourism industry which are based on policies and practices with long-term solutions, such as employment contracts and the promotion of Cyprus in private markets. Another parameter highlighted in the study by Klaric and colleagues (2007) is the bureaucracy and the conflict of decisions, a result of micro-political differences. Based on that study, Cyprus is at an early

stage of tourism adaptation.

The TCC once again has been the concept needed for in-depth investigation of the necessity of the island's tourism sustainability during the announcement of the tourism report in 2021: National Tourism Strategy 2030. According to Dr. Vassou (tourism officer, Deputy Ministry of Tourism), TCC is currently under research (e-mail: 16/6/2021). A new research strategy (internally) is being implemented, which includes the creation of TCC models. Once again, a competition has been launched to find external partners-consultants that will carry out an environmental impact study for the implementation of the National Tourism Strategy 2030 and a study of the carrying capacity of the destination.²

Following the chronological order of TCC research (Figure 1) for the case of Cyprus, it is clear that there is a continuous need to examine the carrying capacity of the island's destinations and the creation of a model as an instrument that will contribute to tourism sustainability. Figure 1 below illustrates the stages of TCC research in Cyprus.

Figure 1: Chronological Order on Cyprus TCC



²<https://www.brief.com.cy/oikonomia/kypros/yf-toyris moy-anelyse-ti-epraxe-2020-ti-tha-kanei-21>

Still, the lack of coherence and continuity of such an effort is clearly visible. The tension for the use of external partners and experts is also clearly apparent. In conclusion, the Chronological Evolution of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus showcases the shift from an initial focus on mass tourism to a more sustainable and managed approach. The progression involves recognizing environmental and social concerns, developing frameworks and indicators, integrating TCC into tourism strategies, and ongoing monitoring and adaptation. This evolution demonstrates Cyprus' commitment to balancing tourism growth with the preservation of its natural and cultural resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

2.4 Prospective application of TCC in Cyprus

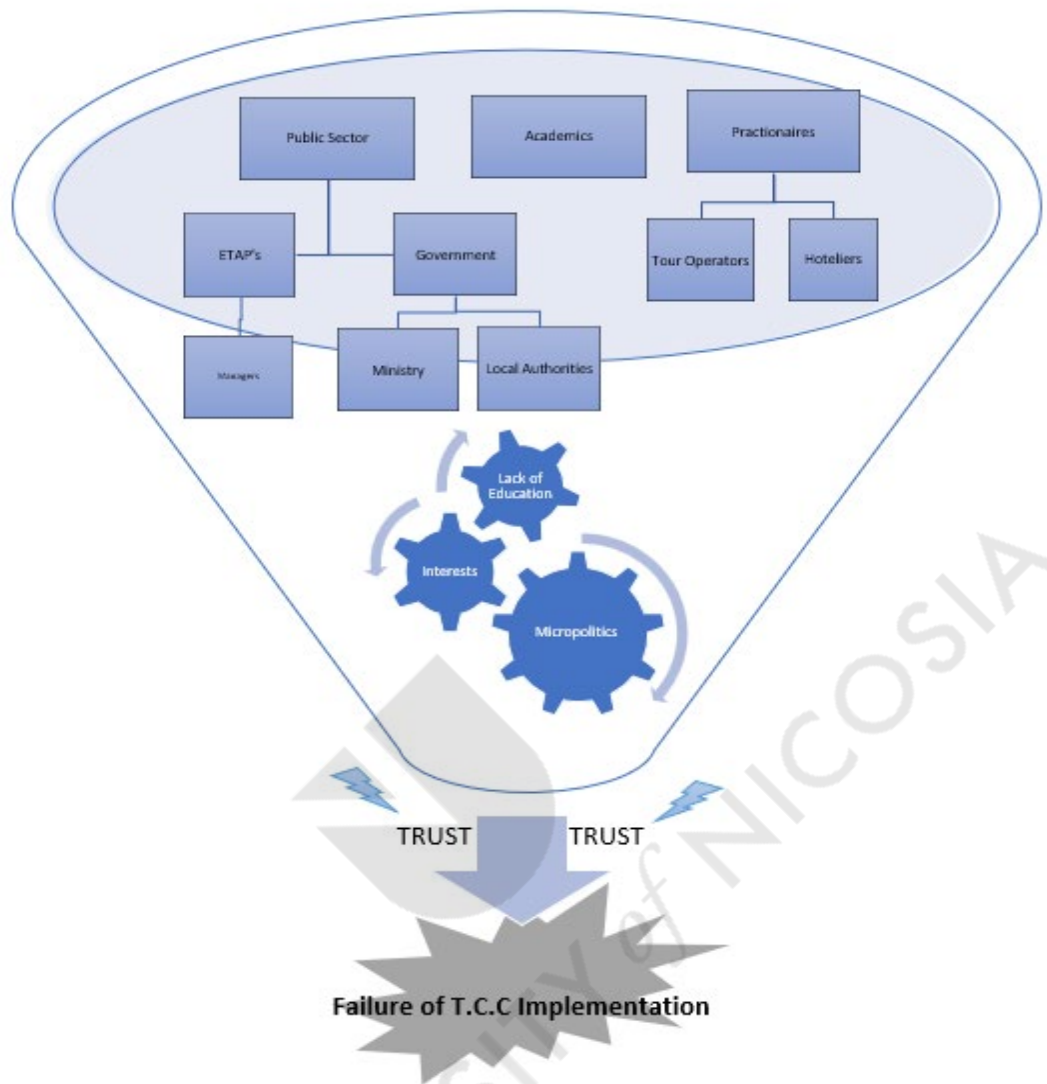
Despite past efforts, the lack of coherence and continuity of such an effort justifies the usual treatment of any research up until today, which was its ending on the shelves of some office, keeping it as an archive. Although competent bodies also play a major role (Klaric, 2007), it is clear that there is intense scepticism, confrontation, and a lack of trust in the network (Bogacz et al., 2019). This observation can be deduced from the findings. Throughout the years, no research has been undertaken on this matter. The notion of implementing a sustainable tourism strategy, involving the collaboration of foreign specialists, has been contemplated but regrettably not realized. A contributing factor to this outcome is the absence of confidence in the experts' motives. Tourism destinations are a top-down network structure supported by the public sector (Zhu & Liu, 2022). Trust plays an important role among many organisational values; therefore, attention should be paid to the role of trust in networks (Bogacz et al., 2019).

Moreover, the existing dependencies that appear between entities indicate the need to apply a doctrine of sustainable development (Underwood & Friesner, 2017). Sustainable development and mutual trust between stakeholders are inextricably linked. It is accepted by many researchers that sustainable development requires the cooperation of many political, economic and social partners and therefore solutions are needed to improve trust in cooperation according to Frerichs and colleagues (2017). In addition, the role of trust in decision-making processes and the fact that trust affects the sustainability of a professional learning community are

observed (Frerichs et al., 2017). Trust is also important for the development of capacities that favour the undertaking of sustainable development activities (Almers, 2013). Figure 2 illustrates a schematic representation of the insufficient implementation of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC).



Figure 2: Inadequate execution of Tourism Carrying Capacity



Source: author's own

The transition of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation to the Deputy Ministry of Tourism focuses to change the former's functionalities, transform the current government policy (Perdios, 2022), and recover the lost trust. This change also seeks to involve the contribution of the local authorities to take initiatives, which until now have been unsuccessful. The reasons vary: mainly the lack of political power in the decision-making process as well as the absence of support by the stakeholders (private or government), due to political and/or personal interests which stand as barriers to significant policy decisions. The study has reported an increase in tourism to 4 million, although the indicators decreased, excluding variables such as pandemics and emerging markets (Italy, Greece, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Poland, Turkey, Bulgaria). This

was achieved in 2019. There was no evidence of the report on TCC measurement indicators nor the stakeholder's perceptions and involvement. In a recent study by the National Tourism Strategy, the purpose of this document is to be the framework for conducting an open consultation for the country until 2030. Some clear positions are distinguished for the first time. Some are related directly to the clusters where they will benefit from single management units for efficient operation (cluster management units). Concentration (clusters), in short, is the division of tourist destinations into sub-destinations. Analysis of the issue is investigated further. Therefore, in terms of tourism planning, according to ex- Deputy Minister Savvas Perdios, the concentration of different destinations into larger groups of tourist destinations in Cyprus is more sustainable than dispersion. This concentration of strategy-making policies and decision-making might be considered by the Deputy Minister and his experts as ideal to be adopted in Cyprus,³ but it refutes the original strategic plan for 2030 which states the increased involvement of the local authorities and the destination's experts.

The limits of economic activity are, by extension, linked to the rate of exploitation of natural resources by humans (Sartzetakis & Karatzoglou, 2011; Wang et al., 2020). Lack of destination planning, unplanned development, and unlicensed accommodations are some of the main negative effects that are constraints to sustainable development. When planning future development, it is important to evaluate the existing supply. The concept of destination management is the subject of increasing interest at a time when destinations are competing to provide a higher quality experience to visitors while effectively managing the impacts this entails on local communities and the host environment. The concept of "destination" itself is defined on a case-by-case basis based on spatial (physical), thematic, or administrative boundaries, with most definitions consistent with defining a geographical area of tourist interest that includes accommodation units, attractions, and other services supporting the tourism product in a way that gives it a clear and distinct set of identity characteristics (Mu and Purposear, 2022). By identifying the "destination" as a single identity of all the components of the tourist offer (attractions, facilities, accessibility) and the provided tourist experience (image, price, human resources), a destination adopts the properties of a "macro-enterprise", a "product collective production", a "tourism network", or a "competitive unit" (UNWTO, 2007). In this light, the process of managing a destination refers to the strategic approach of connecting the constituent elements with the ultimate goal of the synthetic, unified, and,

³<https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/11/28/tourism-arrivals-at-same-levels-despite-challenges-says-minister/>

consequently, improved utilization of the alert elements (living and non-living) that determine its characteristic identity and compose and render value in the tourist experience (Varelas & Apostolopoulos, 2020).



Chapter 3: Literature Review



UNIVERSITY of NICOSIA

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the conceptual framework of TCC, exploring its role in determining the development limits of tourist destinations and evaluating the compatibility of interventions with the natural, socio-cultural, and economic characteristics of an area. The rapid growth of tourism globally has raised concerns about its negative impacts on the environment, culture, and society of destinations, leading to an increased emphasis on sustainable tourism development. TCC, a key concept in this domain, defines the maximum number of tourists a destination can sustain without adverse effects. Effective destination management, involving collaboration among stakeholders, is crucial for sustainable tourism, as is visitor management to minimize negative impacts on the destination. The concept of Tourism Clusters, comprising interconnected businesses collaborating to enhance destination competitiveness, is also explored for its potential benefits, including improved infrastructure, increased revenue, and enhanced sustainability. The primary aim of a literature review is to thoroughly investigate and analyse the existing body of knowledge in a specific field of study. Following this examination, the next step involves proposing a conceptual framework that synthesizes and integrates the insights gained from the reviewed literature.

Overall, sustainable tourism development requires a comprehensive approach that includes TCC, destination management, visitor management, and Tourism Clusters. These concepts are closely interrelated and can help to ensure that tourism remains sustainable in the long term. This study explores these concepts in more detail, discussing their significance in sustainable tourism development and their interrelationships. The capacity of each system to assimilate the existing changes is a key factor for sustainable development (European Commission et al., 2002). This literature review embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the imperative concept of TCC within the realm of sustainable development, as underscored by Butler (1999) as one of its fundamental principles. The subsequent analysis delves into the nuanced dimensions of single spatial tourism, tourism planning, and tourism management. The review unfolds with a historical perspective on TCC, examining its evolution over time. In the scrutiny of the TCC concept, a meticulous assessment of its various parameters and measurement methods, including indicators, is undertaken. The literature review encompasses an array of pertinent themes, ranging from the sociology of tourism and the cultural heritage of Cypriot tourism to the efficacy of tourism management plans in Cyprus. Moreover, it explores the pivotal role of Destination Management Organizations (D.M.O.s), the intricacies of visitor

management, and the multifaceted challenges posed by over-tourism, addressing the concept while acknowledging issues of overcrowding. Spatial tourism, sustainable tourism development in Cyprus, stakeholders' networking and dynamics, and stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism development emerge as pivotal components of the inquiry. The review also scrutinizes the intricate relationship between TCC and the life cycle of a tourist destination, delving into tourism indicators, calculation methods of T.C.C, and various TCC models vis-à-vis sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. Further exploration includes the concept of Tourism Social Carrying Capacity, the role of community-based tourism for sustainable development in Cyprus, and the dynamics of Tourism Clusters, particularly regional Tourism Clusters and their contribution to sustainable tourism in Cyprus. The literature review concludes by drawing insights from best practices in sustainable tourism development gleaned from the Cyprus context.

The researcher also evaluates the current situation of the island of Cyprus. The carrying capacity of a destination is inextricably linked to the concept of tourism destination management and, for many researchers, to over tourism, where both concepts are examined. Extensive reference will also be made to spatial tourism with examples from both outside and inside the island since it makes a direct contribution to any tourism destination management strategy. The carrying capacity of tourism, as confirmed by most researchers, is influenced to a very large extent by political and state decisions (Zielinski et al., 2021). Stakeholders and D.M.O.s act as catalysts, especially in countries like Cyprus where they were relied upon after the war. There is an ongoing extensive analysis of the concept of clusters, and specifically of tourist clusters, their importance as well as their advantages and disadvantages. This investigation will incorporate illustrative instances drawn from both internal and external contexts. The conceptualization of tourist clusters, as it is elucidated subsequently, assumes significance within the realms of both organizational and national cultures, a fact that became subject to detailed examination in a dedicated chapter. It also highlights the concept of Tourism Clusters, which refers to a geographic area consisting of interconnected tourism businesses and organizations that collaborate to enhance the competitiveness of the destination. Tourism Clusters can provide a range of benefits, including improved infrastructure, increased tourism revenue, and enhanced sustainability.

In summary, the purpose of the introduction is to provide an overview of key concepts in sustainable tourism development, emphasizing the importance of tourism carrying capacity,

destination management, visitor management, and Tourism Clusters. These concepts are closely interrelated and can help to ensure that tourism remains sustainable in the long term. The study will explore these concepts in more detail and discuss their significance in sustainable tourism development and their interrelationships.

3.2 The Sociology of Tourism

The inclusion of the sociology of tourism in the literature review of the thesis, serves to provide a foundational understanding of the social dynamics inherent in tourism. By starting with this perspective, the thesis aims to explore how various stakeholders interact and engage in managing tourist activities within Cyprus. This approach allows for a broader examination of power dynamics, social structures, and community impacts, which are crucial for devising effective strategies for sustainable tourism development. Through the lens of sociology, the thesis seeks to shed light on the complexities of stakeholder involvement and propose inclusive and socially responsible approaches to visitor management in Cyprus.

The sociology of tourism is a field of study that explores the social and cultural dimensions of tourism. It examines how tourism influences and is influenced by social structures, norms, values, and behaviours, and how it shapes relationships between tourists and hosts. The sociology of tourism also investigates the impact of tourism on social inequalities, identity formation, and cultural change (Cohen & Cohen, 2019a). The multilevel investigation of the correlation is based on four axes, namely the consequences and effects of the tourism phenomenon, the character of the tourist, the structure and operation of the tourism system, and the relationships that develop between tourists and locals (Holden, 2008). In the present work, special reference is made to two of the four axes, i.e., the effects of the tourist phenomenon and the relations between tourists and locals and the interaction between them. Tourism is a social phenomenon that involves the movement of people from one place to another for leisure, pleasure, or business. As such, it has social implications that go beyond economic benefits and environmental impacts. The sociology of tourism aims to understand the social processes and dynamics involved in tourism, including the production, consumption, and representation of tourism experiences. Tourism is a social phenomenon as it develops between organized societies.

Humanity seeks fulfilment through travel, satisfying needs for escape, recreation, and spiritual growth, thereby fostering social connections with the destinations visited. People from

different places and countries develop relationships with each other and get to know the culture and everyday life of different peoples, resulting in the exchange of ideas and thoughts, and developing a spirit of cooperation and solidarity. Tourists affect, either positively or negatively, the lives of the members of the society they visit. An important factor for the conclusion of the relationship that is created is the education that each tourist and the locals possess (Orphanidou et al., 2024; Koltsidopoulos, 2005, pp. 67–69). Also, the result of communication between tourists and locals is influenced by the type of tourism development, the commercial dimensions of the meeting, the differences in the midst of cultural and social characteristics of tourists and locals, etc. Also important is the stage of development of tourism; for example, the phenomenon of organized and mass tourism leads to commercialization resulting in tourists and locals developing a single business relationship (Athanassiou, 2007, pp. 22–27). Finally, tourism can bring about change and establish in a society a foreign stereotype that alters its character. One of the key concepts in the sociology of tourism is the tourist gaze, which refers to the way in which tourists view and consume the places they visit. The tourist gaze is influenced by various factors, including culture, history, media, and personal preferences. It shapes the way in which tourists interact with the local environment, culture, and people and can have both positive and negative impacts on the destination.

The sociology of tourism also examines the power dynamics between tourists and hosts. Tourism can create inequalities between tourists, who have access to resources and privilege, and local communities, who may face economic, cultural, and environmental challenges as a result of tourism development. The sociology of tourism investigates how these power dynamics are negotiated and contested and how they affect the relationship between tourists and hosts. Moreover, the sociology of tourism explores the role of tourism in identity formation and cultural change. Tourism can challenge or reinforce cultural norms and values, and can influence the way in which local communities perceive themselves and their place in the world. The sociology of tourism investigates how tourism contributes to the construction of collective identities, the formation of cultural hybridity, and the negotiation of cultural differences. It also influences a country's policy regarding the promotion of social tourism policy as a necessary asset to people who are unable to fully purchase a tourism product, thus promoting the state's domestic tourism. (Lagos, 2007, pp. 63–67). The rapid growth of the tourism sector, especially after World War II, and the fact that the economies of many developing regions are based on tourism created the need to determine the magnitude of the impact from the development of tourism. In this context, the sociology of tourism was developed, a branch of the social

sciences, which has recently been developed with the aim of analysing the human dimension of tourism. Tourism is defined as a social phenomenon, as a result of human activities that need to be examined and analysed. Tourism and travel in general are an ancient process based on human curiosity, the interest in the unknown and the discovery of new places. "The view that tourism is a 'random' social phenomenon should be ruled out and, on the contrary, should be perceived as a social phenomenon." As Erik Cohen (2019b) states, the sociology of tourism has as its object the motivations, roles and behaviour of tourists during their stay in the host country but also the effects they have on the social structures of the host countries. "The sociology of tourism is an emergent specialty concerned with the study of touristic motivations, roles, relationships and institutions and of their impact on tourists and on the societies who receive them" (Saveriades, 2006, p. 162).

As can be seen from the international literature, it is not possible to have a clear line of demarcation between the various spheres of influence of tourism development. In the context of tourism development, there is an interaction of various factors. For this reason, the sociology of tourism is linked to other sciences, such as political science, law, economics and social anthropology: "Tourism in its current form covers an extremely wide range of activities, which are economic, social, cultural and environmental fields of scientific analysis. This does not certify the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary analysis on which tourism relies for its interpretation of the time" (Lytras, 1998, p. 60). The aim of the above analyses is to accurately identify the negative effects, in order to take the appropriate measures to protect the host communities and the visitors themselves. At the same time, the aim is to identify the positive effects of tourism development, with the aim of maximizing the benefits at local and national level. The objective of the sociology of tourism is the study of the tourism phenomenon as a social institution. Scientists analyse tourism using interdisciplinary methods from various fields, including anthropology, geography, social psychology, and social anthropology, as well as mathematical and statistical science, examining topics such as the social change and sociological characteristics of tourism, effects on consumer behaviour, socialization and role of tourists, family dynamics, moral behaviour, human health, social tourism, international peace and cooperation, political effects, tourism employment, and alternative forms of tourism development (Chartas, 1996; Holden, 2008).

In Cyprus, several studies have been conducted in the past to determine the social impact of tourism. In most cases, the studies were not of a pan-Cypriot scale and focused their attention

on specific geographical areas with intense tourist activity. In chronological order, the Cyprus Tourism Organization conducted a study in 1988 titled "Social Impacts of Tourism in Cyprus," which aimed to investigate the negative effects of increasing tourist development on the island's locals and society, exploring factors such as residents' attitudes towards tourism, its influence on community and family relations, its impact on morals, values and antisocial behaviour, effects on the environment and identity of tourist areas, and other contributing factors to changes in social behaviours and patterns.

To sum up, the sociology of tourism is a rich and multifaceted field of study that sheds light on the social and cultural dimensions of tourism. It emphasizes the need to consider the social implications of tourism development and to adopt a critical perspective that takes into account the power dynamics between tourists and hosts, the role of tourism in identity formation and cultural change, and the potential for social inequality and conflict. By understanding the social and cultural dimensions of tourism, we can develop more sustainable and equitable forms of tourism that benefit both tourists and local communities.

3.2.1 Cultural Heritage of Cypriot Tourism

Research into residents' perceptions of tourism are approached from many perspectives: the balance between positive and negative perceived impacts (social exchange theory), the shared social representations of tourism with different community members (social representations theory; Moscovici, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1988), the speed and intensity of tourism growth, particularly within the early phases of tourism development (Albrecht, 1984; Kang et al., 1996), and increasing investments and associated commodification and destruction of the landscape and idyll (theory of artistic destruction (Mitchell, 1998)). Cultural tourism is part of the general knowledge field of indispensable forms of tourism and for the last 20 years has been one of the most stoutly developing sectors of the tourism industry. "Cultural distance" is a collective term for the cultural distinction between tourists and locals. It will take the shape of an absence of adaptivity, e.g.: large teams, and generates an offensive behaviour on the part of the tourists, and a sensitivity on the part of the natives (which has its roots within the factors mentioned above). Altogether, cultural distance is often understood as the mental object distinction between locals and tourists. The term goes back to Stephen Williams (2009): the larger the cultural distance, the larger the potential for conflict. Spatial and temporal distribution refers to the situation (the sheer variety of tourists) or the concentration of tourists

in house and/or time. This situation will cause irritation regardless of “cultural distance”: even with the best degree of “correct behaviour” by extremely adaptive individual tourists characteristics, will occur (Andereck et al., 2005; Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997; Harrill, 2004; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2017).

It becomes clear that the quantity of potential conflict fields is massive and their structure heterogeneous and not invariably clearly transferable. Additionally, specific developments not only impact the direct interests of the native residents but also the relations between totally different traveller actors and economic teams. As an example, it is not clear whether dealing through sharing portals has a control on the value development within the edifice business (Zervas et al., 2016), and the way abundant “sharing” (as hostile businesses) within the sharing economy (European Commission, 2016; O’Neill & Ouyang, 2016). Moreover, it is supposed to help clarify the link between stakeholders (i.e., the residents, the touristy suppliers, and also the visitors) and their various objectives. Being abstract, however, it is not supposed to function as a structural model delivering graphical representations of hypotheses or structural relationships. Obviously, in order to assess things in a very specific destination, the abstract model is simply one basic tool. For concrete applications, a lot of steps ought to be taken, building on the model. To develop a more robust understanding of the mechanism of conflict between tourists, touristy suppliers and residents, table analysis was conducted into potential areas of conflict between locals and tourists, which factors would characterize notably vulnerable residents and distressed locals, and what would be strategic choices to manage the occurrence of such conflicts.

There's a danger that attention to solely negative aspects of the interaction between tourists and locals would cause bias. Economically, touristy sometimes has positive effects on the inhabitants, chiefly through the money coming back in from the surface, which tourists pay within the town and for the town. This cash ends up in traveller turnover, which is mirrored in financial gain. This financial gain is within the variety of salaries, financial gain from self-employment, company profits, or from the leasing or sale of land, buildings or flats. Indirectly, touristy revenues additionally contribute to the creation and maintenance of infrastructures and (tourist) offers, which might even be utilized by residents. This is applicable to most cultural establishments (from the opera to the zoo), and additionally to transport offers, gastronomy, etc. Socially, touristy will also result in fascinating effects within the destination. If, for example, a state of affairs is known as a field of conflict, then indicators and

measurements for the state of affairs have to be found. These is visitant counts or usage information from apps and mobile phones. If shared accommodation appears to be the issue, then the number of hosts, listings and overnights at Airbnb and different platforms are acceptable metrics. A significant downside, however, within the current state of affairs appears to be the shortage of comparable metrics. Acting and implementing measures may be a logical consequence in cases where the assessment section has shown issues of visitant pressure. These actions may well be within the fields of regulation, visitant management, pricing or communication. The model doesn't offer suggestions on what actions to require. It will work, however, as a tenet for the strategic objectives of such actions, particularly to secure (and presumably increase) the value from business enterprise for the town and its business enterprise suppliers on the one hand, and to secure (and presumably increase) business enterprise acceptance on the residents' facet on the other.

According to a recent survey by Thomas Cook, 93% of customers enjoy the experience of the local culture of the countries they visit⁴, while places with local characteristics stand out. Perhaps the most fundamental challenge facing the hospitality industry is "attracting and retaining the necessary number and quality of young people" (Lewis & Airey, 2001, p. 7). Especially in a country like Cyprus, which relies heavily on tourism revenue, the ability to attract skilled people to industry is vital. Many local industry actors argue that while the future prosperity of the industry depends on the quality of its people, the Cypriot hospitality industry has failed, for various reasons, to project an image that could create interest among high school students, and especially those with higher-than-average performance values. Consequently, it is difficult for anyone to present the industry as an attractive career choice for secondary school students (Zopiatis & Kyprianou, 2006). In any case, the Cypriot hospitality industry faces fundamental challenges related to attracting and retaining young people in its highly volatile business environment. Potential labour shortages, which are predicted by many in the industry soon, will disrupt the smooth running of the industry and reduce its ability to contribute to the country's economy. The most important finding, which requires the immediate attention of all stakeholders, is the relatively low image and reputation of the hospitality professions that "enjoy" the students of secondary education (Zopiatis & Kyprianou, 2006). In recent years, interest in sustainable tourism has grown and international projects and research in sustainable tourism have been designed to make this direction popular in the academic space (Berjozkina

⁴ <https://louishotels.com/news/interview-of-mr-savvas-perdioscoo-of-louis-hotels-to-politis-com-cy/>

& Melanthiou, 2021). They include the discipline of the relevant sector in educational programmes related to hospitality and tourism. The implementation of education for sustainable development in higher education institutions is necessary to support the transition to sustainable development (Berjozkina & Melanthiou, 2021).

The researcher, however, raises questions regarding the conclusion by Berjozkina and Melanthiou (2021) that in higher education in Cyprus, sustainability is still an underdeveloped concept. The problem perhaps is not that not all universities and colleges in Cyprus offer bachelor programmes related to tourism and hospitality, and a course on sustainability'. In the researcher's opinion, the questions posed by Berjozkina and Melanthiou (2021), which are very important and valid, lack reference to Cypriots' perception of any hospitality programmes:

“What are the students' expectations?

How could college heads better implement sustainability in the curriculum?

What are the needs and expectations of the industry in terms of education in sustainability?”

In the researcher's view, the problem should not be seen as being limited to higher education of hospitality and students' perspective but as a social phenomenon. Do the related professions of the hotel industry have the respect they deserve, or are they seen as professions of secondary importance among Cypriot citizens, and if so, why? As found in the RAI 2005 survey, the economic benefits of tourism, both from the inflow of capital into the local community and through the employment opportunities provided, are highly valued by the majority of respondents in both the tourist and non-tourist areas in research. The respondents typically mentioned that tourism lays the economic foundations for the improvement of the living standards of the inhabitants of all areas. At the same time, as the researcher discovered, the prevailing opinion is that tourism is an opportunity to promote the culture of Cyprus and at the same time sensitizes the Cypriots themselves about their own culture, and "encourages them to be interested in the sights of their place" (CTO, 1998).

One of the negative effects reported was the feeling of alienation from their community ("they feel like strangers in their place") due to the large number of foreign visitors. At the same time, according to the respondents, the quality of life of the locals was negatively affected due to the overcrowding, the increasing traffic and the noise observed during the peak season. The

changes in the morals and the value system are, according to the respondents, the main negative impact of tourism on the social fabric of their region. This was mainly demonstrated by the exclusion of young people from family activities and responsibilities. At the same time, "the Cypriot seems to desire and seek interact with foreigners" (CTO, 1998), despite the frictions that arise between residents and visitors – quarrels over gambling, theft, etc. – tourists and the local community. It is worth noting, meanwhile, that the inhabitants of the areas in question differentiate visitors based on their nationality and show a preference for Greek tourists. They are followed by the British, the European visitors and finally the Arabs.

In 1997, research entitled "Establishing the social TCC for the tourist resorts of the east coast of the Republic of Cyprus" (Saveriades, 2000) was conducted. According to the researcher, Alexis Saveriades, the size and type of changes (positive and/or negative) that occur in a developed and developed tourist area depend on the balance between the volume of social activity and the capacity of the tourist activity (carrying capacity) of the specific area. The social carrying capacity of each area is determined by:

- The degree of tourism development it is able to develop without any adverse effects; and
 - The volume of tourist flow it is able to receive without the occurrence of the phenomenon of saturation on the part of tourists.

The research focused on the areas of Ayia Napa, Protaras and Paralimni, with the aim of exploring the perceptions of the locals regarding the tourism development in their area. At the same time, within the framework of the research, the relationship between residents and visitors and the role of tourism development in the emergence of antisocial phenomena and alteration of the social fabric of the region were investigated. In order to compare the results between the peak tourist season and the period of low tourist activity, the survey was conducted in two stages, in February 1997 and in August of the same year. A total of 100 personal interviews were conducted with residents of the area. According to the research findings, tourism is considered an important source of income for the local community, absorbing a high percentage of the region's human resources. In addition to the economic benefits, tourism contributes to the promotion of Cypriot culture. What was particularly noted by the inhabitants of the areas was the need for less tourist development. Tourist development gives the possibility of revival of the traditional arts, although as some of the respondents acknowledged, the traditional arts and crafts are altered to a certain extent due to their "Dazik" production. Most of the respondents mentioned that the services and in general the infrastructures of the area have been developed to a great extent, due to the tourist development. The development of the

road network, irrigation systems and the installation of desalination plants are some of the projects that have been carried out to promote and support tourism development and have also contributed to improving the quality of life of locals.

In connection with the above, the respondents were asked to state whether they would like to increase, decrease or stabilize the tourist activity in their area. According to the researcher, the opinion of the residents at this point is divided into those who would like to increase the number of visitors and those who believe that tourism activity has reached a satisfactory level, which should simply be stabilized. Only a small percentage of around 4% said they would like to see a drop in tourist traffic in the area. "Having considered the overall positive and negative effects of tourism, the interviewees were also asked whether they preferred an increase in the volume of tourism, a decrease or for tourism to remain at the same levels. The findings suggest that respondents are equally divided into those who wanted an increase in the volume of tourism and those who preferred tourism to stabilize" (Saveriades, 2000). As part of the research, the relationship between the locals and visitors was also examined. Eighty per cent of the respondents stated that they came into contact with visitors due to the nature of their work, while at the same, 60% associated with tourists outside the workplace, keeping in touch, in some cases, even after their departure. The main reason for the lack of contact between residents and visitors is, as it turned out through the research, the lack of opportunities and difficulties in communication due to language. In general, no negative perceptions of foreign visitors have been observed.

In the most recent study of RAI, the triptych "Country-Religion-Family" is considered as the pillar of support for, and preservation of, Cypriot society, having played an important role in the formation of social consciousness and the moral values of society. The family as an institution represents the cell of social coexistence and socialization, while at the same time religion is an integral part of the national identity. The family is seen as a small society, which reflects the developments of the wider society, influenced as much as the general social whole positively and negatively by external factors. As for the role that the Church and religion should play in the personal and social life of Cypriots, there is, as it turned out, unanimity among Cypriots. Orthodox Christianity advocates "mutual aid", "love" and "mutual respect", values that are reduced to socially universal values and are able to provide the basis for a healthy social coexistence. Opinions differ on whether Cypriots are religious, whether religion is a living and integral part of their lives. In general, as previously mentioned, there are changes

both in the degree of coherence of the above institutions with their traditional form and in the degree of connection of society as a whole with the above institutions.

The liberation of women through their integration into the labour market and the improvement of interpersonal relationships among family members are among the positive changes and differences that have been observed. In the same report, there is a general tendency of society as a whole towards consumerism and a focus on material goods. Money, career and the acquisition of consumer goods, symbols of economic prosperity, are now the main characteristics of Cypriot society. One of the reasons for the emergence of the above phenomenon, as previously mentioned, was the sudden tourism development in Cyprus after the invasion, which affected socio-economic specific areas of free Cyprus. According to the report, the main role is played by the media and especially television, which negatively affect the connection of society as a whole with the traditional values of Cypriot society, the promotion of foreign standards and a code of conduct. The contact of the Cypriots with foreign customs and traditions, either through travels to other countries or through television and the Internet, changed the typical character of some customs. Traditional events, dances, songs and celebrations are often presented as a spectacle, as a means of entertainment, losing the deeper historical and cultural meaning they hold. The various expressions of the folklore tradition in these cases are not treated by the participants and the attendees as part of life, but as a theatrical performance. This becomes more pronounced in cases where traditional customs and traditions are presented to tourists. In view of the above, the prevailing perception is that the external expression of traditional manners and customs are further altered by incorporating foreign elements.

3.3 Tourism Sustainability

Tourism sustainability has been a topic of interest among scholars for several decades. In recent years, sustainable tourism has become increasingly important due to the negative impact that tourism can have on the environment, economy, and social well-being of destinations. This literature review aims to examine the existing research on tourism sustainability, with a focus on the key concepts, strategies, and challenges associated with sustainable tourism. It is also a complex concept that involves balancing the economic, environmental, and social impacts of tourism to ensure long-term benefits for destinations, communities, and tourists. According to Hall (2019), tourism sustainability is a "holistic approach to tourism planning and management

that aims to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on the environment, society, and economy." This definition emphasizes the importance of balancing the economic benefits of tourism with the need to protect the natural and cultural resources of destinations. Several strategies have been proposed to promote sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, responsible tourism, community-based tourism, and sustainable tourism certification. Ecotourism involves visiting natural areas to learn about and appreciate the environment while minimizing negative impacts (Fennell, 2015). Responsible tourism emphasizes the importance of ethical and sustainable tourism practices that benefit local communities and promote conservation (Simpson & Gössling, 2020). Community-based tourism involves working closely with local communities to develop sustainable tourism initiatives that benefit both the community and the tourism industry (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). Sustainable tourism certification programs, such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), aim to promote sustainable tourism practices through certification and accreditation. Despite the benefits of sustainable tourism, there are several challenges associated with implementing sustainable tourism practices.

These challenges include the lack of political support, insufficient funding, poor stakeholder collaboration, and inadequate infrastructure (Ruhanen & McLennan, 2016). The lack of political support for sustainable tourism can result in a lack of funding and regulatory frameworks to support sustainable tourism initiatives. Insufficient funding can also limit the ability of destinations to implement sustainable tourism practices. Poor stakeholder collaboration can result in conflicting interests and a lack of cooperation among stakeholders. Inadequate infrastructure, such as transportation and waste management systems, can also limit the ability of destinations to implement sustainable tourism practices. Tourism sustainability has become an increasingly important issue in recent years, as the tourism industry has grown to become one of the largest and most lucrative industries in the world (UNWTO, 2019). Scholars have highlighted the need for sustainable tourism practices to ensure the long-term viability of the industry and to mitigate its negative impacts on the environment and local communities (Hall, 2011; Weaver, 2011).

One approach to promoting sustainable tourism is through the development of ecotourism, which is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (TIES, 2015). Research has shown that ecotourism can contribute to environmental conservation, economic development, and cultural preservation (Fennell, 2015). However, there are also challenges associated with ecotourism,

such as the potential for overuse and degradation of natural resources, as well as conflicts between tourism and local communities (Boo, 2011). Another approach to promoting sustainable tourism is through the use of certification programs, such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and the Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas (STCNA) (UNEP, 2018). These programs aim to promote sustainable tourism practices by providing guidelines and standards for businesses to follow. While certification programs have been shown to have positive impacts on the environment and local communities, some scholars have questioned their effectiveness and have highlighted the need for more rigorous evaluation of their outcomes (Simpson et al., 2016).

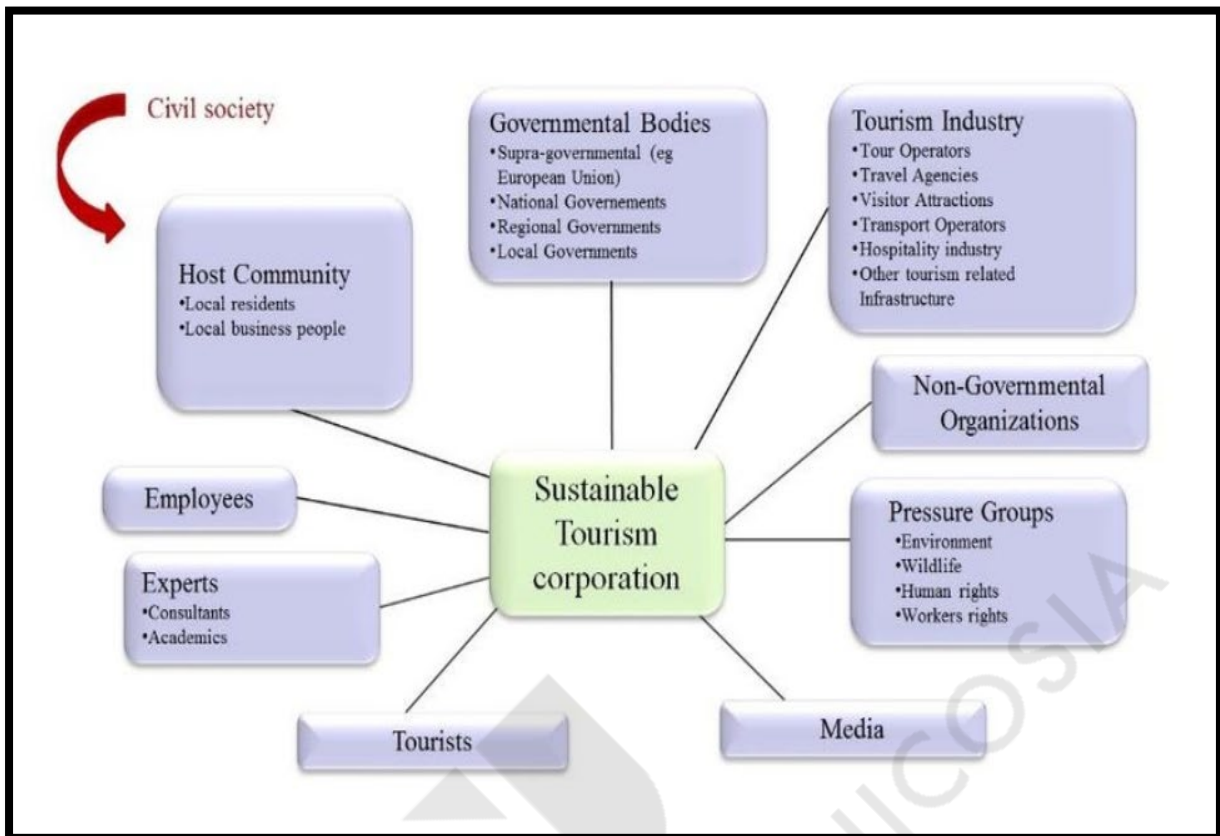
In addition to these approaches, there has also been growing interest in the role of technology in promoting sustainable tourism. For example, the use of virtual reality (VR) technology has been explored as a way to reduce the environmental impact of tourism by providing virtual travel experiences that do not require physical travel (Guttentag, 2010). However, there are also concerns about the potential for technology to further commodify and commercialize tourism, and the need to ensure that technological solutions are truly sustainable and equitable (Cohen & Gössling, 2019). Today, economic process could be a characteristic demand for all types of companies. But without sustainable development, the viability of economic sectors is extremely uncertain. Sustainable development is achieved by ensuring an improved quality of life for all for the present and therefore the future. In recent years there have been severe environmental problems thanks to the economic development of the earth. The reckless consumption of natural resources for human activities is the basis of the issues and poses risks to the ecosystem. Adopting a different approach to sustainability is imperative. For expressing the term "sustainable development" in Greek there are many alternative translations, including "sustainable", "viable", "perpetual", "sustainable", etc.

Consequently, there are many alternative definitions that emerge from the perspective from which the difficulty is approached on every occasion. The term "sustainable development" gained momentum with the report of the Norwegian politician and former Prime Minister Brundtland in 1987, which defined it as follows: "Development that meets the wants of the current without limiting the power of future generations to secure their own needs" (Tsartas & Coccossis, 2001). In step with the planet Commission for the Environment and Development (WCED), sustainable development is defined as "meeting the requirements of this, without diminishing the flexibility of future generations to satisfy their wants". The International Union

for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the global organization United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and also the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) complement the previous definition: "Development is sustainable when it improves the standard of life within the bounds set by the carrying capacity of the ecosystems that support life". In line with most international scholars (Carl, 1995), the term "sustainable development" became well known through the Brundtland report (Brundtland Report, 1987), which gave the definition mentioned earlier. A quick reference to the concept of sustainable development was made at the Stockholm Conference in 1972. Also, in 1980, the global Conservatory Strategy (WCS), created by the global Conservation Fund (IBLF and WWF, 2005), and therefore the world organization United Nations Environment Programme adopted the approach of sustainable development. Eventually, however, this idea entered international politics with the Brundtland report, which played a crucial role in establishing the concept of sustainability, a task that was particularly highlighted by several scholars. From an economic point of view, many young scholars debate the term "prosperity", suggesting that sustainable development should mean that "future generations won't be enduring a tougher position in terms of quality of life than the present generation". In other words, society will be sure to take care of its prosperity over time.

Also, the discussion about the content of "sustainability" supported economics turned mainly to physical capital, which is why classical economists include the productive function of the physical capital factor. Tourism is a global force for economic and regional development. Tourism development brings with it a combination of benefits and costs, and the growing area of tourism financial revenue contributes significantly to tourism policy, planning and business practices (Dwyer 2022). Some of the tourism studies and research today assess the importance of development tourism as a "sustainable" medium. Regardless of the exact meaning of this term, a key component of a sustainable tourism industry is financial sustainability. It is sometimes overlooked that the idea of sustainability has an economic dimension close to its social and ecological dimensions in a society (Kozak, 2012). Economic efficiency leads to a reduced use of resources with possibly less numerous social and physical consequences than their use in society. Tourism improvement is mostly determined by businesses (Kozak, 2012) but also by the stakeholders' contribution in general, where businesses are part of in terms of retaining sustainability. In the same vein, Swarbrooke (2005) identified the key issues in the sustainable tourism debate that one needs to be aware of as illustrated in Figure 3 below. According to Swarbrooke, all stakeholders have an important role to play in Sustainable Tourism Development, whereas the cooperation and communication among.

Figure 3:Sustainable Tourism Corporation



Source: Key stakeholders of tourism businesses (based on Swarbrooke, 2005, p. 17)

However, governments play an important role as partners in tourism development to the extent that it is not reproduced in most other industries through their extensive involvement, from all levels of government, in tourism planning and strategy, in marketing, in infrastructure development and in planning. The more comprehensive the understanding of tourism-related financial issues, as reflected in the decisions made by tour operators and the policies omitted by destination managers, the more affordable the financial returns toward achieving the overall goal of sustainable development of the tourism industry (Dwyer, 2022). For quite some time now, a significant number of scholars and government officials have stated that the current model of tourism development in Cyprus, which is based essentially only on the diptych "sun and sea", is not effective, as it targets mass tourism and is dependent on it. It is therefore necessary to change the strategy, which will lead to the disengagement of the sector from mass tourism and will contribute to the achievement of tourism sustainability. Certainly, this change cannot be made overnight. A necessary condition is the formulation of a targeted strategy with specific actions. The PwC study, carried out in collaboration with the British NGO "Travel

Foundation", on behalf of TUI, entitled "Measuring the Impact of Tourism – Pilot Study in Cyprus", highlighted the need for collaborations and synergies between key actors to this end. The total number of tourists worldwide continues to grow, but the tourism industry is changing in form and composition (Ayres, 2000). According to Shon et al. (2021), the complexity of tourists who now have more travel experience means that they require higher-quality standards and a greater variety of activities. The Sustainable Development Agenda, its associated 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 sub-goals were adopted by the 70th United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015. The SDGs are global in nature and universal in application with a timetable for implementation by 2030. They create implementation commitments for all countries, both developed and developing, taking into account different national realities, levels of development, national policies and priorities.

The 2030 Agenda promotes the integration of all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, environmental and economic – in all sectoral policies, while promoting the interconnection and coherence of SDG-related policy and legislative frameworks. As the local level is the final recipient of sustainable development, and in fact concerns different areas each time, the concepts of economy, society and environment are approached and perceived in a different way, and thus sustainable development can take many forms, making the existence of common principles imperative. As, however, in the literature there is a large number of many different formulations, all of which support the triptych of sustainable development, in this particular section, the principles as approached by Decleri (2003) are presented in Figure 4.

However, the principles came from the Rio conference (1992) and include a total of 27 principles, among which the most important ones concern the right of countries to develop, the elimination of poverty, etc. (UNESCO, 2012).

Figure 4: The principles of sustainable development

- 1st Principle of the public ecological order states that sustainable development is not left to the operation of the market, but is the state's responsibility.
- 2nd Principle of sustainability prohibits the degradation of the remaining natural capital.
- 3rd Principle of the carrying capacity of man-made and natural ecosystems
- 4th Principle of restoration of affected ecosystems.
- 5th Principle of biodiversity protection.
- 6th Principle of common natural heritage, states that natural goods belong to everyone and cannot be appropriated.
- 7th principle of gentle development of fragile ecosystems.
- 8th Principle of spatial planning imposes the activities' overall planning and spatial planning to ensure balance.
- 9th Principle of cultural heritage refers to the preservation of man-made systems.
- 10th Principle of the sustainable urban environment, which aims to address the degradation of urban centers and improve the quality of life in them.
- 11th Principle of the protection of natural beauty, for the protection of the landscape.
- 12th Principle of people's ecological consciousness, as they are a vital element for the preservation of the environment.

Source: Decleri (2003)

Tourists demand efficient use of their free time when travelling and prefer less crowded environments. Also, people become more sensitive to the environment while looking for more individualistic ways to travel in authentic environments. Similarly, technological advances have facilitated the information needs of consumers who are better able to make their own custom arrangements, while changes in the work environment and technology have increased demand for more frequent shorter trips during the year. This means that the transition from the mass non-inclusive holiday tourist form for which Cyprus is famous is obvious. According to Sharpley (2003), the challenges of Cypriot tourism collectively show the dependence on both inside and outside tourism, suggesting a lack of long-term sustainability. As an island state, Cyprus depends on tourism for economic survival. However, this excessive dependence can be dangerous given the instability of the tourism industry. The tourism product of Cyprus has been and remains seasonal, as the months with the best performance with the highest number of arrivals are from July to September, which represent about 50% of total arrivals. The problem of seasonality leads to limited specialized human resources, as tourism companies in the hospitality sector hire cheap unskilled foreign workers to meet peak demand. However, the replacement of the workforce with unskilled foreign workers has worsened the quality levels of the services offered.

In another analysis, PwC investigated the "All inclusive" phenomenon, in order to implement measures to encourage visitors of this category to try new experiences during their visit to our country. The ultimate goal of the study was to increase the per capita expenditure of "All inclusive" visitors to the destination. The project was sponsored by the CTO, the Travel Foundation and the NGO CSTI (Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative, 2016).⁵ This study showed that indeed, when there is commitment on the part of hotels and businesses, the necessary synergies can be achieved for the benefit of the destination in general. At the same time, the study showed that the absence of involvement of local authorities negatively affects the whole effort. It is very positive that through the draft of the study for the formulation of the new Tourism Strategy, the above need for collaborations is highlighted, while at the same time, reference is made to actions related to the local community and the environment as well as the creation of tourism sustainability indicators.

The destination-focused sustainability strategy is a particularly important process that can give the destination substantial competitive advantages, despite the relevant certifications that have been established. For this reason, the process is structured in five distinct phases:

1. Overview of tourism product / Identification of main issues of the destination
2. Hierarchy and importance
3. Definition of strategy and goals
4. Development of action plans
5. Management of actions and destination

The concept of destination-focused tourism sustainability is not new. Organizations such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council have developed criteria for tourism sustainability, which could be used as a substantial basis on which the various tourist destinations of Cyprus can build their actions but also gain competitive benefits, even at the level of local communities. It is worth mentioning that a Cypriot local government body has already studied the criteria of tourism sustainability in relation to its own operational environment with the ultimate goal of implementing them in the future. According to various studies, the creation of sustainable tourist destinations requires the involvement and encouragement of local government and government authorities. This involvement could be done through programmes that create the right conditions for the development of sustainable tourist destinations. Today, the CTO encourages businesses to improve their tourism product. However, since the total tourism product is identical to the destination, plans and initiatives should be developed for it as well.

⁵ chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcapjcgliclefndmkaj/https://csti-cyprus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Sustainability-Is-Culture-Booklet.pdf

These projects could, for example, encourage synergies within the destination business (tourism service chain), through the creation of clusters and support for the creation of destination management partnerships. However, at least in the early stages, tour operators should be encouraged to direct their customers outside the hotel but within the destination. Creating destination brand loyalty is stronger than hotel loyalty because the latter is more fragile. The visitor builds their devotion to the destination when they are given the opportunity to live in the destination, creating their own unique tourist experiences.

3.3.1 Sustainable tourism development in Cyprus: A Review

Sustainable tourism development is an essential aspect of promoting economic growth, conserving natural resources and preserving cultural heritage in Cyprus. The government plays a crucial role in developing policies that support sustainable tourism development. This thesis aims to review the current policies and initiatives implemented by the government of Cyprus to promote sustainable tourism development. The thesis will first provide a background of Cyprus and sustainable tourism, followed by a review of current policies and initiatives. The thesis will conclude with a discussion of the effectiveness of the policies and initiatives, and recommendations for future improvements. Cyprus is an island country in the eastern Mediterranean, situated at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. The country has a rich cultural heritage, beautiful beaches, and a Mediterranean climate, making it an attractive destination for tourists. In recent years, tourism has become one of the most significant contributors to the Cypriot economy, accounting for approximately 15% of the GDP and providing employment opportunities to thousands of people. However, the rapid growth of tourism has also resulted in negative impacts, including environmental degradation and cultural homogenization. Sustainable tourism development is a vital approach to balance the economic benefits of tourism with environmental and social concerns. It involves minimizing the negative impacts of tourism while maximizing the positive ones. In Cyprus, sustainable tourism development has become a priority for the government, and various policies and initiatives have been implemented to achieve this goal.

The government of Cyprus has implemented several policies and initiatives to promote sustainable tourism development. One of the most significant initiatives is the National Tourism Strategy for Cyprus 2020. The strategy aims to create a sustainable tourism industry that contributes to economic growth, job creation, and social and environmental well-being.

The strategy sets out specific objectives, including increasing the number of visitors, improving the quality of tourist services, and promoting sustainable tourism practices. To achieve these objectives, the government has implemented several measures. For instance, the government has invested in infrastructure projects such as the construction of new hotels, the improvement of transport networks, and the provision of new amenities for tourists. Additionally, the government has introduced policies to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices by tourism businesses. For example, the government offers financial incentives to hotels that implement sustainable practices such as energy and water conservation, waste reduction, and the use of renewable energy sources.

Another initiative by the government of Cyprus is the "Greening Cyprus Hotels" program, which aims to promote environmental sustainability in the hotel industry. The program provides guidance and support to hotels to implement sustainable practices such as reducing energy consumption, reducing water usage, and managing waste. The government has also established protected areas, such as national parks and nature reserves, to conserve natural resources and biodiversity. The government has implemented policies to ensure that tourism activities in these areas are sustainable and do not harm the environment. The policies and initiatives implemented by the government of Cyprus have had a positive impact on sustainable tourism development. The National Tourism Strategy for Cyprus 2020 has set clear objectives and targets for sustainable tourism development, and the government has taken concrete steps to achieve these goals. The investment in infrastructure projects has improved the quality of tourist services, making Cyprus a more attractive destination for visitors. The "Greening Cyprus Hotels" program has encouraged hotels to adopt sustainable practices, resulting in reduced energy and water consumption and improved waste management.

The vision of the National Tourism Strategy 2030 should be the "sustainable development of Cypriot tourism in a way that is beneficial to the economy, society and the environment". This vision has become, and will surely remain, our compass in the Ministry of Tourism for the next decade as Deputy Minister Perdios (2022) claimed.⁶ Over the next decade, we expect tourist overnight stays to increase by about 32% to around 48 million (which translates to a 31% increase in tourist arrivals, which are expected to reach five million). On the one hand, this goal

⁶[https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/2285A592B2A47978C225850D0027C6F3/\\$file/Cyprus%20Tourism%20Strategy%202030%20-%20Foreword_Gr.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/2285A592B2A47978C225850D0027C6F3/$file/Cyprus%20Tourism%20Strategy%202030%20-%20Foreword_Gr.pdf?OpenElement)

is an opportunity, because there are many areas in Cyprus that do not yet adequately benefit from the socio-economic boost offered by tourism. Therefore, these areas can benefit from this upcoming tourism development. On the other hand, such a development could also be worrying if it is not properly managed, as some areas are already attracting large numbers of tourists, with the result that natural resources are reaching their limits. In these areas, emphasis on the quality of tourism and not on the volume of arrivals will be paramount in the future. Therefore, as a destination, we will aim to alleviate the problem of seasonality and overconcentration in certain areas, encouraging tourists to visit different areas, different points of interest, at different times of the day, in different months of the year.

The vision focuses on the establishment of Cyprus as a long-term, high-quality, digitally smart and socially beneficial destination. Examples of initiatives to implement are:

Establishment of Cyprus as a full-time destination

- Redesigning the identity and image of Cyprus internationally as a destination that offers more than sun and sea tourism
- Improving air connectivity for the purpose of diversifying our source countries and markets

Establishment of Cyprus as a high-quality destination

- Support for investments related to special forms of tourism
- Improving price competitiveness and value for money, e.g., by modernizing the legal framework related to areas such as restaurants, taxis, rental vehicles, theme parks, etc.

Establishment of Cyprus as a digitally smart destination

- Benchmarking of our tourism services against competing destinations, utilizing data from online reputation management platforms
- Encouraging repeated visits to the destination, e.g., through a reward system that rewards transactions at various attractions and means of transportation

Establishment of Cyprus as a socially beneficial destination

- Distribution of revenues from tourism in all areas of Cyprus, e.g., by promoting the authenticity of mountainous/remote areas and other rural villages
- Dissemination of the benefit of tourism in other sectors of the economy, e.g., connecting authentic gastronomy with agriculture.

Such examples, as well as many others, are included in the detailed Action Plan for the next decade, which is divided into specific time periods, i.e., short-term (2020–2022), medium-term (2023–2025) and long-term (2026–2030) actions. The Action Plan has been approved by the House of Representatives pending the elaboration of a Strategic Environmental Impact Study, which will include the measurement of the "invisible/hidden costs" of tourism for the island. This project requires cooperation between all tourism operators under the coordination of the Ministry of Tourism. Progress will be assessed through several key performance indicators, many of which will be related to sustainable tourism development goals. Beyond any doubt, climate change is of particular importance as stated in the recent European Green Deal Communication, and therefore ignorance of the risk is not an option. The use of aeroplanes or cruise ships is becoming increasingly criticized worldwide, due to its contribution to increasing CO₂ emissions.

In particular, for an island such as Cyprus, which is only accessible by air and sea, this connection could have a particularly negative impact on the "image" of the destination. More than ever, travellers want to feel that, despite the inevitable environmental impact due to CO₂ emissions during their travels, they are visiting at least one destination that is characterized by environmental sensitivity.

3.4 Destination Management

Destination management is a critical aspect of the tourism industry, as it involves the planning and coordination of tourism activities to ensure that destinations are attractive and sustainable for tourists. This literature review examines the existing research on destination management, with a focus on the key concepts, strategies, and challenges associated with managing destinations effectively. Destination management is another critical concept in sustainable tourism development. It involves planning, developing, and managing tourism destinations to maximize the benefits of tourism while minimizing its negative impacts. Effective destination management requires collaboration and cooperation among various stakeholders, including government agencies, tourism operators, local communities, and tourists. Visitor management is another important aspect of sustainable tourism development. It involves managing the flow and behaviour of tourists to minimize negative impacts on the destination's environment, culture, and society. Effective visitor management can help to ensure that tourism remains

sustainable in the long term. Tourism Clusters are another concept that has gained increasing attention in recent years. A tourism cluster refers to a geographic area that consists of interconnected tourism businesses and organizations that collaborate to enhance the competitiveness of the destination. Tourism Clusters can provide a range of benefits, including improved infrastructure, increased tourism revenue, and enhanced sustainability.

Destination management involves the planning, development, and management of destinations to meet the needs of tourists while ensuring the sustainable use of resources. According to Buhalis and Costa (2006), destination management is a "systematic process that integrates all the elements of the tourism industry in a destination to maximize tourism's economic, social, and environmental benefits." This definition emphasizes the importance of integrating all aspects of the tourism industry, including transportation, accommodation, attractions, and activities, to create a cohesive and sustainable destination.

Several strategies have been proposed to manage destinations effectively, including destination branding, stakeholder engagement, destination governance, and destination competitiveness. Destination branding involves creating a unique image and identity for a destination to attract tourists (Pike, 2006). Stakeholder engagement involves working closely with stakeholders, including local communities, businesses, and government agencies, to develop and implement tourism strategies that benefit all parties (Morrison, 2013). Destination governance involves creating effective management structures and regulatory frameworks to guide tourism development and management (Richards & Wilson, 2007). Destination competitiveness involves creating a competitive advantage for a destination by offering unique and high-quality tourism products and services (Dwyer, 2022).

Despite the benefits of effective destination management, there are several challenges associated with managing destinations effectively. These challenges include the lack of coordination among stakeholders, insufficient funding, environmental degradation, and social and cultural impacts. The lack of coordination among stakeholders can result in conflicting interests and a lack of cooperation among stakeholders. Insufficient funding can also limit the ability of destinations to implement effective destination management strategies. Environmental degradation can occur due to the unsustainable use of resources, leading to negative impacts on the natural environment. Social and cultural impacts can also occur due to tourism's effects on local communities and their way of life (Jamal & Robinson, 2010).

3.4.1 Effectiveness of Tourism Management Plans in Cyprus

Tourism is a significant contributor to the economy of Cyprus, but it can also have negative impacts on the environment and local communities. To address these challenges, Tourism Management Plans (TMPs) have been developed and implemented in various destinations worldwide. This literature review examines the effectiveness of TMPs in mitigating the negative impacts of tourism in Cyprus. Tourism management plans (TMPs) are important tools for mitigating the negative impacts of tourism in Cyprus. The effectiveness of TMPs in Cyprus has been evaluated in several studies, which suggest that they can have positive impacts on environmental management, cultural heritage preservation, and local community involvement. One example of a successful TMP in Cyprus is the Sustainable Tourism Initiative for the Mediterranean (STIM), which was developed in 2006 to promote sustainable tourism practices in the region. Kassinis and colleagues (2013) evaluated the effectiveness of the STIM plan in Cyprus and found that it had positive impacts on environmental management, cultural heritage preservation, and the involvement of local communities in tourism development. Specifically, the STIM plan helped to improve waste management practices, reduce water and energy consumption, and promote the use of renewable energy sources in tourism businesses. The plan also emphasized the preservation of cultural heritage sites and the involvement of local communities in tourism planning and development. However, the evaluation of the STIM plan also highlighted some challenges in its implementation. These included a lack of financial and human resources, limited public awareness and participation, and insufficient coordination among stakeholders. Similar challenges have been reported in other TMPs implemented in Cyprus and other destinations worldwide.

The rapid growth of tourism in Cyprus has led to several negative impacts, including environmental degradation, congestion, and a shortage of resources such as water and energy (Ioannides, 2015). Additionally, there has been a growing concern about the impact of tourism on the cultural heritage of the island. Several TMPs have been developed and implemented in Cyprus over the years to address these negative impacts. For example, the Sustainable Tourism Initiative for the Mediterranean (STIM) was developed in 2006 to promote sustainable tourism practices in the region (Kassinis et al., 2013). The STIM plan involved various stakeholders, including local communities, tourism businesses, and government agencies, in the development and implementation of sustainable tourism practices.

3.4.2 The Role of Destination Management Organizations

New Zealand was at the forefront of D.M.O.s, were in 1901 created the first D.M.O. named the "Department of Tourism has formed the Resorts". The majority of DMOs formed after the Second World War together with the expansion of tourism flows, and therefore they have great experience in operating. The task of the DMOs is to create a framework for cooperation and to grant the geographical or thematic level, between the public and private sectors. In this way, the strategic continuity in the promotion of tourist products and the assurance of their quality is ensured services are provided. Baggio et al. (2010) state that the tourist destination is a group of interrelated stakeholders located in a social set and mutually responding to tourism desires by developing the traveller experience. Thus, the origin of governance is a relationship that exists between numerous stakeholders (Dredge, 2019). The D.M.O.s come to play an active role in managing such situations. These control bodies are responsible for managing all the activities of the destination both in terms of marketing and management. Additionally, another important function of DMOs is destination governance. Destination governance is essential for effectively managing the complex nature of tourism destinations.

The collective effort of all the interested parties of the destination is considered essential. DMOs provide an open forum for stakeholders to develop their views and enable collective decision-making, which is vital in a difficult situation. The main financial resource of DMOs consists of the income provided by the affiliated members and the products sold. Also, an amount is earned through compensation, but this depends on seasonality, customer retention and so on. Based on this, Angella and colleagues (2010) created four models, which are described as follows: 1) the first model is based on the local principle that guarantees the local political representation of interests where finance is either public or private, or in certain cases both; 2) the second model is based on entrepreneurship where voluntary members are formed; the third model takes the form of lead firms, where an entity is represented by a local body; finally, the fourth model is based on the fragmented characteristics of tourist destinations that have experienced a sudden increase in tourism demand. These illustrate the boundaries within which a D.M.O. operates, illustrate various strengths and weaknesses of governance, and analyse the various roles played by the D.M.O., further emphasizing that D.M.O. managers should be selected with care. It is very important that there is a synergy between the destination management mechanisms and the stakeholder alliance for effective cooperation.

DMOs at the beginning were heavily dependent on governments and they worked basically as government bodies, part of the administration responsible for tourism (Borzyszkowski, 2005; Lazarek, 1972). DMOs are created to fulfil specific targets of tourism policy and marketing targets. Furthermore, promotion was part of their primary objectives and, to a lesser degree, they were concerned with the creation of new products/services and tourist information. DMOs at the beginning decided to undertake marketing activities. The management aspect of DMOs came later on (Presenz et al., 2005). DMOs were first created in highly developed countries, namely France (1910), Italy (1919), Germany (1948), Denmark (1967), the Netherlands (1968) and Great Britain (1969) (Borzyszkowski, 2005).

A major shift that happened in the last 15 years is that at the destination/local level, “tourism stakeholders have gradually shifted focus from the traditional marketing and promotional functions to the more coordinated strategic approach of destination management” (Shkira & Qirici, 2013). An increasing number of DMOs have nowadays become more complex structures, re-joining numerous public and private sector stakeholders (UNWTO, 2007): national/regional/local governmental/public authorities; agencies established for economic development; town centre management organizations; national park management; providers of transport services; tourist attractions, events and cultural organizations; providers of hospitality services (accommodation, restoration, leisure and retail operations); intermediaries (tour operators, travel agencies, organizers of events, cultural organizations, etc.); agencies representing the destination; media; local/regional tourism consortia and partnerships; agencies encouraging and supporting business development; organizations focusing on developing skills. As Blazevic (2007) and Bosnic (2014) put it, D.M.O.s’ long-term goals can be broken down to:

- Optimal economic development of destination;
- A higher quality of life standard for the local population;
- Preservation of necessary levels of ecology;
- Cultural and historic heritage preservation and use of heritage in economic and general growth;
- Ensuring normative framework;
- Ensuring cooperative and complex activities of various groups within the system of an organization.

Another spectrum of DMOs is to look at them from the perspective of their range of operation. DMOs operate at the national level as National Tourism Authorities (NTAs) or as National Tourist Boards (NTBs). At regional/state/provincial/county levels, DMOs oversee the

management and marketing in specific areas, which do not necessarily coincide with administrative boundaries. Lastly, DMOs can limit themselves to promotion at the city/town/village level. DMOs must take the lead in managing stakeholder coordination, which should be based on aspects of trust, risk sharing and strategic consensus. Therefore, collaborative relationships or partnerships may vary according to the different kinds of stakeholders involved in destination governance. Network methods are used to identify the stakeholders of a destination that contribute to the development of tourism activities and for destination governance. Integrated interorganizational networks are essential to create integrated tourism experiences, as this unified feature can be used as an advantage.

In summary the TCC and the life cycle of a tourist destination are interdependent, and both are essential factors in sustainable tourism development. The TCC helps to ensure that tourism growth is sustainable and does not cause any negative impacts on the destination, while the life cycle of a tourist destination provides a framework for understanding the different stages that a destination goes through over time. Managing the TCC throughout the life cycle of a tourist destination is essential to ensure that tourism growth remains sustainable and that the destination can continue to attract visitors for many years to come. There is a lot of misunderstanding concerning the functions of D.M.O.s. Destination management organizations and destination marketing organizations, two organizations made up primarily of private sector representatives and using taxpayer funds to promote destinations (Higgins, 2018). In Barcelona, for instance, it is obvious that the municipality board is in charge of managing tourism. Public policy goals must be included in the "goals and strategic lines" of the public-private partnership that markets tourism in Barcelona, Turisme de Barcelona. The Tourism of Barcelona organization acknowledges its "social and institutional duty" to "achieve a balance between its own tourism activities and daily life in the city" and "encourage its greater geographical dispersion of tourism in the city" (Higgins & Desbriolles, 2018).

Its aims are:

- a) To enhance the economic impact of the sector and attract tourists with high purchasing power;
- b) To promote its own identity as a tourist attraction;
- c) To reconcile tourists with the local community;
- d) To ensure the geographical and multispectral distribution of tourism;
- e) To strengthen the public-private sector promotional mode.

Despite the recent recognition of the problems associated with "hyper-tourism" and the extensive references to the conditions for sustainable tourism (see UNWTO, 2017), we have shown that the current prevailing model of capitalist development in the case of tourism is clearly unsustainable. As argued in particular, this pattern of development and the tendency towards the maximum possible (unrestricted) development of tourism implies growing social inequalities, a growing inequality of development and social instability, an extensive deregulation and internationalization of production and capital, and a growing ecological degradation. Instead of acting as a means of tackling the worsening crisis of overaccumulation, tourism in fact, and especially mass tourism, tends to exacerbate and widen this crisis on a global scale. According to our analysis, the diversion and appropriation of revenues from the development of tourism contributes significantly to the growing inequalities noted above, while the catastrophic socio-ecological effects of "hyper-tourism" tend to undermine the very foundations of tourism development, undermining thus generally the conditions of social and ecological sustainability. Undoubtedly, a socially and ecologically sustainable tourism can only be ensured beyond capitalism, within a communist perspective and social planning, with a drastic reduction of the real or imaginary needs for tourism, a decommercialization of tourism, an authentic confirmation of hospitality, and an important and ecological memorial support of a trip (Liodakis, 2020).

3.5 Visitor Management

Visitor management is the process of managing the flow of visitors to a destination, attraction, or event in a way that maximizes benefits and minimizes negative impacts. Effective visitor management is essential for sustainable tourism development and can help to reduce overcrowding, congestion, and other negative impacts on the environment and local communities.

One example of successful visitor management is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in Australia. Newsome and colleagues (2012) conducted a study on visitor management strategies at the Marine Park and found that effective visitor management was essential for reducing negative impacts on the environment and improving the visitor experience (Arnold, 2021). The study highlighted the importance of capacity management, visitor education and engagement, and collaboration among stakeholders in ensuring effective visitor management. Another study by Kaval and Kurtulus (2018) examined visitor management practices in the national parks of

Turkey. The study identified a range of visitor management strategies, including capacity management, visitor education and engagement, and infrastructure and facilities development. The authors noted that effective visitor management was essential for protecting natural and cultural resources, promoting sustainable tourism development, and ensuring a positive visitor experience. Visitor management strategies have also been examined in urban tourism contexts. For example, Song and Li (2020) conducted a study on visitor management in the ancient city of Pingyao, China. The study identified a range of visitor management strategies, including capacity management, visitor engagement, and infrastructure development. The authors noted that effective visitor management was essential for preserving the cultural heritage of the city and ensuring a positive visitor experience.

Visitor management strategies can vary depending on the type of destination, the characteristics of the visitor market, and the goals of the destination management organization. Some common visitor management strategies include:

1. **Capacity management:** This involves setting limits on the number of visitors to a destination or attraction, either through physical barriers, timed entry systems, or other methods. Capacity management can help to reduce overcrowding and ensure a more enjoyable experience for visitors.
2. **Infrastructure and facilities:** Providing adequate infrastructure and facilities such as transportation, parking, restrooms, and waste management systems can help to reduce negative impacts on the environment and improve the visitor experience.
3. **Communication and education:** Effective communication and education programs can help to inform visitors about the destination's rules and regulations, cultural norms, and environmental concerns. This can help to reduce negative impacts and promote sustainable behaviour among visitors.
4. **Visitor engagement:** Encouraging visitors to participate in activities that support sustainable tourism, such as volunteering, eco-tourism, and cultural immersion experiences, can help to promote responsible tourism and reduce negative impacts.
5. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of visitor management strategies are essential for ensuring their effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. This can involve collecting data on visitor behaviour, environmental impacts, and economic benefits, among other factors. Effective visitor management requires collaboration among stakeholders, including local communities, tourism

businesses, government agencies, and visitors themselves. By implementing sustainable visitor management strategies, destinations can promote sustainable tourism development and ensure a positive experience for visitors while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and local communities.

In summary, visitor management is a critical component of sustainable tourism development and has been the focus of numerous studies in the tourism literature. Effective visitor management requires a range of strategies, including capacity management, visitor education and engagement, and collaboration among stakeholders. By implementing effective visitor management strategies, destinations can ensure a positive visitor experience while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and local communities.

3.5.1 Spatial Tourism

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries globally, and it has a significant impact on the economy, environment, and society. The spatial dimension of tourism is of particular importance, as it shapes the way tourists experience and interact with the destination. This study explores the relationship between tourism and space, focusing on the concept of spatial tourism. It examines the different perspectives on the spatial dimension of tourism and the various ways in which tourism can shape and be shaped by space. The study also discusses the implications of spatial tourism for sustainable tourism development and the challenges associated with managing tourism in spatially sensitive areas. Spatial tourism refers to the use of space as a key component of the tourist experience (Getz & Page, 2016). It involves the interaction between tourists and the physical, social, and cultural environment of the destination. Spatial tourism can be analysed from different perspectives, including the following:

Place-based perspective: This perspective emphasizes the importance of the place or destination as the central element of the tourist experience (Aitchison & MacLeod, 2017). It acknowledges that tourists seek to connect with the local culture and environment, and that the sense of place is essential in creating a unique and memorable tourist experience.

Network perspective: This perspective views tourism as a network of interdependent actors, including tourists, local communities, businesses, and governments (Aitchison & MacLeod, 2017). It recognizes that tourism is not just about the destination, but also about the

relationships and interactions that take place between different actors in the tourism network.

Mobilities perspective: This perspective focuses on the movement of tourists and the ways in which they navigate through different spaces and places (Sheller & Urry, 2006). It acknowledges that tourism is a dynamic and fluid process, shaped by the movement of people, goods, and ideas across different spatial boundaries.

Spatial tourism has important implications for sustainable tourism development. It highlights the need to manage tourism in a way that balances the economic, social, and environmental aspects of tourism development, while also preserving the unique spatial characteristics of the destination. This requires a comprehensive and integrated approach to tourism planning and management that takes into account the spatial context of tourism development. One of the key challenges associated with managing spatial tourism is the potential for over tourism. Over tourism is often associated with spatially sensitive areas such as natural and cultural heritage sites, historic cities, and small islands.

Effective management of over tourism requires a range of measures, including the development of sustainable tourism policies and strategies, the implementation of carrying capacity assessments, the promotion of alternative forms of tourism, and the engagement of local communities in tourism planning and management (Gössling et al., 2020). It also requires collaboration and cooperation among different stakeholders, including governments, tourism operators, tourists, and local communities. Spatial tourism is a critical aspect of tourism development, as it shapes the way tourists experience and interact with the destination. The concept of spatial tourism highlights the importance of managing tourism in a way that balances the economic, social, and environmental aspects of tourism development, while also preserving the unique spatial characteristics of the destination. Effective management of spatial tourism requires a range of measures, including sustainable tourism policies and strategies, carrying capacity assessments, and the engagement of local communities in tourism planning and management. By adopting a comprehensive and integrated approach to tourism management, it is possible to achieve sustainable tourism development and ensure the long-term viability of the destination.

Tourism could be a multidimensional development, with an extended history. Though the primary organized and systematic movements already originate the event of the primary means that of transport, the development of commercial enterprise, with its characteristics and

dimensions that we all know these days, began to require form once the last half of the twentieth century, once paid leave was established and quick and safe transportation was consolidated (Chartas, 1996). The location of tourist activity is a particularly complex affair, as it is largely influenced by the location of tourist (natural and cultural) resources, by the regulations and prohibitions set by the central administration of each country (through spatial planning) but also by the very investment interest of private individuals, who are the ones who will ultimately choose the place where they will invest in tourist facilities. Also, it even depends on the very individual preferences and behaviours of tourists (tourist behaviour) (Dietvorst, 1995), who also have the final say in the promotion of an area as a tourist destination or not.

Therefore, tourism planning is a necessary process, not only according to the initial orientation of an area to tourism activity, but mainly along the way and even more so when the destination passes into the stage of stagnation or, even worse, decline (stages in which, according to TALC theories, the reverting to an earlier, healthier state/stage occurs, or should occur). In the context of the above stages of tourism planning, a series of other analyses are usually pursued, such as (Lickorish & Jenkins, 2004): i) demand analysis; ii) supply analysis; iii) demand forecast; and iv) cost and project financing analyses. Other analyses that are also useful are: a) analyses of the spatial distribution of tourist facilities and infrastructures; b) analyses of the spatial distribution of tourist resources (natural and cultural); and c) analyses of the adequacy of technical infrastructures (roads, ports, etc.), public utility networks (water supply, sewerage, etc.) and services (health, welfare, etc.). Finally, according to Tsartas and Coccossis (2001), studies of Tourism Carrying Capacity and environmental impacts are also useful.

The Plan for the Island, as mentioned by Pisourios (2014) in his book, is a small study of 126 typed pages, which formulates the spatial framework for the economic and social development of Cyprus over a period of 30 years (Department of Urban Planning and Housing, 1973). Although this time horizon is considered to be particularly long-term, according to current conceptions of spatial planning, the stated intention in the Law on Urban Planning and Spatial Planning of 1972 for annual revision of the study, in order to adapt to the current economic and social changes, is a pioneering conception of design as an ongoing process, with direct contributions to the systemic conception of programming by Brian McLoughlin (1969). The formulation of the Plan for the Island is carried out over 13 chapters, with 11 of them (excluding the introduction and the conclusions) specializing in individual thematic areas of study: housing network, demography, employment, transport, industry, services, etc.

These chapters present the analysis and the proposals of spatial planning, which are summarized in four main axes that concern the following: a. the structure of the S.C.C, the element network and the transport system; b. the functional hierarchy of service centres; c. the protection of the environment; and d. the application of spatial standards. Considering the structure of the, the plan for the Island's SCC has two main objectives. The first concerns the hierarchy of SCC elements, to combine their hierarchy with the application of spatial standards, an issue to which the author will return later. The second goal concerns the pursuit of further urbanization of the population, through the strengthening of the existing urban centres. This policy was adopted based on the observation that larger SCC elements can achieve faster growth rates, especially in the manufacturing sector. At the same time, priority is given to the development of tourist activities in areas of outstanding natural near large urban centres. In contrast, the rural area, which is basically facing a declining growth course and a significant loss of population, is left to maintain its recessionary course. As it is understood, the main goal of the Plan for the Island is to achieve high growth rates at the state level, without considering the inequalities that will be produced between rural and urban areas.

3.6 Challenging Over tourism: Examining the Concept While Acknowledging Overcrowding

“Over Tourism” - Overcrowding

Over-tourism and overcrowding are two distinct concepts with different meanings and implications in the context of tourism. Over-tourism is a situation where the number of tourists exceeds the carrying capacity of a destination, resulting in negative impacts on the environment, local communities, and the overall visitor experience (UNWTO, 2019). It is characterized by overcrowded attractions, congested infrastructure, strain on natural resources, increased pollution, degradation of cultural heritage, and conflicts between tourists and residents (Higham & Lück, 2019).

Over-tourism occurs when the volume of tourists overwhelms the destination's ability to handle them sustainably, leading to a decline in the quality of life for local communities and the erosion of the destination's unique identity (Barbhuiya, 2021). On the other hand, overcrowding specifically refers to the excessive number of people in a particular area or attraction within a destination (Ray, 2021; Gössling et al., 2020). It is a localized phenomenon that results in long

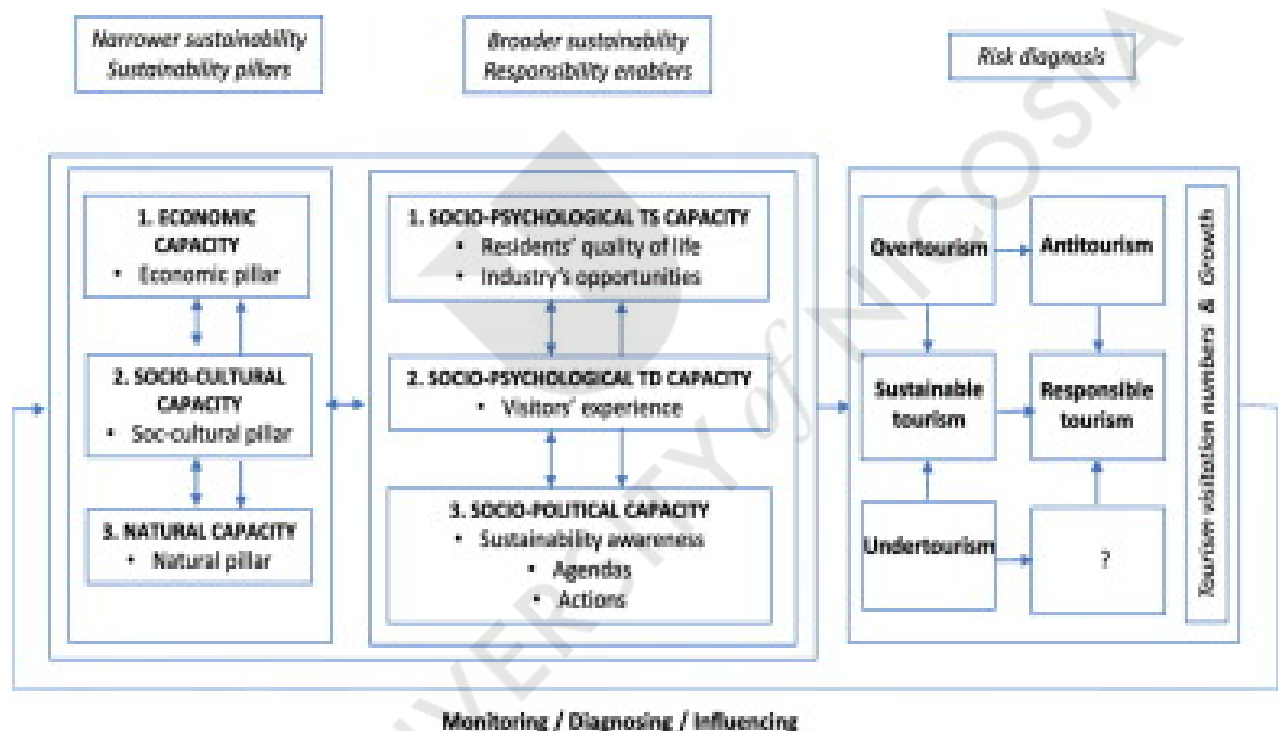
queues, limited access, difficulties in movement, and a compromised visitor experience. Overcrowding can occur in popular landmarks, public spaces, transportation systems, or during peak travel seasons.

While overcrowding is a subset of over tourism, over-tourism encompasses a broader range of negative impacts that go beyond overcrowding. It includes issues related to sustainability, environmental degradation, and cultural preservation (Hall et al., 2015). Over-tourism requires a comprehensive approach to destination management and the implementation of sustainable tourism practices to address the underlying causes and mitigate its effects. Understanding the difference between over-tourism and overcrowding is crucial for developing effective strategies to manage tourism and ensure the long-term sustainability of destinations. By addressing over-tourism through measures such as visitor management, carrying capacity assessments, and community engagement, destinations can strive to achieve a balance between tourism growth and the preservation of their natural and cultural assets. Over tourism refers to a situation where a tourist destination experiences an excessive number of visitors, which exceeds the carrying capacity of the destination. This can result in negative impacts on the environment, culture, and society of the destination, such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and social conflicts. “Over tourism” can be defined as “an excess of tourists, leading to conflicts with residents” (ibid.). The UN World Tourism Organization (2018) calls this a “negative impact of tourism” as a result of poor planning and the growth of the middle classes. Over tourism is often associated with popular destinations that attract large numbers of tourists, particularly during peak seasons, but can also occur in less popular destinations that are not prepared for sudden increases in tourism. The issue of over tourism has gained increasing attention in recent years due to the rapid growth of global tourism and its impact on destinations. Many destinations are now exploring strategies to manage tourism flows and promote sustainable tourism development to address the issue of over tourism.

Researchers, however, find both positive and negative impacts of tourism, depending on the management skills of tourism organizations. Over tourism could be an advanced development that powerfully affects the live ability of an area, further because the experiences of residents, visitors, and completely different stakeholders either directly or indirectly get involved with or full of business enterprise (Bellini et al., 2016; McKinsey, Company, World Travel and Business Enterprise Council, 2017; Metropolis, 2018; Postma, 2013). Consequently, there

cannot be a simple “top-down” or “easy fix” approach to tackling over-tourism and to spotting and implementing effective management solutions. “One clear result of ignoring this issue is the problem of over-tourism (Dodds & Butler, 2019), the name implying too many tourists in a location with respect to resident attitudes, physical capacity and environmental tolerance, the traditional dimensions of carrying capacity” (Butler, 2019, p. 209). Solutions need shared responsibilities between stakeholders and tailored actions consistent with the specific characteristics of a destination (Milano et al., 2018) acceptable to the precise scenario within a given destination. Mihalic & Kuščer (2020) shared the same opinion as shown in the Figure 5 below:

Figure 5: Conceptualizing over tourism: A sustainability approach



Source: Mihalic (2020)

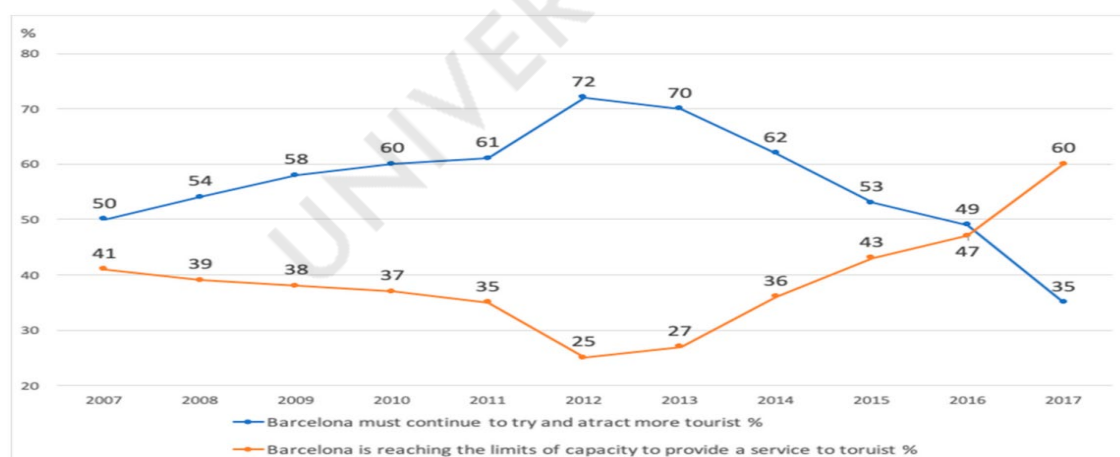
The term “over tourism” is comparatively new, with most writings associated with qualitative analysis going back to 2017 and an increasing number of grey literature publications emerging in 2018. However, this doesn't mean that the phenomenon could be a new one. In fact, studies exploring the pressure of business enterprise on native communities emerged in the Seventies (Boissevain, 1977; Williams, 1979), along with discussions on the risks of destination saturation (UNWTO, 1983). For example, a crucial contribution within the impact studies domain is Doxey’s “Irritation Index” (Doxey, 1975), which outlined four emotional stages

residents might experience with increasing traveller numbers. The ultimate stage is antagonism between hosts and guests. Another key contribution is that the business enterprise space Life Cycle (TALC) by Pantryman (1980), consistent with that ‘tourism destinations suffer from their own success. This may be the explanation where Dredge and Jenkins (2017) wonders whether coining the term "over tourism" means simply resetting the clock in well-established debates.

Overcrowding is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that no one set of measures will address. Social media will continue showing users’ preferred places and travel experiences, contributing to the congestion of certain destinations. Some of the measures taken by policymakers of destinations are related to dispersing travellers within the city and beyond (UNWTO: Madrid, Spain, 2019). Here is an example to demonstrate the above theory. “Barcelona is one of the most visited cities in the world, receiving double its population in tourists, and there, as in other European tourist destinations, the effects of over-tourism have been felt” (Almeida et al., 2019, Figure 6). The opinion of 60% of the population is that the admissible limit has been reached in all the of city. According to Almeida, 83% believe that tourism is still beneficial; that perception dropped 10 points in 10 years. The majority do not want more tourists, especially in the most central areas, and they do not want more hotels (Almeida et al., 2019).

Figure 6: Locals perception of over tourism – The case of Barcelona

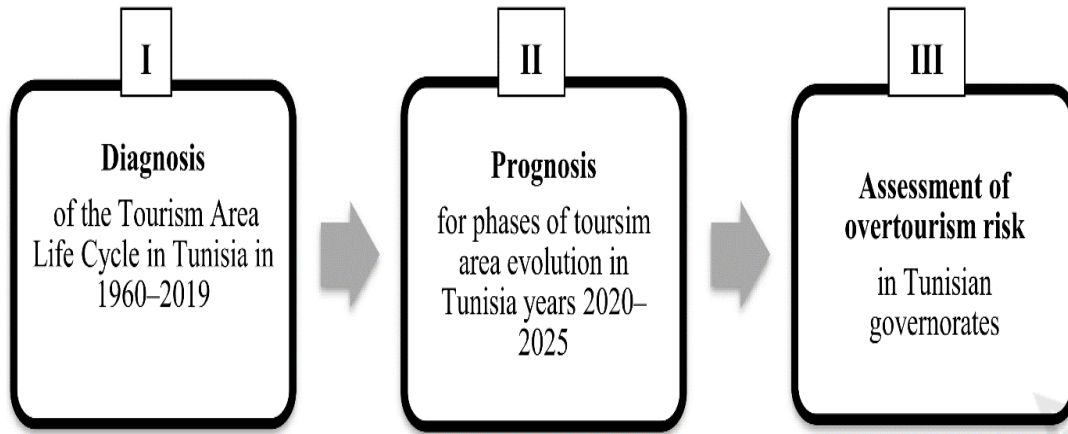
Source: Almeida et al., (2019)



Source: Almeida et al., (2019)

In his recent study, the assessment of the risk of over tourism in the analysed area is a complex issue as shown in Figure 7:

Figure 7: Stages of over tourism



Source: Widz and Brzezińska-Wójcik (2020)

As Dredge & Jenkins (2017) highlights, the rapid development and increased number of tourists travelling a new type of tourism came into being, called “mass tourism”, defined as the movement of many organized tourists to desired destinations, often to the same resort at the same time. This form of tourism is very popular and is the cheapest way to holiday. “Sometimes capacity constraints, for example ‘crowding’, might become a tourist asset” (Coccossis & Mexa, 2004), as in the case of Ayia Napa, where instead of controlling development, demarketing could be more appropriate.

This is a phenomenon characterized by the use of packaged products and mass consumption. Package tours and cheap fares created a revolution in travel and tourism services as they enabled the masses to travel (Vainikka, 2013). When Thomas Cook introduced its package deals, for example, the company provided cheap transport for around six million tourists to the Great Exhibition in London in 1851.⁷ Since this type of tourism became popular and cheap, it came to be called simply “Cook’s package deal” and was popularized within many industrialized countries. This tourist movement burgeoned all over the globe. Railway networks covered far-off places for positive socio-economic advantage, among the main temptations being the transfer of wealth, employment generation and strengthening of a weak

⁷ <https://independenttravelcats.com/travel-history-the-tale-of-thomas-cook-father-of-modern-tourism/>

economy. The movement also generated a complete tourism distribution channel to facilitate the interaction of all components (Buhalis & Law, 2005). Holiday “package deals” meant that all of a tourist’s needs could be catered for by one company (in collaboration with others), thus achieving economies of scale (Buhalis, 2019; Soteriades & Varvaressoos, 2015). And, with the growth of mass leisure, better and speedier public transport, development of the motor car and more comfortable accommodation, tourism volume increased tremendously. When one considers the mammoth gatherings at beautiful destinations, it is clear that, as a form of tourism, mass tourism is a peculiar phenomenon in which tourists premeditatively select a destination to which each one of them goes, using the same passage, at the same time of the year, and prefer the same sort of hotels/resorts. Such tourists often follow the same epicurean philosophy of “enjoyment above all”. For them, this is the best way to enjoy their leisure time. Tourism seems to be a game of numbers: the more, the merrier. Some areas attracted more tourists than their own population. As mobility modernized, transport became faster, and as discretionary income rose, increasing numbers of people travelled, and visitor numbers increased in popular, well-connected places, resulting in negative effects. In Western Europe, for example, especially France, Spain, Italy, Germany and the UK, there were often too many tourists, to the consternation of the local people (Singh, 2018). As a result of a few negative experiences, all tourism is often pronounced negative (Pearce, 2019). The Barcelona episode, where overcrowding of tourists resulted in picketing by locals, and where hosts and guests were at loggerheads, is a case in point. Such trends particularly occurred in France and Spain, as these attracted the highest number of tourists. These countries competed with each other for tourists until matters came to a head and residents led demonstrations against their governments for allowing too many tourists and ruining residents’ lives. Nevertheless, some scholars feel that mass tourism is often more sinned against than sinful, noting that governments lay down harsh measures to curb what has been termed “over tourism” (Milano et al., 2019).

Positive impacts can include an increase in jobs and a higher quality of life for locals. Negative impacts can be loss of habitat, impacts on local customs and damage to the socio-cultural sphere. Poor countries are mostly interested in tourism development for transfer of wealth. Some oriental countries are still a big attraction for mass tourists and they host tourists with respect. Despite the many negative impacts, tourism is popular in all segments of most societies and the tourism industry has rarely looked back since the first major boom after World War II. Although mass tourism is especially disparaged and decried by speciality tourism researchers, it is a greater earner than other economic sectors in many countries. Recent world tourism

figures reached 1.4 billion international arrivals in 2019, against 25 million in 1950 when international tourist arrivals were first monitored. Managing over tourism is a challenge as tourism is a fast-growing industry and demands skilled workers. According to the UNWTO, 1.4 billion tourists in a year translates to the arrival of 45 international tourists every single minute of the year.

The negative impacts of tourism disturb the future of tourism-led growth and resilience of ecosystems, which should be integrated in positive ways (Singh, 2018). As over tourism increases, residents find it difficult to enjoy the natural and socio-cultural ambience of their hometowns/cities. They are annoyed when they must invariably rub shoulders with strangers (tourists) who find their way into the narrow streets and closed. Traffic jams, degradation of landscape and vandalism of heritage sites abound as a result of excess tourists who do not care for, or empathize with, locals. To manage such a huge and complex phenomenon, there is a need for a robust policy and good governance. There are examples where policy failures have led to the downsizing of tourism concerns. Strict measures should be taken when tourists cross the carrying capacity threshold (Wall, 2020). Over tourism is what follows at a destination when there are too many tourists, resulting in an unacceptable deterioration of the quality of life and/or the visitor experience, as perceived by both locals and hosts as well as guests and visitors.

This is a situation where destinations are no longer able to manage tourism and hospitality equably. It should not be confused with mass tourism, which simply means a large volume of tourists who are brought to a destination in an organized manner. Effective mass tourism organizations have learned the rules and regulations of tourism so that the environment is not impacted negatively (Harrison, 2004). Must we be silent spectators of the tourism growth in our beautiful cities? Goodwin (2011) suggests that we should opt for responsible tourism. Similar ideas have been advocated in international forums: that tourists should respect locals, their environment and culture, support local businesses and try to travel off-season, in addition to the development of responsible behaviour towards residents and their customs. The importance of tourists' codes of ethics/conduct, which have long been voiced (Fennell, 2015), needs special emphasis in order to develop alternative types of mass tourism that do not become transformed into insensitive over tourism.

For a more convincing solution we need to look at population growth, which is increasing exponentially. There are nearly 8.1 billion people on this shrinking planet⁸, and with further population growth more tourists are likely to rush to the same destinations as others. As mass tourism crosses optimal limits of TCC, it is more likely that megacities will become distressed, and tourist sites and accommodation architecture will need rejuvenation, more greenery and lateral thinking to match the tourist capacity with an appropriate design of the environment.

Across the world, the increasing politicization from below as an explanation for the unease regarding business enterprise development (Colomb & Novy, 2016b) has helped to shed light on the social unrest, protest and resistance against business enterprise in most European cities. The negative impact of business enterprise development has recently been related to terms like “anti-tourism movements”, “tourism-phobia” and “overcrowding”. Notably, the term “tourism-phobia” was used for the first time over a decade ago by Delgado (2008), a Spanish social scientist trying to clarify a mix of repudiation, mistrust and contempt of tourists. More recently, a connected conception such as tourism-phobia has been delineated together with over tourism as an immediate result of “the growing evolution of unsustainable mass business enterprise practices” (Milano, 2017a, p. 5).

In studies adopting a primarily numerical approach and according to the views of tourists and residents, over tourism has conjointly been known as pertaining to a localized scenario “in that hosts or guests, locals or guests, feel that their square measure too several guests which the standard of life within the space or the quality of the expertise has deteriorated intolerably. It is the alternative to accountable business enterprise, which concerns mistreatment business enterprise to form higher places to measure in and higher places to go to. “Often, both visitors and guests experience the deterioration and at the same time rebel against it” (Goodwin, 2017, p. 1). Similarly, from the tour operators’ point of view, over tourism may well be seen as a scenario within which “visitors outweigh locals”, which becomes ‘an issue for his or her value of living and thus quality of life’ (Intrepid, 2018, p. 16). Another approach is to describe over tourism as “the excessive growth of holidaymakers leading to overcrowding in areas wherever residents suffer the results of temporary and seasonal business enterprise peaks, which have enforced permanent changes to their lifestyles, access to amenities and general well-being” (Milano et al., 2019, forthcoming). Over tourism is consequently related to visiting numbers. However, “crowding” and “overcrowding” should not be confused with density. This situation

⁸ https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/#google_vignette

typically refers to a psychological response to density, that is, to feelings of experiencing an absence of privacy, or unwanted interactions (Crothers et al., 1993; Gove and Hughes, 1980; Gray, 2001). For example, “the issues related to overcrowding will vary, from alienated native residents to full infrastructure. The problems will have an effect on each established and emerging destination of every kind. Countries, regions, cities and individual sites, like parks, beaches and museums, might all be affected” (McKinsey, Company, World Travel and Business Enterprise Council, 2017).

As the number of tourists is constantly increasing, the negative effects of tourism are becoming more and more noticeable. The environment and host communities operate under pressure to manage the ever-increasing tourist flows (Cooper, 2018). Some destinations have reached the point where the carrying capacity has been exceeded by the number of visitors (Muler et al., 2018). Travel must be carried out in such a way as to ensure the viability of tourist destinations. Decisions made now must be long-term oriented and therefore enable future generations to visit the same tourist destinations as previous generations (Weaver, 2012). Over-tourism and ever-increasing tourist flows are a threat to many well-known tourist destinations around the world. The problem occurs around the world from the rural areas of Iceland to the beaches of Thailand (Nilsson, 2020; Diskin, 2016; Livadeas & Smith, 2018). The inability to control the effects over time has led some destinations to take some strict actions (Livadeas & Smith, 2018). In a very short period, over-tourism has become the "de facto" description of the overly negative effects on tourism (Koens, 2028; Postma et al., 2020). Over-tourism causes economic, social and environmental problems in many destinations such as Cyprus, especially during the summer months. Rental housing prices have risen, there is excessive, unplanned tourism development and many hotel units, and the negative effects on the environment include the increase in air pollution, and pollution of cities and the sea. The effects are similar to those discussed in previous studies by Seraphin et al. (2018) and Panagiotopoulos and Pisano (2019). The island has been unable to control the effects of over-tourism to date and to take stricter measures to control it, as pointed out by the Mayor of Paphos, Phedonas Phedonos (2023).⁹ These effects are often multidimensional and complex and come from many elements of the tourism sector. It has been found that the growing number of tourists in Cyprus is accelerating the effects caused by people. Based on the findings, the spatial and temporal concentration of tourists seems to be an important factor in many of their effects and size.

⁹ <https://knews.kathimerini.com.cy/en/news/bad-blood-between-towns-over-tourism-college>

While researchers are looking for answers, they are asking new questions in tourism: Does over-tourism even exist? “We tend to simplify things. Over tourism may not exist. Greece's problem is mainly caused by bad management policies,” as Professor Buhalis explained during the event during a conference organized by job search engine Skywalker.gr (Pantziou, 2020).¹⁰ The same thing happens in Cyprus. “Most are talking about ways to reduce the number of tourists. This is not going to happen. We expect tourist flows to increase further in the future,” he said, adding that as people improve their quality of life, travel is the next thing they will look for to create new experiences. So, the real issue is to manage the tourist demand in a smart way and to look for ways to evenly distribute the tourist traffic in the Greek destinations. “We need to promote different forms of tourism, experiences and other destinations to avoid overcrowding,” Buhalis and Park (2021) added. Meanwhile, the new key strategies announced by the Ministry of Tourism are in line with Buhalis's proposals and focus on introducing other destinations and redirecting travellers to new locations. The same tactic is followed by the Deputy Minister of Tourism of Cyprus in similar speeches.¹¹ The minister added that the reduction of seasonality and the creation of new tourist products are key to the development of a sustainable tourism model that will create added value and evenly distribute travellers to the country's destinations. An increasing number of travellers are much more likely to visit destinations and make purchases from travel companies based on their sustainable practices (Mullis, 2017).¹² If the expansion of tourism results in more jobs and more economic opportunities, why are a growing number of destinations around the world proposing or implementing measures to reduce it? Destinations such as Cinque Terre, Zion National Park and Machu Picchu limit the annual number of visitors. Amsterdam, Barcelona and the Seychelles are limiting large-scale development. Bhutan and Venice charge visitor taxes and fees, while places like Koh Tachai in the Similan National Park prohibit visiting (Nepal, 2021).

Governments and the tourism industry need to understand that a limited emphasis on expansion is a problem that lowers the quality (and value) of the experience for both visitors and travellers (Koens et al., 2018). Due to ad hoc development or poorly enforced environmental restrictions, tourism can also contribute to water and energy shortages, the pollution of water resources and the damage of ecosystems (Spilania & Vayanni, 2004). Some places have reached the point

¹⁰ <https://news.gtp.gr/2021/10/25/greece-overtourism-or-poor-management-what-is-the-real-problem-of-popular-destinations/>

¹¹ <https://www.hotelmanagement.net/own/savvas-perdios-talks-cyprus-growing-appeal>

¹² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/08/the-growth-paradox-can-tourism-ever-be-sustainable/>

when the number of travellers exceeds their carrying capacity (Muller et al., 2018). Travel must be carried out in such a way as to ensure the sustainability of tourist destinations. Decisions made now must be long-term oriented and therefore enable future generations to visit the same tourist destinations as previous generations¹³ (OECD Tourism Trends and Policies, 2020). Over-tourism and the ever-increasing tourist flows are a threat to many of the tourist destinations known by the authors around the world. The problem occurs all over the world from the geysers of Iceland to the beaches of Thailand (Diskin, 2016; Livadeas & Smith, 2018). The inability to control the effects over time has led some destinations to take some strict action (Livadeas & Smith, 2021). The effects of excessive tourism can naturally be observed, for example, in an environment full of tourist attractions. In addition, over-tourism also has intangible effects that are not visible but still exist. A tourist may feel that overcrowding is reducing his experience, just as locals may feel that tourism is affecting their daily lives (WTTC and McKinsey, 2017). According to Koens and colleagues (2018, p. 2), over-tourism can be defined as the "excessively negative effects of tourism on host communities and/or the natural environment". Koens and colleagues (2018) points out that the term "over-tourism" describes phenomena that the authors discussed in the scientific literature long before the term became popular, with the discussion on the harmful effects of tourism going back to the 1960s. In contrast, the EU (Peters et al., 2018) in its research on over-tourism describes this phenomenon as "load-carrying capacity thresholds". Public scepticism is associated with the growing recognition that mass tourism has significant costs in cultural, social and environmental terms.

Moreover, local economic benefits may be very limited in some niche markets leading to over-tourism, such as cruising or bus tourism, while the burden on populations and destination ecosystems such as Venice and Dubrovnik are heavy (Muler et al., 2018). In general, the phenomenon of tourism is characterized by a situation where the quantity and type of tourism that prevails exceeds the carrying capacity of the destination, resulting in damage to the social, cultural or environmental fabric of the destination. It is crucial to stress that there is a carrying capacity for tourism, and that this means that there are other aspects besides numbers that affect carrying capacity. Koens and colleagues (2018, p. 2), for instance, emphasize that factors like "visitors, behaviour, schedule, concentration, location, experience with tourism, and local etiquette" contribute to the net number of tourist arrivals that result in cultural, social or environmentally sustainable forms of mass tourism (Koens et al., 2018, pp. 2–3). Furthermore,

¹³ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/oecd-tourism-trends-and-policies-2020_6b47b985-en

technological developments shape tourism behaviour and can therefore lead to undesirable consequences. Social media can make tourists flock to areas that do not have the necessary infrastructure, thus increasing the harmful effects of over-tourism there (Seraphin et al., 2018). For example, the advent of Instagram and other social media has meant that unplanned tourism on these sites could increase (e.g., if reported by a popular "influencer"). In addition, changes in tourist behaviour led visitors to search for authentic experiences that lead them to delve deeper and deeper into parts of a destination outside of tourist hot spots or even within private or semi-private residences (Dodds & Butler, 2019). The problem of over-tourism is very serious today and solutions must be found for how to deal with it. The challenge for businesses and destination marketing organizations is that they no longer have the freedom to use the places where people live and work to attract visitors. The challenge now is to develop ways to tackle over-tourism.

In addition, an important element to be considered in the T.C.C estimate, although it has not been mentioned earlier in the work due to insufficient data available, is the rapid rise of Airbnb. According to a report by the European Parliament, the emergence of Airbnb is linked to the phenomenon of over tourism as it has an uncontrolled spatial distribution in destinations and unfair competition. The latter is mainly due to the lack of regulations on safety, environment and quality that are common in the field of commercial hospitality. In addition, Airbnb owners pay less or no taxes. It is characteristic that some cities in Europe are in a state of overcrowding. It goes without saying that the measurement of Tourism Carrying Capacity is an important tool to avoid or reduce the negative consequences of the uncontrolled development of the tourism product. This helps the competent authorities to carry out the proper handling and proper exploitation of tourism in order to satisfy both local communities (economic benefits, environmental and cultural protection) and visitors. In different cases, as already mentioned, there are phenomena of over tourism, which can eventually lead to saturation of the respective destination.

While there exists a consensus regarding the detrimental effects associated with over-tourism, scholarly discourse exhibits divergence concerning its definition and evaluative methodologies. Certain scholars advocate for a strictly quantitative approach, positing that over-tourism should be assessed through objective metrics such as visitor volume, visitor-resident ratios, and tourist density (Holland et al., 2019). They underscore the significance of employing concrete measures to gauge overcrowding levels and resource strain. Another area

of contention pertains to the temporal dimension of over-tourism. Some assert that over-tourism represents a persistent, chronic issue necessitating long-term strategies and sustainable tourism planning (Liu et al., 2019). They stress the importance of implementing measures targeting the underlying causes of over-tourism to foster sustainable tourism development. Conversely, others argue that over-tourism can also manifest as sporadic occurrences or peak tourist seasons, resulting in transient overcrowding and adverse impacts (Cohen & Cohen, 2019a). They highlight the importance of managing tourism flows during peak periods to mitigate disruptions and ensure a positive visitor experience. These divergent viewpoints underscore the multifaceted nature of over-tourism, encompassing quantitative metrics, qualitative considerations, community perspectives, and the overarching sustainability of tourism development. The discord among scholars underscores the ongoing debate and underscores the necessity for further research and collaborative efforts to attain consensus regarding the definition, assessment, and management strategies associated with over-tourism. On the other hand, there are researchers who advocate for a more qualitative and holistic approach to understanding over-tourism. They argue that it should not be solely determined by numerical thresholds but should also consider subjective experiences, perceptions, and the quality of life for local communities (Gössling et al., 2020). This perspective recognizes that over-tourism is a complex issue influenced by factors such as visitor behavior, infrastructure capacity, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability.

Another area of disagreement among researchers is the temporal aspect of over-tourism. Some argue that over-tourism is a chronic problem that persists over time, requiring long-term strategies and sustainable tourism planning (Liu et al., 2019). They highlight the need for measures that address the root causes of over-tourism and foster sustainable tourism development. In contrast, others argue that over-tourism can also manifest as sporadic events or peak tourist seasons, leading to temporary overcrowding and negative impacts (Cohen & Cohen, 2019a). They emphasize the importance of managing tourism flows during peak periods to minimize disruption and ensure a positive visitor experience. These differing perspectives reflect the complexity of over-tourism as a multifaceted issue. It involves not only quantitative indicators but also qualitative aspects, community perspectives, and the overall sustainability of tourism development. The disagreements among researchers highlight the ongoing debate and the need for further research and collaboration to reach a consensus on the definition, measurement, and management strategies related to over-tourism.

Researchers have different viewpoints on the definition and measurement of “over-tourism”. While some emphasize quantifiable indicators, others argue for a more qualitative and holistic approach. The temporal nature of over-tourism is also subject to debate, with differing opinions on whether it is a chronic issue or manifests as sporadic events. Resolving these disagreements and fostering collaboration among researchers will contribute to a better understanding of over-tourism and the development of effective strategies to mitigate its negative impacts. While there is a general consensus on the concept of over-tourism, researchers and experts in the field may have differing views on its precise definition and usage. Some researchers argue that the term "over-tourism" is subjective and can be interpreted differently based on context, making it challenging to establish a universally accepted definition (Dredge & Jamal, 2019). One point of contention revolves around the threshold at which tourism becomes "over" or excessive. Different destinations have varying carrying capacities, and what may be considered over-tourism in one location may be acceptable in another. Additionally, the impacts and perceptions of over-tourism can differ between stakeholders, including residents, tourists, businesses, and policymakers. Another issue of debate is whether over-tourism should be solely measured based on visitor numbers or if it should incorporate qualitative aspects such as the strain on infrastructure, social disruption, or environmental degradation. Some argue that a more holistic approach that considers both quantitative and qualitative factors is necessary to capture the full extent of over-tourism (Gössling et al., 2020).

3.6.1 Over-tourism or Overcrowding? Exploring a Conundrum between the researchers

In recent years, the term "over-tourism" has gained traction in both academic and popular discourse as a way to describe the negative consequences of tourism overcrowding in certain destinations. It has become a buzzword that captures the attention of policymakers, destination managers, and researchers who are concerned about the sustainability and well-being of tourist hotspots. However, researchers and experts may differ in their perspectives on the term and its precise definition. Some argue that over-tourism should be seen as a continuum rather than a binary concept, with different degrees of pressure and negative impacts on destinations (Muller, 2020). They emphasize the need to consider multiple dimensions, including social, economic, and environmental aspects, to understand the complex nature of over-tourism fully. Despite these disagreements, the term "over-tourism" has gained widespread recognition and has been instrumental in drawing attention to the negative impacts of tourism in certain

destinations. It has stimulated discussions and debates on sustainable tourism practices, destination management, and the need for proactive measures to address the challenges associated with excessive tourism. Furthermore, critics argue that the term itself may have negative connotations and can perpetuate a negative narrative around tourism. They contend that it oversimplifies the complexities of tourism development and its relationship with local communities (Dredge & Jamal, 2019). They advocate for a more nuanced and balanced approach that acknowledges both the positive and negative aspects of tourism. The lack of a standardized definition and measurement framework for over-tourism also poses challenges for researchers and practitioners. Without clear criteria, it becomes difficult to compare and analyze data across different destinations and develop effective strategies to address over-tourism (Gössling et al., 2020). Consequently, some researchers prefer to use alternative terms such as "tourism congestion" or "destination pressure" to capture the essence of the issue without invoking negative connotations (Cohen & Cohen, 2019b).

Disagreeing on the term "over-tourism" presents an alternative perspective on the issue at hand and encourages a critical examination of its validity and usefulness in addressing the challenges faced by tourist destinations. While the concept of "over-tourism" has gained significant attention as a way to describe the negative impacts of tourism overcrowding in certain destinations, it is important to delve deeper and explore the complexities of the issue. One of the concerns with the term "over-tourism" is that it may be misleading and overly simplistic. By implying that any level of tourism beyond a certain threshold is inherently negative and unsustainable, it fails to recognize the potential benefits that tourism can bring to destinations. Tourism can contribute to economic growth, job creation, and cultural exchange, providing opportunities for local communities to thrive (UNWTO, 2019). It is crucial to acknowledge that the challenges faced by destinations are often multifaceted and require a more nuanced understanding. Another aspect to consider is that the term "over-tourism" tends to generalize and homogenize diverse tourism destinations. Different regions and communities have unique characteristics, carrying capacities, and levels of tolerance for tourism. Applying a blanket term like "over-tourism" may overlook the specific nuances and complexities of each destination, hindering the development of tailored and context-specific solutions. It is important to recognize that what may be considered overcrowding in one destination might be well within the capacity of another (Gössling et al., 2019). Focusing solely on the negative impacts of tourism can also overshadow the positive contributions it can make. Rather than framing the issue solely as a problem of "over-tourism," it is more productive to adopt a holistic approach

that considers sustainable tourism development. This approach involves taking into account factors such as community engagement, infrastructure planning, and effective management strategies (Hall, 2019).

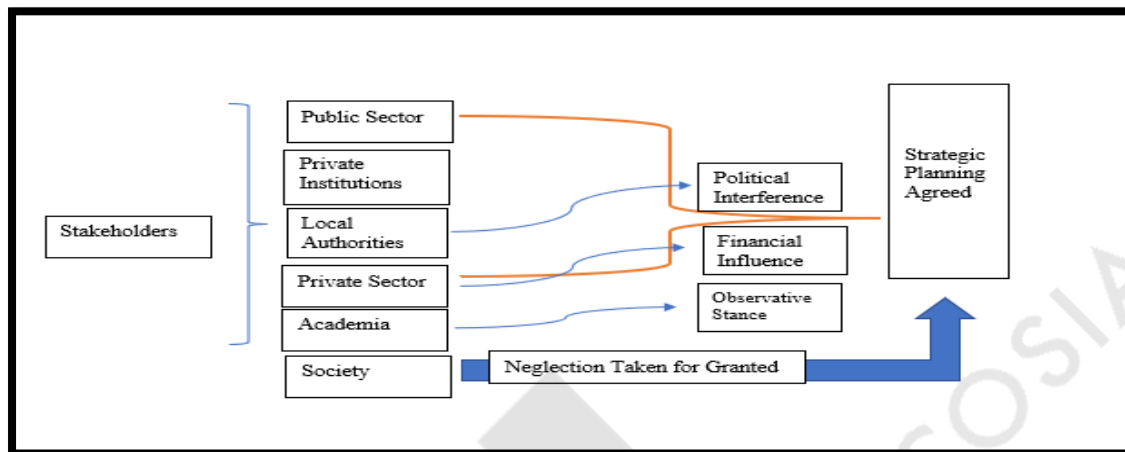
By shifting the focus from a narrow definition of "over-tourism" to sustainable tourism practices, destinations can strive for a balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and community well-being. By emphasizing responsible tourism management, stakeholder collaboration, and long-term planning, destinations can mitigate the negative impacts of tourism while harnessing its potential benefits. This broader perspective allows for the development of effective solutions that promote responsible and inclusive tourism development. It encourages a deeper understanding of the unique characteristics of each destination, enabling the implementation of context-specific strategies that address the challenges faced by tourist destinations (Gössling et al., 2019). Despite the ongoing debates and disagreements, the term "over-tourism" has served as a catalyst for raising awareness and initiating discussions on sustainable tourism practices and destination management. It has prompted stakeholders to reflect on the impacts of tourism, engage in dialogue, and seek solutions to mitigate the negative effects associated with overcrowding and excessive tourism. While there may be divergent views among researchers and experts regarding the precise definition and usage of the term "over-tourism," there is a general recognition of the negative impacts it represents. The concept has brought attention to the need for sustainable tourism practices, destination planning, and the responsible management of tourist flows. As discussions and research on over-tourism continue, it is essential to foster collaboration, develop measurement frameworks, and consider the unique characteristics and challenges of each destination to effectively address the complexities of this phenomenon.

In conclusion, while the term "over-tourism" has played a role in raising awareness about the challenges faced by certain destinations, it is crucial to approach the topic with a critical lens. By reframing the discussion towards sustainable tourism practices and considering the specific characteristics and needs of each destination, we can foster more effective solutions that promote responsible and inclusive tourism development. This approach enables us to strike a balance between maximizing the benefits of tourism and minimizing its negative impacts, leading to the long-term well-being of both destinations and communities.

3.7 Stakeholders' Networking and Dynamics

The diversity of members in stakeholder networks transcends organizational borders and frameworks. Members as shown in Figure 8 of the network are devoted to a set of shared objectives and, presumably, viewpoints (Minnaert, 2020).

Figure 8: Cyprus stakeholders



Source: Author's own

A shareholder can include tourism companies with nearby locations. The author was mainly interested in the indicators of inconsistent and subpar participation and coordination of stakeholders as well as the absence of government oversight in this area. Wagar (1964) came to the conclusion that excessive development has resulted in a greater emphasis on quantity than quality, which has decreased the economic value of the industry for the host community and jeopardized the destination's long-term success. Exceeding carrying capacity degrades the quality of the final product and the guest experience (Sanchez et al., 2019, p. 12). Because the goals of the two parties are so different – mass tourism for maximum profit versus actual sustainability – partnerships between governments and important tourism companies have been found to be ineffective.

Additionally, it is assumed that there may be a discrepancy between the recommendations made to governments by non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations and what can really be achieved and put into practice (Spilker, 2012). The arguments are intended to persuade readers that thesis like the one published by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) about the growth of sustainable tourism do not adequately consider the interests of

local people (Nhuta, 2015). Non-governmental organizations are among the groups promoting environmentally friendly travel (Getz 1994). They may be in charge of promoting environmentally friendly tourism practices or they may just be researching. Scientists and research teams from universities can be contacted to assist with planning. The researcher's interest in tourism and the management of tourist locations led him to conduct this study, which he hopes will highlight a number of issues and challenges with the management of the island's numerous tourist destinations. Additionally, the researcher will emphasize the competing interests of numerous stakeholders in this study and work to address the various half-measures that, yet again, serve as a barrier to the implementation of strategic objectives. Tourism operates in a wider macroeconomic environment, which is directly or indirectly managed, influenced and guided by the government. The involvement of governments in tourism is imperative, constituting a necessary condition for their participation in the industry. This engagement manifests in both immediate and indirect dimensions. On an immediate level, governments play a crucial role in the development of infrastructure and designated areas, fostering the necessary groundwork for tourism activities. Indirectly, governmental participation extends to supporting organizations that actively promote and contribute to the advancement of the tourism sector. This dual role underscores the multifaceted impact and influence of government involvement on the overall landscape of tourism.

The ideal conditions for the development of tourism are political stability, security, a well-defined legal framework, and basic services and infrastructure (roads, water, etc.) that the state can provide. Authorities also bargain over matters like visa requirements, landing privileges, operating and taxation laws, funding, and establishing a nation's marketing strategy. The government's other responsibilities include planning, facilitating and developing the tourism industry, as well as providing the necessary infrastructure and financial incentives to promote private sector participation. At the national level, governments are interested in tourism because, if left unchecked, it is an environmentally destructive activity, and it can affect the people and economies of the region in both positive and negative ways. Tourism may cause social and cultural change among the local population and alter the character and atmosphere of the sites. Governments intervene in the tourism industry because it is considered complex. The tourism industry is an amalgam of different businesses and sectors, where the benefits increase if businesses are better coordinated to achieve common goals, namely the development and improvement of the quality of tourism.

Public sector support can limit vital, innovative activity if the tourism sector operates in a protective environment and does not have to compete globally. The benefits of government involvement in the tourism industry are cited by those who want continuous assistance. They argue that improvements in all infrastructure, attractions and business activities benefit local residents. But for many local councils, tourism is often seen as a problem because it increases costs due to the cost of cleaning, garbage collection, policing, marketing and promotion. Government intervention and tourism performance active role for governments and a possible reason for intervention in the tourism economy or markets is related to:

1. The strategy of seasonal redistribution of tourists;
2. The strategy of geographical redistribution of tourism.

Public bodies seek to extend the tourist season and expand the opportunities for traffic in the low season with the aim of increased business activity and turnover leading to greater profitability, increased employment and improving the image of the tourist area.

In order to increase company activity and turnover, which will result in better profitability, more employment and an improved perception of the tourist area, public organizations are working to lengthen the tourist season and provide options for traffic during the off-season.

3.7.1 Stakeholders engagement in sustainable tourism development in Cyprus

Stakeholder engagement is a critical component of sustainable tourism development and has been the focus of numerous studies in the tourism literature. Effective stakeholder engagement can help to ensure that tourism development is sustainable, responsible, and responsive to the needs and concerns of local communities. Cyprus is a popular tourism destination that has faced a range of sustainability challenges, including overcrowding, environmental degradation, and conflicts between tourists and local residents. To address these challenges, there has been growing interest in stakeholder engagement as a means of promoting sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

One example of stakeholder engagement in Cyprus is the "Sustainable Cyprus" initiative, which was launched in 2019 by the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI). The initiative aims to promote sustainable tourism development in Cyprus by engaging a range of stakeholders, including local communities, tourism businesses, government agencies, and NGOs. The initiative has developed a set of sustainable tourism guidelines and is working to

promote sustainable tourism practices among tourism stakeholders in Cyprus. Another example is the "Pafos Regional Tourism Strategy", which was developed in 2017 by the Pafos Regional Board of Tourism. The strategy aims to promote sustainable tourism development in the Pafos region of Cyprus by engaging stakeholders in a collaborative planning process. The strategy includes a range of sustainability objectives and action plans, including measures to reduce the environmental impacts of tourism, support local communities, and enhance the visitor experience. In addition, there have been numerous academic studies on stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. For example, Stylianou et al. (2019) conducted a study on stakeholder perceptions of sustainable tourism development in Cyprus and found that effective stakeholder engagement was essential for promoting sustainable tourism practices and addressing sustainability challenges.

In conclusion, stakeholder engagement is a critical component of sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. Through effective stakeholder engagement, destinations can promote sustainable tourism practices, address sustainability challenges, and ensure that tourism development is responsive to the needs and concerns of local communities. Initiatives such as "Sustainable Cyprus" and the "Pafos Regional Tourism Strategy" are examples of effective stakeholder engagement in the context of sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

3.8 The Concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity

TCC is a pivotal concept employed to govern and regulate the influx of tourists to a destination, aiming to prevent negative repercussions on the environment, society, and the tourism industry itself. Unlike the conventional notion of "capacity" associated with a specific quantity, such as seats on a vehicle, TCC encompasses a broader and more nuanced understanding (Komilis, 1994). This concept holds paramount significance in the sustainable management of tourism, seeking to strike a balance between the requirements of tourists and the preservation of the destination. The mismanagement of tourism can lead to adverse effects like overcrowding, environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and social conflict. TCC models serve as instrumental tools in averting these negative impacts by establishing sustainable limits on the number of tourists a destination can accommodate. The exploration of carrying capacity dates back to 1936 (Stankey, 1981), prompting various attempts to define it. In 1998, Middleton and Hawkins conceptualized it as a measure of a site's tolerance, advocating for the utilization of upper and lower TCC values over a fixed numerical threshold (Athens, 2002). Recent research,

such as the work by Butler (2023), has demonstrated the judicious evaluability of TCC levels, challenging the notion of its impracticality. Despite initial criticisms, including doubts about its replicability across diverse destinations (Lindberg et al., 1997), the enduring use of the TCC concept prevails. This persistence is supported by the contention of Watson and Kopachevsky (1996), who argue against dismissing the concept merely due to the absence of universally applicable measurement tools. The history of the carrying capacity idea traces back to 1936 (Storch & Okie, 2019), with the foundational conceptual framework remaining largely unchanged despite extensive research in recreational carrying capacity (Zhang et al., 2021).

Over merely a theoretical framework, SCC may be a “frame of reference that takes the movement of valued things (resources) through the human process as its focus” (Emerson, 1976, p. 359). Therefore, exchanges ought to be understood as a longitudinal method over time, wherever the unit of study isn't the people, but the relationships. For instance, “instead of speaking of the ability of persons the tendency to speak dependence relations” (Emerson, 1976). Although SCC attracts abundant from a political point, it is abundant broader. Social exchange theorists’ area unit essentially involved with the implications of the exchange for the sociality of the cluster and also the relations of trust, cooperation and obligation that emerge (Uehara, 1990). within the field of commercial enterprise, SCC suggests that expressed support for commercial enterprise development is taken into account as a temperament to enter into the associate exchange (Xiao et al., 2021; Jurowski et al., 1997). People choose exchanges once assessing the advantages and prices (Homans, 1961). Consequently, people World Health Organization judge the exchange as helpful understand a similar impact otherwise to somebody World Health Organization evaluates the exchange as harmful (Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2012). Several studies don't expressly talk to SCC however use a cost-benefit approach to residents and commercial enterprise (Canestrelli & Costa, 1991; King et al., 1993). There’s a priority whether the environmental and social prices of commercial enterprise development out economic advantages (Krippendorf, 1982; Liu et al., 1987). The purpose wherever there is an associate imbalance between the rewards associated prices, indicates an approach to social carrying capacity limits. Therefore, the willingness to accept more tourism and the tourism intensity suggesting arrival varies, amongst stakeholders. If impact perceptions will function an indicator of social carrying capability, it is expected that positive impact perceptions completely correlate with temperament to simply accept additional tourists. The literature revision doesn't produce several studies about the SCC Concerning business enterprise development, King and colleagues (1993) found that there was a correlation between

perceptions and therefore the overall opinion concerning business enterprise

The environmental and social disruptions will be tolerated if the goal of economic development is considered as a priority. Moreover, to reduce impacts, the parameters of management (factors that may be manipulated directly by managers) can be introduced in the light of objectives and goals. Through procedures of demand management using marketing, the volume of tourists can be manipulated. That is by channelling visitors along specific routes, modifying the behaviour of tourists, providing good interpretation and information, encouraging non-polluting types of transport, and diverting tourists to other destinations. Adequate education about the destination can be provided to both visitors and hosts.

Education about the way greater economic prosperity can be provided to the area, old handicrafts can be rejuvenated, and heritage can be preserved through tourism should be provided to the locals. To understand the influence left by visitors on the environment and society of the area visited, knowledge about the destination should be provided to visitors. They must be provided with the education of respecting the natural and human heritage of the host communities so that they can refrain from activities that may further degrade the local environment. This is where the important question arises. How can the author talk about sustainability and carrying capacity when the profession itself is undervalued and therefore the author treats it superficially as a profession of minor importance?

In light of the above descriptions, the concept of maintaining a level of use and development that will not result in socio-cultural or environmental deterioration is based on establishing carrying capacity or be perceived by tourists as depreciating their appreciation and enjoyment (Thyne, Watkins & Yoshida, 2018). Social carrying capacity has been addressed by one of these approaches and includes using tolerance levels of the host population and attitudes to set restrictions on tourist development. Joshi & Dahal (2019) suggested that depending on the volume of tourism, the reciprocating impacts of visitors and hosts can be converted into different degrees of host irritations.

A cycle akin to those experienced by destinations involves changes occurring over time, often leading to varying degrees of host irritation. The residents of tourist destinations go through stages of antagonism, irritation, apathy, and euphoria. The actual level of irritation emerges from the contact of visitors and hosts and is identified by the degree of mutual compatibility.

The tensions may be generated alone by sheer numbers of groups even when factors like colour, economic status, and culture are excluded. Thereby, it can be suggested that at some point a predominantly negative reaction may arise that may harm the tourist industry unless restrictions are set on tourism development. It is quite difficult to measure attitudes and cannot be conducted objectively. Also, through a procedure of adaptation, the attitudes of the host population are likely to change over time or because of turnover in the population. Thomas Malthus first published the concept of carrying capacity in 1798 with a broad understanding of limiting the population and economic growth and it has become the foundational concept of the current environmental movement (Narasimmaraj, 2012). Mathieson and Wall (1982) (as cited in Saarinen, 2006) defined carrying capacity as “the maximum number of people who can use a recreational environment without an unacceptable decline in quality of the recreational experience” (Joshi & Dahal, 2019).

In 1960, researchers focused on the ecological and social factors of carrying capacity. Wagar argued that carrying capacity is "the level of recreational use that an area can withstand while providing a lasting quality of recreation" (Wagar, 1964 as cited in Graefe et al., 1984). He stated that in natural areas, the carrying capacity has both biological and social dimensions, as the more people visit a natural site, the more it affects the environment and the quality of the visit (Wagar, 1964 as reported in Hof et al., 1996). In 1974, he revised his view by arguing that in the management of an area, a flow of benefits for the people should be created and maintained and each area should be considered as a sector within a whole system and not as an individual element (Wagar, 1974). In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers focused on the levels of use and satisfaction they provided to visitors (Spyratos, 2005). In 1970, a definition of Tourism Carrying Capacity was formulated in the Countryside Recreation Glossary as the resources experience of the visitor to an acceptable degree” (Parpairis, 1993). Other researchers have since developed similar definitions, such as Mathieson and Wall in 1982, who distinguished its economic and social dimensions, and Middleton and Chamberlain in 1997 and Palaiologou in 2017.

According to Mathieson and Wall (1982) in a first attempt to capture the carrying capacity, it is defined as "the maximum number of people who can use a place without an unacceptable change in the natural environment and without an unacceptable reduction in the quality of the experience which, the visitors obtain". The carrying capacity can be used in two senses: 1) as the physical carrying capacity of a place (Angelidis, 2000), i.e. the smallest area of physical

space that is required to be able to develop an activity, which, however, will not cause system failure (Avgerinou & Cologne, 1996); and 2) as the environmental or ecological carrying capacity of a place (Yaoutzi & General, 2011), i.e. the number of infrastructures that the ecosystem can withstand on a larger scale (Avgerinou & Cologne, 2011). The broader concept of environmental carrying capacity arose from the theory of ecology and can be defined as "the maximum number of a species that an ecosystem can support indefinitely. For the carrying capacity to be functional and effective at the same time, the limits that should not be exceeded should be set (Hunter, 1997; Pan et al., 2018).

On this, Jacobs et al (2020) believes that environmental capacity should be realized through democratic processes by institutions (Stoddard et al., 2012), which will take into account the people who exist and the effects of decisions (Nicholas et al., 2009). Carrying capacity is a strong idea (UNCED, 1992) in defining a tourism policy (UNWTO, 2011), but it is difficult to accurately calculate the limits (Jickling, 1994). This difficulty is due to the main focus on the multiple provisions of the concept (Scott & Gössling, 2019) and the inherent limitations in estimating boundaries in natural (Shahzad et al., 2017) and human (Sheppard & Williams, 2016) ecosystems. Getz (1987) identified six different approaches to measuring carrying capacity by integrating the variables of environment, economy and society, and integrating the system of sustainability and tourism (Rodriguez and Espino, 2016; Świąder et al., 2020) such as the tangible resource limits of the destination, the hosts community tolerance, the customers satisfaction, the excessive growth rate and the capacity seeing in a systematic approach based on cost and benefit assessment.

Butler (1980;1999) emphasized the need to achieve sustainable tourism development using borders and not through overexploitation of resources at the local level. He states that a key element of Tourism Social Carrying Capacity (TSCC) objectives for sustainable tourism is to establish the Tourism Carrying Capacity of a destination in a region. Tourism Social Carrying Capacity (TSCC) refers to the maximum visitor density in an area where tourists quietly feel satisfied, and the perception of crowding should be managed if local people are to continue benefiting from tourism and to minimize the negative effects of tourism (Tokarchuk et al., 2021).

The tourism carrying capacity, according to many definitions, is the maximum amount of tourist development that an area can accept, without causing negative impacts on it (Andriotis,

2018). It is a multidimensional concept and concerns the limits of the natural, social and economic environment. Most of the definitions emphasize both the effects that are created on the environment and also the quality that the traveller accepts (EOT, 2000). The reliability of its application in practice has been the target of many critics, given the difficulty in collecting data and determining the optimal number of variables to be investigated for the results to be reliable. The way of measuring the TCC and the design that will be proposed vary depending on the type of destination (Coccosis & Tsartas, 2001; Vagiona & Palloglou 2021):

- Urban areas – built-up areas with a historical character.

Urban areas with significant archaeological sites attract tourists and are usually large urban cities. The pressures exerted on the environment are intense, but positive results are also identified, such as the increase in employment or the strengthening of saturated cities, etc.

- Mountainous – rural areas.

The biggest feature of these areas is the reduction in the population, because there are limited opportunities for employment. Great attention must be paid to the effects on the environment and the use of natural resources for the development of tourism.

- Coastal areas.

In the coastal areas there is a high concentration of activities and consequently large populations. During their development, important infrastructures and transport systems are rebuilt, altering the original character of the area.

- Islands.

Islands have unique characteristics including poor access, few natural resources and constrained geographic space. More effort must be made to complete the design while taking into account its unique features. The Social Carrying Capacity's (SCC) conditions and restrictions and studying the potential for approaching a location's development boundaries – beyond which its destruction occurs – serve tools (Naser et al., 2020). In order for a region to accept any interventions, it must be in harmony with its natural and economic character and with the local population. The goals of this research are to evaluate the development limits of a tourist destination through the tourism social element of its carrying capacity. The objective is to manage tourism and provide the ideal environment for utilizing and promoting a destination's tourism-related goods.

All analyses of recreational carrying capacity include two fundamental elements. One is the behavioural element that reflects the quality of the recreational experience (Storch & Okie,

2019), and the other is the biophysical element related to the integrity of the resource base that denotes a certain tolerance or threshold level after which strains may be imposed on the natural ecosystem by continued use or exploitation (Zhang et al., 2021). There is still no acknowledged definition of it or standardized systematic method for analysing it. There are environmental concerns when there is a rise in tourist demand since the infrastructure must grow to accommodate everyone who comes. Each tourist destination has unique resources that can be used for exploitation, therefore the carrying capacity identifies the restrictions that must be imposed on their use (Andriotis, 2018). In reality, the boundaries reflect the extent to which man-made and natural resources can withstand the effects of tourism, while preserving the region's unique qualities (Butler, 1999). As a result, the TCC started to become increasingly important in managing visitors and tourists in protected regions, national parks and other places. This entails examining the specific species that the environment can support as well as controlling the number of visitors at any given moment. The TCC is also intended to evaluate a tourist destination's potential for development, as any interventions made there must be compatible with the locals' socio-cultural practices.

The idea of recreational carrying capacity has permeated tourism studies as a result of the recognition that destination sites have demonstrated cycles of decline and popularity as well as growing concern over the detrimental effects of tourism. On the subject of carrying capacity, various schools of thought have been outlined. The first line of thinking views T.C.C as the capacity of the destination location to absorb tourism before the host community feels the negative effects of tourists. The emphasis is on the number of tourists who can be accommodated and are desired rather than the number of travellers who can be persuaded or desire to visit a location (Chapman and Byron, 2018). The notion of the cycle is at the centre of the second school of thought. Because specific capacities are taken into account by the tourists themselves, there will be a decrease in tourist flows as tourism capacity increases. As a result, they are no longer drawn to, and satisfied with, the destination locales, leading to them investigating alternative locations.

The TCC, which derives from many definitions, is the largest amount of tourism growth that a region can allow without it having an adverse impact on it (Andriotis, 2018). Given the difficulties in gathering data and choosing the right number of variables to examine in order to produce trustworthy conclusions, many critics have focused on the validity of its implementation in practice (Zhang et al., 2017). Analysis of TCC has an impact on how the

industry will develop in the future and on sustainable tourism, which determines the industry's social, economic and environmental effects on the local community. When analysing the motivation guiding sustainable tourism, it is frequently necessary to take the ideals and hidden agendas of governments into account (Deputy Minister of Cyprus Tourism, 2021). It is clear that there are a few border control issues for any tourist destination, as in the case of Cyprus. Among the numerous examples are double-booked rooms in hotels, the countless unregistered Airbnb's, and the lack of coordination between government agencies, hotels and tour operators (Arbara, et al., 2021; Farmakis et al., 2015; Guo & He, 2012). The physical-ecological component, the socio-demographic component and the political-economic component are the three main classifications of TCC. They are vital for identifying the key macro-indicators that are crucial for determining the carrying capacity and identifying the parameters responsible for quantifying the sustainability of tourism destinations (Coccossis & Parpairis, 2000).

Definitions of carrying capacity usually include the term “acceptable”, and the question that needs to be asked is to whom should a change be acceptable or unacceptable (Sheppard & Williams, 2016). If, as in the case of social impact, it is the host population that must judge the degree of acceptance of an activity, how is this reflected in the policies (UNWTO, 2019)? Therefore, in a completely democratic political system, we could argue that residents should express their views on the proposed tourism activities (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Sbokos, 2015). However, this perfect democracy is rather hard to find (Rokos, 2005). In addition, large tourism development is stimulated by the private sector (Stamatiou & Psaltaki, 2013), which may have a much more limited attitude towards development issues and maintain completely different views on acceptable levels of development (Buhalis & Park, 2021). The issue becomes even more complicated in the case of environmental carrying capacity. Who should judge and vote for the acceptance or non-acceptance of a project that has an environmental impact (Bramwell, 2006)? The environment itself can change and some species of flora and fauna can be harmed by development, but they do not have the right to vote (Brundtland, 1987).

Butler (1999) first proposed the idea of three distinct categories in 1989. The idea of sustainable tourism had largely been supplanted by the early 1990s, although many of the problems identified as mentioned in earlier articles remained (Juardo et al., 2012). They place a strong emphasis on the need to restrain the rise of tourism, for which modifications to the natural and social environment are considered appropriate (Butler, 1999; Liu, 2012). The researchers Navaro Juardo et al. (2012) and Franco et al. (2020) focused on reviving the ongoing discussion

on growth limits and seeking a solution. As a result, the idea of carrying capacity is frequently utilized to promote sustainable tourism in order to safeguard the destinations' physical, social, cultural and ecological well-being (Corrine et al., 2019; Rodella et al., 2017; Saveriades, 2000; Syed et al., 2014; Zacharias et al., 2014). TCC is commonly referred to as an all-encompassing notion of sustainable tourism in theoretical understanding. In protected, limited and conserved places where existing ecosystems are gravely threatened by outside meddling, its proper understanding and thresholding measures are even more crucial. It considers a wide range of socio-economic-physical-environmental variables when conceiving TCC.

TCC is a multidimensional and systemic idea, yet due to the numerous varying variables that make it up, it is not fixed. Thus, its dimensions and characteristics must be specified according to each area of study. TCC is a management plan, according to Zelenka and Pásková (2012), that is influenced by a variety of elements, including activities, the social and natural environment, the operation of the associated tourist organizations, and the influence of external factors and conditions. *"The TCC of the destination is a management plan in the context of the systemic approach to the destination, tourism stakeholders and external influences"* as Zelenka and Pásková (2012, p. 19) noted. Additionally, in the 1970s, evidence emerged, particularly from the Mediterranean region (Gao et al., 2020), that the social and physical environment of a destination can be eroded by tourism. It thus became apparent that the character of cultural and natural resources that can result in a loss of tourism demand can be destroyed permanently or transformed by unplanned development. Despite local and/or national planners' awareness of the carrying capacity concept, which refers to the sustainability of a specific level of tourist uses and development within a particular region, excessive development in various destinations led to a decline in the quality of the overall tourist experience in line with the deterioration of the environment and socio-cultural aspects (Sgroi, 2020).

Various Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models have been developed and applied globally, encompassing physical, ecological, social, and economic dimensions. Physical models, rooted in the tangible attributes of destinations, assess factors such as the availability of hotel accommodations, transportation infrastructure, and public spaces. Ecological models, focusing on environmental sustainability, evaluate a destination's capacity to withstand pollution and maintain biodiversity. Social models centre on the community's ability to engage with tourists and deliver a satisfactory experience. Economic models analyse a destination's financial capability to support tourism-related activities.

Successful implementation of TCC models necessitates the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including the tourism industry, local communities, and governmental agencies. The tourism industry must recognize the significance of TCC in managing tourist flows to ensure long-term sustainability. Local communities should actively participate in the development of TCC models to address their specific needs and concerns. Governmental agencies play a critical role in providing policy frameworks and regulations to uphold the effectiveness and sustainability of TCC models.

A comprehensive understanding of TCC is often achieved through the synthesis of existing empirical and theoretical bases, providing insights into its terminology, characteristics, and subcategory classification. This research endeavours to investigate the intricate dynamics of TCC, with a particular emphasis on the social carrying capacity (SCC). Swarbrooke (1999) identified six variables of carrying capacity related to tourism, including physical, environmental, financial, socio-cultural, infrastructure, and perceptual carrying capacity, collectively influencing a destination's ability to manage its tourism activities sustainably (Prideaux & Timothy, 2018).

Ensuring optimal carrying capacity is imperative for the long-term sustainability and profitability of tourism. While increased tourist numbers may boost profits, exceeding a destination's carrying capacity can lead to adverse ecological, aesthetic, and social impacts, detracting from its allure. Consequently, proper management informed by carrying capacity knowledge is essential for mitigating these negative effects, through temporal and spatial distribution of tourism activities. However, the literature suggests that TCC is often perceived as static or absolute (Lele, 1991). The implementation of TCC models requires the involvement of different stakeholders, including the tourism industry, local communities, and governmental agencies. The tourism industry needs to be aware of the importance of TCC and their role in managing tourist flows to ensure the sustainability of tourism. Local communities need to be engaged in the development of TCC models to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed. Governmental agencies need to provide policy and regulatory frameworks to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of TCC models.

How can we judge whether something is environmentally acceptable or not in the context of design (Butcher, 1997)? The object of sustainability is to protect people and businesses from risk. In this way, we contribute to the long-term economic well-being of residents and the

stabilization of local economies. Insurance is one of the main ways in which we mitigate the effects of climate risk and offset climate-related damage. In addition to contributing to sustainable economic growth through our business, one strategy also focuses on overcoming barriers to social inclusion that will lead our society to a better, more productive future. TCC is an extremely fluid and dynamic concept (Butler, 2020b).

As with many human characteristics, exposure to stimuli implies a degree of acceptance. Levels of socio-cultural tolerance change over time and with gradual exposure to tourists (Jovicic, 2016; Kimhi & Oliel, 2019). If, for example, a small island destination rises from 100 to one million tourists in one year, the socio-cultural (Nicholas et al., 2009), economic and environmental impact will be catastrophic (Jurado et al., 2016). If in the same destination we increase the volume of tourists equally but in the long run for a period of 50 years, the significant effects will be much smaller (Kalantzi et al., 2016). People get used to change; its effects do not diminish; they just accept them. Economies should also adapt to structural changes that take place over a long period of time, rather than pursuing rapid change (Nazmfar et al., 2019). Adequacy of time will allow the establishment of the necessary connections and support services and, consequently, will allow the destination to optimize its benefits from tourism (Noronha, 1977). Even the environment, or at least the concern of the local population for it, can better cope with the change if it occurs late and appropriate visitor management systems can be implemented to limit the negative effects (Pan et al., 2019).

The above issues concern all aspects of carrying capacity, with the exception of whether a project is acceptable to tourists or not (Chen & Tung, 2014). Many destinations conduct visitor satisfaction surveys to monitor acceptance (Das & Dirienzo, 2010; Sæþórsdóttir & Hall, 2020). In addition, if the carrying capacity is exceeded in this respect, tourists will react and go elsewhere (Su et al., 2022). Despite the problems of translating a theoretical definition into an operational tool, carrying capacity has been adopted by modern development strategies (Song et al., 2020), which involve increasing efforts to impose specific developmental constraints to prevent impact on the environment (Kirstges, 2002) and society (Kokotovic & Kurecic 2017; Lee et al., 2019), or avoiding the risk of overdependence (Lane, 2009). The literature on carrying capacity gives the impression that it is in some way static or absolute (Lele, 1991).

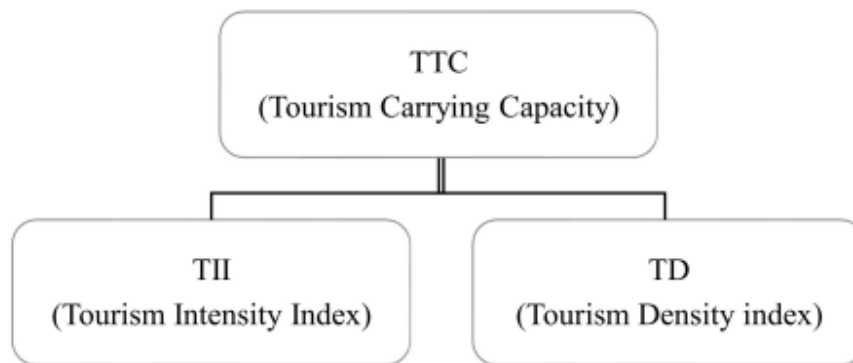
Carrying capacity is a scientific approach to building a tourism destination based on sustainable development concepts. The essence of TCC has been expanded in numerous ways, and various

pieces of literature are accessible to illustrate the background of this notion. Tourism Carrying Capacity is roughly categorized as having various subdivisions, notably environmental carrying capacity, physical carrying capacity, socio-cultural carrying capacity, biophysical carrying capacity and economic carrying capacity (Zelenka, & Pásková, 2012). TCC was described by Middleton and Hawkins Chamberlain (1997) as the level of human activity that a destination could accommodate without the area becoming overcrowded and the local population being negatively affected and the quality of visitors' experience being diminished. Tourism destinations, as Peeters and colleagues (2018) confirm, are in pursuit of novel methods that could be adopted to identify and measure carrying capacity before over tourism happens. Today, there are two contradictory trends in traveller destinations. On the one hand, given the benefits related to business enterprise in terms of economy and employment, among others, tourist destinations compete against one another to draw in additional guests.

On the other hand, new business enterprise phenomena, like cheap transportation and short rental platforms, are in increasing demand in some traditional business enterprise destinations. This example has a crystal rectifier to citizens' rejection of business enterprise (Martin et al., 2018) According to Mathieson and Wall (1982), the first attempt to capture the carrying capacity as "[t]he maximum number of people who can use a place without an unacceptable change in the natural environment and an unacceptable reduction in the quality of the experience gained by visitors." TCC (tourism carrying capacity) is not a new concept. Various definitions of carrying capacity have been proposed over the years, with the earliest mention being made in 1936 (Zelenka, & Pásková, 2012) in the context of the Sierra Park Policy, which posed the question: "How many people may be allowed animals for free without damaging its essential properties?" In the continuation of the literature review, there is an extensive analysis in relation to the topic of over tourism. The pre-evaluation stage consists of determining the tourism carrying capacity, which is usually measured with the two most frequently used indicators - the Tourism Intensity Index (TII) and Tourism Density (TD)¹⁵ as presented in Figure 9.

¹⁵ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU\(2018\)629184](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2018)629184) (accessed on 5 November 2019).

Figure 9: Carrying capacity model given over tourism



Source: Own analysis based on Manera and Valle (2018) and Peeters et al. (2019)

Destination management refers to a holistic approach, where many aspects of a destination are managed through a coordinated process. This may include marketing management, local accommodation, tours, events, activities, attractions and transport and is often the responsibility of a dedicated destination management organization. The purpose is to ensure that tourism has a net positive effect on the destination, and this means maximizing benefits by optimizing both supply and demand. A destination management organization will typically be based on membership that includes government officials, local businesses and others in the travel industry (Cooper et al., 1998). Undoubtedly, the environment and tourism now play quite a decisive role in the evaluation of any development initiative undertaken to improve the quality of life. On the one hand, the continuous deterioration of the environmental conditions of our planet (Vries, 1989), and on the other hand, the significant increase of tourist sizes, have led to the launch of policies and models that ensure the preservation of our planet's valuable resources. As early as the late 1960s, the debate over the threatening limits of the earth's carrying capacity due to population growth and economic growth gave impetus to a widespread manifestation of environmental consciousness (Meadows, 1972). Things that affect people's settlement include climate, labour supply, altitude, distance from the sea, distance from farms, wars, migration and politics, or the lack of a policy restricting births from a state. Today, few do not share the view of the rapid decline and deterioration of environmental resources (e.g., fish stocks, minerals, fresh water, biodiversity, etc.) and the abuse of "ecological landfills" (e.g., assimilation of waste into air, water, soil (Brown, 2022), as well as the fact that this abuse destroys and alters ecosystems and ultimately the living conditions of humans and other

species. It is now certain that the society of the so-called "abundance", prosperity but also human exploitation can no longer remain indifferent in the face of the systematic violation of the resilience of the ecosystem that surrounds us given the inherent pursuit of consumer society to constantly expand. It is well known that tourism activity, the dynamic phenomenon of our time, has contributed decisively to the development of destinations and social classes along with the negative socio-cultural effects that often result from poor or uncoordinated management policy (Mason, 2003, p. 42).

The attempt to preserve the environment that attracts and develops tourism, therefore, can only be an immediate priority to ensure the duration and the positive effects of its expansion. The risk of suffering negative consequences from the development of tourism activity is quite visible for our country. It would be right to make all the necessary moves to formulate an appropriate tourism product management policy that maximizes the benefits and minimizes the negative effects, something that sustainable tourism development ensures. After all, the rapid development of tourism in Cyprus, in combination with significant shortcomings in planning and exercising controlled development action, has brought the country to the point of risking losing, even from neighbouring destinations, what Cyprus as a tourism destination has built so far thanks to the efforts towards the end of the 1960s. The depletion of natural resources and pollution intensified society's awareness of environmental protection, leading to the development of policies to address them. Later, due to the continuous growth, the danger of the earth's carrying capacity was pointed out, while at the same time the need to combine the policies of the economy, society and the environment to achieve sustainable development was understood.

However, the development and use of tools that could support planners and decision-makers in their efforts to measure carrying capacity and control tourism development has proven over the years to be a difficult task with many obstacles (Pearce et al., 1998). Attempts have been made to measure the carrying capacity in a social, economic and cultural context (Coccosis & Mexa, 2004) and to measure:

- social capacity: the number of visitors a site can receive without altering its culture (Visvaldis et al., 2013);
- economic capacity: the limits of local development so that the destination is not led into

tourism monoculture (Manning, 2007) and consumption benefits the local population (Needham et al., 2011);

- ecological carrying capacity: the number and type of investments made in the area as well as the number of visitors not to burden the structured and natural environment (Tay & Chan, 2014);
- psychological capacity: the number of visitors who can coexist in one place – either as visitors, as residents or as immigrants (Mehmood et al., 2016) – without degrading the quality of the experience and without disrupting the dynamic relationship between visitors and locals (Bera et al., 2015).

The main challenge is to determine the level of boundaries within which tourism will move (Saveriades, 2000). As with the definitions of sustainability, defining these limits and the carrying capacity they entail is a difficult task (Salerno et al., 2013). As for tourism, one approach is to adopt Hardin's (1968) formulation on human impact and simply transfer it to tourism (Johnsen et al., 2008). The wording is as follows: impact of tourism = tourist population X tourist impact, per capita. Such a wording, however, is not enough and does not reflect the variety of influences related to the nature of tourism activity (Choi, 2006), its destination vulnerability (Lobo, 2015), technological change (UNWTO, 2020a) and so on. The market itself (supply and demand) has led the majority of countries to what is called "congestion pricing". Prices get higher during peak season and lower during the off-season period. Another example is that of Venice: as tourists increasingly outnumber the residents, headlines continue to herald how Venice is slowly "dying". The government has tried to limit the number of large cruise ships and proposed ordinances to fine tourists \$580 for sitting down. A planned tourist entrance tax was set to be implemented in 2020, but was then delayed until 2022, according to CNN. So, the Italian city is now taking its most watchful measure yet: tracking travellers' every move. While the number of visitors unsurprisingly dropped in 2020 due to the global pandemic, the city opened its control room operation last September. Barcelona is in the process of approving a new law to limit tourist arrivals after serious social negative effects.¹⁶

The optimal carrying capacity (or optimal use of tourist areas) must be verified for tourism to be sustainable and profits to be maximized in the long run. The increase in profits may largely

¹⁶ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/spain/catalonia/barcelona/articles/barcelona-unveils-new-law-to-keep-tourists-away/>

depend on the increase in the number of tourists; however, if tourism in an area exceeds its carrying capacity, it can have negative ecological, aesthetic and social effects, resulting in the attractiveness of the tourism area being reduced. In short, tourism can destroy tourism. Knowledge of the carrying capacity of a host area makes it possible, through proper human management, to mitigate the negative effects of tourism, dividing tourism in time and space or concentrating it in areas with a high carrying capacity. The literature on TCC gives the impression that it is in some way static or absolute (Lele, 1991).

As with many human characteristics, exposure to stimuli implies a degree of acceptance. Levels of socio-cultural tolerance change over time and with gradual exposure to tourists (Jovicic, 2016; Kimhi and Oliel, 2019). If, for example, a small island destination rises from 100 to one million tourists in a year, the socio-cultural (Nicholas et al., 2009), economic and environmental impact will be catastrophic (Jurado et al., 2016). If, in the same destination, we increase the volume of tourists equally but in the long run for 50 years, the significant effects will be much smaller (Kalantzi et al., 2016). People get used to change; its effects do not diminish; they just accept them. Economies should also adapt to structural changes that take place over a long period, rather than pursuing rapid change (Nazmfar et al., 2019). Adequacy of time will allow the establishment of the necessary connections and support services and, consequently, will allow the destination to optimize its benefits from tourism (Noronha, 1977). Even the environment, or at least the concern of the local population for it, can better cope with the change if it occurs late and appropriate visitor management systems can be implemented to limit the negative effects (Pan et al., 2019).

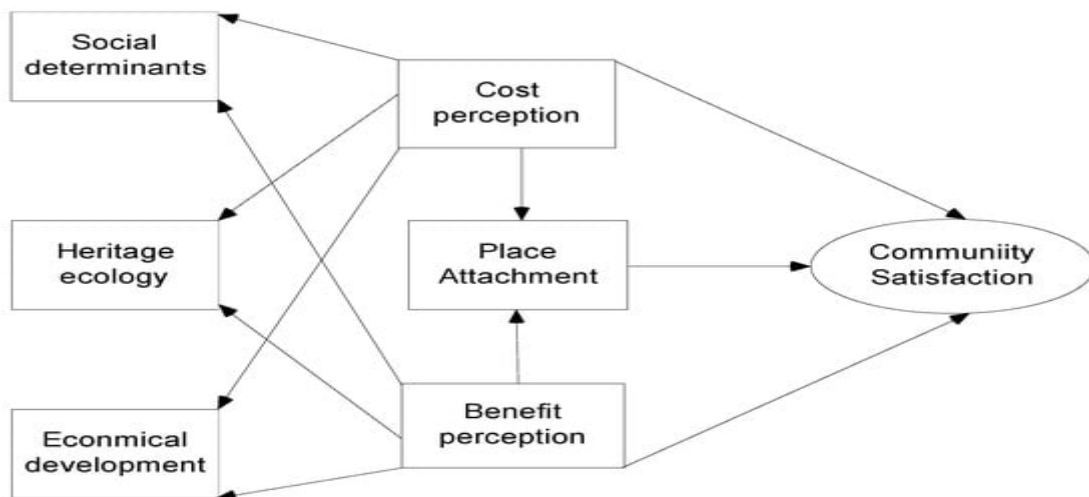
The fact that there are four broad sets of competency indicators – economic, environmental, socio-cultural and tourist satisfaction levels – creates some difficulties in accurately determining the carrying capacity of a particular destination (Cole, 2006). The carrying capacity of a particular destination can only be covered in one of these areas and not in the others. Thus, one destination may find that tourism activity exerts pressure, for example, on the local ecosystem (Choucri, 1997) before it poses significant threats to social structure, culture or the economy (Canestrelli & Costa, 1991). This means that regardless of the limits it has on the latter, the carrying capacity of this destination is dictated by the vulnerability of the ecosystem (Ciscar et al., 2011; Da Silva et al., 2020). The general sets of factors that determine carrying capacity along with the different stages that can affect the magnitude and direction of impact are shown below so that the impact of each sector can be studied.

Local factors will influence the magnitude and direction of the impact, but what is important, apart from the nature of the local factors, is the relative difference between the local and tourism factors and the speed of change (Cohen, 1972). The social structure of the destination is crucial in determining the scale and nature of the effects (Cole, 2006). Larger populations with a cosmopolitan structure are more adaptable to change (Gomez et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). As a result, some societies may accept large tourist volumes with little visible effect, while others may not. In general, the smaller the local population, the stronger the social impact of tourism, especially if tourism is based on large tourist flows (Wheeler, 2007). The cultural heritage of a destination is very important when trying to identify the impact and carrying capacity (Bramwell & Lane, 2007). The more unusual the cultural background, the more attractive a destination can be to potential tourists (Jovicic, 2016; Lozano et al., 2008). As the author identified further, Bramwell's figure of contrast between residents' views and those of tourists has only one very important factor that in reality has changed dramatically the residents' attitude towards tourism, namely work pride.

One way to increase Tourism Carrying Capacity is through tourist community participation, which involves the involvement of local communities in tourism activities, such as providing accommodation, food, and transportation services (Tosun & Timothy, 2001). Tourist community participation can help to alleviate the strain on existing infrastructure and resources, increasing the capacity of the destination to accommodate more tourists. Additionally, tourist satisfaction is an important factor that can impact tourism carrying capacity. When tourists have a positive experience, they are more likely to return to the destination, recommend it to others, and spend more time and money there, which can increase demand for the destination (Yuan et al., 2019). However, it is important to ensure that tourism development is sustainable and does not exceed the carrying capacity of the destination to avoid negative impacts on the local community and the tourism industry itself (Weaver & Lawton, 2014). By involving local communities in tourism and promoting tourist satisfaction, destinations can manage tourism in a sustainable manner and increase their carrying capacity without causing negative impacts-

Figure 10:

Figure 10: Tourist community participation and satisfaction ‘SHE~ABC’ framework in WHS



Source: Nian et al. {2022}

The environment changes with the presence of tourists, regardless of how aware they may be or how carefully the tourism activity has been planned (Manning, 2007). The environment can be artificial or natural (Monioudi et al., 2017). In general, the former is more resilient to the effects of tourism than the latter (Nicholas et al., 2009). The economic structure will determine the benefits and costs associated with tourism. In general, the more developed and industrialized an economy is, the stronger and more adaptable it will be (Antonakakis et al., 2015). Further, the political structure can affect the impact of tourism in various ways (Santana et al., 2018). Initially, political instability will deter tourists and therefore hinder the development of tourism (Wu & Zhu, 2016). Some groups of tourists are more cautious about political instability than others, but few tourists are unaffected by the prospect of political instability (Yap & Saha, 2013). The political structure can also directly affect tourism development if it is decided, in reflecting the ideals and beliefs of the population, that tourism development should be limited or even discouraged (Seraphin et al., 2018).

Some countries restrict tourism development by reducing the number of visas issued within a given year (e.g., Bhutan) (UNWTO, 2020b), while others may increase the cost of issuing visas or complicate the process, thus limiting the issuing of visas to only the most determined. The availability of local resources (labour, capital, land, etc.) can significantly affect the acceptance and attractiveness of tourism development, and even its form (Zhang et al., 2017). When resources are scarce, competition for these resources will be high and the opportunity cost of using them in tourism will also be high (Zhong et al., 2015). Local infrastructure is also part of

the resource base. If tourism development involves the intensive use of local infrastructure, this will limit capacity (at least in the short term) long before the carrying capacity limits are exceeded (Zhang et al., 2017). If the infrastructure is used extensively due to tourism development, this can provoke strong reactions from the local population and then the social impact of tourism will limit the carrying capacity (Williams, 2001). The carrying capacity of today will not be the carrying capacity of tomorrow, as it is neither given nor static (Saveriades, 2000). In the 1950s, few of the world's top tourist destinations could have imagined the volume of tourists they host today (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). This dynamic feature of carrying capacity, along with the difficulty of finding a universally accepted definition (Blowers, 1993; Bramwell & Lane, 2008), has given rise to some bodies, such as the United States National Park Service), that choose to adopt an alternative terminology, that of the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC), as their programming indicator (Stankey et al., 1985; Bennett, 2012).

Therefore, carrying capacity is a dynamic concept, in the sense that the limits that determine carrying capacity are likely to increase over time if tourism development is sound (Currie et al., 2009). Unplanned rapid growth can easily lead to low tolerance levels and much lower carrying capacity values (Deng et al., 2014). There are wide-ranging references to the meaning and the peculiarities of tourist complexities. This then sheds light on theories of social capital in terms of human resources, to define and describe the linkages between destinations, stakeholders and cluster resources (Nordin, 2003) – meaning the products derive from the clusters: *“geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities”* (Porter, 1998, p. 78).

TCC is one of the basic techniques of integrated tourist area planning and defines the highest acceptable level of tourism development in an area (Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre, 1997). TCC is a multidimensional and systemic concept. This means that it is not stable, as it consists of many variable factors. Therefore, depending on the area the author is researching, its dimensions and specifications are defined accordingly. According to Zelenka and Pásková, (2012), carrying capacity is a management plan that is influenced by many factors, including the social and natural environment, activities, operation of the tourism agencies, (Zelenka, & Pásková, 2012). Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) is an important management plan that can help destinations to manage tourism sustainably. The systemic approach to destination management involves considering the destination as a complex system that is influenced by various stakeholders and external factors (Hall, 2011). TCC can be used

as a tool to manage the demand for tourism and ensure that the destination can accommodate visitors sustainably without causing negative impacts (Butler, 1999). TCC can be influenced by various factors, such as the availability of natural resources, infrastructure, and services (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Additionally, the involvement of tourism stakeholders, such as local communities, businesses, and government agencies, is crucial in implementing TCC and ensuring that it is effective (Mbaiwa, 2011). External influences, such as economic, political, and environmental factors, can also affect TCC and the sustainability of tourism in a destination (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011). By adopting a systemic approach to destination management and using TCC as a management plan, destinations can manage tourism sustainably and ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are met.

Conceptual approaches to carrying capacity vary, most often referring to the "permissible number of tourists". The term "permissible" could be approached in two ways. The first states that there is a maximum number that an area can withstand, based on its capacity and resources. The second concerns the desired goal, which is determined by the regulatory framework (urban planning rules, standards). In other words, carrying capacity is not just a mathematical formula but a tool for proper design (Kourentis & Ziankas, 2010; Lagos & Diakomichalis, 2011; Spyros, 2005).

There are some internationally accepted capacity standards, which are used to estimate the number derived from mathematical formulas when calculating it. Below there are three categories (Serraos, 2013) based on which the capacity is calculated with a brief description. Also, each category is accompanied by a corresponding table (Tables 2, 3 and 4) that shows the subcategories of the study area, the international registered standards of people capacity per subcategory and the daily utilization rate. The daily use factor shows the quotient of the users of a unit (beach, protected area, coast, etc.) to the capacity of this unit. The values shown in the tables are some of the constants that result from bibliographic reports and studies (Sanders, 2016):

- Coastal zones

These areas have diverse characteristics and it is advisable to use field research. The environmental dimension is understood, but mainly the socio-psychological dimension, which varies at various levels and is accepted accordingly by residents and tourists.

- Natural areas

The calculation of the capacity in these areas takes into account the ecological characteristics of an area, the number of visitors and the type of activities carried out.

- Anthropogenic/cultural resources

In this category, the main characteristics of the resources are taken into account, such as the size and location of the site (e.g., museums, archaeological sites, etc.) as economic, cultural and psychological factors. The (Smith, 2021; Johnson & Williams, 2020) is to avoid the commercialization of culture for the purpose of tourism development, which could lead to its degradation. One factor that affects the calculation of TCC is the seasonality as the largest concentration of tourists in a place is observed at a certain time of the year. The number of tourist arrivals, the water consumption and the amount of waste are elements that change during this period. Therefore, the S.C.C's goals are to stand as a regulatory tool. Its application is easier in new destinations than in already developed or saturated tourist areas (Spilanis & Vagianni, 2009).

The number of species or units of a species that an ecosystem can sustain without degrading is known as its "carrying capacity". In a systemic sense, a system or subsystem's carrying capacity keeps the overall system in balance. Put simply, in tourism, the carrying capacity is the maximum possible number of people that a tourist destination can accommodate at the same time without causing destruction of the natural, economic or social environment, and without an unacceptable reduction in the quality of satisfaction of visitors (United Nations Environment Programme, 1997). Social issues, management techniques, environmental factors and tourists' expectations (factors that change over time) affect the measurement of carrying capacity. For this reason, Neil (1999) considered it to be particularly difficult to measure the carrying capacity to arrive at a commonly accepted index, that is, a number that can combine and express all these complex parameters.

The presence of tourists can produce two categories of problems, namely the production of solid and liquid waste (the management of which burdens the local community, and their treatment and management must be adequate) and the case of conflict between residents and tourists due to the use of productive resources and services but also due to the effects of the operation of the economy in the region. In order to ensure the sustainable tourism development of the tourism industry, it is necessary to plan the tourist offer and analyse its potential,

environmental, social and economic situations in the region to calculate the potential burden in relation to the carrying capacity of the region. In the case of Cyprus, crimes have been committed and unfortunately are still being committed on the altar of tourism for the sake of the natural environment. Major roads have been opened and are being opened to facilitate people's access to tourist waste (e.g., the new Paphos–Ayia Napa–Protaras road) (Zachariou et al., 2011), increasing noise pollution and air pollution, while destroying the natural environment. Large tourist facilities have been created, greatly reducing agricultural land and inaccessible natural areas, while polluting the soil and subsoil (e.g., Agia, Thekla area, Pegeia, Germasogeia) (Zachariou et al., 2011). The demand for water and electricity has increased and is increasing with huge impacts on the wider and local environment. Many beaches, due to the "overload" of tourists, have been polluted, while due to climate change, the heatwaves are getting worse during the summer months.¹⁷

3.8.1 Tolerance and factors of Tourism Carrying Capacity

Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) has gained significant importance within tourism planning and management due to the growing challenges posed by the adverse effects of tourism on destinations. A key consideration in assessing TCC is the concept of tolerance, which highlights a destination's capacity to harmonize the interests of tourists with those of the local community and environment. This review delves into the various factors influencing TCC and examines their interplay with tolerance, shedding light on the complexities of sustainable tourism development.

Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) is a pivotal concept in sustainable tourism development, encompassing the maximum number of tourists that a destination can accommodate without causing unacceptable impacts on its environment, society, and economy (Butler, 1999). The determination of TCC is multifaceted, with various factors influencing its calculation and management. Pearce (1978) emphasized the importance of physical factors, highlighting the availability of natural resources and the condition of the environment as primary determinants of TCC. This aligns with the notion that the physical carrying capacity, related to the land and resources available for tourism activities, is intricately linked with the environmental carrying

¹⁷ <http://www.ncu.org.cy/MSc/projects/tourism/tourismoskaifisi.html>

capacity, which reflects the environment's ability to sustain tourism impacts. Moreover, social factors play a crucial role in shaping TCC, as noted by Gursoy and Rutherford (2004), who emphasized the significance of community attitudes and tolerance towards tourists. A welcoming and supportive local population is more likely to tolerate a larger number of tourists, thus enhancing the destination's TCC, while hostility towards tourists can constrain TCC due to reduced social acceptance. Economic stability and infrastructure also significantly influence TCC. An economically robust tourism sector can support more tourists, thereby increasing TCC, as suggested by numerous scholars (Liu & Var, 1986).

Furthermore, infrastructure, encompassing transportation and waste management systems, is essential for determining TCC, with adequate infrastructure enabling a higher number of tourists and enhancing TCC (Inskeep, 1991). However, inadequate infrastructure may limit TCC due to constraints on accommodating visitors. Effective management of TCC requires a comprehensive understanding of these factors and their interplay to ensure sustainable tourism development. By balancing the needs of tourists with those of the local community and environment, destinations can optimize TCC and promote long-term sustainability in tourism (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). Continued research is essential to deepen our understanding of the relationship between tolerance and TCC and to develop robust strategies for managing TCC in destinations, thereby fostering sustainable tourism growth (Butler, 1999).

3.8.2 TCC and life cycle of a tourist destination

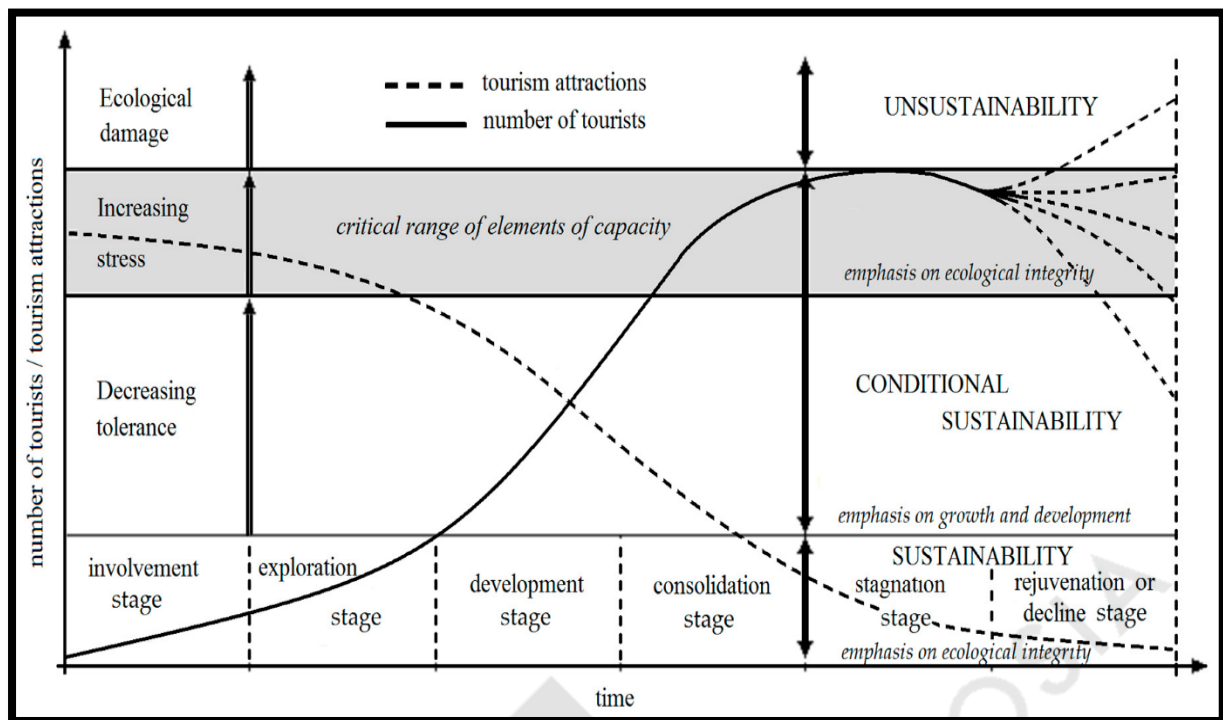
The TCC and the life cycle of a tourist destination are closely related, as the TCC is an essential factor in determining the sustainability of a destination's growth throughout its life cycle. As a destination moves through its life cycle, the TCC may change due to changes in its physical, social, and economic conditions. In the exploration stage, the TCC is generally low, as the destination is not yet developed, and there are limited resources available to accommodate tourists. In the involvement stage, the TCC increases as the destination becomes more developed and can accommodate more tourists.

During the development stage, the TCC may reach its maximum capacity, and the destination may begin to experience negative impacts, such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, and cultural erosion. Therefore, it is essential to manage the TCC during this stage to ensure that the destination's growth remains sustainable. In the decline stage, the TCC may decrease

as the destination's infrastructure deteriorates, and it becomes less attractive to tourists. The development of tourism and its impacts have been the subject of numerous intriguing studies, all of which have reached the same conclusion: the evolution of a tourist destination occurs in stages. The term "stages" refers to the many stages of a region's tourism development, each of which has its own distinct socio-economic structure and range of tourist infrastructures and services (Hatzivgeris, 2003). The concept of the tourist area's life cycle – a temporal sequence beginning with the establishment of the tourist product and concluding in decline or renewal – has been linked to the discussion of development stages.

The stages of the tourism product life cycle, as defined by the Butler model (2006), number six, i.e., discovery, involvement, development, consolidation, withering, a fall or rejuvenation. This model was developed for the fictitious growth of a tourist destination. This point of view is first founded on the idea that a product undergoes modest growth, followed by a quick increase in demand, and finally stability. Sales will decline and the product will be pulled off the market if it doesn't become better. This viewpoint was also supported by animal population growth curves. According to this theory, a growth in an animal species' population is sufficient or exceeds the environmental limit. This may result in the development of the accounting growth curve known as the "S" curve. Figure 11 below shows that the population density is well below the carrying capacity of the environment. Butler (1991) contends that a species' population may be more than its carrying capacity, be at or near its limits or be within a zone where it is. It is said to be in a "steady state or dynamic equilibrium" if the population expansion at the carrying capacity constraints is minimal or constant over time (Papapavlou & Ioakeimidou, 2010).

Figure 11: Outline of the life cycle model of a Butler tourist destination



Source: Szromek (2019)

According to Butler (2009), the five stages of the life cycle of a destination are:

- **Exploration**

This stage is characterized by a small number of tourists and a lack of public infrastructure. The area is discovered by these tourists from another part of the country while the first rudimentary infrastructure in accommodation and restaurants is carried out with the help of local businessmen. The locals treat the tourists as guests or as carriers of different perceptions.

- **Engagement**

Tourist traffic starts to increase. The local community adapts to tourism and recognizes it as the main means of development. Also emerging are the first small-scale tourism investments with parallel pressures on local authorities to increase tourism infrastructure. There is a gradual change of productive structures with a shift to services, while the first signs of urbanization appear in a portion of the population.

- **Development**

At this stage, almost all industries are abandoned and there is a shift to employment (indirect-direct) in tourism. The relations of tourists with the locals gradually become trade relations. Towards the end of this stage, tourism continues to grow, and local tourism services and resources are not sufficient to serve the large number of tourists. Thus, some features for the

area emerge, such as:

- Creation of a complex tourist infrastructure (tourist offices, large hotels, restaurants, taverns, bars, etc.)
- Large-scale state investments and first significant investments by individuals
- Significant changes in the spatial and functional organization of the area
- The area acquires an advertising image.

• **Consolidation**

The number of tourists is still large, while the services are standardized. Many of the hotels and services are under the control of international companies. The local population is now financially dependent on these companies. The dissatisfaction of the locals is becoming more and more intense as they realize the negative effects of tourism on both the economy and the environment.

• **Withering**

The destination is now saturated. Residents are unhappy because tourism has not brought them all the expected benefits, while visitors no longer see in the area those factors that made it attractive (warmth, hospitality, friendliness, clean and crowded environment) and look for other, unadulterated destinations. The end of the cycle is sealed by the phase of transubstantiation, where fall or rejuvenation can occur.

- Fall: the tourist market continues to shrink, and the tourist area can no longer compete with other destinations.
- Revitalization: this can occur by utilizing resources that have hitherto remained unused or by creating new ones.

The phenomenon of mass tourism with these characteristics, which has been particularly intense in recent years, forces tourist destinations to formulate other models of tourism development, taking into account new sustainable models of planning and implementation. It is imperative to calculate the carrying capacity of each destination and to start an extended discussion with local government bodies and citizens on the form of the tourism model of each destination, adapted to the specific characteristics of each place.

The 1980s was the decade in which the so-called “modern tourism” period was characterized by the rapid expansion of mass tourism. In practice, mass tourism means an excessive concentration of tourists in a place during a specific tourist season, with the result that the environment is under pressure, the quality of tourist services is reduced, negative impressions

are created for the permanent residents and, of course, many questions arise regarding the contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of the destination (Papalazaridou, 2010). The paragraph delineates the cyclical nature of post-war tourism development models, a phenomenon experienced by Cyprus in the aftermath of conflict. Such models historically relied on organized mass tourism and were shaped by various influencing factors, contributing to their eventual decline. Conversely, the contemporary approach to tourism development, epitomized by the Tourism Plan 2030, underscores a departure from traditional paradigms towards specialized and alternative forms of tourism. This forward-looking plan is grounded in the principles of sustainable development, leveraging new technologies, hyper-segmentation of tourism demand, and evolving societal attitudes towards leisure (Hare, 2005).

3.8.3 Tourism Indicators

TCC focuses on different levels of tolerance, such as how tolerant the ecological system is to the tourist invasion and activity of the destination under consideration (Sheppard & Williams, 2016) and how tolerant it is to activities created as a result of tourism activity (Lewis, 2017), as well as how tolerant the socio-cultural structure is toward the introduction of foreign cultures, ideals and beliefs (Kimhi & Oliel, 2019), and how much tolerance there is in the economic structure (Ormerod, 2016). In the event of the carrying capacity being exceeded in any impact area, the tourism development process will be hampered, and development may be considered unsustainable (Rees, 1990; Ruhanen, 2013; UNWTO, 2011). Damage caused by exceeded capacity can be related to any of the impact areas (Pulido-Fernández and Rodríguez-Díaz, 2016) or to tourist satisfaction (McCool and Lime, 2001), but the end result will be the same. Either the destination will decline due to a reduction in tourism activity (tourists look for alternative destinations) (Muler et al., 2018) or the combination of tourist arrivals will change, making it increasingly difficult for the destination to achieve its design objectives (Lobo et al., 2013). Based on the above factors and the influence of Agenda 21 and the Rio outcomes, there is an urgent need to formulate indicators for measuring Tourism Carrying Capacity (Marsiglio, 2015; Pinto et al., 2015) that will be differentiated from the classic growth indicators based on gross domestic product and gross national product (Peet & Hartwick, 2015). International bodies such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Environment Agency and the World Tourism Organization have agreed to the need to form acceptable indicators for measuring the carrying capacity of sustainable tourism development (Chen & Teng, 2016; Coccossis & Mexa, 2004;

Jurado et al., 2012, 2013; Manning, 2007; UNWTO, 2020a). Setting boundaries in tourism activity is only one aspect of a successful tourism development effort (Cupul & Rodriguez, 2017). Destinations can also take steps to change the behaviour of those involved in the tourism process (Graymore et al., 2010; Pung et al., 2020), either by creating an appropriate economic context (Jurado et al., 2012) or by investing in awareness campaigns (Ma et al., 2017). They can also encourage the development of more sustainable forms of tourism activity (Lankford et al., 2003). Since both of these strategies help to meet tourism demand in a way that minimizes the net negative effects, they are part of the same framework (Kurecic and Kokotovic, 2017). The indicators are organized in three groups: physical-ecological indicators, socio-demographic indicators and political-economic indicators. There is a rich literature on the indicators that fall into each category (Chen & Teng, 2016; Coccossis & Mexa, 2020; Jurado et al., 2012;2013; Lagos, et al., 2015; Lozano et al., 2008; Manning, 2007; Muler et al., 2018; Pearce et al., 1998; Reddy, 2008; Stoddard et al., 2012; UNRIC, 2019; UNWTO, 2020a; Wang et al., 2020; Wei et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2017a). Indicatively, the indicators that are most often recorded in the international literature are categorized according to the dimensions of Coccossis and Mexa (2004):

A. Physio-ecological indicators

Tourism Operation Index (Pearce et al., 1998), Tourism Intensity Index (Saveriades, 2000), Tourism Pressure Index (Wei et al., 2016), Tourism Development Density Index (Coccossis, 2001), Area of Protected Areas (Vivaldi et al., 2013), number of endangered species (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006).

B. Socio-demographic indicators

Cultural heritage pressures (Lozano et al., 2008), percentage of residents benefiting from tourists (Latinopoulos & Vagiona, 2013), local community satisfaction (Simon et al., 2004), tourist-immigrant correlation index and crime (Mehmood et al., 2015), Tourism density index (Lagos et al., 2015).

C. Political-economic indicators

Integration of environmental criteria in tourism planning (Torres-Delgado and Palomeque, 2014), Economically active population/beds (Coccossis, 2001).

Numerous academics have examined the characteristics of carrying capacity and determined the subgroups that it can be divided into. It can be categorized into physical, environmental or ecological, social, economic, perceptual and infrastructure, according to Swarbrooke Spilanis and Vagianni, (2009). According to Pearce, the ecological, social, economic and perceptual environments each have a different carrying capacity for the growth of tourism (Kourtesis & Ziankas, 2010). However, Neil classifies infrastructure, socio-politics and biophysics as categories (Spyratos, 2005). The following Table 3, presents the components of carrying capacity according to each researcher in more detail.

Table 3: Components of carrying capacity

Natural	Ecological: the ability of natural resources and ecosystems to support tourism development.
	Spatial: the ability of infrastructure and superstructure to support tourism development.
Social	Psychological: the pleasure of the visitor is the measure for the development of tourism in an area.
	Cultural: describes the tolerance of the domestic population in tourism.
Economic	It focuses on the relationship of the local economy to tourism (existence of local workforce, strengthening of local investment programmes).
Perceptual	It refers to the number of people who can be accommodated in a host venue based on meeting their needs and developing different types of experience.
Biophysical	It concerns the effects caused to the natural environment.
Socio-political	It concerns the effects on the population.
Infrastructure	It refers to the quality of the experience that tourists gain during their visit to the area.

Source: Spyratos (2005)

based on criteria influenced by a variety of factors. Indicators that have already been identified in similar studies and are known to have yielded essential data for evaluating the area are frequently used. In many cases, indicators are linked to the economic, social and environmental principles of sustainable tourism development. This classification leads to conclusions about the economic, social and environmental sectors (Spilanis & Vagianni, 2009). Additional criteria for indicator selection are divided into four categories (Landres et al., 2005):

- Feasibility: The indicator must be accessible, which means there must already be data to study.
- Importance: The indicator should be useful for the area being studied, and its results should be explicable.
- Response: The index should respond to management measures and policies that are chosen, as its changes are caused by the effects of tourists/visitors rather than environmental factors.
- Reliability: The index is measurable, produces the same results when measured by different people under identical conditions and can be repeated.

The ultimate goal of calculating the indicators is to develop a more effective leisure management plan; that is, the indicators should be related to three main factors: the needs and desires of visitors/tourists, the opportunities presented by the space available for tourism development and the management rate that may exist (Wang et al., 2020).

The following are the most common indicators used to calculate a visitor's carrying capacity: “*Physical Carrying Capacity (PCC), Real Carrying Capacity (RCC) and Effective Carrying Capacity (ECC)*” (Wang et al., 2020). PCC refers to the length of a route, the time it takes for a visitor to travel it and the amount of space required. RCC addresses space characteristics such as soil erosion, walking difficulty and so on. Finally, ECC is related to management facilities, training and staff suitability, among other things. Because the estimation of each index depends on the previous one, the indices are calculated one after the other as mutually dependent levels, and the following relationships between the indices PCC, RCC and ECC must be valid (Corbau et al., 2019). The PCC is always greater than the RCC, and the RCC is greater than the ECC, thus: $PCC > RCC$ and $RCC \geq ECC$. Physical Carrying Capacity (PCC).

Taking into account the foregoing descriptions, the concept of maintaining a level of use and development that will not result in socio-cultural or environmental deterioration is based on establishing carrying capacity or being perceived by tourists as undermining their appreciation and enjoyment (Thyne et al., 2018). One of these approaches addresses SCC by utilizing host population tolerance levels and attitudes toward SCC restrictions on tourist development. According to Joshi and Dahal (2019), the reciprocating impacts of visitors and hosts can be converted into varying degrees of host irritation depending on the volume of tourism. A cycle similar to those of destinations exists, and changes in time occur within the degree of host irritations. Residents of tourist destinations experience antagonism, irritation, apathy and euphoria. The actual level of irritation emerges from contact between visitors and hosts and is determined by the degree of mutual compatibility.

Nevertheless, even when factors such as colour, economic status and culture are excluded, tensions can be generated simply by the sheer number of groups. As a result, it is possible that a predominantly negative reaction will emerge at some point, potentially harming the tourist industry unless restrictions on tourism development occur. However, measuring attitudes is difficult and cannot be done objectively. Also, through a procedure of adaptation, the attitudes of the host community will enhance the implementation of the above policy. The use of indicators in trying to determine the carrying capacity of an area is one of the most effective ways to present the pressures and needs created in the area. Following a review of the literature, the table below presents indicators used in TCC studies. Their classification (natural-ecological, socio-demographic and political-economic) was founded on the long-term management of tourism development. Populations are likely to change over time or due to population turnover.

The European system of tourism indicators is specifically intended for tourist destinations. It is designed as a locally owned and managed process to monitor, manage and enhance the sustainability of a tourism destination. It has resulted from lessons learned from previous initiatives in relation to indicator systems and has undergone adjustments based on observations gathered from field trials in a range of destinations in Europe. The system consists of a set of indicators, a set of tools and a data set. It is designed to be a tool that can be used and applied from any destination without requiring special training. It can also be a useful means of monitoring a destination's performance and making better decisions about its management, as well as leading to the formulation of appropriate policies. The structure of the present system consists of 27 basic and 40 optional indicators. These indicators can be used on a voluntary basis, either alongside or integrated into existing destination monitoring systems. The system is flexible. It can be expanded or narrowed to meet the needs of the destination, the interests of local stakeholders and the specific sustainability issues facing the destination. A key principle of the index system is the sharing of responsibility, ownership and decision-making in relation to the destination. Encouraging collaboration within a team to collect and report information is a powerful way to enhance effective destination management.

The concept of carrying capacity is integral to the sustainable management of various systems, encompassing environments, ecosystems, and, notably, tourism destinations. Researchers have delved into the nuanced components that constitute carrying capacity, recognizing its

multifaceted nature and critical implications for the equilibrium of a given system. The exploration of carrying capacity components reflects a comprehensive endeavour to understand the intricate interplay of factors influencing the sustainable utilization of resources and spaces. The focus is directed towards elucidating the insights gleaned from scholarly investigations into the diverse facets that collectively contribute to the conceptual framework of carrying capacity.

The researchers' view, illustrated in Table 4, identifies key components of carrying capacity crucial for sustainable tourism. These include natural factors (ecological and spatial), social factors (psychological and cultural), economic factors, perceptual considerations, biophysical impacts, socio-political effects, and infrastructure quality. These dimensions collectively inform tourism development strategies and ensure the preservation of natural and cultural resources while enhancing visitor experiences.

Table 4: Carrying capacity components according to the researchers

	Percentage of avoidance of use pesticides	Prokopiouetal.,2015
	Percentage of seawater over-pumping in aquifer in relation to the S.C.C. of boreholes	Prokopiouetal.,2015
	Percentage of green in relation with the urban fabric	Prokopiouetal.,2015
	Percentage of clearings	Prokopiouetal.,2015
	Percentage of drinking water in relation to availability of water	Prokopiouetal.,2015
	Coast users by length of swimming shore	Giannelis2003 Prokopiouetal.,2015
	Beaches over usage	kotzamopoulos&Pavlakis 2003 Lagos &Diakomichalakis 2011 Prokopiouetal.,2015 Tselentis,2006 Chen, J., Ye, G., Jing, C., Wu, J. and Ma, P., 2017.
Social - Culture	Permanent tourists Numbers	Serraos, 2013 Zacharatos et al., 2006 Kourentis&Ziakas, 2010 Zacharatos et al., 2006 Papageorgiou&Tortoni, 2003 Maggi & Fredella Franco Lorenzo, 2010
	Acceptable Number of Tourists	Serraos, 2013, Lagos &Diakomichalakis 2011 kotzamopoulos&Pavlakis 2003
	Tourism earnings and Investments	Serraos, 2013, Kourentis&Ziakas, 2010
	Tourism Index Specialization	Serraos, 2013, kotzamopoulos&Pavlakis 2003 Giannelis2003
	Tourism Index Penetration	Lagos &Diakomichalakis 2011 Mallas,2003
	Number of per Local / Nights Index	Kourentis&Ziakas2010 Tselentis,2006 Giannelis,2013,Prokopiouetal.,2015
	Psychological Issues	Lagos &Diakomichalakis 2011 Serraos,2013 Mallas2003 kotzamopoulos&Pavlakis 2003
	Summer house / 1000 inhabitants	kotzamopoulos&Pavlakis 2003
	Attractiveness index	Lagos &Diakomichalakis 2011
	Local conservation indextradition and culture	Zacharatosetal.,2006
	Visiting period	Kourentis&Ziakas2010

	Employment and Public expenditure and Revenue	
	Social Behaviour	
	Health and Safety	
	Criminality	
	Residents Satisfaction and Tourists Satisfaction	
	Users for network endurance infrastructure and water supply	Papageorgiou&Tortopidi 2003
Economic	Economically active population per bed	Lagos & Diakomichalakis 2011 Giannelis, 2003 Wang, J., Huang, X., Gong, Z. and Cao, K., 2020.
	Number of nights / sq.km	Lagos & Diakomichalakis 2011 Maggi& Fredella Franco Lorenzo, 2010, kotzampouras&Paulakis 2003, Chen, J., Ye, G., Jing, C., Wu, J. and Ma, P., 2017., Kynakou, K., Hatris, G. and Sotiranos, E., 2017
	Percentage of fullness hotels (in low and high season)	Tselentis, 2006 Wang, J., Huang, X., Gong, Z. and Cao, K., 2020.
	Tourist-visitor relations to resource attractiveness	Papageorgiou&Tortopidi 2003 Chen, J., Ye, G., Jing, C., Wu, J. and Ma, P., 2017.
	Number of arrivals / sq.km.	Maggi& Fredella Franco Lorenzo, 2010
	Average length of stay tourists	Kourentis&Ziarkas 2010 Chen, J., Ye, G., Jing, C., Wu, J. and Ma, P., 2017.
	Minimum required stop between visitors	Kourentis&Ziarkas 2010
	Users for network endurance infrastructure and water supply	Papageorgiou&Tortopidi 2003
	Tourist accommodation to residents	Papageorgiou&Tortopidi 2003
	Percentage of tourism in the GDP of the region	Kourentis&Ziarkas 2010, Giannelis 2003 Mallas 2003, Wang, J., Huang, X., Gong, Z. and Cao, K., 2020. Kynakou, K., Hatris, G. and Sotiranos, E., 2017
	Average annual employment in the tourism sector / total employment	Papageorgiou&Tortopidi 2003 Wang, J., Huang, X., Gong, Z. and Cao, K., 2020.
	Average annual employment in the tourism sector / total employment	Papageorgiou&Tortopidi 2003 Wang, J., Huang, X., Gong, Z. and Cao, K., 2020. Kynakou, K., Hatris, G. and Sotiranos, E., 2017
	Local industry relationship with the local government	Prokopiou 2011 Wang, J., Huang, X., Gong, Z. and Cao, K., 2020.
	Number of tourists accommodation	Mallas 2003, Chen, J., Ye, G., Jing, C., Wu, J. and Ma, P., 2017. Kynakou, K., Hatris, G. and Sotiranos, E., 2017
	Main to auxiliary accommodation	Papageorgiou&Tortopidi 2003, Chen, J., Ye, G., Jing, C., Wu, J. and Ma, P., 2017.

Source: author's own

3.8.4 Calculation Methods of TCC

In the course of the development of a region with a "tourist economy" and in order for the region to approach its rich economic areas, it must set a limit to the increasing expansion of tourism, in order not to disturb the balance of its compositional elements in relation to. In this way, the endurance limits of the tourist development of the area can be determined, which determine the carrying capacity of each tourist area and are the catalyst for shaping harmonious relations between tourism and the environment. This is achieved by adopting the strategy of sustainable tourism development, with which the development limits of each region can be determined in relation to the life cycle of the tourist destination (Lagos, 1998). Therefore, the most basic studies on carrying capacity revolve around three main components or dimensions: physical-ecological, socio-demographic and political-economic. These dimensions reflect the range of issues that occur in practice. It is clear that, when referring to bearing capacity, the three components should be considered with different weight (importance) when referring to different destinations. "Measures of quality of life have attracted the attention of governments worldwide as being more comprehensive than the traditional economic measure of prosperity" (Diene et al., 2018).

Measurement of the TCC for the natural-ecological component

(a) Analysis of the general ecological and physical characteristics of the area – data collection – analysis. Within this context, it is necessary to define the limits of the system, i.e. the spatial extent of the area based on the homogeneous or functional characteristics. It would be useful if official census data or data from relevant municipalities were used for the area under study. Particular attention is normally given to main features and processes such as hydrology, coastal dynamics (in the case of coastal areas and islands), vegetation plans and cover, distribution of wildlife species, natural and cultural landscape, plans for urban development, land uses, transport network, water supply and sewage disposal, waste treatment facilities, energy production, presence of various services necessary to support tourism (e.g. health facilities, etc.). (b) Determination of the relations with the adjacent/neighbouring areas, based on the strong links with the system under study. The presence of tourist infrastructure and tourist attractions in the neighbouring areas may contribute to the pressures exerted on the study area.

Measurement of the tourist TCC for the socio-demographic component

(a) Analysis of general demographic and social characteristics of the area. Data collection

analysis. Analysis of population growth and density, age structure, etc. (b) Analysis of cultural issues and social relations. Particular emphasis is often given to those aspects that have an impact on the use of resources and on the relationship of the local community to visitors/tourists (e.g. conflicts, social tensions, etc.). (c) Defining the relationship with the wider system (cultural and social conditions in the wider area), which may affect the system under study.

Measurement of the tourism TCC for the political-economic component

Numerous academics have examined the characteristics of carrying capacity and determined the subgroups that it can be divided into. Swarbrooke claims that it can be classified as physical, ecological, social, economic, perceptual and infrastructure-related (Spilanis & Vagianni, 2009). Thus, according to Pearce, the ecological, social, economic and perceptual environments all have different carrying capacities for the growth of tourism (Kourtesis & Ziankas, 2010). Infrastructure, socio-politics and biophysics are three categories that Neil defines the perspective of the tourists, the perceptual element is quite important. Social refers to the most effective use of S.C. Cs without causing negative feelings to influence locals' travel-related behaviours. Discovering the phases that a tourism location goes through has engaged numerous researchers. Gilbert initially proposed the idea of the life cycle of a tourism attraction 65 years ago (Andriotis, 2018). A tourist destination's life cycle corresponds to the life cycle of a commodity. The two ideas are comparable, but a product is simple to replace or remove, however the adverse impacts affect a location's future direction and identity (Hatzivgeris, 2003).

Butler's work provides a useful model of the evolution of a tourism destination area over time. Butler's tourist area development cycle is useful because it addresses the idea, inherent in the concept of sustainable development, of an environmental limit, or carrying capacity, to tourist numbers, beyond which development in the destination area becomes unacceptable and declines. In other words, "...unless specific measures are taken, tourist destinations and resources will inevitably become overused, unattractive and ultimately experience degraded use" (Butler, 1991). The six stages of the Butler model (2020a;2020b) – exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, withering and fall or revitalization – were developed for a fictitious development of a tourism destination (Butler, 1999). The idea of a product life cycle and the growth rates of animal populations serve as the foundation for this point of view. According to the former, a product will expand slowly, then its demand will quickly climb, and eventually it will reach a stable stage. Sales will continue to decline and the product will

eventually be withdrawn if it doesn't get better. If the necessary steps are taken, the "product" in the instance of the tourist destination will be able to return after it exits the market. It will be able to be used in another way if this is not possible. According to the second principle, a growth in animal species either exceeds the environmental limit or serves as a sufficient population. This may result in the formation of the accounting growth curve, or "S" curve as depicted in the graph below (Papapavlou & Loakeimidou, 2003).

There have reportedly been numerous attempts to create a model of resort evolution, but the model displayed below is based on Richard Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle model, which refers to resorts as "products" that go through a number of evolutionary stages in client demand. There have been numerous successful attempts by researchers to calculate the carrying capacity using a variety of empirical models. Numerous such models have guided the study's efforts to advance and create more effective quantitative representation. A numerical depiction of TCC with the overall level of economic, physical and environmental resources in the context of China was recently proposed by Wang and colleagues (2020), who also provided new empirical clarification on this concept. They emphasized the significance of economic carrying capacity (ECC), taking into account factors like employment, inequality and income. Many models have been utilized to adequately reflect the many variables that have been evaluated in various research efforts. Internal, the System Dynamic (SD) model, the Biophysical Imaging Model and the Multidimensional Programmable Model are some examples of these. Caday-Fillone and Villanueva (2019) highlighted the many approaches used by researchers to calculate the TCC as well as the challenges they encountered during data collection, data preparation, sample error reduction, study bias differentiation and the enumeration of forecasting models.

The situation calls for a thorough investigation and empirical portrayal. In one of their seminal representations, Makhadmeh and colleagues (2020) concluded that TCC is an important path in tourism organization after reviewing numerous research works that evaluated the health of the tourism industry in Cyprus, its all-encompassing impact on the ecology and environment, the industry's growth potential, the industry's economic contribution to the country's GDP and so forth. It is the tool for SCC to bring up levels for environmentally conscious travel and preserving cultural legacies. The Parametric Importance Unit (PIU) multiplies the individual indicator's associated significance in forecasting the outcome by the tourist index once the Indicator Quality Unit (IQU) has first calculated it. Additional research on the target nation's

tourism industry and effect assessments led to the conclusion that the country's policy measures were appropriate. The PIU of each individual sign is calculated using the mathematical average of the oracle's numbers. Joshi and Dahal (2019), in their multifaceted study, set a unidirectional objective to examine how TCC and CCC are related to one another in the Nepalese Annapurna Conservation Area. The main factor used to assess whether it would be feasible to expand tourism in a certain area is TCC. The study conducted by Caday-Fillone and Villanueva (2019) has as its major objective to investigate the numerous efforts made to evaluate the TCC in the tourism sector. New procedures have evolved in place of a mathematical process, in line with fundamental discoveries, which explains how carrying capacity can be reached in a tailored configuration. These are the planned and coordinated tools that permit complex fact validation and serve as a tool to provide results that facilitate participant feedback and lead to evaluation.

The replacement of delegated measures must be certified and periodically checked for correspondence and recurrence because it is of functional importance. The assessment of carrying capacity as stated by the Ivy Panda (2019) report is used to indicate the effect of tourism on the environment and aims to measure the same with the help of a suitable qualitative representation. It exhibits a noteworthy geographic expansion in tourism (the report "Material for a Document" contains the findings from the study "Defining, Measuring and Evaluating Carrying Capacity in European Tourism Destinations", Athens, 2002). Both the tourist destination extent and the individual extent are used to measure carrying capacity. It has been the subject of extensive investigation, the findings of which led to the development of a method for determining carrying capacity. The focus of the research was on creating regular formulas that could be applied to many tourist destinations. Different analyses have been classified according to their distinct quality, which was determined using actual evidence. Every tourist destination has a unique dimension for its physical, economic and social make-up. Tourism has a negative impact on a destination's population, natural environment and economy. The study came to the conclusion that the interests of both tourists and locals should be taken into consideration. A tourist destination cannot prosper as a tourist destination or sustain its biodiversity if the local community does not embrace tourism and does not change its attitude toward the activities associated with tourism.

Two challenges in this sector are an excess of tourism-related issues and the negative side effects of tourism, according to Bertocchi and colleagues (2020). The writers pointed out that one of the most popular tourist destinations, Venice, is suffering from over tourism. Finding a guide that can solve the issue is one of the study's key goals, and it is based on Venice. The

fuzzy linear programming model was used to determine the structure of a tolerable number of tourists in the popular tourist destination of Venice in order to highlight the best relationship between economic profit and the control of adverse tourism effects. This was accomplished by compiling data and learning information from residents and visitors. It was demonstrated that using this fuzzy linear programming model in this situation would make it easier for tourist destinations to understand problems with long-term tourism growth. This approach can also assist in evaluating additional ways to deal with the oversupply of tourists, aiding in the creation of a plan to effectively manage visitor flow. The maximum number of tourists that can grow is determined, and the conditions for a region's tourist development are limited, depending on the criteria that are individually chosen for each case and the indicators employed (Oksana et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, Wang and colleagues (2020) emphasize that TCC lacks future dynamic trends. According to Buan et al. (2016), one of the most important things to consider is how crowded tourist sites are. The author conducted a secondary data investigation, taking a number of aspects into account. The tourists that were interviewed for the primary data provided comments on a variety of factors. The survey's findings were very helpful in determining the carrying capacity and in calculating the appropriate rotation coefficients. In Luisiana, Laguna, the inquiry was an empirical one conducted in February 2016. Areas visited by tourists, the average length of a visit, the number of hours that attractions are open to visitors, the frequency of daily visits and other relevant indicators are reviewed and evaluated in depth. It was unique in that it employed primary survey data to determine the amount of tolerance and long-term standards for numerous indicators. The tourism planning system, which after a traumatic experience in many countries (Costa, 1992; Dragisevic, 1990) developed into a high-quality and environmental orientation instrument to lead tourism growth, is at the heart of the challenge of recognizing TCC, as the author has already highlighted. Depending on the location where, and period within which, they are used, empirical criteria that are discovered via assessment and comparison of comparable situations in other nations and locations are used to determine the TCC (Parpairis, 1993). The location is first investigated on a local level, when information about the state of affairs and local characteristics is gathered. The proposed technique is then presented, during which indicators, mathematical formulas, questionnaires, geographic information systems (GIS) and other qualitative and quantitative methodologies are applied.

The fundamental traits of primary and secondary tourist supply and demand are then examined

using the proper indicators and sizes. The social, economic and environmental repercussions are then examined, and suggestions are made to lessen the adverse effects. The methods that have already been applied in various situations are presented below. Some rely more on theory, while others are more dependent on real-time data, while yet others blend the two. Capturing a place's borders is a common objective of all approaches in order to prevent it from deteriorating to the point where it could have disastrous effects on the environment, both natural and artificial. TCC attitudes and signs might not be suitable for coastal areas that are prone to excessive tourist activity. By including arithmetic carrying capacity in the actual scenario, the author demonstrated the significance of an accurate assessment of sustainable development and carrying capacity through the use of novel methodologies and technologies. There haven't been many studies that examine the factors that go into carrying capacity calculations. The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) were first presented in 1985 and implemented as a plan in 1987. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), Process for Visitor Impact Management (VIM), Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) and Management Process for Visitor Activities (VAMP) in the United States are some of the techniques that had the aim of functionalizing carrying capacity issues. The method signs and quality are the same as in LAC-made VERP and VIM. Among all study methods, the VIM stood out for identifying the causes of tourism effects, identifying ways to manage them and putting them into action using other methods. The Tourism Optimization Management Model (TOMM) is a modern LAC-style approach. It identifies the business opportunity and provides a structure to care for the participants. The DPSIR model (Drivers, Pressures, State, Impacts and Responses) is another recent model that evaluates the facts that tell of current and future conditions.

3.8.4.1. Motivational forces, pressures, status, impacts, reactions – Drivers, Pressures, State, Impact, Responses (DPSIR)

This is a model (Table 5) that examines the impact of human activities on the environment. In the first phase, the area is analysed in order to understand how tourism is developing and any problems that arise. A framework for assessing carrying capacity in the area is created. The purpose of this method is to SCC limits for each indicator, so that their evaluation is more substantial and effective regarding the decisions that must be taken next (Castellani & Sala, 2012). The method was applied in Spain on the eastern Costa del Sol with the aim of expanding the development boundaries of the area using indicators and organizing the data through the DPSIR (Navarro et al., 2011).

Table 5: Drivers, Pressures, State, Impact, Responses (DPSIR)

DRIVERS	Construction and management of accommodation structures and facilities, presence of tourists, road traffic
PRESSURES	Emissions of air pollutants, emissions of pollutants to surface water, municipal solid waste generation, land use and soil erosion, energy consumption, presence of tourists in protected areas
STATE	Concentration of pollutants in the air and water, availability of groundwater, amount of solid municipal waste, level of urbanization and overcrowding in natural locations
IMPACTS	Biodiversity loss, wildlife disturbance, adverse effects on human health
RESPONSES	Promotion of sustainable tourism: reduction of water consumption, energy, waste production, promotion of public transport, use of renewable energy sources, promotion of ecotourism activities

Source: Navarro et al., 2011

3.8.4.2 Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC)

The researcher, in this method, focuses on the conditions prevailing in an area and its resources. It is accepted that there are changes in the area as a direct consequence of tourism development, and the conditions that must exist are studied in order to avoid the risk of environmental damage. Also, the experiential information provided by the citizens themselves about the positive and negative effects of tourism development is taken seriously (Krumpe and Stokes, 1994). It is mainly a method of theoretical analysis and consists of the following nine steps (EOT, 2000):

1. Identifying issues or problems that arise in the area
2. Determining the ideal uses per area
3. Selection of indicators for measuring the state of natural resources and social conditions
4. Recording of natural resources and social conditions
5. Establishment of constants for the maintenance of the state of natural resources and social conditions
6. Identification of possible alternative locations of the areas of ideal uses
7. Identification of management actions for each alternative
8. Evaluation and final selection of alternatives
9. Implementation of a management plan and monitoring of conditions

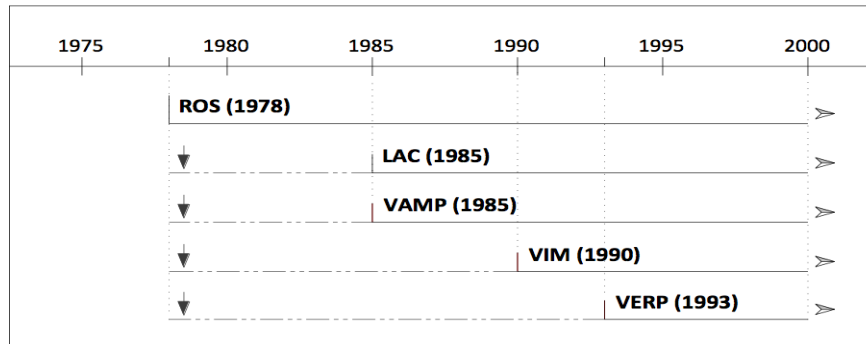
The LAC method was applied to a section of Arthur's Pass Park in New Zealand to identify and manage the impact of visitors on the natural environment (McKay, 2006). LAC applications in New Zealand (Kazmierow, 1996; Wray et al., 2005) have shown that the early stages of the LAC process are useful in determining levels of acceptance in natural areas; studies cover only the first half of the LAC procedure. Its full implementation would include the involvement of stakeholders in the decision on appropriate management actions regarding the impact of visitors to an area, the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the impact and the effectiveness of the strategies. Research to evaluate the full LAC process should be done in collaboration with the Department of Conservation, as independent researchers do not have the authority to implement the actions recommended in areas of New Zealand. The model suffers from a lack of ways to determine whether the change is reversible or not and the state of the socio-cultural or physical system is still acceptable (Manning, 2007). For similar reasons, the LAC model (for applications and analyses of the LAC model, see, for example, Ahn et al. (2002) and Frauman and Banks (2011)) cannot overcome this basic problem either. Some authors, therefore, doubt the concept of carrying capacity – for example, Papageorgiou & Brotherton (1999) and McCool and Lime (2001) state that the mentioned concept lacks theory, is not realistic in application and that it is impossible to measure carrying capacity. Others doubt that load-carrying capacity can be used to perform accurate analyses and in practical management (Buckley, 2012).

3.8.4.3 Management – Process for Visitor Activities (VAMP)

The purpose of this model, created for the management of parks in Canada, is to provide suitable conditions for visitors to learn about the heritage of the park and participate in educational activities. The steps to follow in the management plan process include creating terms of reference, confirming existing park conditions, analysing the current situation, and defining priorities for proper park management. (Nilsen & Tayler, 1997)

The following Figure 13, shows the time of the appearance:

Figure 13: The evolution of TCC measurement methods



Source: Nilsen and Tayler, 1997

3.8.4.4 Visitor experience and resource protection – Visitor Experience Resource Protection (VERP)

The method for exploring the physical, biological, and social impacts, factors, and conditions responsible for problems, which is quite similar to the LAC method, includes several steps such as carrying out pre-evaluation and review of the database, review of management objectives, selection of key indicators and templates, comparison of standards and existing conditions, identification of possible causes of the effects, defining management strategies, and application (Nilsen & Tayler, 1997). Some of the indicators used in the method are presented figure 14 below:

Figure 14: Indicating TCC Impacts.

CATEGORY	INDICATORS
Physical Impact	Soil density, pH, productivity, drainage
	Waste density and depth
	Area for full camping
	Number of social paths
	Visible corrosion
Biological Impacts	Soil density, ground cover/loss
	Diversity of plant species
	Percentage of exotic plant species
	Plant species, strength and diseases
	Trees – cut
	Wildlife species, diversity
	Reproduction success
Social Impact	Visitor perception of overcrowding
	Visitor perception of the impact on the environment
	Satisfaction of visitors
	Visitor reports of unwanted behaviours

Source: Gallo et al., 2001

This method was applied on a Colombian island, San Andres, in 2001, for mooring boats. The purpose was to create a visitor impact management framework. It has been proposed to change the anchors to mooring buoys as a design element in a marine protected area (Gallo et al., 2001).

3.8.4.5. Bouillon method

This is the most practical method the authors have mentioned, as it is a mathematical formula through which the carrying capacity of a tourist area is calculated. The formula is as follows:

$$TCC = \frac{\text{Total area used by tourists}}{\text{Average area appropriate to the visitor}}$$

Of course, the average area for each visitor varies depending on the destination under consideration. The method then calculates the number of visitors that a place can withstand:

$$\text{TCC} = \frac{\text{Total area used by tourists}}{\text{Average area appropriate to the visitor}}$$

The rate of visitor renewal is calculated by dividing the total duration for which the destination receives visitors by the average duration of a visit (Grevena et al., 2008). The choice of a methodology for the calculation of TCC requires special attention to be adapted to the study area and the existing situations that have been created there in order to achieve realistic and sustainable proposals. Finally, the correct prioritization of indicators can facilitate the management and construction.

In conclusion the calculation of TCC is an essential aspect of tourism planning and management. The methods used to calculate TCC vary depending on the destination, the type of tourism, and the resources available. The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC), Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP), Tourism Impact Model (TIM), and Economic Carrying Capacity (ECC) are some of the commonly used methods for calculating TCC in tourism planning and management. These methods help to ensure that tourism growth is sustainable and does not cause any negative impacts on the destination.

3.8.5 TCC Models and Sustainable Tourism Development in Cyprus

The TCC concept has gained significant importance in recent years, particularly in the context of sustainable tourism development. In the realm of Sustainable Tourism Management, TCC models play a pivotal role in achieving a delicate balance between reaping economic benefits and mitigating environmental and socio-cultural impacts. These models offer structured frameworks for assessing and overseeing tourism development in destinations, empowering stakeholders to make well-informed decisions that ensure the sustainable support of tourism growth within a destination's capacity.

Among the array of TCC models, several stand out for their widespread recognition and efficacy in guiding sustainable tourism practices. These models provide invaluable guidance in navigating the complexities of tourism development while safeguarding the integrity of natural and cultural resources. Through their application, destinations can strive for harmonious growth that fosters both economic prosperity and environmental stewardship. Let's delve into the essence of some commonly employed TCC models, exploring their principles, methodologies, and contributions to sustainable tourism management. There are several TCC models used in tourism planning and management. These models vary in terms of their approach, methodology, and indicators used to measure the TCC. Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models are crucial tools in sustainable tourism management, aiming to balance economic benefits with environmental and socio-cultural impacts. Several commonly used TCC models provide frameworks for assessing and managing tourism development in destinations. These models help stakeholders make informed decisions to ensure that tourism growth remains within the capacity of a destination to support it sustainably.

One widely recognized TCC model is the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework, developed by Stankey et al. (1981) in the 1980s [1]. The LAC approach focuses on defining the desired future conditions of a destination, identifying indicators of environmental and social quality, and setting standards to maintain or improve these conditions. By continuously monitoring these indicators, stakeholders can adjust management strategies to keep tourism development within acceptable limits. Another commonly used TCC model is the Tourism Impact Management and Planning (TIMP) framework, proposed by Hall in the 1990s [2]. The TIMP model emphasizes the importance of understanding the dynamic relationship between tourism demand and the capacity of a destination to absorb it sustainably. By assessing the physical, environmental, and social carrying capacity of a destination, stakeholders can develop strategies to manage tourism impacts effectively and enhance destination resilience. Additionally, the Destination Carrying Capacity (DCC) model, introduced by Coccossis & Parpairis in the late 1980s [3], focuses on the interactions between tourism demand, supply, and carrying capacity at the destination level. The DCC model considers both physical and social carrying capacities, taking into account factors such as infrastructure, natural resources, and cultural heritage. By integrating quantitative and qualitative indicators, stakeholders can evaluate destination capacity and implement measures to optimize tourism development sustainably.

Furthermore, the Visitor Impact Management (VIM) framework, developed by Weaver and Lawton in the 2000s [4], provides a systematic approach to managing visitor impacts in protected areas and natural attractions. The VIM model emphasizes the importance of understanding visitor behaviour, assessing impacts on the environment and local communities, and implementing strategies to mitigate negative effects. By engaging stakeholders in collaborative planning and decision-making processes, destinations can achieve sustainable tourism development while conserving natural and cultural resources.

Moreover, the Tourism Sustainability Assessment (TSA) model, proposed by Font et al. in the 2010s (2016) [5], offers a comprehensive framework for evaluating tourism sustainability across multiple dimensions. The TSA model considers economic, environmental, socio-cultural, and governance aspects of tourism development, providing a holistic assessment of destination performance. By benchmarking against sustainability criteria and best practices, destinations can identify strengths and weaknesses and prioritize actions to enhance sustainability. These commonly used TCC models provide valuable frameworks for assessing and managing tourism development sustainably. By integrating environmental, socio-cultural, and economic considerations, stakeholders can make informed decisions to optimize tourism benefits while minimizing negative impacts. Through collaborative planning, monitoring, and adaptive management, destinations can achieve sustainable tourism development and enhance the well-being of host communities and future generations. Some of the commonly used TCC models include:

Physical Carrying Capacity Model: This model is based on the physical capacity of a destination to accommodate tourists. It takes into account the availability of land, water, energy, and other resources, as well as the capacity of infrastructure such as roads, airports, and hotels.

Ecological Carrying Capacity Model: This model focuses on the environmental impact of tourism and measures the maximum number of tourists that can be accommodated in a destination without causing irreversible damage to the ecosystem. This model takes into account the impact of tourism on water resources, biodiversity, and other environmental factors.

Socio-Cultural Carrying Capacity Model: This model measures the impact of tourism on the social and cultural fabric of a destination. It takes into account the capacity of local communities to absorb the influx of tourists, the impact of tourism on local culture and traditions, and the potential for social conflicts between tourists and locals.

Cyprus has a well-developed tourism industry, which contributes significantly to its economy. However, the rapid growth of tourism in the country has led to concerns about its impact on the environment, culture, and social fabric of the island. The application of TCC models in sustainable tourism development in Cyprus can help to mitigate these concerns. One example of the application of TCC models in Cyprus is the Limassol Tourism Development and Promotion Company's (LTPC) development of a TCC model for the Limassol region. The model takes into account factors such as the carrying capacity of beaches, parking lots, and other infrastructure, as well as the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities. The model is used to guide tourism development and management in the region, ensuring that tourism growth is sustainable and does not exceed the region's TCC. Another example is the Pafos Regional Board of Tourism's (PRBT) development of a sustainable tourism action plan, which includes the application of TCC models to guide tourism development in the region. The plan focuses on the development of sustainable tourism products and services, the promotion of sustainable tourism practices among tourism businesses, and the implementation of measures to mitigate the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities.

In Cyprus, several TCC models have been developed and applied in sustainable tourism development. One of the most significant examples is the Larnaka District Development Plan, which was developed by the Cyprus Tourism Organization (CTO) in 2002. The plan aimed to promote sustainable tourism development in the Larnaka district by identifying the carrying capacity of the area and developing guidelines for tourism development. The plan involved several steps, including the identification of the natural, cultural, and social resources of the district, the analysis of the existing tourism infrastructure and services, and the development of a tourism development strategy. Another example of TCC models in Cyprus is the Ayia Napa Development Plan, which was developed by the Ayia Napa Municipality in collaboration with the CTO. The plan aimed to promote sustainable tourism development in Ayia Napa by identifying the carrying capacity of the area and developing guidelines for tourism development. The plan involved several steps, including the identification of the natural, cultural, and social resources of the area, the analysis of the existing tourism infrastructure and services, and the development of a tourism development strategy.

The effectiveness of TCC models in sustainable tourism development in Cyprus has been evaluated by several researchers. For example, Ioannides and Debbage (1998) evaluated the

effectiveness of the TCC model in the development of sustainable tourism in Cyprus. They found that the TCC model was useful in identifying the carrying capacity of the destination and developing guidelines for sustainable tourism development. However, they also found that the TCC model was not effective in controlling the negative impacts of tourism development. Similarly, Papatheodorou and colleagues (2007) evaluated the effectiveness of the TCC model in the development of sustainable tourism in the Troodos Mountains in Cyprus. They found that the TCC model was useful in identifying the carrying capacity of the area and developing guidelines for sustainable tourism.

In conclusion TCC models are an important tool for sustainable tourism development. They help to ensure that tourism growth is sustainable and does not cause adverse impacts on the environment, culture, or social fabric of a destination. In Cyprus, the application of TCC models has been instrumental in guiding tourism development and management in various regions, ensuring that tourism growth is sustainable and does not exceed the region's TCC.

3.8.6 Tourism Social Carrying Capacity

One of the challenges associated with sustainable tourism development is to determine the carrying capacity of a destination, which refers to the maximum level of visitors that can be accommodated while maintaining the quality of the tourism experience and protecting the destination's social, cultural, and environmental resources. One aspect of carrying capacity that has gained increasing attention in recent years is social carrying capacity, which refers to the ability of a destination's social infrastructure to accommodate and manage the number of tourists without compromising the local community's way of life and social interactions. As tourism is an activity that involves the interaction between tourists and local residents, social carrying capacity is a critical factor in ensuring that the tourism industry benefits both tourists and the host community. *"The social carrying capacity dimension is associated with all the elements that concern social communities, as well as the interrelation problems between the local resident population and tourists"* (Joshi & Dahal, 2019). The overall social carrying capacity is the result of the reaction of native individuals towards the touristy development of an area (Mohamad et al., 2014).

Further to that, from the review of the literature, it was found that the Tourism Social Carrying Capacity (TSCC) of a traveller space is outlined from two totally different points of view. From

the perspective of residents, the TSCC represents the social interaction between residents and guests, and it is the MNV (maximum range of visitors) tolerated by the host population while not reducing their quality of life. From the literature review, some of the common and most cited social carrying capability indicators were found to include: employment opportunities, traveller satisfaction with a destination, tourists concerned about crime, and residents' complaints. Park (2007) also referred to social impacts as the positive or negative changes in nursing cultural conditions that directly or indirectly result from a project/programme hosted by a community. In literature, the social carrying capability is usually analysed from the perspective of residents and tourists. A business enterprise is usually a seasonal economic activity. On the busiest days of the year, traffic, guiltiness, waiting time, and noise by day and by night are significant causes of residents' discomfort, and the quality of the visitors' recreational activities deteriorates. To determine sociological carrying capacity, a model has been developed based on the different methods and interpretations identified in the literature.

Social carrying capacity can be defined in various ways, but it typically involves the analysis of the social impacts of tourism and the capacity of the destination to absorb and manage these impacts. One of the primary goals of social carrying capacity is to identify the point at which the local community's social fabric and identity are at risk of being overwhelmed by tourism activities (Gursoy et al., 2016). When this point is reached, negative impacts may occur, such as the displacement of locals from their neighbourhoods, the destruction of cultural heritage, and the degradation of social interactions between locals and tourists. To manage social carrying capacity, it is essential to assess the social impacts of tourism, which can include changes in the local community's social structure, behaviour, values, and attitudes (McCool & Moisey, 2008). For example, tourism may lead to the commodification of local cultures, resulting in a loss of cultural authenticity and a shift towards more tourist-oriented values and behaviours among the local population. In addition, tourism can create tension between locals and tourists, particularly when tourists' behaviour and actions do not align with local cultural norms. To address these issues, destination managers and policymakers can implement various strategies to manage social carrying capacity. These can include community-based tourism initiatives that involve local residents in the tourism development process and promote the preservation of cultural heritage and social interactions. Other strategies may include limiting the number of visitors, promoting sustainable tourism practices, and investing in social infrastructure, such as community centres and public spaces, that support local social interactions (Poria et al., 2010). One of the many vital socio-cultural impacts of tourism is

referred to as the "demonstration" impact. This could be because there are visible differences between tourists and hosts. Such a scenario arises in many developing countries. In the context of the demonstration impact, it is believed that perceptive tourists can cause changes in activity in the permanent population (Williams, 1998). Under these conditions, local people can observe the superior material goods of the visitors and follow them.

This can have positive effects and will encourage residents to adopt many productive patterns of behaviour. However, there is often turmoil, as the locals become annoyed as they cannot obtain the standards and *modus vivendi* unquestioningly from the visitors (Burns & Holden, 1995). Tourism businesses can thus create divisions in social groups between young and older members. The impact of the show can further encourage many younger members of a community to migrate from rural areas in search of the "proven" *modus vivendi* in urban areas or perhaps abroad. Demonstration impact is likely to occur where contacts between residents and guests are comparatively superficial and ephemeral (Williams, 1998). Another method, referred to as "acculturation", could occur when the contact is extensive and deeper. As Williams (1998, p. 153) noted:

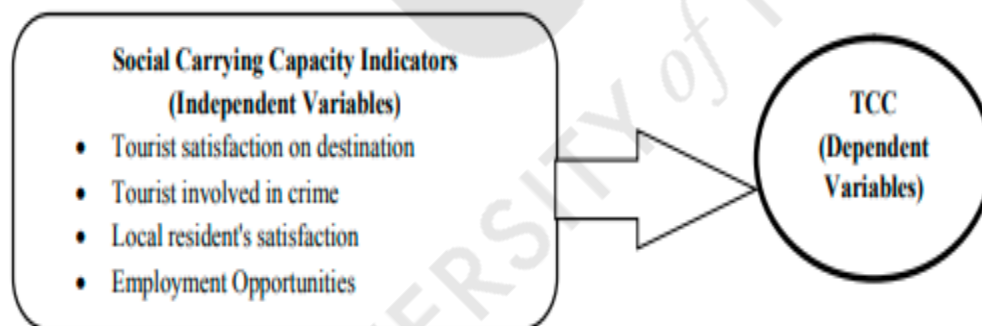
"Acculturation theory states that when two cultures come into contact for any length of time, an exchange of ideas and products will take place that, over time, will produce varying levels of convergence between the cultures; that is, they become similar" (Mason, 2003, p. 44).

Impressively it has been also identified in the Cypriot reality – resulting in the positive role it has to play being degraded. Therefore, the increase in the size of the structure of the tourism product (demand, distribution, supply) worldwide, but also at the level of Cyprus, due to factors such as the increase in income, leisure and employment intensity, and anxiety, pollution and the deterioration of the quality of life in general, especially in urban areas, has been confirmed by global organizations (WHO, EU, UN), as well as the Cyprus National Office (CTO), as relying solely on the attractiveness of the environment.

In particular, the social carrying capability impacts ought to be researched so as to induce an explicit plan of social amendment to avoid the foremost common negative effects and optimize positive drivers (Bretlaender & Toth, 2014). Similarly, the SCC dimension is related to the concern social communities, similarly because of the issues of interrelatedness between the native resident population and tourists. In general, the social carrying capability is a result of the reaction of the native inhabitants towards the business development of an area (Mohamad et al., 2014). From the perspective of residents, the SCC represents the social interaction

between residents and guests, and it is the MNV (maximum range of visitors) tolerated by the host population while not reducing their quality of life (Brandolini, 2005). In the same vein, Saveriades (2000) defines social carrying capability as “the utmost level of use that may be absorbed by a district while not being associated with unacceptable decline within the quality of expertise of tourists and while not having an unacceptable adverse impact on the area’s society”. From the review, it is evident that the two elements of TSC Care: (1) the standard of expertise that guests can settle for before seeking various destinations (that is, the tourists’ psychological carrying capacity); and (2) the degree of tolerance of the host population to the presence of tourists (that is, the residents’ psychological carrying capacity). The level of holidaymaker satisfaction will greatly influence the prospect of repeat visits. A key outcome of business satisfaction that will influence future business intention to revisit in the short and long run is loyalty to the destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007). In this way, social carrying capability helps to take care of the balance between business edge and native perception towards business activities. Figure 15 illustrates the SCC Indicators relationship between Interdependent Variables and the dependent Variables.

Figure 15: Conceptual framework of social carrying capacity and tourism carrying capacity



Source: Joshi & Dahal (2019)

The parameters of management and the process of planning involve objectives that are important in tourism development and planning in providing broad directions and making it obvious that some objectives are more important than others. Therefore, for the concept of TCC, the development of priorities is important (Alvarez-Sousa, 2018) and this will identify whether some hurdles can be overcome in accomplishing goals. Some problems or costs will be created by it, some inevitably, which may be tolerated for the sake of realizing the goals (e.g. a tourist development project can be desirable economically, i.e. it might generate income and create jobs for the local residents while at the similar time it may be environmentally and socially damaging). The lack of setting TSCC boundaries, the reckless activity of people and

the rapid growth of tourism have caused significant failures of sustainable development in recent years (Benner, 2019).

A very good example is that of Ayia Napa, where the rapid overdevelopment and lack of a long-term strategic plan have led to the opposite to what Sharpley (2009) supports, i.e., “sustainable tourism development is widely seen as a solution to the problem of island tourism”, or the fact that “based on a case study of Cyprus, it demonstrates that, despite its inherent dependency, tourism has proved to be an effective vehicle of development”, as Sharpley (2009) also supports. TCC is not a deterrent model for increasing the number of visitors to a destination. What it is essentially based on is the controlled increase in visitors, without entailing an unacceptable decrease in the quality of the entertainment experience, according to Wang et al. (2020). The creation of a non-static model such as TCC is aimed at having a recreational environment that can be enjoyed by the largest possible number of visitors, taking into account the natural effects on a tourist destination. The United Nations Conference proclaimed 2017 to be the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 50 years after the International Year of Tourism – Passport to Peace (1967) and 15 years after the International Year of Ecotourism (2002; UNWTO, 2018). This continuous search for sustainable development reflects a rising worry about the unintended consequences of economic development plans that include social issues on the agenda and relate them to environmental concerns. The concern that arises is whether a small country like Cyprus, with such a small population, could implement different models for each destination. Recognizing the importance of destination development, several individual governments have been called to implement through national legislations the monitoring and assessment of sustainable development, especially those that have seen a tremendous increase in tourism arrivals and a vast development in recent years like the Mediterranean countries (UNWTO, 2020). The carrying capacity of tourism is described in law established by the Greek Parliament in 2018 as: *“[t]he maximum possible number of tourists/visitors that a tourist destination can accommodate with its existing tourist facilities and infrastructure without destroying the natural or structured environment and degrading the quality of the provided tourist services, while ensuring the satisfaction of the local community of visitors/tourists”* (Article 2 Para. 1 of Law 4582/2018 (Government Gazette 208 / AD / 11.12.2018).

The seasonality issue in Cyprus is one of the most significant issues facing tourists in terms of accommodation. For this reason, facilities are closed or underused at various times of the year, increasing the seasonal unemployment rate for most workers (PWC Report, 2015, pp. 72–75).

In examining the T.S.C.C, to deal with the low demand outside the season, it is necessary to expand the business activities in peak periods of the tourist supply. This in turn leads to overexploitation of the tourists, high prices, excessive bookings and overcrowding, which eventually leads to a bad reputation and customer dissatisfaction.¹⁸ It could be argued that the idea of TCC began to be hotly debated after researchers focused on the growth of the human species (Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834)), a theory that influenced several later claims, such as the natural selection of Charles Darwin. The view of pressure exerted by a population in a place was a key part in the development of the concept of natural selection and therefore of the mechanism for explaining biodiversity and evolution. Both theories converge on the fact that the uncontrolled growth of a population is limited by the limits of natural resources, something that was first modelled with a mathematical equation by the professor of mathematics Pierre F. Verhulst (1838). The equation for the accounting increase is:

$$\frac{dN}{dt} = rN \left(\frac{K - N}{K} \right)$$

where N is the population, r is the growth rate. The theory of exponential population growth, a theory that Malthus (1993) and his predecessors originally believed in, is illustrated as follows:

$$\frac{dN}{dt} = rN$$

The existence of geometric (exponential) growth must be rejected as TSCC has no ceiling (Hutchinson, 1979). Nevertheless, the combination of Malthus's assumptions about exponential population growth and the existence of limits to this increase was an important step in the emergence of the phenomenon now known as carrying capacity.

The assessment of the TCC in the tourist management of an area is a decisive tool in the development of development policies (Spilanis & Vagianni, 2009). In tourist destinations, the development must be controlled, without at the same time affecting the satisfaction of the visitors. For example, the number of people visiting a place must be commensurate with the tourism development it can receive, so as not to strain its social, natural and ecological environment, and cultural character. Also, each part of each destination presents a different potential for development, without putting pressure on resources and land uses (Butler, 1999) (Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022, 2017). There are environmental concerns when

¹⁸ <https://www.cyprusprofile.com/sectors/tourism>

there is a rise in tourist demand since the infrastructure must grow to accommodate everyone who comes. The carrying capacity specifies the boundaries that must be maintained SCC in their exploitation because each tourist region has certain unique resources that can be utilized (Andriotis, 2018; Zhao & Jiao, 2019). In reality, the borders represent the extent to which resources, both natural and man-made, can withstand the effects of tourism without changing the region's unique qualities (Datzira, 2020).

3.8.6.1 Community-based Tourism for Sustainable Development in Cyprus

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a form of sustainable tourism that emphasizes the involvement of local communities in tourism planning and development. CBT is seen as a way to promote sustainable tourism development by ensuring that tourism benefits are shared more equitably, local cultures and environments are respected, and local communities have a greater say in tourism development decisions.

In Cyprus, CBT has been identified as a potential tool for promoting sustainable tourism development and addressing some of the sustainability challenges facing the island. Several initiatives have been launched in recent years to promote CBT in Cyprus and to involve local communities in tourism planning and development.

One example of a CBT initiative in Cyprus is the "Villages of Cyprus" project, which was launched in 2019 by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO). The project aims to promote rural tourism and to support the development of tourism products and services that are based on the cultural heritage and traditions of local communities. The project involves the participation of local communities in tourism planning and development and provides support for the development of tourism infrastructure and services. Another example is the "Sustainable Pafos" project, which was launched in 2020 by the Pafos Regional Board of Tourism. The project aims to promote sustainable tourism development in the Pafos region by involving local communities in tourism planning and development and by supporting the development of sustainable tourism products and services. The project involves the development of a network of sustainable tourism businesses that are committed to promoting sustainable tourism practices and supporting local communities.

Academic research has also highlighted the potential benefits of CBT for sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. For example, Christou et al. (2018) conducted a study on CBT in Cyprus and found that CBT can contribute to sustainable tourism development by promoting local economic development, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing environmental sustainability.

In conclusion, CBT is seen as a potential tool for promoting sustainable tourism development in Cyprus by involving local communities in tourism planning and development, promoting local economic development, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing environmental sustainability. Initiatives such as the "Villages of Cyprus" project and the "Sustainable Pafos" project are examples of efforts to promote CBT in Cyprus, while academic research has highlighted the potential benefits of CBT for sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

3.9 Tourism Clusters

Tourism Clusters refer to a group of tourism-related businesses and services that are located in close proximity to one another. These businesses and services may include hotels, restaurants, transportation companies, tour operators, and other businesses that serve tourists. The concept of Tourism Clusters is based on the idea that businesses that are located in close proximity to one another can benefit from collaboration and networking. Tourism Clusters can generate economies of scale and scope, as well as create synergies between businesses that can lead to innovation and competitiveness. Tourism Clusters can be developed in different ways. One approach is through natural clustering, which occurs when tourism-related businesses and services are located in close proximity to natural attractions or landmarks, such as beaches or mountains.

Another approach is through deliberate clustering, which occurs when tourism policymakers and planners intentionally encourage the development of tourism-related businesses in a particular area. The benefits of Tourism Clusters include increased tourism revenue, improved tourism experiences for visitors, and increased employment opportunities in the tourism sector. Tourism Clusters can also generate positive spill over effects on other sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and manufacturing.

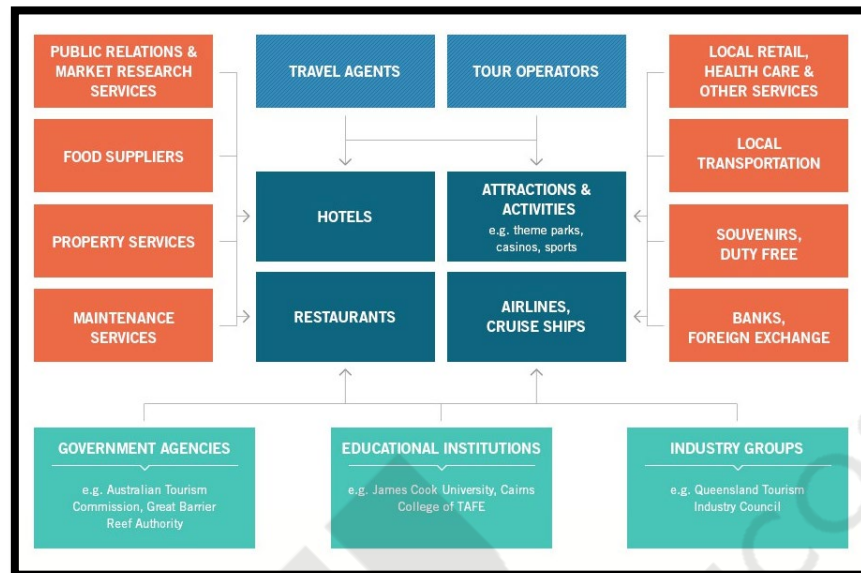
However, there are also challenges associated with Tourism Clusters. One challenge is the potential for overcrowding and environmental degradation, particularly in natural Tourism Clusters. Another challenge is the potential for competition and conflict between businesses within a cluster. To address these challenges, tourism policymakers and planners can use cluster mapping to identify opportunities for collaboration and growth among tourism businesses. Cluster mapping can help identify the strengths and weaknesses of a tourism cluster, as well as the connections and interdependencies between businesses. This information can then be used to inform policy and planning decisions that promote sustainable tourism development and minimize negative impacts. By promoting collaboration and networking among tourism businesses, Tourism Clusters can generate economic benefits and improve tourism experiences for visitors. However, to ensure the sustainability of Tourism Clusters, policymakers and planners must address the potential challenges associated with clustering and use data-driven approaches such as cluster mapping to inform their decisions.

According to cluster theory, the synergies created within the cluster (via interactions between firms that compete and those that collaborate) boost firms' productivity and innovation, and thus their economic performance. Is agreed with Porter's definition: "Clusters are geographical concentrations of interconnected corporations and establishments in a highly specific field, linked by commonalities and complementarities" (Jankowiak, 2018). According to Porter, industrial production must be viewed as a system of reticular players and operations (Jankowiak, 2018).

Laing and Lewis (2017) argue that clustering as a destination development strategy is not viable for the community. They suggest that the community's culture and attitude towards tourism act as barriers to destination development. Instead, they propose that destination development efforts should prioritize strengthening local Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and enhancing the community's capacity. They accept the idea that agglomerations are not a replacement development, but they argue that behavioural pattern explanations have been altered. The effort to strive for easier access to staple, cut prices, or get access to supply, has now changed into a deliberate choice of discovering different corporations in similar environment (Laing & Lewis, 2017). As a result, businesses have access to an environment where the amount of innovation is high, new products and services are perpetually developed, overspecialization is decreasing, consummate labour is available, and the most recent data is accessible. Clusters may be thought of as something new in comparison to previous

approaches, which supports this viewpoint. The boundaries of a cluster do not typically follow normal body borders such as municipalities, counties or even countries (Muria, 2010). They do not adhere either to "normal" industrial boundaries, as the linkages extend beyond that point.

Figure 16: Tourist Cluster in Cairns, Australia



Source: 2021 businessmentor.gr

Tourism cluster mapping as shown in Figure 16 above is a process of identifying and analysing the geographic concentration of tourism-related businesses and services in a particular region or area according to Majewska & Truskolaski (2019). The aim of tourism cluster mapping is to understand the relationships and interdependencies between tourism businesses and to identify opportunities for collaboration and growth. The process of tourism cluster mapping involves several steps. The first step is to identify the geographic boundaries of the area under consideration. This may be a city, a region, or a country. Once the geographic boundaries are established, data is collected on the tourism-related businesses and services in the area. This data may be obtained from government agencies, tourism associations, or business organizations. The data collected may include the number and type of tourism-related businesses, the size of the businesses, the number of employees, and the revenue generated. The data may also include information on the supply chain, such as the suppliers of goods and services to tourism businesses. Once the data is collected, it is analysed to identify clusters of tourism-related businesses. A cluster is a geographic concentration of businesses in a particular industry. In tourism, clusters may include hotels, restaurants, tour operators, transportation companies, and other businesses that serve tourists.

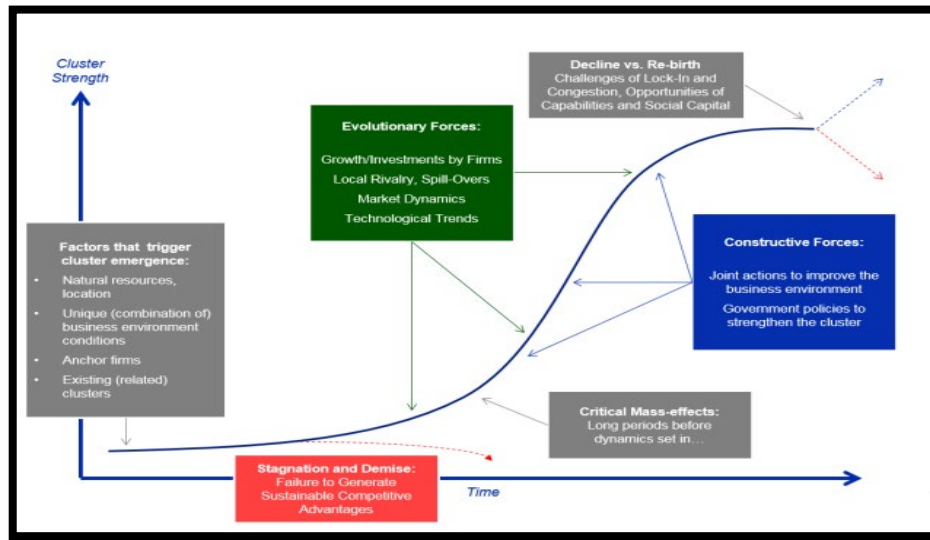
The evolution of Tourism Clusters can be understood through the lens of the Ketels and Portes model, which outlines the progression from simple geographic concentrations of tourism businesses to dynamic and integrated systems driving sustainable destination development. Initially, Tourism Clusters were perceived as basic geographic agglomerations of tourism-related enterprises, reflecting the traditional economic perspective emphasized in the first stage of the Ketels and Portes model (figure 17). At this stage, clusters were primarily seen as collections of businesses within a specific region or area, often identified based on the proximity of tourism assets such as attractions, accommodations, and dining options.

However, as the tourism industry matured, the understanding of clusters expanded beyond mere economic considerations to encompass social, cultural, and environmental dimensions, aligning with the second stage of the Ketels and Portes model. Scholars and practitioners began to recognize the interconnectedness between tourism development, local livelihoods, and sustainability within clusters. This broader perspective emphasized the importance of collaboration, innovation, and shared responsibility among stakeholders in shaping the future of destinations.

In the contemporary context, Tourism Clusters are viewed as dynamic and complex systems, in line with the third stage of the Ketels and Portes model. These clusters serve as platforms for collaboration and co-creation, where businesses, government agencies, residents, and tourists interact to drive destination competitiveness and sustainable development. Through integrated planning, stakeholder engagement, and collective action, clusters play a crucial role in managing visitor impacts, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting responsible tourism practices. The evolution of Tourism Clusters, as outlined by the Ketels and Portes model (Figure 17) illustrates a progression from basic geographic concentrations of businesses to dynamic systems driving sustainable destination development.

This evolution reflects a broader shift towards a holistic understanding of clusters as catalysts for economic growth, social well-being, and environmental stewardship in tourism destinations.

Figure 17: The evolution of clusters



Source: Ketels (2011); Porter (1990)

A more quantitative collection of research on the impact of agglomeration appeared in the academic literature, addressing some of these problems. However, cluster definitions remained ad hoc, and the emphasis was frequently on examining a single mechanism of local spill overs. They did not, however, respond to more detailed inquiries on the overall relevance and influence of clusters in the economy. The cluster mapping approach is broken down into three steps: first, cluster categories must be formed using evidence of local relatedness across restricted industries. Second, these criteria are used to convert current industry statistics into a cluster mapping data set that can be evaluated further. Third, the cluster mapping data set is evaluated to provide insights into the function of clusters in the economy and competitiveness of the country.

In times of economic crisis, businesses and the state of a country look for ways to survive in the best possible way. Clusters have developed in times of crisis and have enabled businesses to open up new opportunities (García et al., 2020). At such times, the economy and businesses are under great pressure, and this leads to the geographical concentration of clusters and also to specialization. The main reasons for the development of clusters are:

- the interconnection of cluster enterprises with research institutes of significant research activity within the cluster and the production of knowledge and innovative value-added products. This means an increase in skilled labour market staff.

- the high competitiveness of cluster companies, significant exports and penetration of regional, European and global markets. High competitiveness contributes to the production of goods and services, but also to tackling unemployment.
- the emergence of new innovative investment objects and cultures.
- the emergence of the scientific and managerial potential of the wider cluster area.
- encouragement of the creation of new enterprises closely linked to existing enterprises.
- low transaction costs. When companies participate in clusters, means that the more transactions there are within the cluster, the more easily the transaction costs are reduced.
- geographic concentration of either equipment suppliers or customers. There is growth and geographical concentration in enterprises belonging to a particular industry sector, due to specific conditions such as an abundance of raw materials (Alimova et al., 2020).

The clusters identified in the analysis are then mapped to visualize the geographic concentration of tourism-related businesses (Lazzeretti et al., 2015). The map (Figure 18) may show the location of clusters, the size of clusters, and the density of businesses in each cluster. The map may also highlight the connections between clusters, such as the supply chain relationships between businesses. The information obtained through tourism cluster mapping can be used to inform tourism policy and planning. By understanding the relationships and interdependencies between tourism businesses, policymakers can identify opportunities for collaboration and growth. For example, policymakers may identify opportunities to support the development of Tourism Clusters by providing infrastructure or financial support. Tourism cluster mapping can also be used by tourism businesses to identify opportunities for collaboration and growth. By understanding the supply chain relationships between businesses, businesses can identify opportunities to work together to improve efficiencies and reduce costs. For example, a hotel may identify an opportunity to work with a local tour operator to provide package tours for guests.

Figure 18: Cluster mapping as the quantitative measurement

Key Features of Cluster Mapping	What Cluster Mapping is NOT
• Quantitative measurement of economic activity in related industries • Comprehensive across the economy • Comparison of the size and profile of clusters across locations • Based on common standards • Data-driven definitions • Interest in the overall impact of all types of local linkages and spill-overs on economic geography	• Qualitative analysis of the dynamics and linkages within clusters • Focused on specifics of individual regions and regional clusters • Location-specific analysis of performance drivers • Definitions of clusters to match specific local circumstances • Policy or expert-set definitions • Measurement and analysis of specific linkages and spill-overs

Source: Christian Ketels Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, 2017

The composition development of a cluster can be standardized in four individual steps (Jackson, 2006):

The first step is to prepare the ground, to find the companies that will participate. For this purpose, it is required in principle to present the mutual benefits that companies will have through it and to emphasize that the contribution of the cluster is greater than that of each body if would be operated independently. Next, trust must be established between members. The consolidation of trust between the members of the cluster contributes to the dissemination of information between the members, to the exchange of ideas, to the good cooperation between them, to the joint undertaking of projects, etc., and is the key to the successful operation of the cluster. Trust is a particularly important parameter, especially in the case that companies traditionally operate based on corporate interest only, formulate autonomous corporate strategies or have characteristics such as secrecy, etc. To develop trust, it is necessary to implement specific actions that encourage the dissemination of information and to promote the development of advanced knowledge networks. This task alone is difficult. Issues need to be resolved, such as the extent to which any information is communicable to members of the network, as members are on the one hand partners within the network and competitors on the

other. But it is also important to maintain trust. In order to maintain trust, the exploitation of members' ideas that may be detrimental to other members must be avoided.

Development of strategic links (partnership phase)

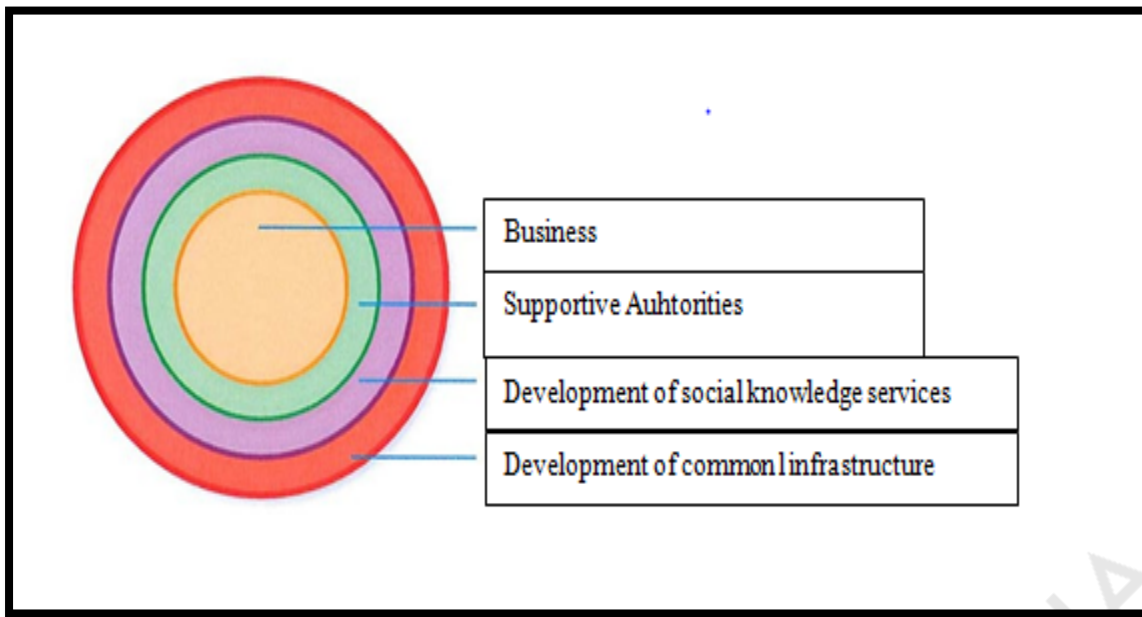
The next step for cluster development is the identification and development of strategic links or otherwise the development of formal cooperation links (formalizing linkages). This step can actually be done through the identification (competence audit) of the competitive advantage of the area, the skills of the cluster members and the identification of weaknesses. The diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of the cluster can later be developed into a mechanism (competence system) to review the comparative advantages of the cluster and encourage members to cooperate more closely, both with each other and with universities and research institutes. This mechanism can help address emerging issues and guide potential partners to identify potential collaborations more quickly and effectively in areas such as R&D research, development, procurement and sales.

Strategy and vision development (planning phase)

The goal is to form a common vision, goal and strategy. It is necessary to capture the current situation and assess what the market needs will be in the future. To achieve this, it is useful to conduct interviews with experienced people, to organize discussions between stakeholders and market experts, to exchange ideas (brainstorming), etc. The vision in the first steps of cluster development can be very broad, such as: "In five years, the turnover of the companies of the cluster has doubled." Gradually, as the cluster's competitive advantage and growth opportunities can be better identified, the vision will become more focused and specific. Other measurements of clusters' growth and success can be exports, the number of employees, the number of backbone companies involved or the number of visitors.

Figure 19, illustrates the backbone of clusters, providing a visual representation of the core elements or central framework that underpins the clustering concept within the context of the research.

Figure 19: Clusters' backbone



Source: Christian Ketels Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness 2017

During the cluster implementation (cluster maturation phase), the next step, once the cluster strategy and vision have been developed, is the implementation. An action plan of the initiatives that the cluster will develop needs to be developed. These actions basically fall into two categories: a) actions aimed at improving the cluster dynamics; b) actions aimed at improving the external environment in which the cluster operates.

More specifically, the action plan should, in addition to identifying which actions will be implemented, specify the expected results, identify the required resources, and identify which of the clusters have the know-how and skills and could be involved. According to Alimova et al. (2020), the implementation of the action plan, task forces can be set up with the participation of at least one member of the leadership group. However, even if the cluster is fully developed, it will have to evolve, as market demands change and the companies that make it up are transformed, as García et al. (2020, p. 76) note. Thus, clusters must constantly rethink their vision and strategy to remain innovative. They will have to reformulate the goals and the action plan each time, responding to the constantly evolving conditions and the needs of the market. Therefore, steps 3 and 4 are repeated throughout the life of the cluster. After the development cycle is completed, it is recommended that it be institutionalized, that is, that a company be established. The goal is for the new company that will host the cluster to be self-financed and

the inspirer of the cluster (facilitator) to remain an active member of the management team of the company. This new company will provide services in a narrower geographical area in relation to professional and other trade associations (professional/trade chambers and organizations) but will serve a larger number of companies within this area, i.e. the companies that are members of the cluster. The company will operate in the interest of its members. Traditional approaches to cluster analysis focus on two different types of design, based loosely on the analogy that a production process resembles a series of links in a chain, according to Turken and colleagues (2020), where each link adds value to a sequence of steps in producing a final product for consumer use. In this model, clusters of companies can be formed around a link in the chain, or they can be grouped together to facilitate a series of links in the same chain.

As a result, clusters allow a group of companies to develop the external financial benefits of their partnership, which is supposed to reduce the cost of structures and increase market growth opportunities. These profits have an impact on every company in the internal economy, but how it is addressed within each company remains part of their own autonomous decision-making. The understanding of cluster theory, which emerged from the analysis of post-war economics, continues as an entrenched part of the provisional approaches. "...In general, the more industries located in each area, the more important the external economies that became possible" (Mountjoy, 1993, p. 107).

More recent explanations of cluster types have placed a third type of clustering (Fraley & Raftery, 1998). Here the disagreement is not based on the groups of companies in a value chain, but rather on the proximity of companies that provide dissimilar but complementary products and services that extend the revenue opportunities of the cluster. How companies have access to the supposed benefits of the cluster, however, has often proved more problematic to explain, for distribution may well be asymmetric. The answer may well be that it is not just the neighbourhood that matters, it is the structure and the way it brings companies and host societies together, so it is the interaction that fuels the synthesis to enhance synergy production and increase collectible market volume. In other words, it is the kinship dynamics that are created between companies that lead to further commercial success and the development of community prosperity. As each type of cluster exhibits a different connection between companies, with different economic and social impacts, there is substance in explaining each one individually. Horizontal clustering is the most common and easily recognizable type of clustering. It occurs where similar or identical companies from the stage in the value chain for the same industry

are adjacent to a geographical area. These companies are competitive, selling the same products using similar productive resources. Simple examples can be seen in the clear boundaries of the retail and production process found in each fairly large city (the arrow indicates a growing number of companies in a horizontal cluster as it grows from left to right).

The proximity of companies operating at different stages in an industrial supply chain is referred to as “vertical clustering” (Karagiannis & Metaxas, 2020). Here, there is a comprehensive relationship between the stages of production and consumers where it contains specialization. Close proximity between companies minimizes storage and distribution costs and can help aggregate stocks, workforce skills and market information.

The typology of clusters extends to recognizing the creation of diagonal clusters, and to identifying a growing concentration of complementary companies. Here each company adds value to the activities of the others, although their products may be quite different and clearly belong to other industrial classifications. Creating diagonal clusters occurs when partner companies create a number of different products and services that the consumer necessarily buys as a single item. The situation is common in many tourist destinations, where different companies with different production processes supply activities, transportation, hospitality, accommodation, etc. The proximity of additional suppliers adds value to the tourism experience as, in contrast, the absence of key services is likely to limit the development of existing companies (this arrow implies a growing concentration of complementary vendor activity as it moves from bottom left to top right). As an abstract model, this appears to have some value in applications of smaller societies seeking to improve outcomes from a cluster process, although the overall level of activity is on a micro scale. All elements of distribution and complementarity production come together to reduce costs and enhance the specific competitive advantage of locality. If the cluster is able to take advantage of these benefits, then community outcomes will be optimal. Over time, of course, there is always the potential for further profits, for member companies or the host community, if cluster scale and margin can continue to spread.

The proposal for tourism is interesting. Clustering, as a catalyst for growth, can be effective in a variety of environments where companies focus on a specific part of the production process. Markets are not amorphous entities despite the fact that they include sets of related activity with clear consumer characteristics, so it is possible for companies to build a cluster in a

particular segment – and each of these segments can be as different as a retail for haute couture clothes from a cluster in aeronautics. Nevertheless, clustering can become more effective in a non-metropolitan environment when activities from industries located on the same site are based on "visiting"; this increases the demand for travel and the need for additional development for supported industries that satisfies visitors. We do not suggest that other forms of industrial clusters do not encourage economic growth, but that Tourism Clusters are based on creating a set of complementary properties that meet the needs of consumers, creating more and more opportunities for companies that choose to be located on the same site with each other. From now on, the proposal is that the creation of clusters based on tourism can add multiplier and external effects and help accelerate opportunities for new forms of economic prosperity, creating demand for a group of complementary activities, which in turn give rise to their own the consequences. The increased traffic also brings new influences and externalities to the host community, which are not all welcome. The social impact of clustering remains a new area of research, although Seaton (1996; 1999) offers guidance on how to address these effects with his analysis of six specialized areas in north-western Europe, where growth has been concentrated around small cluster markets.

The key to controlling public outreach in these environments appears to exist on a small scale of the development process, allowing local interests to control the choices made. In tourism, the phenomenon of spatial agglomeration (concentration of economic activity) spreads beyond the borders of the territorial units. It is described as geographic "spill over" that enhances spatial interdependence and the functional relationship with neighbouring regions. Within the quality procedure of cluster mapping, the concentration inside a territorial unit can also be analysed, which may be a source of biased leads to tourism studies. Tourist agglomeration centres sometimes occur at the juncture of territorial units, and therefore the economic entities located within them form spatial clusters with a special degree of membership in many centres of agglomerations located (Majewska & Truskolaski, 2019). In a typical tourism cluster, tourists' experience is affected not only by the allure of the primary attractions, such as beaches or historical localities, but also by the quality and effectiveness of complementary businesses such as hotels, restaurants, trade distributors and transport facilities. Lazzaretti and Kapone (2004) opined that cluster members are interdependent; therefore, the good performance of one cluster member can enhance the success of the others. Clusters are vital for agriculture (Paraušić et al., 2013), sport (Gerke et al., 2018) and tourism (Fundeanu, 2015; Nordin, 2003); therefore, the development of recent technologies has led to the formation of e-clusters (Davidović, 2014).

Paraušić and Domazet (2018) stated that countries with highly developed clusters simultaneously have high national innovation potential and vice versa.

Tourism Clusters are the results of complementary business organizations that will not necessarily be a part of an equivalent sector; yet, they benefit from the network membership and linkage dynamics (Novelli et al., 2021). Inkpen and Tsang (2005) stated that cluster members are given access to knowledge, resources, markets and/or technologies. This network can operate as a strategic alliance if the cluster members enter into a voluntary arrangement of exchanging, sharing or co-developing products or services (Gulati, 1998). Skowronek (2015) observes that Tourism Clusters consist of various organizations, suppliers and repair providers or businesses operating within the tourism sector or institutions connected to them, within the same geographic area. All cluster members at an equivalent time compete and cooperate (Beni, 2003). Staszewska (2009) highlighted three important parts as the drive of a cluster: (1) private sector; (2) public sector; and (3) R&D sector (Mirčetić et al., 2019). Following global trends, a key part of the strategy is to develop and refine niche segments like health tourism, as well as sports, nautical and cultural tourism (Cyprus Profile, 2020). This research is aimed at the importance of the socio-cultural perspective as a driver in Tourism Carrying Capacity within Cyprus Tourism Clusters. Tourism complexes consist of organizations and companies associated with tourism products. These clusters provide the necessary services and products for tourism companies and these groups are key factors in tourism capacity. Part of the research is to find the rationale for the formation of tourist complexes on the island and to formulate the definition and the main characteristics of the tourist composite.

The problem of the impact of clusters on the productivity of SMEs and the competitiveness of destinations are discussed based on economic theory using the case study and on-site work method as the literature study. In the 1990s, Porter planned the thought of “industrial clusters” (Porter, 1990). The explanation for clusters theory development (as Porter supported in examined different cooperation networks) is market failures (market imperfections), government failures, and general failures (low social capital, high value of cooperation with R&D establishments, low level of education, etc.). A business enterprise cluster could be a complicated organization, with a structure fabricated from numerous systems, each one possessing its own, and completely different, data infrastructure. The members of a cluster, while retaining their legal perspicacity and economic independence, represent a versatile style of economic integration aimed toward achieving a standard goal (Kachniewska, 2011). When

it comes to Tourism Clusters, into the detail of the accommodation, catering, transport, culture and recreational facilities that can be provided in the tourism sector. The tourism cluster consists of a multitude of resources and attractions, businesses and establishments directly or indirectly concerned in business enterprise, focused in a very specific geographic region. Their aim is to create a partnership among native business, instructional and analysis units, native authorities and representatives of native governments (Mirčetić et al., 2019). The advantages of cooperation clusters in business enterprise activities afford the effective exploitation of the collective efficiencies and/or the event of external corporations from the enterprises (entrepreneurial cooperation, work productive specialization, collective infrastructure, service specialization, etc.) (Enright, 2003).

Tourism product area units are currently marketed as a combined product, so for the merchandise to possess a picture and to be branded, it should be managed effectively. In this context, business is managed on a destination scale. Within the destination, business is considered in conjunction with its main and auxiliary parts, planning, organizing in order to figure certain its coordination (Sarac, 2021). 'In support of the reasons developed during this analysis, destination management is incredibly necessary for a destination to keep up its economic, social, cultural and environmental existence. Operating in cooperation with the most and intermediate parts of tourism in destination management is incredibly necessary in terms of prosperous management of the destination a standard goal and purpose cannot be determined by taking into consideration the interests of all stakeholders that conjure up the destination. This case causes the destination and therefore the industrial organizations within the destination to lose their existence within the medium term. For this reason, it is suggested to form effective designing with agglomeration in prosperous destination management and to implement this set up successfully all told different management phase, as Sarac (2021) supports.

In times of economic crisis, the destinations look for ways to survive in the best possible way. Clusters of businesses developed in times of crisis and enabled businesses to create new opportunities. During such periods, the economy and the companies are under great pressure and this leads to the geographical concentration of the cluster but also to the specialization. The main reasons that lead to the growth of business clusters are the following (Bergman & Feser 2020):

1. The interconnection of the companies of the cluster with research institutes is an important research activity within the cluster and the production of knowledge and

innovative products of added value. This implies an increase in the number of skilled workers in the labour market.

2. The high competitiveness of the cluster companies, the significant exports and the penetration in the regional, European and world markets. High competitiveness contributes both to the production of goods and services but also to tackling unemployment
3. The emergence of new innovative investment objects and mentalities.
4. The emergence of the scientific and executive potential of the wider cluster area.
5. Encouraging the creation of new businesses that are closely linked to existing businesses.
6. The low transaction costs. When businesses participate in clusters it means that, if not all trades and transactions, most will take place between businesses within the cluster. This means that the more transactions are made within the cluster, the more easily the transaction costs are reduced.
7. Geographical concentration of either equipment suppliers or customers. There is growth and geographical concentration in companies belonging to a specific industry, due to special conditions such as an abundance of raw materials.

The inclusion of the idea of the diagonal cluster comes in part from the renewed emphasis on business strategy design, the crucial role that complementary companies play in the consumer decision-making process. Ever since Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), economists have simply assumed that companies are in competition with each other, but this is not exactly true. As Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1997) have explained, if a company is the producer of a particular product, then another company that produces a complementary product or service cannot and should not be considered a competitor. The reason is obvious because the complementary producer's activities serve to add more value to the original product than it has on its own. The real competitor, of course, is a company that seeks to sell a substitute product or whose activities detract from the value of the original product in some way. This helps to explain how a company gains from the development of complementary activities and why in these companies the purpose is to seek cooperation with each other, without causing the normal assumption of competitive behaviour. The result of this controversy also helps to explain the fact that most companies, in the general context of the wider market, have virtually no competitive relationship with most of the other companies, which are neither the supplements nor their substitutes. The reality of competition, then, is limited to specific market

samples where only the activities of some companies can influence outcomes from other similar producers. Complementary producers, however, have every reason to work together to build their businesses for long-term viability.

This clarification led Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1997) to propose a strategy for business development by groups of companies or for companies in specific regional partnerships, to create a new focus around the creation of complementary activities among compatible companies. This leads to the obvious strategy that business growth is more the spread of complementary activities than competition.

“We think that supplements are a different way of thinking about entrepreneurship. It is about finding ways to make the pie bigger than competing with competitors over a ready-made pie. To benefit internally, think about how to extend the pie by improving new supplements or making existing supplements more affordable” (Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1997, pp. 14–15).

For tourism development, perhaps this maxim can be adjusted to include thoughts on how to make supplements more “accessible”, which is precisely the role that diagonal clusters play. The creation of diagonal clusters (the proximity of complementary companies) and diagonal integration (the operation of complementary activities within a company) are comparatively new approaches for both the tourism industry and regional development strategies. Poon’s (1994) analysis of the tourism and hospitality industries established the existence of strong cross-sectional relationships in the value chain resulting from the expansion of information technology that accelerated the capacity of companies to interact, allowing them to benefit from opportunity savings. Under these conditions, companies add value to their actions by consolidating or combining complementary services into a total product for sale, thus enabling companies to diversify their purchasing products to meet the needs of a target consumer group (Poon, 1994, p. 224). This allows companies to derive savings opportunities and synergies between products, rather than simply focusing on the search for economies of scale, where profits are projected from both clusters, horizontal and vertical. The idea that corporate collections can improve financial outcomes by aligning themselves with each other in the distribution of a unified product has a specific application for small-scale regional tourism development. An obvious illustration of such a relationship occurs where a company creates excursion packages to a destination, where the product for sale combines the distinctive products of a number of neighbouring companies. As larger companies may seek to integrate

many of these different functions into the production process, it is likely that in a small tourist destination the range of services will be produced by a number of companies. The test for a diagonal value chain is in the consumer's perception of picking features from the products they consume, and so different products in terms of production requirements can be combined together as one entity for consumer purposes. As Lancaster (1966a; 1966b) noted, each good or service has different characteristics and a unique combination of characteristics, which is what the consumer wants.

Consumer behaviour is not so much driven by the demand for goods, but by the characteristics they possess of those goods: “Goods, as such, are not the direct objects of taste or utility or wealth but are associated with those characteristics that are directly connected to the consumer” (Lancaster, 1966b, p. 14). Where complementary activities, goods or services can be packaged or collected in some way, the range of features increases along with consumer satisfaction. In tourism, this process is necessary because it is the collection of values that must be gained from the experience of the visit where the consumer is looking to buy. For example, a local gift shop or souvenir shop may well provide a comprehensive service for consumers who visit a neighbouring tourist attraction, adding value to their experience because they can buy souvenirs from their visit.

There is no reason, of course, why the gift shop should be connected to the centre of attraction, other than that it serves as a supplement. Thus, in the general context of tourism development, it is the development of complementary activities that pushes savings opportunities and accelerates wealth and job opportunities. A simple example of the tourism industry, which may not be uncommon in many countries, may be found in a location endowed with fishing resources where local shops and crafts produce and supply the mechanism to visitors. Where existing agents develop collaborative and complementary interactions to serve this market, they do the same with the general context of the needs and values of their societies and thus begin to exploit the synergies between them.

3.9.1 Regional Tourism Clusters and Sustainable Tourism in Cyprus

Cyprus, situated in the eastern Mediterranean, boasts a rich historical and cultural heritage, stunning natural landscapes, and a thriving tourism sector. To safeguard the longevity of its tourism industry and mitigate environmental impacts, Cyprus has instituted a variety of policies

and endeavors aimed at fostering sustainable tourism practices. A pivotal strategy adopted by Cyprus involves the establishment of regional Tourism Clusters, a concept widely recognized for its efficacy in promoting sustainable tourism development (Smith, 2019). These clusters are organized around specific geographic areas or tourism products and encompass a variety of businesses catering to tourists, including hotels, restaurants, tour operators, transportation services, and other amenities. Through collaboration within these clusters, businesses are able to pool their knowledge and resources, resulting in cost reduction and the creation of more innovative and sustainable tourism offerings (Hall, 2008). This approach aligns with the principles of destination management, emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts among stakeholders to enhance destination competitiveness and sustainability (Buhalis & Costa, 2006). By fostering cooperation and synergy among tourism enterprises, Cyprus aims to optimize the quality of visitor experiences while simultaneously preserving its natural and cultural assets for future generations. Cyprus has embraced the concept of Tourism Clusters as a cornerstone of its sustainable tourism strategy, recognizing the potential of collaborative partnerships in driving positive economic, environmental, and socio-cultural outcomes within its tourism sector (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). Through the development and support of regional Tourism Clusters, Cyprus endeavors to fortify its position as a leading sustainable tourism destination in the Mediterranean region.

In Cyprus, the development of regional Tourism Clusters has been a key strategy for advancing sustainable tourism development. The country has established several regional Tourism Clusters, including the Larnaka Tourism Cluster, the Limassol Tourism Cluster, and the Pafos Tourism Cluster. These clusters have been formed around specific geographic areas or tourism products, such as coastal tourism, cultural tourism, and ecotourism. The regional Tourism Clusters in Cyprus have played a significant role in advancing sustainable tourism development in the country. By bringing together businesses and stakeholders in the tourism industry, these clusters have facilitated collaboration and knowledge-sharing, and have helped to promote innovation and best practices in sustainable tourism development. For example, the Larnaka Tourism Cluster has implemented a range of initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable tourism, including the development of cycling and walking trails, the promotion of local food and wine, and the establishment of a local tourism certification scheme. The regional Tourism Clusters in Cyprus have also helped to promote economic development and job creation in the tourism sector. By working together, businesses in Tourism Clusters have been able to attract more tourists to the region, generate more revenue, and create more employment opportunities. This

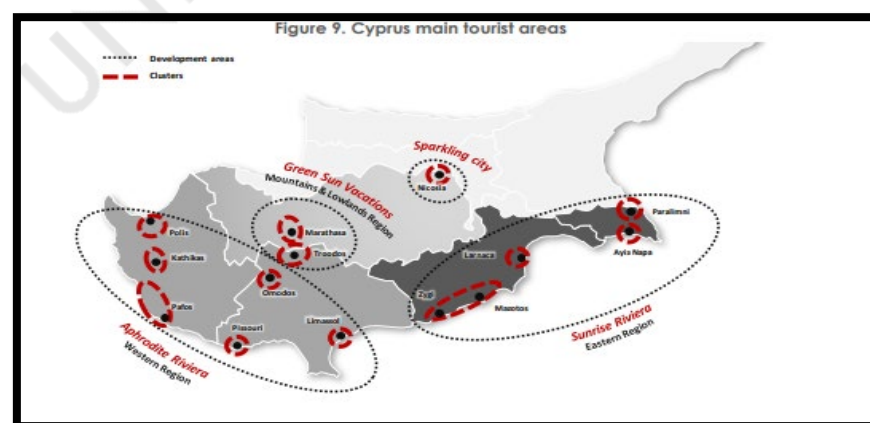
has been particularly important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a significant impact on the tourism industry in Cyprus and around the world.

However, there are also challenges associated with the development of regional Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. One challenge is the potential for overcrowding and environmental degradation, particularly in coastal areas. Another challenge is the need for effective governance and coordination among businesses and stakeholders in Tourism Clusters to ensure that sustainable tourism development objectives are achieved (Mandic & Kennell, 2021).

To address these challenges, policymakers and planners in Cyprus must continue to support the development of regional Tourism Clusters, while also taking steps to ensure that sustainable tourism development objectives are achieved. This may include the implementation of policies and regulations to manage tourist numbers and minimize environmental impacts, as well as the establishment of effective governance structures to facilitate collaboration and coordination among businesses and stakeholders in Tourism Clusters. Cyprus' strategic as SCC's embody its engaging holidaymaker areas, the range of activities that may be performed there; the network of service suppliers and collaborators that make the whole experience doable, and client base.

Cyprus incorporates a wide selection of traveller attractions that unfold across it. Besides the coastal regions, landlocked areas on the island also have the potential to draw in tourists. THR had analysed the country's traveller attractions by dividing them into 13 main areas of interest, as illustrated in Figure 20 below:

Figure 20: Cyprus Tourism Clusters



Source: Cyprus Tourism Organization

Cyprus's tangible and intangible values as a destination generates, predicated on a mix of a good variety of natural and cultural attractions, infrastructure and services. Value is delivered in exceedingly numerous attractions and resources. A developed business supports value production. A wide array of service suppliers helps tourists to explore the country. The Tourism Development and Promotion Companies Ltd were created to promote the further development of the basic and tourist infrastructure of tourist destinations. Each province has its own ETAP, which are essentially the clusters promoting instruments suggested by THR. It is important to state that ETAP had already been established prior to the results of THR and were worked independently for almost two three decades. The Tourism Development and Promotion Companies of the Region have been established with the aim of repositioning the clusters on the tourist map and the development and promotion of their tourism product.

The Companies are in the form of a non-profit company under private law and limited liability, consisting of a ten-member Board of Directors with members from stakeholders of each region. The basis of the National Tourism Strategy 2030 document was formed after an extensive study conducted by THR Innovative Tourism Advisors (Spanish consulting company) for the Cypriot government and completed in 2017. Subsequently, the Ministry of Tourism reviewed/updated the document, adding information that emerged through internal research, studies, and know-how. The operation of tourism directly affects the environmental system, but also the production of tourism itself.

The pollution of a beach results not only in the degradation of the environment, but also in the reduction of the competitiveness of the tourist product for this area.¹⁹ Sustainability is a fundamental concept in re-evaluating the role of tourism in modern society. The World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as follows: Sustainable tourism is perceived as tourism that meets the current needs of tourists but also maintains destinations, while increasing future opportunities. It must be understood in such a way as to define the management of all resources provided in order to meet the economic, social and aesthetic requirements while maintaining cultural integrity, biodiversity and life support systems.²⁰

¹⁹ Ivars, 2004, pp. 25–26.

²⁰ WTO, 1998, p. 21.

The local development model based on sustainable tourism involves very complex relationships and can only be achieved if the data of a specific area are considered (Ruschmann, 2001):

- Ecological and environmental sustainability refers to a development process based on the environment that aims to maintain and make rational use of natural resources in tourism activities. It is also a process that will help the ecosystem to recover from the problems created by humans.
- Economic viability: this is the pursuit of economic growth through the efficient allocation and management of resources and sustainable public and private investment, in order to guarantee not only profit at the micro-economic level, but also economic efficiency at the long-term social level.
- Socio-political sustainability: this is the need to preserve the cultural diversity and values that exist in an area.
- Political and institutional viability: strengthening of democratic institutions, with a view to implementing institutional values and socio-political representative organizations that have already taken into account sustainability criteria.

The right tourism policy, the appropriate strategic planning and the promotion of the tourist product in combination with the respective investments are the points that the interested parties should focus on. All of the above can lead to the development of tourism in society, and this will be further helped by the optimization and improvement of infrastructure and superstructures. Another important factor for the development of tourism is the creation of new perspectives and innovations. Businesses are looking for solutions to their problems, especially after the long period of financial crisis they have experienced. Solutions to the problems can be found either by strengthening the competitiveness of companies or by reducing their costs, improving their productivity and increasing good contact with their customers and suppliers. Tourism Clusters are subject to the same development principles as other business clusters. But there are some notable distinctions that must follow. Consumers must "come to the factory", i.e., the area where tourist products and services are produced. The buyer must purchase and consume a set of individuals "products or services". Due to the variety of tourism products, there are important and established intermediaries, including the visitor, who organize the travel experience (including incoming and outgoing travel agents, air carriers and hotels). The

business networking (cluster) of related professional activities that take place in companies and organizations due to the short distance between them in specific geographical areas leads to economic benefits. More specifically, the business network (cluster) offers cooperation and distribution of information, cooperation in production, promotion, marketing, learning and use of new technologies, development of new products and finally cooperation in the financing of business projects. Creating business clusters is aimed at all this as well as the specialization of the staff.

The quality of tourism is improving, and the needs of tourism can be met faster and in the best way. Conditions for clustering are a common place of reference, concentration and connectivity. The person who is interested in travelling for a holiday has a key feature that is common to all tourists, regardless of gender, age, income, etc.: they want to have a good time. But everyone will have a nice and happy time when they satisfy their own wishes for the holidays. A society can offer individual activities but it will hardly be able to satisfy the tourist if it is not properly organized. For this reason, the creation of tourism business clusters (clusters) enhances tourism. Tourist groups can offer a variety of different activities and cater to a wide range of tourists. This can be achieved by joining the cluster of many companies from the local community that will enhance either their competitiveness or their complementarity. By joining clusters, it is observed that companies lead to increased collaborations, facilitation of formal and informal relations between companies, the increase of specialization in the local market, mobility of employees between companies, and of course the improvement of supplier-customer and equipment manufacturer-user relations, etc. Business networking (clusters) in tourism is the set of companies and organizations that are interconnected and complementary in order to shape and offer the tourism experience. Clusters' approach to economic development is a simple but effective framework that allows the effort to learn about the tourism value chain and the potential for leaks and interconnections.

The typical leak reduction policies used in developing countries, such as restricting foreign staff to senior executives in chain hotels, should not be inappropriate. However, these policies need to be considered in the context of the significant need to create a domestic value chain and a skilled supplier workforce. If a region does not have sufficient financial institutions, such as training programmes to prepare the administration for hospitality, restrictions on foreign staff only limit potential growth and do not improve the region's tourism industry. Thus, the framework of clusters is a tool that goes beyond the traditional top-down design and is based

on classical concepts of market development. Therefore, this framework encourages the efficient use of information, the negotiation of priorities within the tourism market region and the creation of various alliances between private and public market companies for positive change. Through a participatory collaborative process, stakeholders throughout the development continuum are able to identify the challenges they share and be directly involved in making changes that will improve their financial potential. For tourism economies in developing and developed countries, this approach can lead to more balanced domestic development.

In conclusion, the development of regional Tourism Clusters has played a significant role in advancing sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. By bringing together businesses and stakeholders in the tourism industry, these clusters have promoted collaboration, innovation, and best practices in sustainable tourism development, while also promoting economic development and job creation in the tourism sector. However, to ensure the sustainability of regional Tourism Clusters, policymakers and planners must continue to address the potential challenges associated with clustering, while also promoting effective governance and coordination among businesses and stakeholders.

3.10 Sustainable Tourism Development Best Practices: Insights from Cyprus

Sustainable tourism development has been the subject of much research in recent years due to the potential negative impacts of tourism on the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage. Island destinations are particularly vulnerable to these negative impacts, and as such, implementing best practices in sustainable tourism development is crucial to ensure the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry in these destinations. This literature review will focus on the best practices in sustainable tourism development in island destinations, using insights from Cyprus as a case study.

One of the best practices in sustainable tourism development is the integration of sustainability principles into tourism planning and management. This involves conducting sustainability assessments, developing sustainability strategies and action plans, and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives. In Cyprus, the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI) was established in 2006 to promote sustainable tourism development and to support the integration of sustainability principles into tourism planning and

management (Andriotis & Agiomirgianakis, 2014).

Another best practice is the promotion of responsible tourism practices by tourism businesses and tourists. This includes promoting environmental conservation, supporting local communities, and respecting local cultures and traditions. In Cyprus, the Green Cyprus Programme was launched in 2008 to encourage tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices and to promote sustainable tourism to visitors (Green Cyprus Programme, 2021). Engaging with local communities and stakeholders is also considered a best practice in sustainable tourism development. This involves involving local communities in tourism planning and development, ensuring that tourism benefits are shared more equitably, and addressing local concerns and issues related to tourism development. In Cyprus, several initiatives have been launched to promote stakeholder engagement and community involvement in tourism planning and development, including the "Sustainable Pafos" project (Pafos Regional Board of Tourism, 2020).

Finally, education and awareness-raising are considered important best practices in sustainable tourism development. This involves providing education and training opportunities for tourism stakeholders, raising awareness among tourists about sustainable tourism practices, and promoting sustainable tourism through marketing and communication campaigns. In Cyprus, the CSTI has launched several education and training programs for tourism stakeholders, while the Cyprus Tourism Organisation has launched several campaigns promoting sustainable tourism to visitors (Andriotis & Agiomirgianakis, 2014).

In conclusion, implementing best practices in sustainable tourism development is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry in island destinations like Cyprus. These best practices include the integration of sustainability principles into tourism planning and management, the promotion of responsible tourism practices, stakeholder engagement and community involvement, and education and awareness-raising. Initiatives such as the CSTI, the Green Cyprus Programme, and the "Sustainable Pafos" project are examples of efforts to promote sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

3.11 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for understanding Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus provides a theoretical and analytical structure for examining the complex dynamics and interactions that influence the sustainable management of tourism in the region. It integrates various concepts and dimensions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of carrying capacity and its application within the socio-cultural context of Cyprus. It is built upon recent research and scholarly works in the field of tourism and sustainable development. For example, Coccossis and Mexa (2020) emphasize the importance of considering both quantitative and qualitative indicators in assessing tourism carrying capacity. They argue that a holistic approach that takes into account social, cultural, and environmental factors is crucial for sustainable tourism management.

Additionally, Gössling and colleagues (2019) highlight the significance of stakeholder engagement and participatory processes in determining tourism carrying capacity. They argue that involving local communities, tourism industry stakeholders, and policymakers in decision-making processes enhances the effectiveness and legitimacy of carrying capacity assessments and management strategies. The conceptual framework guides the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data related to Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus. It provides a systematic approach for assessing the current state of tourism development, identifying potential issues and challenges, and formulating strategies and recommendations for sustainable tourism management in the region. This framework draws upon the principles of sustainable tourism development and takes into account the unique socio-cultural context of Cyprus.

The framework incorporates methodologies such as qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews and focus groups, to gather insights and perspectives from relevant stakeholders. By utilizing these methods, the researcher aims to explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals involved in the tourism industry, local communities, and government bodies. The application of the conceptual framework allows for the identification of key indicators and criteria that are specific to the context of Cyprus. It facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the relationships and interdependencies among various dimensions of tourism carrying capacity, such as environmental impacts, socio-cultural factors, infrastructure, and economic considerations.

By utilizing recent references and incorporating the latest research findings, the conceptual framework provides a robust foundation for investigating Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus. It offers a systematic and comprehensive approach that takes into account the multifaceted nature of the topic and ensures the development of sustainable tourism management strategies tailored to the unique context of Cyprus

The literature highlights various conceptual frameworks for carrying capacity, encompassing social, economic, and ecological dimensions (Simon et al., 2004). These dimensions are studied both independently and integrated into comprehensive frameworks for assessing carrying capacity (Navarro et al., 2012; Papageorgiou & Brotherton, 1999; Shelby & Haberlein, 1986). Navarro and colleagues (2012) developed a methodology that considers social carrying capacity along with 23 additional indicators. Their framework acknowledges the importance of incorporating social factors, such as resident attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours, as indicators of social carrying capacity. These indicators reflect the perspectives of the local community and provide valuable insights into the community's capacity to tolerate and benefit from tourism activities. Positive attitudes and hospitality among local residents contribute to the attractiveness of the destination, while negative attitudes can serve as a threshold in determining a destination's capacity to absorb tourism (Getz, 1994). The inclusion of social carrying capacity in the conceptual framework allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions between tourists and local communities, promoting sustainable tourism development. It is important to note that the elements of the conceptual framework interact and influence each other in a dynamic and interactive process throughout the research project. The bidirectional arrows in the framework represent the direct relationships between these elements, focusing on specific aspects of qualitative research. These relationships highlight the interconnectedness and interdependencies of social, economic, and ecological dimensions in the context of tourism carrying capacity.

By integrating recent references and concepts from the literature, the conceptual framework provides a solid basis for examining and assessing tourism carrying capacity. It offers a comprehensive and multidimensional approach that acknowledges the complex interactions and influences involved in sustainable tourism management. It provides a theoretical foundation and structure for understanding the complex dynamics of Tourism Carrying Capacity within the context of socio-cultural factors in the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus. The framework draws on existing literature and theories related to tourism carrying capacity, socio-

cultural aspects of tourism, and destination development.

Recent studies have explored the multidimensional nature of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its socio-cultural implications. For example, Gössling and colleagues (2013) examine the social carrying capacity in tourism destinations, emphasizing the need to consider the local community's perspectives and attitudes. They argue that understanding the social dynamics and impacts of tourism on host communities is crucial for achieving sustainable tourism development.

Furthermore, the framework incorporates concepts from various disciplines to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. For instance, Ryan and Moyle (2020) discuss the role of cultural heritage in tourism and how it can influence carrying capacity. They emphasize the importance of considering the socio-cultural context and the preservation of cultural resources in managing tourism activities. The conceptual framework also acknowledges the significance of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. Recent research by Ioannides and Gyuris (2021) highlights the importance of cluster-based approaches in tourism development and destination management. They argue that Tourism Clusters can enhance collaboration among stakeholders, promote innovation, and support sustainable tourism practices. By integrating these recent references and concepts, the conceptual framework offers a holistic understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity within the socio-cultural context of the Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. It provides a lens through which researchers can examine the interactions between various factors, such as visitor behaviour, host community attitudes, infrastructure, and the socio-cultural context, to assess and manage tourism activities sustainably.

The conceptual framework for understanding Tourism Carrying Capacity in the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus draws on recent literature and theories that shed light on the multidimensional nature of the concept. Recent studies have emphasized the significance of considering socio-cultural factors in assessing tourism carrying capacity. For example, Gössling and colleagues (2020) argue that understanding visitor behaviour and its impact on the local community is crucial for determining sustainable tourism levels. They propose a framework that integrates socio-cultural indicators to assess carrying capacity in destinations. Additionally, the framework incorporates insights from various disciplines to provide a comprehensive understanding of tourism carrying capacity. Recent research by Novelli et al.

(2021) explores the interconnections between tourism, culture, and sustainability, highlighting the need to consider the socio-cultural context in assessing carrying capacity. They emphasize the role of cultural values, practices, and traditions in influencing the capacity of a destination to accommodate tourism.

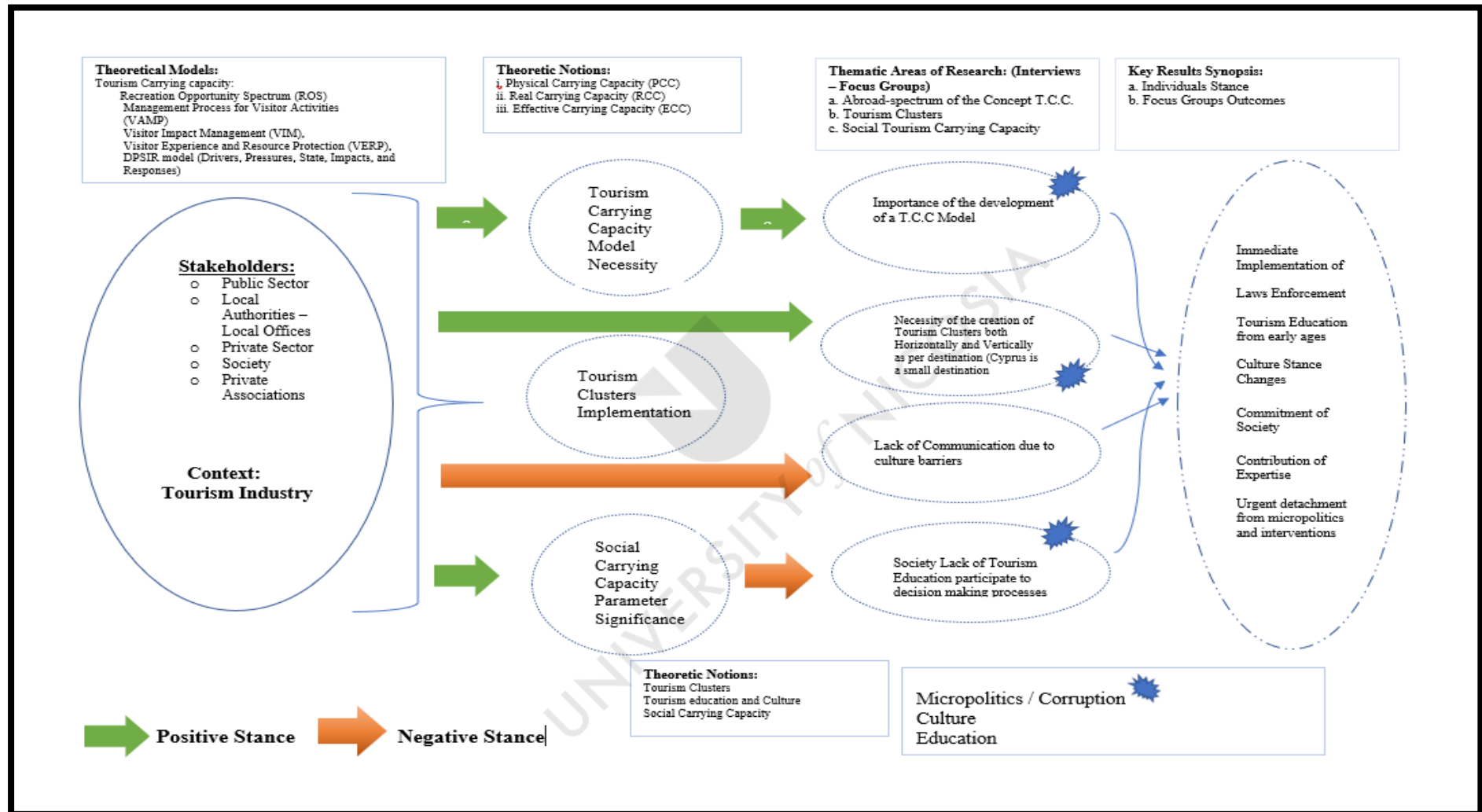
Furthermore, recent studies have recognized the role of Tourism Clusters in shaping carrying capacity and socio-cultural impacts. For instance, Ioannides et al. (2022) examine the dynamics of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus and their influence on sustainability. They argue that understanding the characteristics and interactions within Tourism Clusters is essential for managing carrying capacity effectively. By integrating these recent references and concepts, the conceptual framework provides a lens through which researchers can examine the complex dynamics of Tourism Carrying Capacity within the socio-cultural context of the Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. It considers factors such as visitor behaviour, host community attitudes, infrastructure, resource availability, and the socio-cultural context to assess the sustainable level of tourism activities. The framework guides the study's data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes, aiming to contribute to the existing knowledge and understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity from a socio-cultural perspective and provide insights for sustainable tourism development in the region.

TCC is influenced by factors such as visitor behaviour, host community attitudes, infrastructure, resource availability, and the socio-cultural context of the destination. The framework also incorporates the socio-cultural perspective, recognizing the importance of understanding the social and cultural dynamics that shape the tourism experience and its impact on the host community. It explores issues such as the social carrying capacity, which considers the community's tolerance and acceptance of tourism and its effects on their daily lives, values, and traditions. Additionally, the framework takes into account the role of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, which are geographical areas with a concentration of tourism activities, infrastructure, and stakeholders. It acknowledges that the characteristics and dynamics of these clusters can significantly influence Tourism Carrying Capacity and the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. The conceptual framework guides the study's data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. It provides a lens through which the researchers can examine the interactions between tourism carrying capacity, socio-cultural factors, and the specific context of the Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. By employing this framework (Figure 21), the study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge and understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity from a

socio-cultural perspective and provide insights for sustainable tourism development in the region with that: Having reviewed the relevant literature, this study aims to develop a preliminary conceptual framework that will serve as a guide for primary research and contribute to the finalization of the research findings. The relationship between humans and nature has evolved towards a reflective development model, influenced by concepts such as "The Limits of Growth" in the 1970s (Ohl et al., 2014). This framework acknowledges the vital role of residents in fostering sustainable tourism, as they serve as cultural agents and the social group through which tourism is experienced. Recognizing that local hospitality is a crucial component of the tourism product, efforts should be made to ensure that the benefits are shared within the community (Glasson et al., 1997). The perceptions and goodwill of residents play a significant role in the success and sustainability of tourism development (Bimonte and Punzo, 2016).



Figure 21: Imprint of Findings



Source: author's own

3.12 Conclusions

The concept of TCC seems to have first appeared in the time of Malthus, (1993) because of the theory of the growth of the human species and the study of the limits of natural resources for the uncontrolled growth of a population. With the rapid increase of human tourist movements, the concept of Carrying Capacity for Tourism Development was introduced. This current study embarks to explore the current state of Tourism Carrying Capacity and the creation of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, with a particular focus on the socio-cultural perspective of the term.

The TCC studying this chapter concentrates to point out that it is a complex process as not all tourist destinations have the same characteristics. The main division is based on their geographical location: urban areas, mountainous areas, coastal areas, and cities. Different approaches can be achieved in destinations with similar geographical locations. Several TCC investigation models have been developed and implemented according to the needs of each region to formulate the appropriate policy. The most common is the use of TCC indicators. The indicators aim to assess the TCC to create a framework for better management of leisure opportunities.

This study draws from both TCC given emphasis also to the SCC theories, reflecting the common practice in tourism research of utilizing a combination of multiple theories and approaches. These frameworks are not considered mutually exclusive but rather complementary, providing insights into the various factors influencing residents' attitudes toward tourism (Hernandez & Leon., 2013; Vargas et al., 2011). Studies of residents' attitudes to commercial enterprise have most frequently used SCC as their theoretical framework (Andereck & Vogt, 2000). Over-tourism occurs when local authorities are unable to cope with the overwhelming impact of tourism. This has led to widespread "tourism phobia" as a sign of rejection, mistrust, and contempt for tourists. Tourism must be part of the wider destination management system, which must also address transport and mobility, conservation, the local economy and housing, among other aspects of daily life. Research, planning and close and ongoing dialogue between the tourism industry, civil society groups and locals are essential.

The socio-cultural component refers to those social aspects that are important to local communities. They concern the presence and development of tourism social and demographic

issues, such as available human resources or trained staff, etc. Also included are socio-cultural issues such as a sense of local community identity or the tourist experience, etc. Some of these can be expressed in quantitative terms, but most require qualitative research, (Karagiannis & Thomakos, 2004). Limits of social ability are perhaps the most difficult to assess in contrast to natural-ecological and economic ones, as they are highly dependent on value crises. Political and economic decisions may influence some of the socio-cultural parameters, such as examples of immigration policies. Social capacity is used as a general term to include both the tolerance levels of the host population and the quality of the visitor experience. It is inevitable that the event of business enterprise induces changes on the social character of a destination. The direction (i.e., whether or not positive or negative) and also the magnitude of those changes depends on the carrying capability of a destination in reference to the quantity of holidaymaker activity, (Siri et al., 2020).

Every destination will sustain a selected level of acceptance of holidaymaker development and use, on the far side that any development may result in socio-cultural deterioration or a decline within the quality of the expertise gained by guests. In different words, the carrying capability of a destination is decided (i) by its ability to soak up holidaymaker development before negative impacts are felt by the host community; and (ii) by the extent of holidaymaker development on the far side that holidaymaker flows can decline as a result of the destination space ceases to satisfy and attract them. Within the extensive exploration of literature on Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC), several research propositions have emerged, each rooted in the examination of existing scholarship, debates, and gaps in the literature.

1. Definitional Challenges and Evolution of TCC:

The first proposition stems from the historical perspective on TCC, investigating its evolution over time. The source of this question lies in the work of Butler (1999), who emphasizes TCC as a fundamental principle of sustainable development. The debate revolves around how the definition and understanding of TCC have evolved, identifying gaps in the literature regarding the conceptual clarity and historical development of TCC.

2. Parameters and Measurement Methods:

A subsequent research question arises from the meticulous assessment of various parameters and measurement methods for TCC. The source of this question is the need to understand the

intricacies of TCC measurement, as outlined in the literature. The debate centers on the effectiveness and appropriateness of different parameters and methods, exposing a gap in the literature concerning standardized approaches to TCC measurement.

3. Addressing Overcrowding Challenges in Visitor and Destination Management Strategies:

The examination of challenges posed by over-tourism and the complexities of visitor management gives rise to another research proposition. This question is sourced from the acknowledgment of issues related to overcrowding and its impact on destinations. The debate explores strategies for mitigating over-tourism effects and gaps in the literature surrounding effective visitor management practices.

4. Stakeholder Engagement and Networking:

The inquiry into stakeholders' networking and dynamics contributes to a research proposition grounded in the pivotal role of stakeholders in sustainable tourism development. The source of this question lies in recognizing the significance of stakeholder engagement. The debate involves understanding the dynamics of stakeholder relationships and identifying gaps in the literature concerning effective stakeholder engagement for sustainable tourism.

5. Life Cycle of a Tourist Destination:

The exploration of the relationship between TCC and the life cycle of a tourist destination gives rise to a research question sourced from the recognition of their interconnectedness. The debate revolves around how TCC influences and is influenced by the life cycle stages of a destination, revealing gaps in the literature regarding the holistic understanding of these dynamics.

6. Tourism Clusters and Sustainable Development:

The investigation into regional Tourism Clusters and their contribution to sustainable tourism in Cyprus forms another research proposition. The source of this question is the growing attention to the role of Tourism Clusters. The debate centers on the benefits and challenges associated with Tourism Clusters, uncovering gaps in the literature regarding their optimal functioning and impact on sustainable development.

In essence, these research propositions emerge organically from the literature review, reflecting the critical examination of existing scholarship, ongoing debates, and identified gaps in the literature on Tourism Carrying Capacity and sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology



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4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the selection, planning, and execution of various methodological steps essential for conducting the analysis outlined in this study. It elucidates the philosophical underpinnings guiding the research and delineates the methodology developed along with the research methods employed. The study was undertaken with a singular aim: to establish evaluation criteria and key indicators for Tourism Carrying Capacity and to empirically formulate a model for testing within the context of Cyprus. The primary avenue for acquiring pertinent information was through secondary databases comprising various data sources and existing research on the subject. A wealth of secondary data and scholarly reports were leveraged to formulate opinion-based insights with robust theoretical foundations concerning the subject matter. Most statistical analyses conducted relied on secondary sources with diverse sample sizes and homogeneity across specific geodemographic areas (Smith, 2021; Johnson & Williams, 2020).

The methodology chapter assumes a central role in this research, delineating the methodologies, techniques, and instruments utilized to investigate and interpret the socio-cultural dimensions of tourism carrying capacity. Within this chapter, a comprehensive overview of the research design, data collection methodologies, and analytical procedures employed to explore the socio-cultural dynamics and their implications for Tourism Carrying Capacity within the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus will be provided. By adopting a socio-cultural lens, this research aims to elucidate the intricate interplay among tourism, culture, and society in defining the capacities of tourism destinations. The insights derived from this investigation hold promise in furnishing policymakers, destination managers, and tourism stakeholders with actionable strategies conducive to fostering sustainable tourism practices while preserving and enriching the socio-cultural fabric of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus.

This research contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on Tourism Carrying Capacity by emphasizing the importance of socio-cultural determinants. By providing empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks, this study aims to enrich decision-making processes within tourism planning and management. The subsequent section on research methodology will expound upon the research design and methodologies employed to unravel the complexities inherent in understanding Tourism Carrying Capacity through a socio-cultural

lens, particularly within the context of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus.

In addition to elucidating the methodological framework, it's essential to underscore the potential for the creation of Tourism Clusters and the benefits they offer to enhancing Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus. By strategically clustering tourism assets and attractions, Cyprus can optimize its resources, diversify its tourism offerings, and mitigate the strain on individual destinations. Tourism Clusters facilitate synergies among stakeholders, foster collaboration, and promote sustainable development practices. Moreover, they amplify the region's appeal to a broader range of tourists, thereby distributing visitor flows more evenly and alleviating pressure on overcrowded areas. Harnessing the power of Tourism Clusters holds promise for bolstering Cyprus's tourism sustainability and resilience in the face of evolving challenges.

4.2 Research Philosophical Positioning

The thesis adheres to a philosophical framework characterized by subjectivist ontology and constructivist interpretivist epistemology. Constructivism is a philosophical paradigm that emphasizes the subjective nature of knowledge and the active role of individuals in constructing their understanding of reality. It posits that knowledge is not discovered, but rather created through social interactions, cultural contexts, and personal experiences (Crotty; 2021).

In the context of this research, the constructivist philosophical positioning recognizes that Tourism Carrying Capacity is not an objective and fixed concept, but rather a socially constructed and context-dependent phenomenon. It acknowledges that different stakeholders, including local communities, tourists, policymakers, and industry actors, may have varied perspectives, values, and interpretations of tourism carrying capacity. These subjective understandings are influenced by socio-cultural factors, such as cultural heritage, traditions, beliefs, and social norms, which shape the perception and management of tourism within the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus. By adopting a constructivist philosophical positioning, the study aims to explore and interpret the socio-cultural dimensions of tourism carrying capacity. It recognizes that meaning and understanding are constructed through social interactions, dialogue, and the interpretation of cultural practices and values (Hall & Jenkins 2018) The research seeks to uncover and analyse the diverse viewpoints, perceptions, and experiences of different stakeholders to gain a comprehensive understanding of how socio-cultural factors influence the interpretation and management of Tourism Carrying Capacity in the case of the

Tourism Clusters of Cyprus.

The constructivist philosophical positioning aligns with the belief that reality is socially and culturally constructed, and that knowledge is context-dependent. By embracing this perspective, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights into the complex interplay between tourism, culture, and society in shaping tourism carrying capacity. The findings of the study will offer a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics and implications for sustainable tourism practices and effective destination management strategies in the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus.

4.2.1 Interplay of Ontology and Epistemology in Tourism Carrying Capacity

In the context of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus, the philosophical underpinnings and chosen research methods play a crucial role. Just as philosophy has evolved and adapted to different contexts, the understanding and assessment of carrying capacity in tourism destinations have also evolved over time. The research highlights that philosophy initially had a more epistemic Cosmo centric character, focusing on understanding the relationship between nature and human beings. This aligns with the early approaches to carrying capacity assessment, which primarily focused on the physical limits of the environment to support tourism activities. In the case of Cyprus, this could refer to assessing the capacity of natural resources, infrastructure, and services to accommodate visitors sustainably.

However, as philosophy evolved to consider humans within their social context and their pursuit of truth and authentic knowledge, a shift occurred in carrying capacity assessments as well. The study suggests that philosophy became more partisan, acknowledging the importance of the social environment in shaping human experiences. In the context of tourism carrying capacity, this implies a broader understanding of the impacts of tourism on local communities, cultural heritage, and social dynamics. It involves assessing the social and cultural carrying capacity alongside the physical capacity to ensure the well-being and satisfaction of both visitors and residents.

Moreover, the research highlights the interconnectedness between philosophical analysis and the assumptions and views about the world held by scientists. This notion resonates with the importance of considering the philosophical position as the basis for research approaches and

methods in Tourism Carrying Capacity assessment. Researchers and destination managers in Cyprus need to carefully consider their philosophical standpoint when determining the appropriate methodologies and strategies to evaluate and manage Tourism Carrying Capacity effectively (Paskova et al., 2021a; Paskova, 2008). In addition, the research emphasizes the significance of philosophy and its evolution in shaping our understanding of the world and influencing research approaches. In the context of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus, recognizing the interplay between philosophy, research methods, and the complex socio-environmental dynamics is crucial for sustainable tourism development and management. By integrating philosophical insights and adopting appropriate research approaches, Cyprus can strive towards achieving a balanced and sustainable Tourism Carrying Capacity that preserves the island's natural and cultural assets while delivering positive experiences for visitors and residents alike.

Ontology

In the context of qualitative research on tourism carrying capacity, the researcher's ontological stance of subjectivism would typically align with interpretivism or social constructivism. These ontological perspectives emphasize the subjective nature of reality and the importance of understanding and interpreting the meanings constructed by individuals and groups within their social and cultural contexts (Zhao, 2020). Interpretivism recognizes that social reality is constructed through the interpretations and subjective experiences of individuals. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the perspectives, values, and interpretations of different stakeholders involved in tourism carrying capacity, such as local communities, tourists, policymakers, and industry actors. Interpretivist researchers aim to uncover the diverse viewpoints and subjective understandings of these stakeholders to gain insights into the complex social phenomena of tourism carrying capacity. In the context of constructivism, there are two main ontological stances that are often associated with this philosophical perspective: subjectivism and social constructivism (Zowisło, 2019).

Subjectivism within constructivism acknowledges the subjective nature of knowledge and reality. It emphasizes that individuals construct their own understanding of reality through their subjective experiences, interpretations, and mental processes. Subjectivism suggests that knowledge is personal and situated within the individual's consciousness (Mohajan, & Mohajan, 2022).

Social constructivism extends the idea of constructivism by emphasizing the social and cultural aspects of knowledge construction. It posits that knowledge is not only individually constructed but also socially and culturally shaped (Shah & Kumar, 2019). According to social constructivism, individuals actively participate in social interactions, dialogues, and cultural practices that influence and shape their understanding of reality. Social constructivism recognizes that knowledge is collectively constructed through shared meanings and social processes. Social constructivism can be seen as an extension or elaboration of subjectivism within constructivist thinking. In addition, it builds upon the idea that individuals construct their own understanding of reality through their subjective experiences, interpretations, and mental processes (Olmos et al., 2023). However, social constructivism goes beyond individual subjectivity by emphasizing the role of social interactions, cultural contexts, and shared meanings in the construction of knowledge and reality (Rannikmäe et al., 2020). In social constructivism, knowledge is seen as a socially negotiated and collectively constructed phenomenon. It recognizes that individuals are not isolated entities but are influenced and shaped by their interactions with others and the broader social and cultural context in which they exist. Social constructivism highlights the significance of language, communication, and cultural practices in shaping individual understandings and the construction of shared meanings (Zhao, 2020).

For many researchers, social constructivism can be seen as an expansion of subjectivism within constructivism, incorporating the social and cultural dimensions of knowledge construction. It acknowledges that individuals' subjective experiences and interpretations are influenced by and interact with the social and cultural context in which they are situated (Boyland, 2019; MacLeod, 2022). A constructivist approach within qualitative research on Tourism Carrying Capacity would acknowledge the influence of socio-cultural factors, such as cultural heritage, traditions, beliefs, and social norms, on the perception and management of tourism. Researchers would focus on exploring and interpreting these socio-cultural dimensions and the ways in which they shape the stakeholders' understanding and management of tourism carrying capacity.

The researcher's ontology is closely linked to their beliefs and understanding of the nature of reality and existence. Ontology is about how individuals perceive and interpret the world based

on their ontological stance and epistemological assumptions. It acknowledges that knowledge is not something that can be fully obtained or owned, but rather it is a continuous process of exploration and engagement (Holmes, 2020). The researcher's ontology shapes their perspective and influences how they approach their research. It determines what they believe exists and what they consider as the fundamental elements of the world. Just as Pythagoras mentioned that people can only flirt with philosophy, the researcher recognizes that their ontology is subjective and influenced by their own prism of understanding. In the context of research, ontology plays a crucial role as it provides a framework for defining and categorizing entities and relationships within a structured framework (Mundi, 2010). It offers an account of reality and guides the researcher's understanding of the subject matter. Different ontological approaches can be adopted by social scientists, including realism, empiricism, positivism, and postmodernism, each offering a unique perspective on the nature of reality and the study of being (Al-Ababneh, 2020). The researcher's ontological stance of social constructivism fundamentally influences their research questions, methodologies, and interpretations. It serves as the underlying framework for their pursuit of knowledge and understanding, recognizing the vital role of ontology in philosophy and research as it seeks to define and grasp the essence of existence. (Krupnik et al., 2022).

Epistemology

The researcher's epistemology is constructivism, which is an approach to knowledge that emphasizes the active role of individuals in constructing their own understanding of the world. Constructivism holds that knowledge is not simply discovered or transmitted, but rather it is actively built and shaped by individuals through their experiences, interactions, and interpretations. In the context of the Tourism Carrying Capacity of Cyprus, the researcher's constructivist epistemology would inform their perspective on the concept. They would view the understanding and assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity as a subjective and socially constructed process, influenced by the perspectives, values, and beliefs of different stakeholders involved. According to constructivism, knowledge about Tourism Carrying Capacity is not an objective truth to be discovered, but rather it is shaped by the interactions and interpretations of various individuals and groups.

Different stakeholders, such as local communities, tourists, policymakers, and industry professionals, may have different views on what constitutes an appropriate level of tourism

development and its impacts on the environment, society, and economy. The researcher's constructivist epistemology would also highlight the importance of considering the social and cultural context in which Tourism Carrying Capacity is assessed. They would emphasize the need to involve local communities and stakeholders in the decision-making process, as their perspectives and knowledge contribute to the understanding of the carrying capacity of a destination.

Furthermore, a constructivist epistemology recognizes that knowledge is not static but evolves over time through ongoing interactions and dialogue. The researcher would likely advocate for continuous engagement and collaboration among stakeholders to reassess and adapt the understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity as conditions and perspectives change (Hong & Francis, 2020). In conclusion the researcher's constructivist epistemology would shape their approach to studying and understanding the Tourism Carrying Capacity of Cyprus, emphasizing the active role of individuals in constructing knowledge and the importance of considering diverse perspectives and social contexts.

4.2.2 Discussing and applying constructivism

In the study a constructivist approach is defined and applied to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic. Constructivism is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the role of social and cultural factors in shaping individuals' perceptions, knowledge, and understanding of the world. Within the context of this study, constructivism is employed to explore how socio-cultural factors influence the interpretation and management of Tourism Carrying Capacity in the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus. By adopting a constructivist perspective, the research aims to acknowledge that Tourism Carrying Capacity is not solely determined by physical or environmental factors, but also by the socially constructed meanings, values, and practices associated with tourism in a particular cultural context (Koens, et al., 2018). To apply constructivism, the study will engage in qualitative research methods such as semi structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to capture the perspectives, beliefs, and experiences of key stakeholders involved in the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus. These methods will enable researchers to uncover the subjective understandings and interpretations of tourism carrying capacity, as influenced by socio-cultural contexts, local communities, tourists, and other relevant actors. Through the constructivist lens, the study seeks to highlight the socially constructed nature of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its multifaceted dimensions within the

Tourism Clusters of Cyprus. It acknowledges that different stakeholders may hold diverse perspectives and interpretations, and these subjective understandings shape the dynamics of tourism development and management in the region (Jamal & Stronza, 2009).

Constructivism, as a theoretical framework, underscores the substantial influence of social and cultural factors on individuals' perceptions, knowledge, and comprehension of the world. In the realm of studying tourism carrying capacity, adopting a constructivist perspective facilitates an exploration of how socio-cultural factors shape the interpretation and management of this concept within specific Tourism Clusters. This approach acknowledges that Tourism Carrying Capacity is not solely determined by physical or environmental factors, but is also socially constructed, influenced by the meanings, values, and practices associated with tourism in a given cultural context.

Recent studies, such as Gursoy, Kim and Shim (2018), Sigala (2018) and Teye, Adu-Ampong, and Obeng (2020), have delved into the socio-cultural dimensions of tourism carrying capacity, emphasizing the necessity of considering diverse perspectives and subjective understandings of various stakeholders involved in tourism development and management. By incorporating a constructivist lens, researchers gain a more contemporary and nuanced understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity from a socio-cultural perspective.

By embracing a constructivist approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity from a socio-cultural perspective. This will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of tourism management, offering insights that can inform sustainable tourism practices, policy-making, and destination management strategies in the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus.

4.2.3 Constructivism in Understanding Tourism Capacity: Cyprus Case Study

Constructivism, an established pedagogical theory rooted in the interpretivist theory of learning, continues to shape our understanding of knowledge construction. It aims to empower learners to interpret and construct their own meaningful representations and understandings of the external world. Within the constructivist framework, cognitive constructivism and social constructivism are two prominent schools of thought. Social constructivism transcends the notion of reality being solely shaped by the interaction between researchers and questioners. It recognizes the influence of questions and environmental information on the projection of

reality. Vygotsky (1978) posits that reality is not viewed as an isolated entity but rather emerges through the interplay between questions and the surrounding environment. Gergen (1999) further argues that social constructivism acknowledges the intellectual creation of reality in relation to the real world, influenced by social rules, tradition, complexity, and interactions with external factors. Fister (1990) describes Gergen's collective view as the social creation of knowledge, wherein societies collaboratively shape their interpretations of the world and continually redefine them, collectively determining which interpretations are deemed acceptable.

In the field of tourism, carrying capacity assumes a crucial role in the management of sustainable tourism development. It denotes the maximum number of tourists an area or destination can accommodate without causing adverse impacts on the environment, local communities, and the overall tourism experience. Understanding and effectively managing Tourism Carrying Capacity is essential for ensuring the long-term viability and preservation of destinations (Hall & Page, 2019). It requires a careful assessment of physical, environmental, social, and cultural factors to strike a balance between tourism demand and the capacity of the destination to support it sustainably (Kozak & Kozak, 2020). By adopting a constructivist lens, researchers gain insights into how socio-cultural factors influence the interpretation and management of Tourism Carrying Capacity within specific contexts, recognizing the socially constructed nature of this concept (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2020). The integration of constructivism provides a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics involved in managing and sustaining tourism development in diverse destinations (Korstanje, 2017). To comprehend and evaluate tourism carrying capacity, various theoretical perspectives can be employed. One such perspective is constructivism, which originates from the interpretivist theory of learning. The relevance of constructivism in understanding Tourism Carrying Capacity extends beyond the assessment phase. It also emphasizes the dynamic nature of capacity, highlighting that it is not a fixed threshold but can be influenced by various factors such as infrastructure development, technological advancements, and changes in tourist behaviour. Constructivism encourages a continuous process of re-evaluation and adaptation, allowing for flexible management strategies that respond to evolving realities. It provides a valuable theoretical lens for understanding tourism carrying capacity. By emphasizing the active role of individuals in constructing their knowledge and perceptions, constructivism allows for a more holistic and inclusive assessment of carrying capacity.

In the case of Cyprus, a popular tourist destination, constructivism can provide a framework for understanding the local community's perspectives on carrying capacity. By acknowledging that different stakeholders may have diverse interpretations of the impacts of tourism, constructivism allows for a more inclusive and participatory approach to assessing carrying capacity. It recognizes that individuals actively construct their knowledge and perceptions of tourism impacts based on their experiences, cultural backgrounds, and interactions with others. Moreover, constructivism highlights the importance of social interactions in knowledge construction. In the context of tourism carrying capacity, this implies that the views and opinions of local communities, tourists, and other stakeholders should be considered and integrated into the assessment process. By engaging in dialogue and participatory approaches, a more comprehensive understanding of carrying capacity can be achieved, taking into account the diverse perspectives and values of different actors. Applying constructivist principles in this study facilitated the integration of diverse perspectives from local communities, tourists, and other stakeholders into the management of tourism impacts. This approach acknowledges that Tourism Carrying Capacity is not solely dictated by physical or environmental factors but is also socially constructed, influenced by the meanings, values, and practices associated with tourism within the cultural context of Cyprus.

Recent research underscores the pertinence of constructivism in comprehending Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus. Constantinou, Loizides and Samitas, (2017) delved into the socio-cultural dimensions of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus, stressing the imperative of incorporating local community perspectives and cultural contexts in sustainable tourism management. They argued that adopting a constructivist lens enables policymakers and stakeholders to grasp the social and cultural dynamics shaping Tourism Carrying Capacity and devise tailored strategies. Similarly, Tsiotsou and Vlachopoulou (2020) explored how cultural factors influence perceptions of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus, highlighting the pivotal role of local residents' cultural values and perceptions in destination capacity assessment. Embracing a constructivist approach, their study underscored the significance of considering socially constructed meanings and values associated with tourism in Cyprus for effective carrying capacity management.

Incorporating a constructivist perspective in the study of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus yields a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the intricate socio-cultural dynamics at play. This approach facilitates a context-specific analysis that accounts for subjective interpretations and socio-cultural factors shaping Tourism Carrying Capacity within Cyprus's unique cultural milieu.

4.3 Methodology

The research explores the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus through a socio-cultural lens. Successful research, as emphasized by Barker and colleagues (2016), goes beyond the application of techniques and requires critical thinking, imagination, creativity, empathy, problem-solving skills, and moral integrity. These qualities align with the notion of emotional intelligence, as proposed by Gardner (1983). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) highlight that research encompasses three dimensions: research methodology, ontology, and epistemology. While the research methodology involves the practical steps of the research cycle, the last two dimensions, ontology and epistemology, shape the researcher's mindset and significantly impact the interpretation of reality (Myers, 2009). Each individual holds a personal philosophy, consciously or subconsciously, which influences their worldview. This philosophical stance governs the functioning of various aspects of life, including science, politics, and everyday experiences (Collier, 1994; Walliman, 2011).

In the context of the study on Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus, the researchers' philosophical perspective, particularly their ontology and epistemology, plays a crucial role in understanding and interpreting the socio-cultural aspects of Tourism Clusters. By employing a socio-cultural perspective, the study aims to shed light on the complex interactions between tourism, culture, and society in relation to carrying capacity. This approach recognizes that tourism is not solely an economic phenomenon but also deeply intertwined with social and cultural dimensions. Understanding these dimensions requires researchers to adopt an open mindset and engage in critical reflection on their ontological and epistemological assumptions. By incorporating constructivism as a theoretical framework, which emphasizes learners' active interpretation and construction of knowledge, the study can explore Tourism Carrying Capacity from a socio-cultural perspective.

This allows for a nuanced understanding of how social rules, traditions, and complexity shape the reality of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. Furthermore, the integration of emotional intelligence, as highlighted by Gardner (1983), enables researchers to empathize with local communities, creatively address challenges, and consider moral implications in their investigation. In addition, the study on interpreting Tourism Carrying Capacity from a socio-cultural perspective in the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus recognizes the multidimensional nature of research, encompassing not only methodology but also ontology and epistemology. By employing constructivism and considering emotional intelligence, the researchers can offer valuable insights into the socio-cultural dynamics and implications of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus (Teixeira et al., 2019). Using qualitative research in a social sciences Ph.D. thesis on Tourism Carrying Capacity can offer numerous benefits over quantitative research. First, qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration and understanding of the intricate social dynamics and complexities surrounding Tourism Carrying Capacity (Lew et al., 2021). It provides researchers with the opportunity to delve into the context and meaning of social experiences related to tourism carrying capacity, thereby offering rich insights and interpretations (Ryan et al., 2021). Moreover, qualitative research enables the exploration of subjective perspectives and the diverse range of opinions and perceptions regarding Tourism Carrying Capacity (Dolnicar & Grün, 2021). This approach recognizes the importance of individual viewpoints and offers a more holistic understanding of the concept. Additionally, qualitative methods provide flexibility in data collection and analysis, allowing researchers to adapt their approach based on emerging findings and changing research contexts (Wang & AbiGhannam, 2021). This adaptability ensures that the research stays responsive to the dynamic nature of tourism carrying capacity.

Furthermore, qualitative research promotes the inclusion of marginalized voices in the study of tourism carrying capacity. By giving marginalized groups a platform to express their experiences and perspectives, qualitative research empowers these individuals and promotes a more inclusive understanding of tourism development (Salazar et al., 2021). Additionally, qualitative methods enable the exploration of complex social interactions and relationships among different stakeholders involved in Tourism Carrying Capacity (Nunkoo & Ribeiro, 2021). This approach sheds light on the intricate dynamics between stakeholders and their influence on the management of tourism carrying capacity.

Moreover, qualitative research allows for the generation of new theories and hypotheses by providing inductive insights and conceptual frameworks (Paniagua & Peón, 2021). It encourages researchers to explore novel ideas and develop a deeper understanding of tourism carrying capacity. Qualitative approaches are also well-suited for capturing the dynamic nature of Tourism Carrying Capacity and understanding the process and changes that occur over time (Gössling et al., 2020). This longitudinal perspective is crucial for comprehending the evolving nature of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its implications. Additionally, qualitative research enables the identification of nuanced factors and barriers that may impact the implementation and management of Tourism Carrying Capacity (Teixeira et al., 2021). It allows researchers to delve into the complexities of the subject matter and uncover subtle influences and challenges. Ethical considerations are prioritized in qualitative methods, with a focus on participant engagement and the active inclusion of their voices (Ives & Kidd, 2021). This approach fosters a participatory research approach that respects the perspectives and experiences of the individuals involved. Adopting a qualitative approach in the study of Tourism Carrying Capacity in the context of creating Tourism Clusters in Cyprus offers numerous advantages. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the social and cultural factors that shape tourism carrying capacity, captures diverse perspectives, and provides flexibility in data collection and analysis. Qualitative research also promotes inclusivity, explores complex social interactions, generates new theories and hypotheses, investigates process and change over time, identifies nuanced factors and barriers, and prioritizes ethical considerations and participant engagement. By embracing qualitative research methods, researchers can gain a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity and contribute to the sustainable development of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus.

Qualitative research methods provide a valuable approach to capture the rich and nuanced perspectives of stakeholders involved in tourism. Through methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, researchers can delve into the complex socio-cultural factors that shape the understanding of tourism carrying capacity. These methods allow for an in-depth exploration of the social interactions, cultural practices, and norms that influence stakeholders' perceptions and behaviours.

Semi-structured interviews serve as a powerful tool in constructivist research, as they allow for flexibility and open-ended exploration of participants' viewpoints. Researchers can engage

with a diverse range of stakeholders, including local residents, tourism operators, and policymakers, to gain insights into their experiences, values, and beliefs regarding tourism carrying capacity. These interviews encourage participants to share their personal narratives and perspectives, shedding light on the socio-cultural dynamics and considerations specific to Cyprus's Tourism Clusters.

Focus groups provide an additional avenue for capturing collective perspectives and fostering dynamic discussions among participants. By bringing together stakeholders in a group setting, researchers can facilitate interactions and explore shared understandings, conflicts, and potential solutions related to tourism carrying capacity. The group dynamics allow for the emergence of new insights and the identification of common contents and patterns.

The integration of constructivism and emotional intelligence in the study of interpreting Tourism Carrying Capacity from a socio-cultural perspective in the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus allows for a nuanced understanding of the complex social dynamics and implications of carrying capacity. By adopting a constructivist approach, the researchers recognize the active construction of knowledge by individuals and the influence of social factors on their interpretations of the world. This perspective enables them to explore the socio-cultural dimensions of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus, considering social rules, traditions, and complexity. Additionally, the inclusion of emotional intelligence empowers researchers to empathize with local communities, creatively address challenges, and consider moral implications in their investigation. By understanding and engaging with the emotions and perspectives of individuals and communities involved in the Tourism Clusters, researchers can gain deeper insights into the social and cultural aspects of carrying capacity. The philosophical attitudes of researchers significantly influence the way they acquire knowledge and interpret the world. Even those who consider themselves "non-philosophical beings" are influenced by a philosophical stance that governs their approach to various aspects of life. In the context of research on tourism carrying capacity, researchers' philosophical positions play a crucial role. The study recognizes the multidimensional nature of research and the interaction between theory, research, and practical application. The outcomes of the research not only contribute to theory but also redefine practical applications in the field of tourism.

To effectively apply constructivism in the study, various scientific strategies can be employed, such as qualitative research methods, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. By utilizing these methods, researchers can gather rich data that captures the diverse perspectives, experiences, and values of stakeholders. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics and implications of Tourism Carrying Capacity in the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus. The integration of constructivist principles and scientific strategies contributes valuable insights to sustainable tourism development and effective carrying capacity management in the context of Cyprus's Tourism Clusters (Candia et al., 2020).

4.3.1 Research Design

The design of a research study holds significant importance in any investigation (Creswell, 2014). There is no singular formula for developing qualitative research designs, as they are primarily shaped by theoretical and epistemological assumptions aligned with the research objectives (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research designs emphasize understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of the participants, exploring context and meaning in-depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Researchers engage in a variety of qualitative research methods, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, to gather rich and detailed data (Patton, 2015). These methods allow researchers to explore complex phenomena and generate nuanced insights (Miles et al., 2014). By adopting a reflexive and iterative approach, qualitative research designs enable researchers to uncover unique perspectives and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their respective fields (Charmaz, 2014). In the case of examining Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus, a combination of documentation analysis, focus group interviews, and semi-structured interviews will be employed, reflecting the need for multiple approaches in the research design.

The initial goal of the study involves conducting a comprehensive review of existing literature sources through documentation analysis. This review will serve as the theoretical foundation for the study, as well as facilitate the identification and evaluation of relevant academic studies. Scientific publications and analytical reviews will be scrutinized to gain insights into statistics, past and future strategies implemented in the tourism sector. The research not only aims to contribute to academic knowledge but also seeks to enhance the understanding of the problem and the requirements for effective implementation of tourism management strategies.

Additionally, the researcher will present a proposal framework to collect pertinent and valuable information and ideas generated during the study.

When the objective of a study is to conduct an in-depth evaluation of an activity, topic, or process within its contextual framework, utilizing in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions is considered appropriate (Babbie, 2016; Leader, 2013). Similarly, when comprehending a larger group of similar units or investigating an organizational problem, process, or phenomena, an in-depth interview design is deemed suitable (Flick, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Stake, 2013; Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) recommends employing in-depth interviews when gathering data from experienced participants with a solid professional background, ensuring their independence from potential influences due to their standing. The researcher believes that conducting focus groups will facilitate discussions on reality and objectivity, leading to fruitful outcomes. To avoid dominance by certain participants, the selection process will be meticulous, considering power and researcher dynamics. This research approach proves advantageous for conducting an in-depth analysis of current organizational issues (Yin, 2018).

During the interviews, participants were encouraged to disclose information concerning factors that impede the utilization of their tacit knowledge. Their personal experiences and work practices were explored, focused on acquiring a deeper understanding of individual perspectives rather than generalizing outcomes. This research strategy allowed the collection of data to identify parallels and commonalities among participants (Flick, 2014; Stake, 2013). Consequently, this aids in categorizing and analysing the data, unveiling common patterns, comprehending the contextual nuances, and synthesizing elements that hinder the effective utilization of participants' tacit knowledge (Darlington & Scott, 2002; Makuta & Morehouse, 2007; Yin, 1994). The objective of conducting focus groups was to acquire high-quality data pertaining to participants' perceptions, meanings, behaviours, practices, and social interactions. Focus groups facilitate the exploration of social phenomena, processes, and the formulation of new theoretical propositions. Participants from diverse positions, viewpoints, and perspectives relevant to the social issue being studied will be included, allowing for organized collective interviews and interactions among multiple participants on specific topics or interconnected phenomena and processes (Gill & Baillie, 2018).

The recommended research design for the study on Tourism Carrying Capacity and the creation of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus involves qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The research design includes clear research objectives, a theoretical framework, a sampling strategy for diverse stakeholders, data collection through interviews and focus groups, qualitative data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. The design aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic by exploring individual perspectives through interviews and facilitating group discussions and interactions through focus groups. By incorporating both qualitative data and potentially quantitative data for triangulation, this research design enhances the credibility and validity of the findings. This design offers valuable insights into Tourism Carrying Capacity and the development of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, benefiting both academia and tourism practitioners in the region.

4.3.2 Research Purpose -Aim, Objectives and Propositions

The research purpose of studying Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus is driven by the need to develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the current state of tourism development in the country and its profound impact on the destination. By delving into this subject, the research focused to explore the theoretical background, methodology, and case applications of destination management tools for sustainable tourism development. In particular, it emphasized on the assessment of stakeholder perceptions and the development of a generalized operational tool for destination management in Cyprus and shed light on the intricate dynamics between tourism activities and the various dimensions of the destination, including its cultural heritage, social fabric, economic stability, and environmental integrity. The aim of this research was to investigate stakeholder engagement as a pivotal mechanism for advancing sustainable visitor management in Cyprus, with a specific focus on the perspectives pertaining to Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters. Undertaking a targeted qualitative investigation with strong foundational qualitative principles, the researcher viewed it as an innovative endeavour within the Cyprus context, recognizing its importance in socio-cultural dynamics. To address this, the proposed research study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine stakeholders' perceptions of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its implications for sustainable tourism management in Cyprus.
2. To analyze stakeholders' perspectives on Tourism Clusters and their role in shaping

sustainable visitor experiences in Cyprus.

3. To assess the effectiveness of existing stakeholder engagement strategies in promoting sustainable tourism practices and mitigating negative impacts on the environment, culture, and society in Cyprus.
4. To identify barriers and facilitators to stakeholder engagement in sustainable visitor management initiatives in Cyprus.
5. To develop recommendations for enhancing stakeholder engagement processes to achieve sustainable tourism outcomes in Cyprus.

Each research objective will be addressed through a set of specific research questions, guiding the investigation and analysis of stakeholders' viewpoints, challenges, and potential solutions related to sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. Through rigorous inquiry and empirical investigation, this study aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of sustainable tourism and stakeholder engagement, ultimately supporting the development of policies and strategies that promote the long-term sustainability of Cyprus's tourism industry. In the pursuit of understanding and advancing sustainable tourism practices in Cyprus, the researcher embarks on a multifaceted exploration guided by the following objectives:

Firstly, the researcher endeavors to delve into the intricacies of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) and its adaptability within the unique context of Cyprus. This entails a comprehensive examination of the theoretical underpinnings of TCC and its potential implications for the sustainable management of tourism activities in the region. Secondly, recognizing the pivotal role of stakeholder engagement in shaping tourism policies and practices, the researcher sets out to investigate the need for active participation, contributions, and perceptions of stakeholders in the development of a robust Destination Management tool. This tool aims to provide a structured framework for tourism planning and policy actions, informed by the diverse perspectives of stakeholders across various sectors.

Furthermore, the researcher seeks to identify and evaluate effective strategies for promoting cultural sustainability and enhancing visitor management planning in Cyprus. Through an in-depth analysis of current practices and stakeholder perceptions, the researcher aims to pinpoint areas for improvement and assess the feasibility and acceptability of proposed strategies among different stakeholder groups.

Building upon these insights, the researcher endeavors to formulate recommendations geared towards fostering a sustainable and economically viable tourism industry in Cyprus. Emphasizing the importance of stakeholder engagement, sustainable development practices, and long-term planning, these recommendations aim to guide policymakers and industry stakeholders towards more holistic and inclusive approaches to tourism management. Moreover, the researcher explores the influence of stakeholder perceptions on tourism development in Cyprus, seeking to understand and address any negative perceptions that may hinder sustainable tourism initiatives. By identifying key drivers of perception and devising strategies to mitigate potential challenges, the researcher aims to cultivate a more supportive and conducive environment for sustainable tourism practices.

Finally, the researcher delves into the feasibility and potential benefits of establishing regional Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. By examining their role in enhancing destination management and sustainability, the researcher aims to uncover opportunities for leveraging regional collaboration to create a timeless model for sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. In essence, this research journey is driven by a commitment to unraveling the complexities of sustainable tourism management in Cyprus and forging a path towards a more resilient, inclusive, and environmentally responsible tourism industry.

The primary objectives of this research endeavour were multifaceted, concentrating to assess Cyprus's capacity to sustainably accommodate tourists while considering the delicate balance between tourism growth and the preservation of the destination's unique attributes. Through a meticulous examination of existing literature, the study seeks to critically analyse previous research, theoretical frameworks, and practical approaches related to tourism carrying capacity. This examination provided a solid foundation for the research, enabling a comprehensive evaluation of the current state of tourism development in Cyprus. Moreover, the research intentions was to identify potential challenges and opportunities that arise from tourism growth in Cyprus. This entails a thorough exploration of the social, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts associated with increased tourism activity. By examining these factors, the study intended to uncover both the positive and negative consequences of tourism development, paving the way for the formulation of effective strategies to manage and mitigate any adverse effects, while capitalizing on the benefits that tourism can bring to the destination.

An important aspect of the research was its practical relevance. The research strived to provide practical recommendations that are tailored to policymakers, tourism industry stakeholders, and local communities in Cyprus. These recommendations will be informed by a meticulous analysis of the research findings, including insights gleaned from in-depth interviews conducted with key stakeholders. By engaging with policymakers, industry professionals, and community representatives, the research aims to ensure that its recommendations align with the diverse needs, aspirations, and concerns of the various stakeholders involved in tourism development in Cyprus.

The research methodology involves a comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis. It includes a thorough review of relevant literature sources, enabling the identification of key trends, theories, and best practices in tourism carrying capacity. In addition, in-depth interviews with key informants provided valuable insights into the practical realities, challenges, and opportunities associated with managing tourism in Cyprus. Rigorous data analysis techniques have been applied to examine and interpret the collected information, uncovering meaningful patterns, and generating actionable recommendations.

Ultimately, the overarching goal of this research endeavour was to contribute significantly to the existing knowledge and understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity as a critical determinant in destination management. By generating invaluable insights, informing decision-making processes, and fostering the adoption of sustainable tourism practices, the research purposes was to ensure the long-term preservation and conservation of Cyprus's cultural heritage, the well-being of its local communities, the economic stability of the tourism industry, and the protection of its natural environment. By employing qualitative research methods, the research seeks to delve into individual perspectives, experiences, and insights related to Tourism Carrying Capacity and tourism cluster formation. Through semi-structured interviews, the study will explore the factors influencing Tourism Carrying Capacity and the challenges faced in managing tourism growth in Cyprus. The focus groups facilitated group discussions, enabling participants to share their views, ideas, and recommendations regarding the creation of Tourism Clusters to enhance sustainable tourism practices. The research purpose was to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on tourism development in Cyprus, offering valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and practitioners in the field.

4.3.3 Research approach

The utilization of qualitative methods, namely in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, formed the core of the research approach for studying Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus. These methods were carefully chosen to gather detailed and nuanced insights from key stakeholders, including policymakers, tourism industry representatives, local community members, and other experts relevant to the field.

The research process defined clear research objectives and formulated research questions that addressed the key aspects of Tourism Carrying Capacity and tourism cluster formation in Cyprus. A theoretical framework was established, drawing on relevant theories and concepts in the field of tourism and sustainable development. In-depth interviews played a crucial role as a qualitative research tool, enabling researchers to engage in direct and personal conversations with individuals who possessed extensive knowledge and experience in tourism development in Cyprus. These interviews were conducted with a meticulously selected sample of participants, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and expertise. To gather data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse range of stakeholders involved in tourism in Cyprus, including local residents, tourism industry professionals, policymakers, and environmental experts. These interviews allowed for open-ended discussions and in-depth exploration of the factors influencing tourism carrying capacity, the challenges faced in managing tourism growth, and the potential for creating Tourism Clusters. In addition to interviews, focus groups were organized to facilitate group discussions and interactions among participants. The focus groups involved representatives from different sectors, including tourism businesses, government agencies, local communities, and environmental organizations. These group discussions provided a platform for participants to share their experiences, insights, and recommendations regarding the development of Tourism Clusters and sustainable tourism practices in Cyprus. The collected data from interviews and focus groups were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. This process involved identifying common themes, patterns, and emerging concepts from the data and interpreting the findings in relation to the research objectives and theoretical framework.

Both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions offered unique advantages within the research approach. They provided researchers with the opportunity to gain a profound

understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus. These methods facilitated an exploration of participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards tourism development and its impacts. Researchers delved into specific issues or challenges, uncovered underlying motivations and concerns, and identified potential strategies for effectively managing tourism carrying capacity.

To ensure rigor and credibility in the qualitative research approach, several steps were undertaken. These included a careful selection of participants based on their relevant expertise and experience, conducting interviews and discussions in a neutral and comfortable setting, employing a structured approach to guide the conversations while allowing for flexibility and spontaneity, and transcribing and analyzing the data using established qualitative analysis techniques. Techniques such as content analysis were applied to identify patterns, contents, and emerging concepts from the interview and focus group data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

By employing qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the research approach for studying Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus facilitated a nuanced exploration of the complex factors and dynamics involved in managing tourism in the destination. It served as a platform for diverse stakeholders to contribute their perspectives, experiences, and knowledge, thereby enhancing the understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity and informing the development of sustainable tourism management strategies in Cyprus. Ultimately, this research approach aimed to contribute to the preservation and sustainable development of Cyprus as a desirable tourism destination. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were upheld, ensuring the informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality of participants. Researcher reflexivity was also practiced to acknowledge and manage any potential biases or preconceptions that may have influenced the research findings.

4.3.4 Research Design gathering technique

The research gathering techniques utilized for studying Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus employed qualitative methods, specifically in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, meticulously designed to collect detailed and nuanced insights from key stakeholders. These methods were chosen with care to ensure the inclusion of policymakers, tourism industry representatives, local community members, and other relevant experts in the field.

In-depth interviews served as a primary technique, facilitating direct and personal conversations with individuals possessing extensive knowledge and experience in tourism development in Cyprus. Participants were selected through a meticulous sampling process to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and expertise. Conducted in a semi-structured format, these interviews allowed for flexibility and organic exploration of the research topic. Researchers delved deep into the intricacies of tourism carrying capacity, examining its impact on the destination, and uncovering associated challenges and opportunities for management.

Complementing the in-depth interviews, focus group discussions were employed as another valuable technique, bringing together groups of individuals who shared a common interest or experience related to Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus. Participants were carefully selected from various sectors, including researchers, local businesses, community organizations, and environmental agencies. The focus group setting fostered interactive and dynamic exchanges of ideas, experiences, and opinions, allowing for the generation of new insights and critical discussions on tourism development and its implications for carrying capacity.

Prior to the start of the interviews, prospective participants were provided with detailed information about the purpose and methodology of the study, potential risks and benefits, and their freedom to participate or withdraw without adverse consequences. Informed consent was obtained from participants to ensure ethical principles were upheld. The interviews were conducted in settings free from external distractions, and both in-person and online interviews were conducted based on participant preference. The researcher established a relationship of intimacy, trust, and sympathy with the participants to enhance the interaction and data collection process. The interviews were recorded and transcribed word-for-word to maintain accuracy, and additional notes were taken to capture the researcher's observations and thoughts. The duration of the interviews typically ranged from 40 to 60 minutes, and each participant was interviewed once.

The interviews, as a research tool, had the advantage of highlighting unexpected issues and potentially altering the research agenda for the future, which was particularly useful in this case. Communication problems, the quality of social relationships that developed between

participants, and the sense of social cohesion or responsibility that the researcher had, among other parameters, were elucidated through the interviews. However, the reliability of interview findings was often questioned due to the dominance of the subjective element on the part of both the respondent and the researcher. The interview process served as a method of collecting data in which selected participants were asked questions to uncover what they did, thought, or felt. The purpose of the interviews was to develop ideas and research hypotheses rather than gather facts and statistics.

The interview was widely used in social research and allowed for easy comparison of answers to understand how ordinary people thought and felt about the topics of concern to the research. 'The job of the interviewer is thus not that of data collection but ideas collection.' (Oppenheim, 1992:67). Three different types of interviews were commonly used: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews. Furthermore, interviews were commonly one-to-one and face-to-face, but they could take place in group settings. Additionally, the telephone interview was increasingly being used.

The current study employed semi-structured interviews with open-ended response questions to achieve the objective of determining the effective implementation of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC). The interviews consisted of predetermined questions that could be modified based on the interviewer's perception, allowing flexibility in the order and wording of the questions. This approach encouraged interviewees to describe their expertise, experiences, opinions, and feelings, generating data rich in information. The interviews were conducted either in person or through internet platforms such as Skype or Zoom. The choice of open-ended interviews had several advantages, including expanding the response range, avoiding misunderstandings, enabling explanations of complex questions, and providing the opportunity for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and gather detailed information.

Additionally, the snowball sampling technique was utilized, allowing the sample to grow by adding new elements referred by the initial interviewees, particularly useful for accessing populations that are difficult to reach. Each interviewee was informed beforehand about the research's concept, intentions, and objectives, and a summary of the questions and research focus was provided. Unstructured and open-ended questions were favored as they were well-suited for exploratory and qualitative studies, allowing key informants to express their ideas

and emotions freely. However, the interview process had some limitations, including its time-consuming nature, challenges in gaining access to information sources, high costs, limited geographical reach, and sample size constraints.

The interview process also aided in developing appropriate questions for the subsequent development of questionnaires. The researcher had the flexibility to adjust the sequence of questions and add further inquiries based on the needs of the conversation. Existing research and data from previous studies were utilized to construct the interview protocol, while new issues were developed by the researcher. Prior to the interviews, participants were provided detailed information about the study's purpose, methodology, risks, benefits, freedom of choice, anonymity, and data protection. Informed consent was obtained from participants, ensuring ethical principles were upheld. The interviews were conducted in distraction-free environments, and both in-person and online interviews were accommodated based on participants' preferences. Building a rapport of trust and intimacy with participants before the interviews positively influenced the interaction. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and provide a permanent record. Additionally, notes were taken during or after the interviews to capture the researcher's observations, thoughts, and ideas. Finalizing, all these comprehensive data-gathering techniques contributed to a deeper understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus and informed the development of sustainable tourism management strategies.

4.3.5 Focus Groups

For the Tourism Carrying Capacity study in Cyprus, qualitative focus groups were utilized as a research method. Focus groups involved organized discussions within a group of participants to explore perceptions, beliefs, and thoughts on a specific research topic in a permissive and non-threatening environment (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The method allowed for interaction among participants, encouraging them to talk to each other and share their views and experiences (Morgan, 1996). The researcher's influence was minimized, giving more weight to the participants' answers. Focus groups were commonly used to collect qualitative data, uncover interpretations, and gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives (Morgan, 1996; Krueger & Casey, 2015). The goal was to generate contextual and complementary data to supplement other research sources.

Maintaining a balance in group size was important, ensuring that the discussion expanded but remained manageable. Focus groups were recorded with participants' consent, and some demographic data were collected to understand individual differences within the group (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The data obtained from focus groups provided researchers with a multi-level and dynamic understanding of human perception and a diverse range of views, feelings, and experiences (Morgan, 1996). Focus groups could be used as a standalone method or in combination with other qualitative or quantitative techniques, depending on the research objectives (Morgan, 1996).

The selection and composition of participants played a crucial role in creating a productive and comfortable discussion environment. Homogeneous groups facilitated communication and idea exchange, while heterogeneous groups offered diverse perspectives (Morgan, 1996; Krueger & Casey, 2015). Whether participants knew each other or not depended on the research context, and the size of the focus groups should have been large enough to foster meaningful discussion and interaction but not too large to ensure coordination and equal participation (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

For this study, there were six participants in each focus group, with a total of two focus groups corresponding to the clusters identified. The specific composition and selection criteria for the focus group participants were determined based on relevant factors such as their involvement in the tourism industry, local community members, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Their insights and perspectives provided valuable data for understanding the Tourism Carrying Capacity and the creation of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus.

Focus groups offered a platform for participants to express their opinions, concerns, and suggestions regarding sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. The interactive nature of focus groups allowed for the exploration of complex issues and the identification of shared values and priorities among participants. Additionally, the dynamic exchange of ideas facilitated brainstorming and problem-solving, leading to innovative solutions and recommendations for enhancing sustainable tourism practices. The insights gathered from focus groups complemented other data collection methods, providing a rich and comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perspectives on Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters in Cyprus.

4.3.6 Organizing Data

In terms of recording the interviews, a comprehensive approach was followed. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the key informants, and contextual information such as the interview location, date, and time was also documented. In addition to the recordings, the researcher took interview notes to capture the main points discussed during the interviews.

The interviews were conducted either in the participants' offices, online due to the pandemic, or in focused areas, such as remote locations. Each interview had a duration of approximately 40 to 60 minutes. Transcription of the interviews took place on the same day, following the recommendation to complete it within 24 hours at the latest (Keiling, 2021). With the exception of one case, the interviews were conducted in Greek, as it was the first language of the primary informants (refer to Annex II). Subsequently, the interview data were translated into English. In instances where Greek was not the first language of the informants, the interviews were conducted in English (refer to Annex III). The personal information of the informants was kept confidential, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality as required (Yin, 2010). To facilitate organization and analysis of the data, the personal details of all participants were kept anonymous, and they were identified using identifiers such as "Participant 1," "Participant 2," and so on. At the conclusion of the transcription process, the researcher employed a content analysis approach to identify patterns, contents, and underlying elements within the primary qualitative data, following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2016). Further explanations of this approach are provided in the Data Analysis and Discussion chapter. The researcher utilizes qualitative data analysis software (NVIVO) to assist identifying, categorizing and analysis key contents and patterns deriving by the in-depth interviews.

Regarding the focus groups, the selection of participants required careful consideration. While there was no rigid selection process for achieving measurable outcomes, optimal results were typically attained when participants were selected based on both homogeneous and heterogeneous criteria simultaneously. Participants shared certain commonalities but not everything, as an excessively homogeneous group might have led to a simplistic and less engaging discussion. Participants came from diverse backgrounds and occupied different roles. According to the project objectives, the focus groups aimed to identify values, beliefs, and skills related to digital technologies in language teaching, involving various potential

participants, such as language teachers, trainers, staff from language centers, adult education providers, researchers, education department representatives, and language center owners and principals. A minimum of three participants was included in each focus group, but the ideal range was between five to seven participants. Each partner was expected to conduct at least one focus group, selecting participants with heterogeneous profiles. If feasible, heterogeneity could be ensured by considering the following criteria:

Age: Including participants from different generations, possibly with a digital expert among them.

Geographical distribution: Participants from different regions of the country, representing diverse urban and rural areas.

Gender: Ensuring equal gender representation among the participants.

Educational background: Including participants with varying levels of education and digital skills.

Role: Encompassing participants with diverse positions within educational institutes, such as academics, trainers, staff, researchers, language center owners, and principals.

Before commencing the focus groups, it was necessary to prepare a Consent Form (see Appendix A) and obtain participants' signatures to confirm their presence. If the process was conducted online, participants could be requested to fill out an online application form.

In selecting focus group participants, a balance between homogeneity and heterogeneity was sought to ensure a rich and engaging discussion. This approach allowed for diverse perspectives and experiences to be shared, enriching the data collected and enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. Additionally, the inclusion of participants from various backgrounds and roles provided a comprehensive understanding of stakeholders' views and attitudes towards digital technologies in language teaching. Overall, the focus group methodology proved to be an effective means of gathering qualitative data and gaining insights into stakeholders' perceptions and experiences

4.3.7 Research sample approach

The foundation of this research was based on two interconnected pillars. The first pillar focused on the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) and its significance for sustainable development on the island. The second pillar highlighted the importance of dividing the island into Tourism Clusters and examined the relationship between TCC and these clusters.

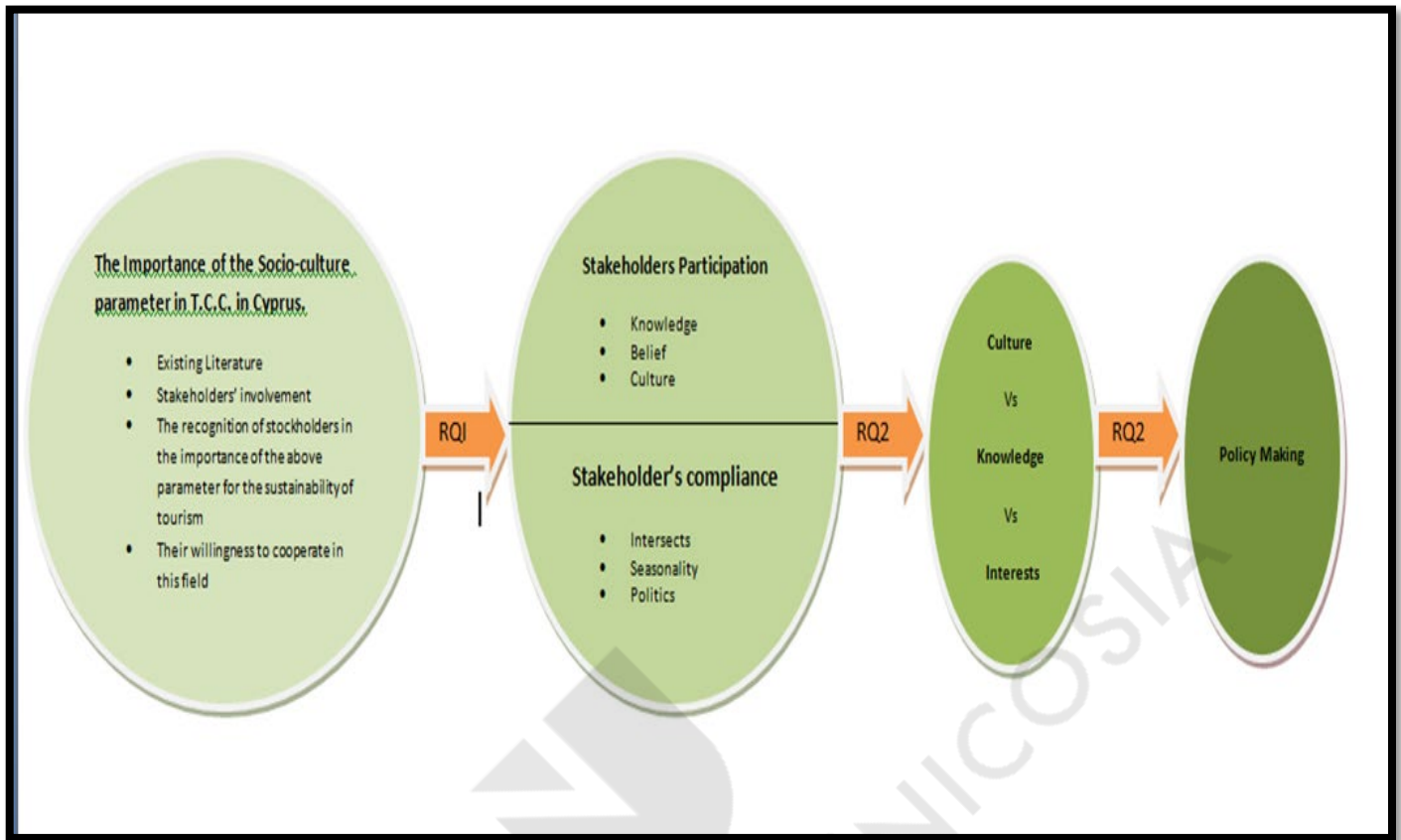
The rationale for this research was to investigate previous studies on TCC specific to the island, understand the importance of TCC, and assess the feasibility of its implementation by considering the contributions of stakeholders. The socio-cultural perspective played a crucial role in understanding TCC within the context of Cyprus Tourism Clusters, as it could serve as a significant measurement tool or be incorporated into a comprehensive "multi-model" approach. To gain a deeper understanding of these aspects, a series of questions was explored.

In a recent study on the National Tourism Strategy, which aimed to provide a framework for an open consultation on the new National Tourism Strategy for the country until 2030, certain positions were identified for the first time. However, there was no explicit mention of indicators to measure tourism capacity. Some of these positions emphasized the benefits of implementing single management units (Cluster Management Units) for efficient operation within clusters. It was emphasized that tourism infrastructure development and interventions should align with the carrying capacity of the region, taking into account socio-cultural, economic, and environmental constraints (Saveriades, 200 p. 149; Epler Wood et al., 2019).

This research primarily focused on three fundamental elements related to tourism carrying capacities, with a specific emphasis on the social carrying capacity variable. In this study, only the social carrying capacity (SCC) related to tourism was considered. The diagram presented in Figure 22 below illustrated the interconnection between the research questions (RQs), the objectives of the study, and the interview questions as seen in Appendix 1.

The examination of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus involved a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, stakeholder perspectives, and theoretical frameworks. By delving into the socio-cultural dynamics and the implications of Tourism Clusters, the study aimed to provide valuable insights into sustainable tourism development on the island. Through rigorous inquiry and empirical investigation, the research aimed to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field and inform policy-making processes for the long-term sustainability of Cyprus's tourism industry.

Figure 22: Possible Outcome



Source: author's own

4.3.8 Population

The proposed study was conducted in Cyprus, with the aim of investigating the development and establishment of a Monitoring System for sustainable tourism and productive sectors. The study sample consisted of 32 key participants as seen in figure 23, from both Government and Non-Government positions who held influential roles and possessed decision-making power within the Cyprus Tourism Industry. These key participants were carefully selected to represent various entities, including local representatives, government representatives, and key stakeholders from the private sector.

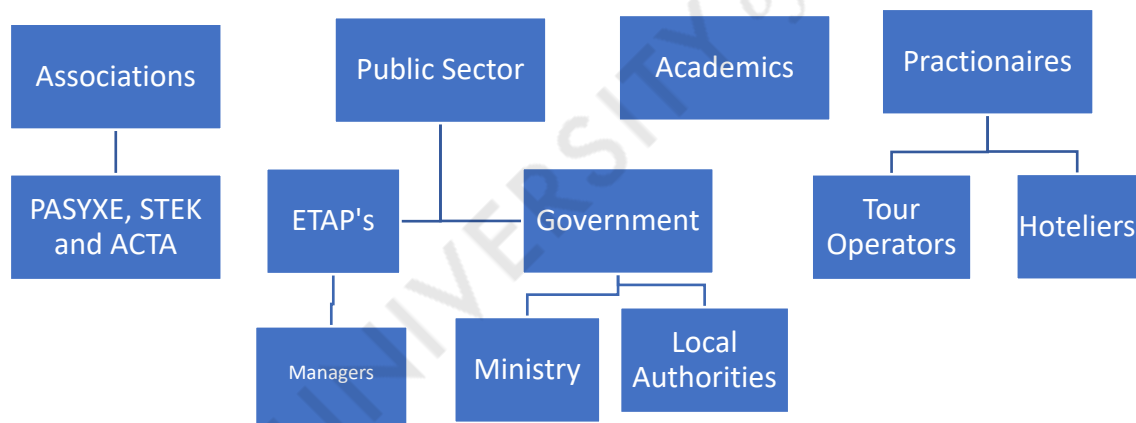
To ensure a comprehensive and diverse representation, the key participants were assigned to three focus groups, each with a rationalistic allocation of duties and responsibilities. These focus groups facilitated in-depth discussions and enabled a collaborative approach in addressing the research objectives. By involving representatives from different sectors and

perspectives, the study aimed to gather a holistic understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and potential strategies for sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

The key participants in the focus groups provided valuable insights, drawing upon their expertise, experiences, and knowledge of the local context. Their involvement and contributions were instrumental in shaping the research findings and recommendations. By including individuals who had a direct impact on tourism decision-making processes, the study aimed to foster dialogue, exchange ideas, and develop a shared vision for the future of tourism in Cyprus.

The collaborative efforts of the focus groups generated rich discussions, leading to a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in sustainable tourism development. Through robust dialogue and information exchange, diverse perspectives were integrated, enriching the depth and breadth of the study's insights. This inclusive approach fostered consensus-building and laid a solid foundation for future policy initiatives in Cyprus (Figure 23).

Figure 23 Population Analysis



Source: author's own

The research has engaged key stakeholders representing influential organizations in Cyprus. These stakeholders included individuals holding pivotal positions in institutions such as the President of PASIXE, CSTI, Ministry of Tourism, Former President of ETAP Nicosia,

TEPAK, HHI, UNIC, Cardiff Metropolitan University, and Cyprus Airways, among others. The deliberate inclusion of stakeholders from diverse sectors and organizations aimed to ensure a well-rounded and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, bringing together perspectives from both academia and industry, and encompassing the viewpoints of practitioners, researchers, and consultants. Through this diverse array of participants, the research sought to generate insights that would be relevant and applicable across various domains and contribute meaningfully to the discourse surrounding the identified issues.

4.3.9 Demographic characteristics and current context

The study utilized a criterion sampling strategy to select participants based on specific criteria, including prior work experience, position held, and education (Smith, 2021; Johnson, 2020). Fluency in English was also a prerequisite for participation. Before their involvement, participants received an introductory email providing a comprehensive overview of the research's purpose and scope. Informed consent was obtained from participants, and they were requested to express their willingness to have their interviews recorded.

The engagement of key participants from government and non-government positions ensured the study's relevance, validity, and applicability to the Cyprus Tourism Industry. Their active involvement in the focus groups provided a platform for collaborative problem-solving and decision-making, contributing to the development of effective strategies for sustainable tourism and productive sectors in Cyprus.

The determination of the sample size for this applied research considered the qualitative nature of the study and the concept of data saturation, ensuring that additional data collection did not yield significantly new insights. Drawing from recommendations by Adams and colleagues (2020), Brown (2022), Davis and Johnson (2020), Peterson (2016), Taylor and Wilson (2019), and White (2014), the decision to conduct a limited number of interviews was informed by previous findings. Adams and colleagues (2020) achieved thematic saturation within the first six interviews in their qualitative study, indicating sample homogeneity. However, consensus on the appropriate sample size for thematic saturation remained elusive (Brown, 2022; Johnson & Davis, 2019; Peterson, 2016; Taylor & Wilson, 2019; White, 2014).

In qualitative research, the focus was on understanding underlying issues rather than making generalizations or statistical inferences (Jones, 2021; Martin & Thompson, 2017; Peterson, 2016). Moreover, Carter (2019) and Turner and Brown (2020) argued that achieving thematic saturation in qualitative studies could be challenging due to the continuous acquisition of new information during interviews and data analysis. While no specific guidelines existed for determining sample size in qualitative analysis studies (Robinson et al., 2022), literature suggested that conducting 20-30 interviews could offer a diverse range of perspectives, as the quality of knowledge acquired in qualitative studies outweighed the significance of sample size or other quantitative measures (Miller & Johnson, 2018; Robinson et al., 2022).

The participants in this study were evenly distributed across various sectors: 30% from the public sector, 30% from non-governmental organizations and semi-governmental organizations, 20% from the academic sector, and 20% from the private sector. The participants' ages ranged from 35 to 65 years, with a minimum of 15 years of professional experience and a maximum of 45 years. They were selected from different provinces in Cyprus and represented professionals in fields such as hotel and tourism companies, civil service, education, and liaison roles.

The research was conducted with a targeted group of participants who exhibited a diverse range of expertise and professional backgrounds. The focus was on individuals aged between 35 and 65 years, each possessing a minimum of 15 years of professional experience and a maximum of 45 years. These participants were carefully selected from various provinces in Cyprus, ensuring a broad geographical representation. The chosen professionals hailed from sectors critical to the nation's development, including hotel and tourism companies, civil service, education, and liaison roles. This strategic selection aimed to capture a comprehensive perspective on the issues under investigation, drawing from the rich and varied experiences of the participants.

The research's methodology incorporated rigorous criteria for participant selection, ensuring a balanced representation of expertise and perspectives. By including stakeholders from diverse sectors and institutions, ranging from governmental bodies like the Ministry of Tourism to academic entities such as Cardiff Metropolitan University, the study encompassed a broad spectrum of insights. Each participant's background, expertise, and experience were

meticulously considered to create a dynamic and comprehensive research environment. This approach aimed to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and enrich the study's findings with multifaceted viewpoints, enhancing its relevance and impact on the Cyprus Tourism Industry's sustainable development initiatives.

In conclusion, the conceptual framework presented in this research offered a solid theoretical foundation and structure for comprehending the intricate dynamics of Tourism Carrying Capacity within the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus, with a particular focus on socio-cultural factors. By drawing on a range of existing literature and theories from various disciplines, the framework integrated key concepts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. At its core, the conceptual framework emphasized the notion of tourism carrying capacity, which defined the maximum sustainable level of tourism activity that a destination could support while preserving its socio-cultural, environmental, and economic integrity. This concept was influenced by multiple factors, including visitor behaviour, host community attitudes, infrastructure, resource availability, and the socio-cultural context of the destination. Importantly, the framework incorporated the socio-cultural perspective, recognizing the crucial role of social and cultural dynamics in shaping the tourism experience and the impacts on the host community. The framework took into account various dimensions, such as social carrying capacity, which explored the community's tolerance, acceptance, and perceptions of tourism and its effects on their daily lives, values, and traditions. Additionally, it acknowledged the significance of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, which represented concentrated areas with a significant presence of tourism activities, infrastructure, and stakeholders. The characteristics and dynamics of these clusters were recognized as key factors influencing Tourism Carrying Capacity and its socio-cultural impacts.

As a practical tool, the conceptual framework guided the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes of the research. It enabled researchers to examine the interconnectedness between tourism carrying capacity, socio-cultural factors, and the specific context of the Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. By employing this framework, the research aimed to contribute to the existing knowledge and understanding of the need for Tourism Carrying Capacity and the need for examining the creation of Tourism Clusters to strengthen the tourism destination's perspective, ultimately providing valuable insights for sustainable tourism development in the region.

It is important to highlight that the elements within the conceptual framework operated in a dynamic and interactive manner throughout the research project. Overall, the conceptual framework served as a valuable tool for researchers and practitioners seeking to explore and address the complex challenges of Tourism Carrying Capacity in socio-cultural contexts. Throughout the research, the elements within the conceptual framework dynamically interacted, shaping the research trajectory. Researchers navigated through data collection, analysis, and interpretation, constantly referencing the framework's principles to maintain coherence and relevance. The framework's adaptability facilitated a nuanced understanding of the evolving socio-cultural dynamics within Tourism Clusters. As researchers delved deeper, the framework provided a lens to examine intricate relationships between tourism activities, socio-cultural impacts, and community resilience. By elucidating these connections, the research aimed to inform policymakers and industry stakeholders about the importance of sustainable tourism practices and the necessity of fostering socio-cultural resilience within tourism destinations. Ultimately, the conceptual framework stood as a guiding beacon, illuminating pathways toward sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

4.4 Data Analysis Method and presentation

The initial step in data collection involved sourcing data from various repositories. Data collection encompassed gathering information and measuring variables of interest, essential for addressing research inquiries, testing hypotheses, and evaluating outcomes. This source data was stored across different platforms, including independent databases, necessitating meticulous error and missing value rectification. Data collection was a ubiquitous element across all academic domains, spanning social and natural sciences, humanities, and business studies. Data exhibiting extreme or missing values risked rendering conclusions invalid or erroneous. While data mining algorithms offered remedies, acknowledging their limitations was imperative.

Hence, ensuring data quality demanded disciplined data definition, emphasizing both secure and accurate data acquisition. Following meticulous data selection and troubleshooting, the data found its repository in the data warehouse. The realm of Information Science, exploring information behaviour research, remained a focal point of contemporary inquiry. Information search processes became integral to daily routines across demographics. Recent studies, like

those by Chen and colleagues (2020) and Hargittai (2021), underscored persistent challenges in information retrieval despite technological familiarity. Thus, educational systems were urged to equip young learners with adeptness in solving information queries using digital media effectively.

Analysing quantitative and qualitative data diverged substantially in approach. While quantitative analysis employed graphs, charts, and statistics, qualitative methodologies adhered to a distinct philosophy. Qualitative data encompassed abstract concepts conveyed through words, necessitating researchers to expound and analyse them. This involved categorizing data into thematic groups and structuring them to address research queries (Saunders et al., 2012). The research methodology prioritized preserving data integrity and richness. Each interview underwent meticulous recording and transcription on the same day, enhancing data accuracy significantly, as advocated by Snow and Thomas (2004). Additionally, meticulous documentation of nonverbal cues and communication nuances complemented explicit interview content, capturing subtleties conveyed through nonverbal channels.

Beyond data collection, analysis and discussion within this research aimed to unearth both parallels and contradictions. Employing the clustering data grouping technique, deeply entrenched across diverse academic disciplines such as biology (Everitt et al., 2020), psychology (Furr & Bacharach, 2014), anthropology (Grünberg, 2021), political science (Warwick et al., 2019), sociology (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 2015), and economics (Belotti et al., 2022), this study endeavoured to organize entities into meaningful clusters based on shared characteristics. This process facilitated pattern and structure identification within the data, enriching existing theories and knowledge in the field.

4.4.1 Data analysis of semi-structured interviews

The data analysis of semi-structured interviews utilized content analysis, drawing upon Neurendorf's work on qualitative content analysis (Neurendorf, 2002). The specific technique employed in this research was based on two distinct approaches: 1) an inductive approach, also known as a bottom-up approach, where the coding and analysis procedures were developed based on the emergent contents found in the data, and 2) a deductive approach, also known as a top-down approach, where the researcher coded and interpreted the data using predetermined theoretical codes, ideas, and topics identified during the primary data collection. A combination

of deductive and inductive content analysis techniques was chosen, involving the inductive coding of the primary data and the elaboration of the main theoretical and conceptual framework of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) application within the context of Cyprus tourism strategies.

Content analysis has been widely recognized as a valuable method for interpreting qualitative data in various fields (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Its flexibility allows researchers to systematically analyse textual, visual, or auditory data, making it suitable for examining complex phenomena such as Tourism Carrying Capacity (Schreier, 2014). Content analysis enables researchers to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the data, providing valuable insights into the research topic (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The research was built upon three interconnected thematic areas (pillars). The first pillar focused on the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its significance in fostering sustainability on the island. The second pillar explored the importance of dividing the island into Tourism Clusters and investigated the relationship between these clusters. The third pillar highlighted the importance of the socio-cultural perspective as a driving force in TCC within Cyprus Tourism Clusters. It served as a crucial measurement tool for TCC or as part of a comprehensive "multi-model." In recent research on the National Tourism Strategy, conducted to provide a framework for an open consultation on the new National Tourism Strategy until 2030, some clear positions were identified for the first time. However, there was no explicit reference to indicators that measure tourism capacity.

The thematic areas were further divided into sub contents. Content A addressed the concept of TCC and provided insights into research questions 1 and 2. Content B investigated the proposed Tourism Clusters, analysed the relationship with the existing ETAP (Strategic Tourism Plan), and examined their contribution to sustainable development and the necessity of a TCC model. It offered answers to research question 3. Lastly, Content C explored the role of Cypriot tourism culture and the socio-cultural variables that contributed to TCC. Content analysis, as a methodological approach, offers several advantages in qualitative research. It provides a systematic and structured approach to data analysis, allowing researchers to manage and interpret large volumes of qualitative data efficiently (Schreier, 2012). Moreover, content analysis enables researchers to identify and analyse both explicit and implicit themes within the data, capturing the richness and complexity of the research topic (Kondracki et al., 2002).

By applying content analysis techniques, researchers can uncover underlying patterns, trends, and relationships, enhancing the depth and breadth of qualitative research findings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The selection of content analysis as the primary analytical method for this research was guided by its suitability for examining complex qualitative data related to tourism carrying capacity. By employing both deductive and inductive approaches within the content analysis framework, the research aimed to capture the multifaceted nature of TCC within the context of Cyprus tourism strategies. Through rigorous content analysis, the research sought to generate comprehensive insights into the conceptualization, application, and implications of TCC in sustainable tourism development, contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical policymaking in the field.

4.4.2 Data Quality

To ensure the quality of research data, researchers adhered to and fulfilled various research quality criteria (Tracy, 2010). This section of the thesis highlighted the approaches taken to address different data quality issues. Specifically, the focus was on reliability, validity, credibility, and ethical considerations when developing and analysing the data. Throughout the research, meticulous efforts were made to uphold the integrity and trustworthiness of the data collected. Reliability was ensured through consistent data collection methods and procedures, minimizing inconsistencies or errors in data gathering. Validity was established by employing appropriate research instruments and methodologies that accurately measured the variables of interest. Credibility was maintained through transparency in the research process, including thorough documentation of data collection and analysis procedures, allowing for verification and replication by other researchers. Ethical considerations were paramount, with protocols in place to protect the rights and confidentiality of participants, ensuring their voluntary participation and informed consent.

Moreover, the research methodology incorporated strategies to address potential biases and enhance the robustness of the findings. Triangulation, for instance, involved cross-validating data from multiple sources or methods to corroborate results and increase confidence in the conclusions drawn. Additionally, peer debriefing and member checking were employed to solicit feedback from external experts and participants, respectively, to validate interpretations

and ensure their alignment with the participants' experiences. Furthermore, the research design encompassed a reflexive approach, where researchers critically reflected on their own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions throughout the research process. This reflexivity enhanced the researcher's awareness of their role in shaping the research outcomes and allowed for transparent reporting of any potential influences on the findings. By addressing these data quality criteria, the research aimed to produce findings that were reliable, valid, credible, and ethically sound, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

4.4.3 Credibility

The first methodological strategy employed in this research to ensure reliability was the triangulation of methods and data. Triangulation of methods and data was a well-established approach in research aimed at enhancing the credibility and reliability of findings. It involved utilizing multiple methods or data sources to investigate a research question, with the goal of corroborating and validating results through the convergence of evidence from different perspectives (Creswell, 2014). The convergence of evidence from different methods and data sources strengthened the credibility of research findings by minimizing the potential for methodological biases or errors. Triangulation enabled researchers to identify patterns, inconsistencies, or convergence in the data, facilitating a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic (Denzin, 2017). It enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings and increased confidence in the conclusions drawn from the study. In addition to methodological triangulation, the credibility of this research was supported through participant audits as part of the research process and by ensuring strong ethical considerations.

Credibility primarily pertained to the reliability and evaluation of the research findings in qualitative studies (Golafshani, 2003; Tracy, 2010). In qualitative research, credibility relied on the researcher's expertise, knowledge, and effort to demonstrate their competence and understanding to effectively complete the study (Golafshani, 2003). The reliability of the researcher was especially crucial in interview-based studies, as the data collection process relied heavily on the credibility of the interviewer (Rhoades & Ward, 2012). Moreover, when gathering sensitive information, such as emotions, the credibility of the interviewer became even more important (Saunders et al., 2012). To enhance credibility, the researcher in this study established higher levels of reliability with the interviewees by being willing to conduct phone discussions prior to the interviews. This communication allowed the interviewees to not only

understand the researcher's knowledge and expertise but also ensured the confidentiality of their names and organizations, facilitating their openness in sharing their thoughts and opinions without hesitation. Additionally, the important information was provided and explained to the participants before the interviews took place, ensuring clarity and transparency on the day of the interview. The researcher effectively addressed the importance of considering the socio-cultural perspective when examining tourism carrying capacity, making a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge. The inclusion of the specific context of the Tourism Clusters in Cyprus enhanced the relevance and applicability of the study.

Moreover, the combination of deductive and inductive content analysis techniques provided a robust methodological approach for data interpretation and analysis. The thorough examination of the three thematic areas, namely the concept of tourism carrying capacity, the significance of Tourism Clusters, and the role of the socio-cultural perspective, ensured a comprehensive investigation of the research topic. Additionally, the utilization of content analysis techniques allowed for a systematic exploration of textual data, facilitating deeper insights and understanding of the research phenomenon. Through meticulous data analysis, the researcher was able to uncover patterns, themes, and relationships within the data, thereby enriching the interpretation of research findings and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

4.4.4 Validity

In the Thesis, issues of quality and authenticity were addressed. While legitimacy was commonly associated with quantitative research, which focused on reliability, validity, and generalizability (Golafshani, 2003), it could also be applicable to qualitative research. In this study, distinct forms of authenticity, including formative, internal, and external authenticity, were considered. External authenticity, which pertained to the generalizability of findings, was not essential for this research as it did not aim to make predictions or generalizations. The development of authenticity in this study was related to the extent to which the research measured or methodologies aligned with their intended objectives (Saunders et al., 2012). Additionally, authenticity was concerned with the substantive nature of the events being studied (Golafshani, 2003). The researcher took several steps to enhance authenticity. Firstly, a clear and detailed description of the data collection process, specifically in-depth interviews, was provided, including records of the interview logs (Stuart et al., 2002). The pilot study

conducted in this research further improved construct validity by addressing identified issues and shortcomings, thereby enhancing the validity of the interview protocol.

While internal validity primarily applied to quantitative studies that demonstrated causal relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2012), in qualitative studies, it was important to allow key informants to freely express themselves without imposing constraints on their participation in the research process (Sobh & Perry, 2000). This study considered this perspective by inviting key informants to participate only if they wished to do so. Moreover, the majority of the questions in the interview survey were open-ended, enabling participants to speak freely and express themselves in their own words. They also had the opportunity to discuss topics or points not specified in the interview protocol, as the interviews were semi-structured. This approach encouraged dialogue and helped to further validate the results. Internal validity was reinforced by the fact that key informants in this study were pre-selected, specifically those involved in tourism, development, and tourism strategy at the national and local levels. This purposive sampling approach allowed the researcher to obtain critical information and improve the validity of the research.

In summary, the qualitative methodology employed in the thesis on Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus addressed authenticity and validity concerns. By providing a clear description of the data collection process, incorporating a pilot test, allowing key informants to express themselves freely, and selecting appropriate participants, the study enhanced the authenticity and validity of the research findings.

4.4.5 Reliability

The validity of the thesis was supported by the concept of TCC in Cyprus, using a qualitative methodology, which was bolstered by the concept of reliability. In qualitative research, reliability referred to the strength of the methodological design, the quality of the data collected, and their contribution to obtaining true and trustworthy findings that reflected reality. While qualitative research did not use the term "reliability" in the same way as quantitative research, it encompassed similar considerations related to internal validity. To enhance the reliability of the research, multiple measures were implemented. Participant audits were conducted to validate data, interpretations, and discussions of the research findings, actively involving participants in the verification process. Additionally, the researcher employed ethical

and methodological strategies, such as thorough documentation of interviews and rigorous data analysis, to ensure consistency and coherence. Prior to publication, the final research report was shared with participants, allowing them to confirm the reliability of specific passages and provide feedback. This inclusive approach strengthened the reliability of the research. In conclusion, through participant audits, rigorous methodological choices, and participant engagement, the thesis on Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus using a qualitative methodology established the reliability of the data and findings, contributing to the overall trustworthiness and validity of the research.

Moreover, the reliability of the research findings was further fortified by the researcher's meticulous attention to detail throughout the data collection and analysis processes. By adhering to rigorous ethical and methodological standards, including transparent documentation and systematic data analysis techniques, the researcher ensured that the research outcomes were consistent and dependable. Furthermore, the active involvement of participants in verifying data and interpretations added an extra layer of validation, reinforcing the reliability of the research findings. This comprehensive approach not only enhanced the reliability of the research but also instilled confidence in the accuracy and credibility of the findings, thereby strengthening the overall validity of the thesis.

4.4.6 Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to and adapted to ethical codes of conduct in research to ensure the ethical integrity of their study. Ethical guidelines and principles established the framework for conducting research and aimed to prevent ethical issues and risks (Saunders et al., 2016). In the context of the thesis, the researcher followed these ethical guidelines to maintain ethical behaviour throughout the study. Respecting the confidentiality and anonymity of the key informants involved in the study was of utmost importance (Blumberg et al., 2017). All documents and interview recordings were used solely for the purposes of this study and were safeguarded to prevent unauthorized access (Kumar, 2021). This ensured the privacy and confidentiality of the participants' information and data. The data collection and analysis in the study were conducted with clarity and accuracy, taking into consideration the privacy concerns and personal space of the participants (Creswell, 2014). Explicit permission was obtained from the participants before recording their responses, and their names and the names of their hotels were kept confidential (Fontana & Frey, 2020). Informed consent was obtained from each key

informant, indicating their voluntary participation in the study (Saunders et al., 2016). Participants were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point during the interview or choose not to answer specific questions if desired (Blumberg et al., 2017).

Obtaining ethical clearance and seeking permission from the hotels involved in the study further demonstrated the researcher's commitment to ethical practices (Kumar, 2021). This ensured that the study adhered to ethical standards and obtained the necessary approvals to conduct the research. In qualitative research, it was crucial to address ethical issues, especially when exploring human emotions (Creswell, 2014). The researcher took great caution to avoid potential psychological harm to the participants by carefully reviewing the interview questions (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Expert input was sought to identify and modify any questions that may have been inappropriate or could potentially cause harm. These measures aimed to ensure the well-being and psychological safety of the participants throughout the research process. By adhering to these ethical codes of conduct, the researcher maintained the ethical integrity of the study on Cyprus Tourism Carrying Capacity, ensuring the protection of participant rights, confidentiality, and privacy.

Furthermore, the researcher continually reflected on ethical considerations throughout the study, ensuring that ethical standards were upheld at every stage of the research process. Regular ethical reviews and consultations with ethics committees or advisors provided additional oversight and guidance, strengthening the ethical foundation of the study. Additionally, the researcher remained transparent about ethical practices in the study's documentation and reporting, promoting accountability and trustworthiness in the research findings. Through these diligent efforts, the researcher demonstrated a steadfast commitment to ethical conduct in research, safeguarding the rights and well-being of all participants involved in the study.

4.4.7 Content analysis technique

Content analysis is a powerful analytical technique that can be effectively utilized in a PhD thesis focused on interpreting Tourism Carrying Capacity from a socio-cultural perspective. This study explores the process and significance of content analysis within the context of a thesis titled "Interpreting Tourism Carrying Capacity from a Socio-Cultural Perspective – The Case of the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus." This technique enables the systematic examination

of textual data to uncover patterns, contents, and codes relevant to Tourism Carrying Capacity and its socio-cultural implications. The initial step in content analysis involves the collection of pertinent textual data, such as interviews with stakeholders, policy documents, tourism plans, and reports. By drawing from these sources, the researcher gains valuable insights into the perspectives, attitudes, and practices of various individuals involved in the tourism industry in Cyprus. These data sources provide a rich foundation for exploring the complex relationship between Tourism Carrying Capacity and its socio-cultural context. Coding is a crucial stage in content analysis, wherein the researcher assigns labels or codes to segments of text that encapsulate meaningful concepts or ideas. This process can be approached deductively by utilizing existing literature and theoretical frameworks related to Tourism Carrying Capacity and socio-cultural perspectives. However, inductive coding may also be employed to capture emerging contents that were not initially anticipated. Through coding, the researcher organizes the textual data and lays the groundwork for subsequent analysis. The coded segments of text are then categorized into contents that capture the core ideas and concepts concerning Tourism Carrying Capacity and its socio-cultural implications within the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus. By identifying similarities and differences within the data, the researcher generates meaningful categories that reflect the diverse dimensions of the research topic. Categorization allows for a holistic understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics at play in relation to tourism carrying capacity.

The analysis and interpretation phase is where the researcher delves deeper into the categorized data to gain valuable insights into the socio-cultural aspects of Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus. By examining the relationships between categories, exploring underlying patterns, and identifying contradictions or divergent perspectives, the researcher uncovers nuanced understandings of the phenomenon under investigation. This analytical process sheds light on the socio-cultural dynamics that influence Tourism Carrying Capacity within the specific context of the Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. To ensure the robustness and credibility of the findings, the researcher engages in validation and triangulation.

This involves seeking feedback from participants or experts in the field to verify the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data. Additionally, the researcher may incorporate multiple data sources or methods to corroborate the findings, such as comparing interview data with policy documents or conducting on-site observations within the Tourism

Clusters. By employing these validation and triangulation techniques, the researcher enhances the reliability and validity of the research outcomes.

Content analysis is a valuable technique in the context of a PhD thesis focused on interpreting Tourism Carrying Capacity from a socio-cultural perspective. Through systematic data collection, coding, categorization, analysis, and interpretation, content analysis enables researchers to uncover the socio-cultural dynamics influencing Tourism Carrying Capacity in a specific context, such as the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus. The findings obtained through content analysis contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural implications of tourism development, inform sustainable tourism practices, and provide valuable insights for policymakers, destination managers, and other stakeholders involved in managing Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus.

4.4.8 Correspondence to each research question and sub-question.

There are several notation systems available for researchers to transcribe spoken words into written text, capturing various paralinguistic expressions such as pauses, accents, and word repetitions (Tsiolis, 2020; Willig, 2017). These notation systems differ in their level of detail and can be selected based on the researcher's chosen analysis approach and research goals.

For content analysis, which primarily focuses on the spoken words' content, a simple notation system that accurately represents the spoken words is sufficient. Distinctive paralinguistic expressions such as laughter, strong emphasis, or extended pauses can be noted (Tsiolis, 2020). During the transcription process, it is important to consider the following points:

- A. The researcher should faithfully record the words of the informant and the interviewer without correcting mistakes, omissions, interruptions, or repetitions.
 - B. The transcription should include both the informant's speeches and the researcher's questions or reactions that prompted the informant's responses.
 - C. The notation system used during the transcription should be documented in the thesis's appendix (Literature Review Management), even if it is a non-standard system (Willig, 2017).
- It is important to note that the material is generated based on an interview guide or protocol, which includes questions aligned with the research questions and sub-questions that the researcher aims to address.

The material is expected to provide data that, after thorough analysis, will help answer the research questions. It is crucial to differentiate between the research questions and the interview guide questions, as they are related but not identical. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, such as NVivo (Appendix 5) can facilitate the process by streamlining data management and analysis (Tsiolis, 2020).

By following these practices and utilizing appropriate notation systems, researchers can effectively transcribe and analyse spoken data to gain valuable insights into their research questions and contribute to the understanding of Cyprus Tourism Carrying Capacity.

4.4.9 Codification

The researcher then engages in the interpretation of the data, seeking to understand its meaning and provide conceptual definitions. This process, known as "coding," involves attributing codes to units of meaning identified in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Tsiolis, 2021; Irisari & Pourkos, 2015). Codes represent the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the data, and they play a crucial role in addressing the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

During the coding process, the researcher identifies relevant features in the data and assigns specific codes to them. This systematic approach ensures that the coding is comprehensive and captures the essence of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In content analysis, ideas, categories, and concepts derived from the literature review are also utilized, providing a framework for understanding and interpreting the data (Willig, 2013). Multiple codes can be assigned to a single passage if it contains multiple units of meaning, and the same code can be used for different snippets when they reflect the same content (Willig, 2013). As the coding process progresses, existing codes can be reused or modified to incorporate variations in meaning or clarify their relationship to other generated codes (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The codes employed in the analysis can be descriptive, summarizing and describing the explicit content of the data, or interpretive, capturing the latent meaning and the researcher's interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2019). It is important to note that the codes can originate from the participants' words and ideas as well as from the conceptual and theoretical framework adopted by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

By employing coding techniques and drawing upon relevant ideas from the literature review, the researcher can identify and analyze patterns of meaning within the data, shedding light on the topic of Cyprus Tourism Carrying Capacity in the research study (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Tsiolis, 2021).

4.4.10 The transition from codes to topics

At that stage, the transition from the code level to the theme level was undertaken. Themes represented more abstract and general conceptual constructs compared to codes (Tsiolis, 2014, pp. 269-271). They were derived through the processing, comparison, and merging of codes, reflecting repetitive patterns of meaning. Themes served as independent conceptual entities and provided versions of the answers to the research questions being investigated. The process of moving from codes to themes began with the collection of all encoded segments of data under each code. Subsequently, the researcher strived to present, with tangible examples, the sequential steps that could be followed to analyse the data using the method of content analysis. In this particular research, the data generated through semi-structured interviews were the focus.

In the first step, the researcher examined the contents obtained from the analysis of the literature review (preliminary contents). The second step involved reviewing the contents during the data collection process and then carefully examining the primary data. The fourth step encompassed the identification of contents through the conduct of interviews. This was followed by reviewing and assigning names to the contents. The final step involved writing up the report, where the researcher organized the data into distinct contents (producing the report). For this research, the proposed steps were as follows:

Step 1: Searched for theoretical ideas and contents within the literature (preliminary contents).

Step 2: Reviewed the contents during the data gathering process.

Step 3: Familiarized with the data.

Step 4: Searched for contents within the primary data.

Step 5: Reviewed potential contents.

Step 6: Defined and named contents.

Step 7: Produced the report.

The findings of the research were based on three main areas. The first area focused on the respondents' knowledge of tourist carrying capacity, the concept of sustainable development in a tourist destination, and the need for a carrying capacity model. Within this area, questions were posed regarding the variables of carrying capacity and which ones the respondents considered most important. Additionally, the respondents were asked to provide their perspective on the key performance indicators (KPIs) and their emphasis. The second area explored the relationship between Tourism Clusters, the involvement of local authorities and government mechanisms, the role of the Tourism Development and Promotion Company (ETAP), and the need for centralization or decentralization of decision-making. The third area aimed to examine the knowledge and experiences of the interviewees concerning the concept of tourism culture, particularly the perceptions, acceptance, and adaptation of tourism in the examined clusters (destinations). Within this area, questions were raised to explore the dynamics of stakeholders, including the respondents' understanding of political and state support.

Prior to presenting, analysing, and discussing the primary data, it was imperative to establish the reliability and significance of the content analysis method employed in this research. Data analysis constituted a pivotal aspect of the research, facilitating researchers in achieving their objectives, addressing research inquiries, and deriving meaningful conclusions (Saunders et al., 2012). Various methodologies were available for data analysis, including content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory, and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Within this research, content analysis and IPA were predominantly utilized. Content analysis entailed the systematic identification, organization, and comprehension of repetitive patterns of meaning within a dataset, thereby granting access to collective modes of signification and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher discerned pertinent patterns of meaning conducive to addressing the research questions. Guided by the research inquiries, content analysis necessitated an active and imaginative role on the researcher's part, as they constructed and cultivated issues through an interactive engagement with the data (Tsiolis, 2016). Interpretive phenomenology, as its denomination implied, centred on the interpretation and comprehension of social reality through diverse constructs or mediums such as language, individual and collective consciousness, and shared significances (McManus & Holroyd, 2007). The analysis of findings in this study was categorized into three content areas, as delineated in the Table 6 below.

Table 6: Content Areas

Content A:
Comprehensive understanding of Tourist Carrying Capacity (T.C.C.):
Importance of a T.C.C. model.
Previous studies on T.C.C. in Cyprus.
Formation of a single or multiple models.
Implementation and strategies related to T.C.C. model.
Variables considered most important.
Success of T.C.C. model implementation.
Barriers to creating a T.C.C. model.
General knowledge of sustainable development and its connection to T.C.C.
Previous studies on sustainable development.
Content B:
Comprehensive understanding of Tourism Clusters:
Agreement with the clustering of tourist destinations by the THR study.
Tourism Development and Promotion Company (ETAP).
Contribution of ETAP.
Centralization or decentralization of decision-making.
Content C:
General knowledge of Social Carrying Capacity (SCC)
Broad understanding of SCC.
Relationship between SCC and T.C.C.
Suggested indicators in SCC based on individual preferences, attitudes, opinions, and experiences.
Factors influencing expectations and evaluations.
Concept of Cypriot culture in relation to tourism.
Stakeholder dynamics:
Stakeholders' knowledge and expertise.

Source: author's own

Before presenting, analysing, and discussing the primary data, it was important to establish the reliability and significance of the Content analysis method used in this research. Data analysis was a crucial aspect of any study as it helped researchers achieve their objectives, answer research questions, and reach meaningful conclusions (Saunders et al., 2012). In qualitative research, such as this study, the analysis of data, which included transcribed interview texts, was conducted to make sense of the data and address the central research questions. The interpretive epistemological tradition encompassed various approaches to qualitative research, each with distinct epistemological assumptions, formulation of research questions, and

methods of data analysis. This research primarily employed content analysis and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Content analysis involved systematically identifying, organizing, and understanding repetitive patterns of meaning within a dataset, providing access to collective ways of understanding and experiencing (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher focused on patterns relevant to the research topic and questions. Content analysis, guided by the research questions, required an active and creative role for the researcher, who constructed and developed themes through an interactive relationship with the data (Tsiolis, 2016). Interpretive phenomenology, as the name suggests, focused on interpretation and understanding of social reality through various constructs or mediums such as language, individual and collective consciousness, and shared meanings (McManus & Holroyd, 2007).

4.4.11 Interview Guide: Exploring Sustainable Tourism in Cyprus through Carrying Capacity and Cluster Dynamics

The interview guide, meticulously crafted as the foundational framework for conducting this thesis research, will be structured into six thematic areas, each addressing crucial dimensions of sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. The questions within these thematic areas are designed to guide the interviews, yet their adaptability will become evident as the interview process unfolds. The flexibility of the guide allows for adjustments in response to the evolving reflections, knowledge, and perceptions shared by the interviewees. It is noteworthy that the structure and content of the first interview will adhere closely to the original guide. However, as subsequent interviews progress, totalling 35 in number, a point of saturation will become apparent, notably after the 20th interview. This saturation will suggest that further interviews, even up to 40 or 45, will likely yield repetitive responses, indicating a comprehensive and rich data collection process.

The guide's effectiveness in uncovering insights will be evident as interviewees share their perspectives on Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC), sustainable tourism, and the intricate dynamics of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. The depth of information collected, coupled with the structured thematic areas and subthemes, will provide a robust foundation for understanding stakeholder perceptions, challenges, and recommendations regarding TCC and sustainable tourism practices. The interview process will not only adhere to the guide but will also demonstrate its dynamic nature, ensuring a nuanced exploration of sustainable tourism in Cyprus through the lenses of TCC and Tourism Clusters.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter provided a detailed explanation of the methodological approaches employed in the study, including the data collection and analysis strategies. It established the relevant terminology, methodological concepts, and principles that supported the researcher's chosen approaches and directions. The chapter began by outlining the researcher's philosophical position, encompassing metaphysics, epistemology, and research methodology approaches. Additionally, it delved into the elaboration of Basic Authenticity as the primary philosophical orientation of the researcher, supported by compelling arguments.

Furthermore, within the research design section, the chapter described the overall plan for approaching and methodologically addressing the research questions through a comprehensive examination of the research purpose and approach. Additionally, the chapter explored the application of Constructivism as the main philosophical stance of the researcher, justified by substantial arguments. The research design section further elucidated the data collection method employed in this study, namely semi-structured interviews, providing the rationale behind this choice. This subsection also detailed the sampling approach, explaining the reasoning behind the selection and presenting the results of the pilot study. Moreover, the section discussed the methodology used for qualitative data analysis. Lastly, the concluding section highlighted the steps taken to address various data quality issues, ensuring the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the collected data. In this context, it also explained how research ethics guidelines were considered throughout the research process to mitigate ethical biases.

This chapter served as a foundation for the comprehensive analysis of the findings in Chapter 5, where the researcher thoroughly examined and interpreted the collected data in accordance with the established methodological approaches.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this research study, Chapter 5 examines the data collected in the field and provides an analysis. Initially, the research aimed to investigate the existing condition of tourism in Cyprus, with a specific focus on the adoption of sustainable tourism practices and the application of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models. The results indicate that despite acknowledging the adverse effects of mass tourism and seasonality in Cyprus, there is currently no utilization of TCC models. Although the Strategic Plan 2030 recognizes the importance of visitor management tools to tackle these challenges, there are presently no active plans or tools in place. The tourism industry is a complex network of stakeholders with different agendas, interests, and perspectives (Andriotis, 2018; Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2019). In Cyprus, stakeholders in the tourism industry have expressed conflicting agendas and interests regarding destination and visitor management planning. While some stakeholders prioritize the economic benefits of tourism and aim to increase visitor numbers, others are concerned about the negative impacts of tourism on the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage, and advocate for sustainable tourism development practices (Andriotis, 2018). This disagreement among stakeholders has led to a lack of consensus on destination and visitor management planning in Cyprus (Philippou & Leventis, 2019). The absence of a shared vision and common goals has hindered effective tourism planning and management, leading to negative impacts such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, and cultural erosion (Panayiotopoulos & Vogiatzakis, 2020).

The tourism industry in Cyprus has witnessed a surge in visitor numbers, which has resulted in overcrowding in popular destinations (Panayiotopoulos & Vogiatzakis, 2020). The strain on local infrastructure and resources has raised concerns about the sustainability of tourism development in the country. Furthermore, the overcrowding has led to a decline in the quality of the visitor experience and has had adverse effects on the environment and local communities (Panayiotopoulos & Vogiatzakis, 2020). To address these challenges, it is crucial to engage in open dialogues and involve all stakeholders in destination and visitor management planning (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2019). Finding a balance between economic benefits and sustainability is essential for the long-term success of tourism in Cyprus. By promoting sustainable tourism practices, distributing visitor flows to less crowded areas, and preserving the natural and cultural heritage, the negative impacts of overcrowding can be mitigated.

(Stylianou-Lambert & Kleanthous, 2019). The existence of conflicting agendas and perspectives among stakeholders in the tourism industry has hindered effective destination and visitor management planning in Cyprus. While some stakeholders prioritize economic benefits and increased visitor numbers, others emphasize the importance of sustainable practices and minimizing negative impacts. The result has been overcrowding and its associated challenges. However, by fostering dialogue and adopting sustainable tourism approaches, the negative impacts of overcrowding can be addressed while ensuring the long-term success of tourism in Cyprus.

One key aspect of sustainable tourism development is visitor management planning that aims to balance the needs of visitors with those of the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage (Andriotis, 2018). Stakeholder participation is crucial for the success of visitor management planning, as it can provide diverse perspectives and ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are considered (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2019). This study explored the stakeholders' perspectives on culture and visitor management planning in Cyprus, with a focus on sustainable tourism development. It focused to understand how different stakeholders perceive the role of culture in tourism and how they contribute to visitor management planning in the context of sustainability. It has also examined the perspectives of stakeholders from the government, tourism industry, local communities, and environmental organizations, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with culture and visitor management planning. By examining stakeholder perspectives, this study to identified areas of agreement and disagreement regarding sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

Sustainable tourism management is a complex process that requires the implementation of various tools and models to address the negative impacts of tourism on the environment, culture, and local communities (Andriotis & Agiomirgianakis, 2014; Bramwell & Lane, 2011). One of the essential tools in sustainable tourism management is the Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) model, which helps assess the maximum number of visitors that a destination can sustain without causing significant negative impacts (Honey, 2008). However, despite the importance of TCC models in sustainable tourism management, it has been observed that several key stakeholders are not aware of this tool and other related models (Santana, Almeida, & Vargas-Sánchez, 2018). This lack of awareness can hinder the effective implementation of sustainable tourism practices and lead to uncontrolled tourism growth, which can have detrimental effects on the environment and local communities. To address this issue, it is crucial to raise awareness

among stakeholders about the significance of TCC models and their role in sustainable tourism management. Educating stakeholders about the potential negative impacts of uncontrolled tourism growth and the benefits of implementing TCC models can foster a better understanding and appreciation for sustainable tourism practices (Weaver & Lawton, 2014). Stakeholder engagement and collaboration are vital in ensuring the integration of TCC models into tourism planning and decision-making processes (UNWTO, 2015). By promoting knowledge and understanding of TCC models among stakeholders, destination authorities can enhance their capacity to manage tourism growth sustainably, mitigate overcrowding, and protect the environment and local communities. This, in turn, contributes to the long-term sustainability and resilience of tourism destination. Furthermore, even among those who were aware of the tool, there were concerns about the practicality and usefulness of the TCC tool in the context of the tourism industry in Cyprus. Without effective management of tourism carrying capacity, there is a risk of overcrowding, environmental degradation, and negative impacts on the local communities.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern among important stakeholders in Cyprus that the tourism capacity in some areas has been exceeded, resulting in overcrowding and environmental degradation (Andriotis & Agiomirgianakis, 2014). This situation calls for the implementation of effective tourism management strategies, including the use of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models, to ensure the sustainable development of tourism in these areas. While tourism contributes significantly to the economic development of the country, it can also have negative impacts on the environment, culture, and local communities. Despite this consensus, the study also found that there were differing perspectives among stakeholders on how to address these issues (Uslu et al., 2020). Some stakeholders believed that the focus should be on reducing the number of visitors in affected areas, while others suggested that the emphasis should be on improving infrastructure and services to better manage the impact of tourism also supported by Filimonau, & Coteau, (2020).

There were also differing opinions on the role of the government and the private sector in addressing these issues. According to the findings of this study, it has been revealed that the lack of a deliberate visitor management plan is a major contributing factor to the negative impacts experienced in tourism destinations. It is, therefore, urgent to develop and implement a comprehensive visitor management plan to mitigate the negative impacts on the Cypriot

tourism industry. The study found that there was a consensus among key stakeholders that there is an urgent need for a deliberate visitor management plan in Cyprus. Stakeholders identified a range of negative impacts of tourism, including overcrowding, environmental degradation, and the loss of authenticity of local cultures and communities. These impacts were seen as potential threats to the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry in Cyprus.

Tourism is a vital economic sector in Cyprus, contributing significantly to the country's GDP and providing employment opportunities. However, the economic impacts of tourism are perceived differently by various stakeholders in the tourism industry. Some stakeholders view tourism as a driver of economic growth and development, while others express concerns about the negative impacts of tourism on the local economy and communities. Furthermore, stakeholders in the tourism industry have varying perceptions regarding the adequacy of infrastructure and services in meeting the needs of tourists.

Moreover, the research findings shed light on the emergence of diverse Tourism Clusters within the tourism industry in Cyprus. These clusters are designed to enhance the competitiveness of specific regions within the sector. This observation is further supported by researchers such as Lee and colleagues (2020), as noted in the literature review. These clusters serve as a vital strategy to foster economic growth and enhance the quality of tourism services and infrastructure in Cyprus. However, the study identifies certain challenges that impede the successful implementation of Tourism Clusters. One major challenge is the lack of coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. Many stakeholders in the Cyprus tourism industry operate independently, with limited communication and interaction with others, resulting in a dearth of synergy and coordination among them. This hampers the effective functioning of Tourism Clusters.

Another challenge is the insufficient resources available to stakeholders for implementing Tourism Clusters. Many stakeholders express the need for increased financial and technical support to fully unleash the potential of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. Despite these obstacles, the study also highlights several opportunities to enhance Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. These opportunities encompass the potential for improved collaboration and communication among stakeholders, as well as the utilization of new technologies and digital tools to enhance the tourism experience. The findings of this study hold significant implications for the ongoing

discourse surrounding sustainable tourism development, stakeholder participation, and the preservation of cultural heritage in Cyprus. Moreover, the results of this research offer valuable insights that can be applied to other destinations aspiring to achieve sustainable tourism development while safeguarding their distinct cultural identity.

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the current state of the tourism industry in Cyprus and provided crucial insights for its future trajectory. The establishment of Tourism Clusters has been identified as a pivotal strategy to bolster competitiveness and stimulate economic growth within specific regions. However, it is evident that obstacles such as the lack of coordination and limited resources impede the effective implementation of these clusters. To surmount these challenges, stakeholders must prioritize collaboration and communication, fostering a unified approach that maximizes the potential of Tourism Clusters. Additionally, harnessing technological advancements and digital tools presents promising prospects for enhancing the tourism experience in Cyprus. By addressing these challenges head-on and capitalizing on the identified opportunities, Cyprus can position itself as a thriving destination renowned for offering exceptional tourism services and fostering sustainable growth. It is paramount for stakeholders, policymakers, and industry players to join forces and invest in the requisite support to unlock the full potential of Tourism Clusters, thus ensuring a prosperous and enduring future for the Cyprus tourism industry. The responses regarding the variables considered most important in measuring the carrying capacity and the extent to which the socio-political aspect of tourism surpasses others differed, but not along party lines. Instead, the variation could be observed based on the interviewees' working environments, such as academics, practitioners, and representatives of the state apparatus. The individual beliefs and understanding of each interviewee played a significant role in shaping their answers. Overall, it was acknowledged that all parameters are important, but three were deemed particularly crucial.

The study on Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) enlisted the participation of 32 individuals, each contributing a unique perspective to the investigation. The gender distribution revealed a predominantly male representation, with 25 male participants and 7 female participants. This gender dynamic sets the stage for exploring how diverse viewpoints may shape discussions on TCC and sustainable tourism management. Examining the stakeholder composition, the participants were categorized into four distinct types. Private organizations accounted for the

largest segment, with 16 participants, highlighting the substantial involvement of the private sector in TCC-related discourse. Top government officials, representing the Ministry of Tourism, constituted 5 participants, underlining the significance of governmental perspectives. Additionally, 8 participants each hailed from local authorities and academic institutions, showcasing the collaboration between these entities in addressing TCC challenges. Their educational backgrounds varied among participants, with 19 holding Master's degrees, 11 possessing a Ph.D., and an additional 11 holding an MSc. This diversity in educational qualifications underscores the interdisciplinary nature of the study, drawing insights from individuals with different levels of academic expertise.

The departments and positions represented in the study spanned a spectrum of key roles crucial to the tourism landscape. From Presidents of industry associations to practitioners and consultants, the participants brought a wealth of experience. Notably, the Former President of PASIXE and the President of PASDIXE, both practitioners, represented the private sector with 45 years of experience each. Meanwhile, academic institutions such as TEPAK and Cardiff Metropolitan University contributed 10 and 30 years of experience, respectively, infusing the study with academic rigor as shown in Table 7.

The rich diversity in gender, stakeholder types, educational backgrounds, and represented positions among the participants enhances the depth and comprehensiveness of the TCC study. This diverse range of perspectives ensures a holistic exploration of TCC-related issues, fostering a well-rounded understanding of sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. The demographics of the participants are summarized in The table 7 below.

Table 7: Participants demographic information

Participant Number	Gender	Type of Stakeholder	Educational Level	Years of Service
P.N.1	Male	Private Organisation	Master	3
P.N.2	Female	Private Organisation	Master	35
P.N.3	Female	Top Government	Master	15
P.N.4	Female	Top Government	PhD	5
P.N.5	Female	Local Authorities	Master	38
P.N.6	Male	Academic	PhD	10
P.N.7	Female	Academic	PhD	15
P.N.8	Male	Private	PhD	30
P.N.9	Male	Private	Master	35

P.N.10	Female	Private	PhD	20
P.N.11	Female	Academic	PhD (c)	30
P.N.12	Male	Academic	Master	30
P.N.13	Female	Local Authorities	Master	15
P.N.14	Male	Academic	PhD (c)	30
P.N.15	Male	Private Organisation	Master	45
P.N.16	Male	Private Organisation	Master	45
P.N.17	Male	Private Organisation	Master	32
P.N.18	Male	Private Organisation	Master	32
P.N.19	Male	Local Authorities	MSc	25
P.N.20	Male	Academic	PhD	20
P.N.21	Male	Private	MSc	30
P.N.22	Male	Private Organisation	MSc	20
P.N.23	Male	Top Government	MSc	5/20
P.N.24	Male	Local Authorities	MSc	20
P.N.25	Male	Academic	PhD	15
P.N.26	Male	Academic	MSc	30
P.N.27	Female	Local Authorities	MSc	5
P.N.28	Male	Local Authorities	MSc	10
P.N.29	Male	Private Organisation's own	MSc	30
P.N.30	Male	Private Organisation	MSc	10
P.N.31	Male	Private Organisation	PhD	30
P.N.32	Male	Private Organisation	PhD	30

The subsequent table presents an overview of the participant demographics involved in the focus groups. The organization and implementation of the focus groups were conducted remotely through Skype, with a predominant number of participants opting for anonymity to ensure their confidentiality. To accommodate this, the researcher provided reassurances and allowed participants to keep their cameras off during the sessions. Detailed instructions were given on how to use Skype securely, and participants were encouraged to use pseudonyms. This approach not only protected their privacy but also created a comfortable environment, encouraging open and honest discussion. The remote nature of the meetings allowed for a broader geographic representation, enriching the diversity of perspectives in the research. The demographic data collected included age, gender, occupation, and other relevant factors, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the participant pool. Additionally, the researcher facilitated the sessions with sensitivity to time zone differences, scheduling meetings at times

convenient for all participants. Feedback mechanisms were also established to continually improve the process, allowing participants to voice any concerns or suggestions regarding the focus groups. This adaptive and participant-centered approach contributed to the richness and reliability of the data gathered. Table 8 illustrates the demographics of the focus groups participants.

Table 8: Focus Groups Participants demographic information

Participant Number	Gender	Type of Stakeholder	Educational Level	Years of Service
F.G 1	Male	Private Organization	Master	10
	Female	Private Organization	Master	35
	Female	Top Government	Master	15
	Female	Top Government	PhD	5
	Female	Local Authorities	Master	38
F.G. 2				
	Female	Academic	Master	15
	Male	Researcher	Master	15
	Male	Researcher	Master	12
	Male	Academic /Researcher	PhD	30
	Male	Senior Inspection Officer	BSc	30

Source: author's own

5.2 Pilot study process and findings

Prior to determining the research aim, objectives, and methodology, a pilot study was conducted to assess the existence of ongoing research in Cyprus regarding the establishment of a Monitoring System for measuring the sustainability profile of tourism and other productive sectors at the destination level. Experts recommended adopting the Premium model, which prioritizes attracting a higher percentage of tourists per capita rather than focusing solely on maximizing tourist numbers. This approach is deemed more balanced compared to the mass-focused model, as the latter has a more significant negative impact on the environment and society. It requires continuous development to meet the increasing demand for

accommodations and infrastructure, resulting in an overall burden associated with larger tourist volumes.

Regarding development and planning, experts recognized the pressures of linear development in coastal areas and advised concentrating new tourism projects into 1 or 2 clusters comprising multiple resorts. This strategy aimed to avoid excessive dispersal along the coastline of Cyprus. Furthermore, they suggested that tourism development should not be limited to coastal regions alone, as the island possesses intriguing opportunities in inland and mountainous areas. Experts emphasized the importance of preparing master plans for each tourist area, including an environmental impact analysis of the proposed strategies. These plans should adhere to general principles for tourism development, including the need for strict control over protected areas and the implementation of a precautionary policy for their management. Specific master plans were recommended for Akamas, Cavo Greco, and Troodos National Parks, outlining regulations to strictly govern permissible development activities. These measures served, according to the stakeholders who participated in this research, the best interests of the natural environment while ensuring the creation of highly valuable tourist experiences.

Guidelines, particularly applicable to rural areas, underscored the promotion of tourism activities derived from the countryside itself, such as its scenic beauty, culture, history, wildlife, and agriculture. Additionally, tourism development should contribute to conservation efforts by repurposing traditional buildings, supplementing farmers' income, and preserving rural populations. To prevent overcrowding and congestion, tourism development should encompass a broader geographical coverage. At the project level, experts stressed the inclusion of sustainability measures in the development and business plans of all tourism projects. However, the researcher observed that although there are various thoughts and suggestions, a concrete strategy with reinforced evaluation and forecasting models is yet to be established.

The findings from the assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models and visitor management strategies in Cyprus reveal a notable gap in the current state of application. Despite the acknowledgment in the strategic Plan 2030 of the negative impacts of mass tourism and seasonality, no actual TCC models or visitor management tools are in use. Moreover, a lack of awareness is evident among several key stakeholders regarding the TCC tool and related models. The consensus among influential stakeholders emphasizes the exceeding of tourism capacity in certain areas, leading to issues of overcrowding and environmental degradation.

The study underscores an urgent need for a deliberate visitor management plan to mitigate these negative impacts on the Cypriot tourism industry. Additionally, there is a discernible disagreement among stakeholders concerning destination and visitor management planning, rooted in conflicting agendas and interests. Stakeholder perspectives on culture and visitor management planning vary, with some advocating for a sustainable development approach and a revival of a more tourism-centered culture. The research also brings to light diverse stakeholder perceptions regarding the economic impacts of tourism in Cyprus, with varying views on whether tourism is approached with a profit-driven mentality. Moreover, there are differing opinions on the adequacy of infrastructure and services to meet the needs of tourists. Interestingly, the study reveals that stakeholders have limited familiarity and experience with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, attributing this to a lack of available data, research, a fragmented tourism industry, and limited government support.

The subsequent sections present the findings alongside their respective summaries. Following this introduction, the analysis of the findings begins, providing a detailed examination of the data collected and the insights gathered from the stakeholders. This analysis aims to shed light on the current state of tourism in Cyprus, the challenges faced, and the opportunities for sustainable development and effective visitor management.

5.3 Introduction to the Analysis of Findings

According to the aim of the thesis, which is to investigate stakeholder engagement as a pivotal mechanism for advancing sustainable visitor management in Cyprus, with a specific focus on perspectives pertaining to Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters, tourism is a vital sector for many nations, contributing significantly to economic development, employment generation, and regional prosperity. However, unchecked expansion of tourism can lead to various challenges, including environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and social tensions. In the context of Cyprus, tourism plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth and development, yet it also presents unique challenges related to sustainability and visitor management.

The first research objective is to examine stakeholders' perceptions of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its implications for sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. This objective is explored under the title "Assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) Models and Visitor

Management Strategies in Cyprus: A Current State Analysis." The findings suggest that no TCC models are currently being applied in Cyprus. While the strategic Plan 2030 recognizes the negative impact of mass tourism and seasonality, no actual visitor management plans or tools are currently in use. Additionally, the "Gap in Awareness and Implementation of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) Tool among Key Stakeholders" reveals that several key stakeholders are not aware of the TCC tool and related models.

The second objective is to analyze stakeholders' perspectives on Tourism Clusters and their role in shaping sustainable visitor experiences in Cyprus. This is addressed under the title "Exploring Stakeholder Familiarity and Experience with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus: Challenges and Opportunities."

The third objective is to assess the effectiveness of existing stakeholder engagement strategies in promoting sustainable tourism practices and mitigating negative impacts on the environment, culture, and society in Cyprus. This objective has produced several findings, including "Stakeholder Disagreement on Destination and Visitor Management Planning in Cyprus: Conflicting Agendas and Interests," which highlights differing agendas and interests among stakeholders. Additionally, the findings are discussed under "Diverse Stakeholder Perceptions on the Economic Impacts of Tourism in Cyprus" and "Assessing Stakeholder Perceptions on Tourism Infrastructure and Services in Cyprus," illustrating varying perceptions on the economic benefits and infrastructure adequacy for tourism.

The fourth objective focuses on evaluating the profit-driven approach to tourism and its implications for Cyprus. This is investigated under "Profit-Driven Approach to Tourism: Stakeholder Perspectives and Implications for Cyprus" and "Urgent Need for a Deliberate Visitor Management Plan to Mitigate Negative Impacts on the Cypriot Tourism Industry." These sub-chapters emphasize the need for a systematic and deliberate visitor management plan to mitigate negative impacts.

The fifth objective is to develop recommendations for enhancing stakeholder engagement processes to achieve sustainable tourism outcomes in Cyprus. This is thoroughly analyzed under "Towards Sustainable Tourism Development: Stakeholder Perspectives on Culture and Visitor Management Planning in Cyprus" and "Consensus among Key Stakeholders on

Tourism Overcrowding and Environmental Degradation in Certain Areas." These sections highlight the preference for sustainable development approaches and the recognition of overcrowding and environmental degradation issues.

In addition to these findings, stakeholders seem to have limited familiarity and experience with Tourism Clusters, attributed to a lack of data and research, a fragmented tourism industry, and limited government support.

Following this introduction, the analysis of the findings begins, providing a detailed examination of the data collected and insights gathered from the stakeholders. This analysis aims to shed light on the current state of tourism in Cyprus, the challenges faced, and the opportunities for sustainable development and effective visitor management.

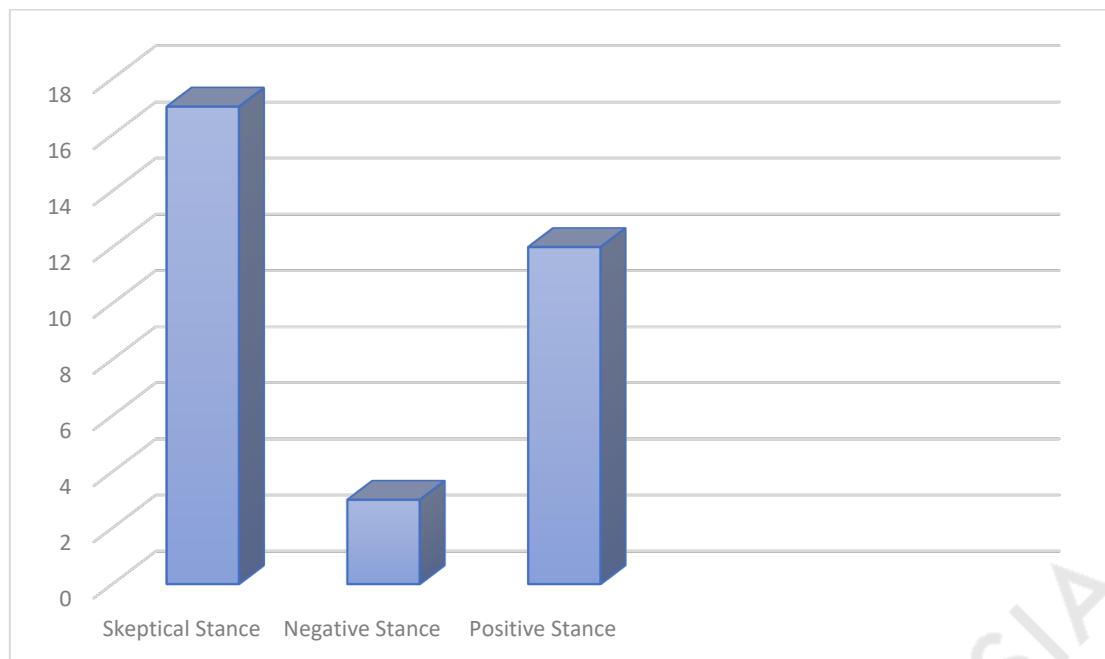
5.3.1 Assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) Models and Visitor Management Strategies in Cyprus: A Current State Analysis

The findings of the study revealed that there was a variation in the level of familiarity and understanding of the Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) concept among the stakeholders (Smith et al., 2020). It was observed that the majority of stakeholders displayed a high level of knowledge and a deep understanding of TCC, showcasing their comprehensive grasp of the concept and its implications. These stakeholders demonstrated an awareness of the purpose, methodologies, and potential benefits of TCC in managing tourism sustainably. However, a small portion of the stakeholders exhibited only a basic knowledge of TCC. While they had some familiarity with the concept, their understanding may have been more limited compared to the majority. Despite this, it is worth noting that none of the participants indicated complete unawareness of the TCC concept, indicating that at least a basic level of knowledge was present among all stakeholders. The variation in familiarity and understanding of TCC among stakeholders can be attributed to several factors. These may include differences in professional backgrounds, levels of involvement in the tourism industry, and exposure to relevant research and educational resources. Stakeholders with extensive experience in tourism planning, management, or academic backgrounds may have developed a deeper understanding of TCC through their professional or educational endeavors. In contrast, stakeholders with less exposure to TCC-related concepts may have a more limited knowledge base. The presence of

comprehensive knowledge and understanding of TCC among the majority of stakeholders is encouraging, as it suggests a solid foundation for the potential implementation and integration of TCC into destination management plans. However, the presence of a small portion with only basic knowledge highlights the importance of continuous education and awareness-building efforts to ensure that all stakeholders possess a sufficient understanding of TCC and its role in sustainable tourism management.

By enhancing knowledge and understanding of TCC among stakeholders through targeted educational initiatives, capacity-building programs, and information sharing, the level of familiarity and expertise can be further strengthened. This will enable stakeholders to make informed decisions, actively contribute to discussions, and support the effective implementation of TCC measures. Ultimately, a well-informed and knowledgeable stakeholder base will facilitate the successful integration of TCC into tourism planning and management practices, leading to more sustainable and responsible tourism development in Cyprus. To address these challenges, it is crucial to raise awareness and enhance stakeholders' understanding of TCC. As shown on Figure 24 Education and knowledge-sharing initiatives can play a significant role in providing accurate information about the purpose, benefits, and potential applications of TCC (Gössling et al., 2019). Engaging stakeholders in capacity-building programs, workshops, and training sessions can definitely help demystify the concept of TCC and foster a better understanding of its role in sustainable tourism management, participants however have shown skepticism of delivering this knowledge objectively.

Figure 24: TCC Concept Awareness

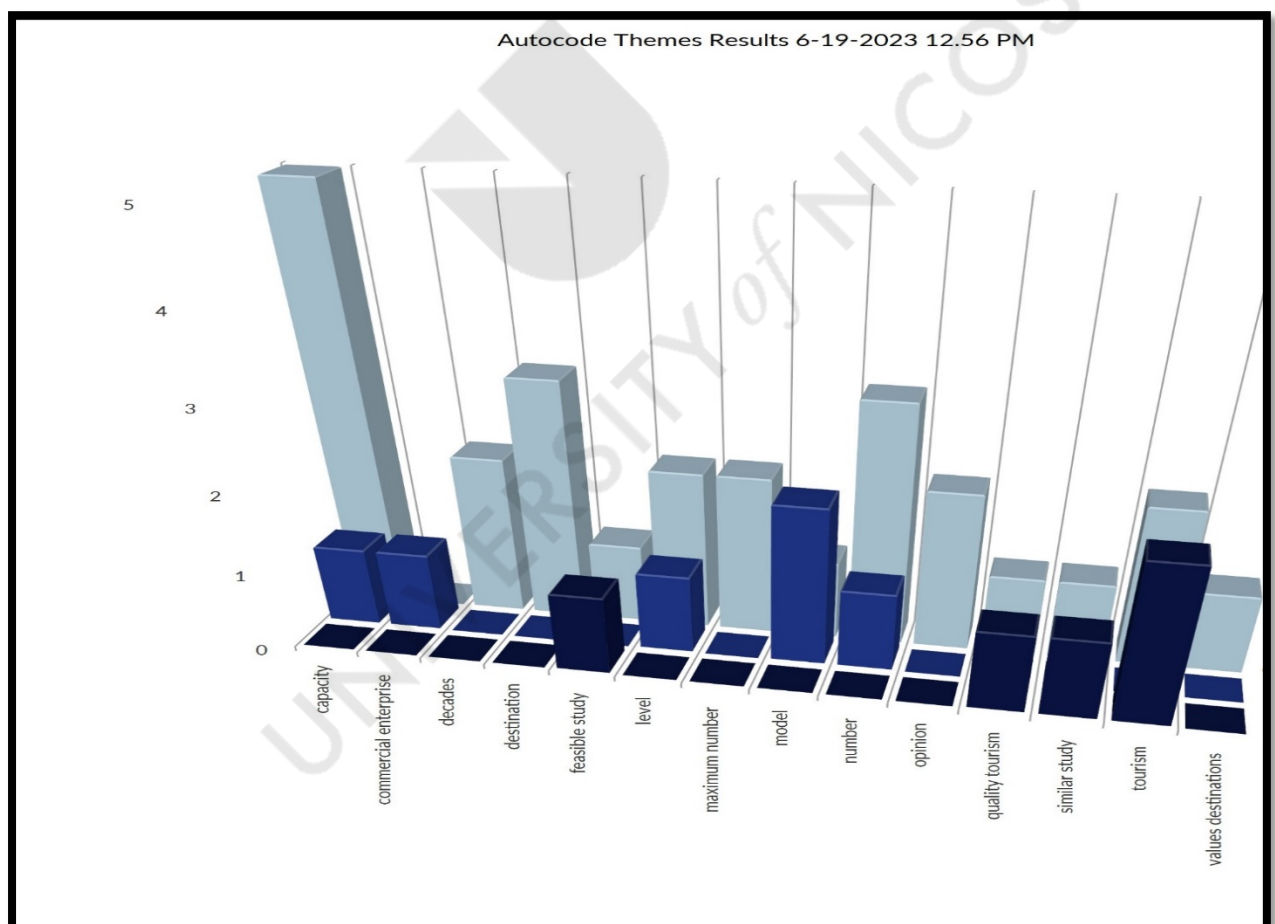


Source: author's own

Upon initial examination, it appeared that participants had a sufficient understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC). However, further discussion revealed significant weaknesses in specific areas. The findings of the study underscore the importance of increasing awareness and implementing the TCC tool effectively in targeted locations to enhance sustainable tourism practices and mitigate potential negative impacts on the industry. The figure presents provides a visual representation of the current state of awareness and implementation of the TCC tool among stakeholders across different areas. It demonstrates the varying levels of understanding and utilization of the TCC concept, highlighting areas where enhanced awareness and implementation efforts are required. The figure specifically emphasizes the need for heightened awareness among stakeholders who have limited knowledge or misconceptions about TCC. It stresses the significance of targeted educational initiatives, capacity-building programs, and knowledge-sharing platforms to improve their understanding of TCC and its relevance to sustainable tourism management. Furthermore, the figure underscores the importance of effectively implementing the TCC tool in specific regions or destinations. It identifies those areas where the implementation of TCC measures is particularly critical in addressing challenges such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, and cultural erosion. By implementing TCC strategies in these locations, the negative impacts on the tourism industry can be minimized, promoting sustainable practices and enhancing visitor experiences.

The visual representation of Figure 25 serves as a compelling reminder of the collective efforts required, of the key concerns to raise awareness and ensure the effective implementation of the TCC tool. It serves as a call to action for stakeholders, including government authorities, tourism organizations, local communities, and industry representatives, to collaborate in promoting awareness, implementing TCC measures, and fostering sustainable tourism practices. By utilizing the insights gained from this research and the visual representation of Figure 26, participants can prioritize their efforts to enhance awareness and effectively implement TCC. This comprehensive approach will contribute to the preservation of natural and cultural resources, the well-being of local communities, and the long-term viability of the tourism industry in Cyprus.

Figure 25: Importance of Increased Awareness and Effective Implementation of TCC Tool

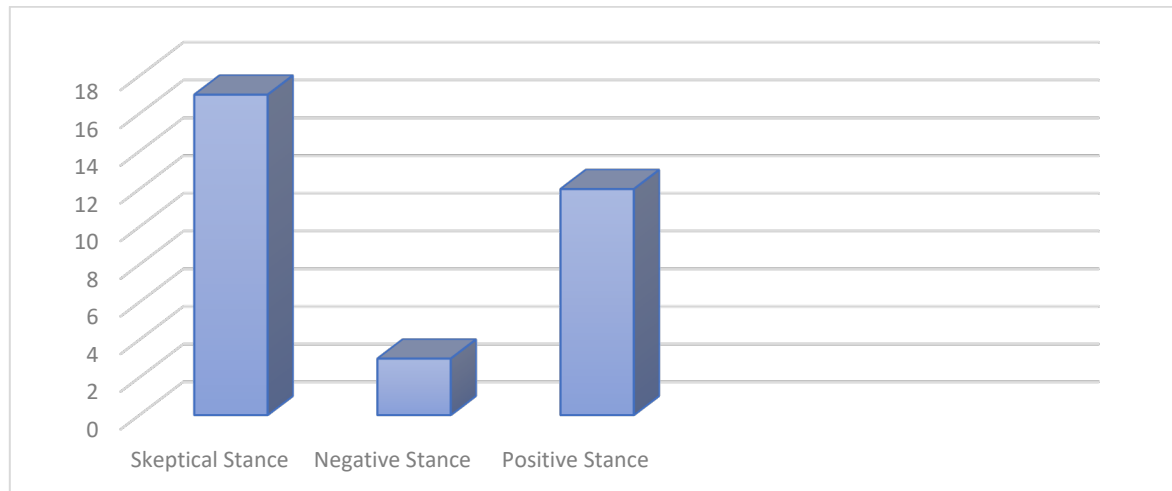


Source: author's own

Based on the findings, a significant number of participants (17 out of the total) expressed their support for the notion that Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) remains theoretical and cannot be practically implemented due to various factors. These participants cited several reasons for their perspective, including the high dependence on tour operators, which poses challenges in increasing tourist numbers. They also highlighted the issue of high seasonality dependence and the lack of adequate infrastructure as hindrances to the practical implementation of TCC.

Furthermore, there were three participants who held a strongly negative stance towards even discussing the concept of TCC. These individuals argued that considering the limitation of tourism capacity at this point would result in significant financial losses. Their viewpoint underscored the perceived negative impact on the industry, making them skeptical about the feasibility and relevance of implementing TCC. In contrast, the rest of the participants (12 in total) supported the implementation of a TCC model, particularly among representatives from the government sector and local authorities. They emphasized the need for action at this stage, asserting that it is the right time to adopt a TCC framework. These stakeholders likely recognized the potential benefits of TCC in managing tourism sustainably, ensuring the preservation of resources, and enhancing the overall quality of the visitor experience. While a substantial number of participants expressed reservations or negativity towards TCC, it is important to note that there were also significant voices in support of its implementation. The differing perspectives indicate the complexity and challenges surrounding the practical implementation of TCC in Cyprus. The findings highlight the need for careful consideration of the factors mentioned, such as the dependence on tour operators, high seasonality, and infrastructure limitations, in the development and implementation of a TCC model. Addressing these challenges and finding appropriate solutions will be crucial to gain wider acceptance and support for TCC implementation. Ultimately, a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving stakeholders from different sectors, including tour operators, government authorities, local communities, and infrastructure developers, will be necessary to navigate the complexities and overcome the barriers to practical implementation of TCC in Cyprus. This approach should consider the concerns raised by skeptics while harnessing the potential benefits recognized by proponents of TCC, leading to a balanced and effective framework for managing tourism sustainably in the region. Figure 26 below demonstrates the participants' perspectives on implementing Tourism Carrying Capacity(TCC) in Cyprus, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities involved.

Figure 26: Implementation TCC in Cyprus: Present



Source: author's own

By improving stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of TCC, there is a greater likelihood of gaining support for its implementation and integrating it effectively into destination management plans. This, in turn, can contribute to more sustainable tourism practices, better management of visitor flows, and the preservation of natural and cultural resources in Cyprus. Effective implementation of TCC requires collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including tourism businesses, government agencies, local communities, and environmental groups. However, stakeholders have conflicting interests and priorities, which can hinder cooperation and compromise. This lack of collaboration lead to a fragmented approach to tourism management, with different stakeholders implementing different strategies and tools, rather than a comprehensive and coordinated approach.

Moreover, the lack of political will and support for TCC implementation is also a significant factor contributing to the gap in awareness and especially to the creation and implementation of a TCC model. Political leaders prioritize economic growth and job creation over sustainable tourism development, leading to a focus on increasing visitor numbers rather than managing tourism sustainably. This result in an over-reliance on tourism as a source of revenue, which lead to overcrowding, environmental degradation, and cultural erosion.

The findings of the study shed light on the diverse perspectives among stakeholders regarding the implementation of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) in Cyprus. While a significant

number of participants expressed reservations and skepticism towards the practical implementation of TCC, it is important to note that there were also voices in support of its adoption, particularly from representatives in the government sector and local authorities. The study identified various factors that contribute to the challenges and complexities surrounding the implementation of TCC. These factors include the dependence on tour operators, the issue of high seasonality, and the lack of adequate infrastructure. Additionally, the differing priorities and conflicting interests among stakeholders have hindered collaboration and coordination in managing tourism sustainably. The lack of political will and support for TCC implementation is another significant challenge. Political leaders often prioritize economic growth and job creation, which can lead to a focus on increasing visitor numbers rather than managing tourism sustainably. This approach can result in negative impacts such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, and cultural erosion. To address these challenges, there is a need for increased awareness and understanding of TCC among stakeholders. Education and knowledge-sharing initiatives can play a crucial role in enhancing stakeholders' knowledge and facilitating productive discussions. Collaboration and coordination among stakeholders from different sectors, including tourism businesses, government agencies, local communities, and environmental groups, are essential for the successful implementation of TCC.

Furthermore, there is a need for political commitment and support for sustainable tourism development. This entails striking a balance between economic growth and environmental preservation, recognizing the importance of managing tourism in a sustainable and responsible manner. In conclusion, the effective implementation of TCC requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that considers the concerns and perspectives of all stakeholders. By overcoming the challenges and leveraging the opportunities, Cyprus can strive towards sustainable tourism practices, better visitor management, and the preservation of its natural and cultural heritage.

5.3.2 Gap in Awareness and Implementation of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) Tool among Key Stakeholders

Tourism has become a major economic driver in Cyprus, with millions of visitors flocking to the island every year. However, this rapid growth in tourism has also led to concerns about the potential negative impacts of tourism on the environment and local communities. To address these concerns, various Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models and visitor management

strategies have been proposed in Cyprus. One example of a TCC model that has been proposed in Cyprus is the "Kakopetria model". This model was developed in the village of Kakopetria, which is a popular tourist destination in the Troodos Mountains. The model limits the number of visitors to the village to 1,500 per day during the peak tourist season. This has helped to prevent overcrowding, preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the village, and ensure that visitors have a quality experience.

Visitor management strategies are used to manage the number and behavior of tourists in a destination, in order to ensure that tourism development is sustainable and beneficial to both local communities and the tourism industry itself. These strategies can include a range of measures, such as regulating the number of tourists, managing traffic and transportation, and promoting responsible tourism behavior. In Cyprus, visitor management strategies have been used to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism on the island. One example of a visitor management strategy that has been implemented in Cyprus is the "Akamas model". This model was developed to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the Akamas peninsula, which is a popular tourist destination in western Cyprus. The model includes measures such as limiting the number of visitors to the area, restricting access to certain areas, and promoting responsible tourism behavior. Overall, the assessment of TCC models and visitor management strategies is an important aspect of sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. These models and strategies help to ensure that tourism development is managed in a way that is environmentally and socially responsible. They also help to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the island and ensure that the benefits of tourism development are shared equitably among local communities and the tourism industry.

However, there are also challenges to implementing TCC models and visitor management strategies in Cyprus. One challenge is the lack of data and information on the carrying capacity of different areas of the island. Another challenge is the need to balance the economic benefits of tourism with the need to protect the environment and local communities. There is also a need for stakeholder engagement and cooperation to ensure that tourism development plans are aligned with local needs and priorities.

The research findings indicate that in Cyprus, there is a notable absence of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models being put into action. Despite the recognition within the strategic Plan

2030 of the adverse consequences posed by mass tourism and seasonality to the island's tourism sector, the implementation of concrete visitor management plans or tools is lacking. This absence of TCC models suggests that there is currently no systematic approach in place to determine and regulate the optimal number of tourists that can be accommodated in various destinations within Cyprus. Without such models, there may be a risk of exceeding the sustainable capacity of the tourism sites, resulting in negative impacts on the environment, infrastructure, and local communities. Although the strategic Plan 2030 acknowledges the challenges associated with mass tourism and seasonality, the absence of tangible visitor management plans or tools indicates that the recognition has not translated into practical strategies for mitigating these issues. This discrepancy raises concerns about the effectiveness of current efforts to address the negative consequences of tourism growth and ensure long-term sustainability. According to all participants, to effectively manage visitor flows and minimize the negative impacts, it is crucial for Cyprus to develop and implement concrete visitor management plans. Such plans could involve strategies such as capacity limits, zoning, diversification of tourism products, promotion of alternative seasons, and stakeholder engagement, also supported by (Gössling, et al., 2013). This would enable the destination to better control tourist volumes, distribute them more evenly throughout the year, protect sensitive areas, and enhance the overall visitor experience.

By implementing visitor management plans and utilizing appropriate tools, Cyprus can strive for a more sustainable and balanced tourism industry that maximizes the positive impacts while minimizing the negative effects of mass tourism and seasonality. This would contribute to the preservation of natural and cultural assets, the well-being of local communities, and the long-term viability of the tourism sector in Cyprus. The analysis of this topic is grounded in categorizing the responses provided by participants in the fieldwork. As outlined in the Literature Review, the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity (T.C.C) originated from the necessity to define the level of human activity an area can accommodate without imposing a burden on residents, compromising visitor experiences, or diminishing the quality of tourism policies. It is a complex decision that requires elected officials to carefully consider a wealth of data and situational factors when making tourism-related determinations. The progress made in a specific location contributes to the longevity of elected officials, and political dynamics encompass both reputation and progress. Within this context, the interviews aimed to explore participants' knowledge and comprehension of the TCC model and its associated sub-tools, as

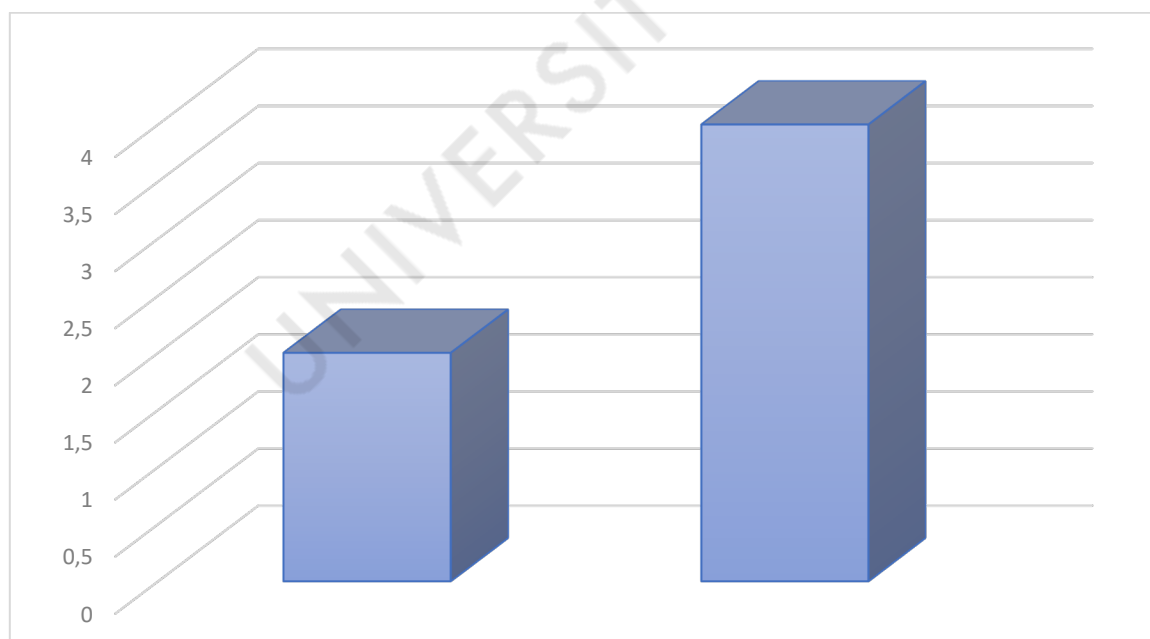
well as their practical application within the Cypriot Tourism sector. The researcher discusses the participants' responses, which highlight the key areas of comprehensive understanding of TCC, the interplay between TCC and Sustainable Development, and the success of creating and implementing a TCC model.

Comprehensive understanding of TCC

The participants emphasized on the importance of developing a comprehensive understanding of TCC. This involves grasping the various factors and considerations involved in assessing and managing tourism impacts, such as visitor numbers, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and community well-being. In the first instance, the researcher queried participants regarding their familiarity with Tourism Carrying Capacity and whether any prior studies had been conducted. Subsequently, they were asked to assess the relationship between a tourism competence model and the sustainability of tourism. Lastly, respondents were prompted to provide insights on the necessity of a TCC study, the development of applicable models, and the effectiveness of implementing such models.

The majority of participants expressed the opinion that no previous study had been conducted on this subject. As shown in figure 27 below only six were unaware of the existence of Tourism Carrying Capacity research for Cyprus.

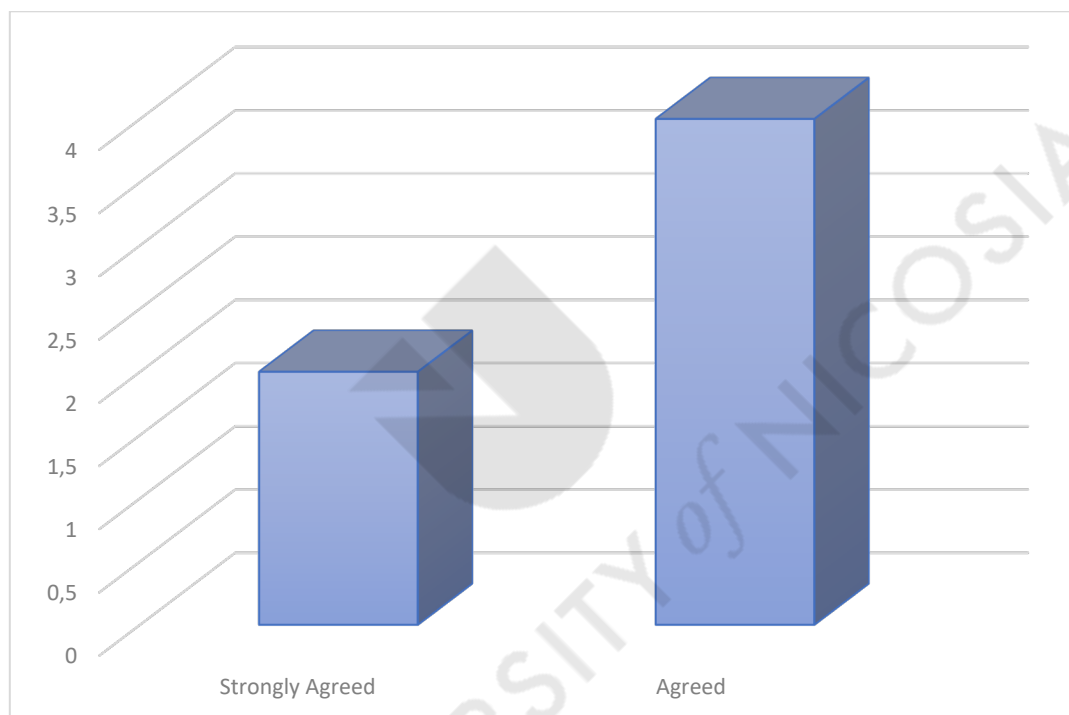
Figure 27: Awareness of TCC Conducted Study in Cyprus



Source: author's own

However, those who were aware of such a study argued that it had been undertaken with flawed criteria and had never been put into practice. Participants displayed a predominantly positive rather than negative outlook regarding the necessity of conducting such a study, recognizing its importance for enhancing the tourist experience in Cyprus. The majority of Participants agreed as shown in Figure 28 that it is important to reconduct a TCC Study. Only two refused as claimed that it will be a waste of time and money again.

Figure 28: Need to Reconduct a TCC Study



Source: author's own

Despite the prevailing belief among most participants that a previous study had been conducted on the subject, there were also contrasting opinions suggesting that it may still be premature to implement the study especially by Ministry representatives who strongly supported that position to discuss a specific model and advocated for a dynamic model based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). According to these viewpoints, the primary focus should be on finalizing KPIs and piloting model programs in specific areas before proceeding with full-scale implementation. These participants emphasized the importance of thoroughly assessing the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed study through smaller-scale trials and testing the reliability of KPIs to ensure accurate measurement and evaluation of tourism impacts. By taking this cautious approach, they argued that the study's implementation could be more

robust, yielding more accurate results and informing well-informed decisions in the long run.

In addition to the differing opinions mentioned earlier, it is worth noting that some participants expressed not only negativity but also a sense of pessimism regarding the issue. They attributed this pessimism to the influence of micropolitics, which they believed played a significant role in shaping tourism management decisions. These participants felt that the complex network of power dynamics, conflicting interests, and personal agendas within the tourism industry hindered effective decision-making and hindered progress in addressing the issue at hand. They emphasized the need to address these underlying micropolitical factors and promote transparency, collaboration, and accountability among stakeholders to overcome pessimism and achieve positive change in tourism management practices. By acknowledging the role of micropolitics and actively working towards its mitigation, participants believed that more constructive and inclusive decision-making processes could be fostered, leading to better outcomes for sustainable tourism development. The responses occasionally consisted of negative monosyllabic statements without room for further elaboration, such as:

"No, there has never been a similar study in the past" (P.N.1),
"No, there is no study other than a draft prepared by THR, and no model has been implemented since 1988" (P.N.5),
"Yes, there was a study, but I am unaware of its details or whether it has been implemented" (P.N.14).
"No, I do not know if there was a similar study in the past, but I strongly desire to have a study" (P.N.1).

In general, the majority of interviewees expressed a negative perception regarding the existence of such a study or its implementation. Regarding this matter, participants (P.N.21) and (P.N.22) expressed their views in a sarcastic manner, stating,

"No, I have never come across such an investigation. I am unsure if the Ministry of Tourism or the Cyprus Tourism Organization has conducted similar research in the past, but based on your explanation, I doubt they have. Moreover, since we are specifically discussing the Republic of Cyprus, not in a general context, it remains

unclear what the outcomes of those investigations would be. If the research results indicate errors or show that it is not in our interest, we simply discard it without hesitation." (P.N.21), (P.N.21).

Continuing with a rather provocative statement, they questioned,

"Were the 3.9 million visitors in 2019 truly tourists, or were they individuals who simply traveled to the occupied areas and then returned? Perhaps they were individuals who went back to their home countries for the summer and then returned. We lack the ability to conduct research, and even gathering data poses a challenge. I have doubts about the accuracy of the statistics because they do not account for the number of people who traveled to the occupied areas. For instance, 55 thousand Russians were registered in Cyprus. If they claim that 3.5 million tourists arrived, then it seems they counted the planes instead of individuals" (P.N.21).

Concerning the issue of water scarcity, (P.N.21) mentioned that we have a contract with a specific company that we pay every year to produce water, as the dams themselves do not have sufficient capacity. On the topic of feasible studies, (P.N.15) stated that previous studies were mainly limited to thesis, such as the one conducted by THR, which outlined how we should proceed to enhance quality tourism with a focus on sustainability. The interviewee also expressed their perspective on the matter, saying,

"To be honest, they aimed for 6 million tourists, which, in my personal opinion and as a member of the hotelier's association, we did not fully agree with, as it contradicted our proposal to address the issue of seasonality and increase tourist flow throughout the year" (P15). Expanding on this criticism, another interviewee (P16) went even further, stating,

"I go beyond what the Spaniards have said, which is obvious and basic: Cyprus cannot just... And I have been saying this for many years, not just in this interview. We have committed a crime against our tourism development, and if we want a future of quality and survival, the effort of national development should overshadow any illogical urban and road planning. The prevailing mindset of prioritizing construction and cranes over quality and strategic planning has been detrimental" (P16).

The following interviewee also expressed criticism, raising the issue of culture for the first time, a culture that unfortunately revolves around micro-politics and constant controversies.

"Unfortunately, the culture of 'Hide to let time pass' is prevalent. We lack planning, we lack a culture that focuses on the future. What should we build to benefit the next government?" (P9). "Look, George, if we take a broader perspective, a problem that exists in our country, and I'm sure you haven't heard about it from others, especially in the Hellenic context, is the problem of our culture... We lack a philosophy of planning, and not just that... If you ask most people, they won't know and will likely make fun of you. The social and cultural aspects you referred to, starting from our leaders who lack awareness, the truth is that there is no strategic plan that defines the desired number of tourists per region and per season. The first problem is our culture and philosophy..." (P8).

Perhaps they have a model, I'm not sure if you have interviewed anyone from the Ministry of Tourism, but if you ask them, they most likely have a model to assess the Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus, as emphasized by (P.N.26).

The reason behind this is that previous generations believed that education should be focused on theoretical knowledge rather than technical professions. This perception led to an increase in technical schools within the local education system, but it failed to convince talented individuals to pursue technical education, as the perception persisted that these professions were for academically weaker students. The hotel industry in Nicosia and Larnaca specifically faced similar challenges. Additionally, the lack of higher education opportunities in Cyprus, due to financial constraints and the perception of it being a lesser option, contributed to this situation. Consequently, we have been producing a workforce that may not be adequately educated and is now occupying key positions. Identifying future problems and developing long-term strategies has become challenging.

The interplay between T.C.C and Sustainable Development

During the discussion, it became evident that all participants unanimously agreed on the crucial interplay between TCC and Sustainable Development. They recognized that TCC serves as an essential framework within the broader context of sustainable tourism development.

Participants emphasized that TCC provides a vital tool for managing and regulating tourism activities to ensure their alignment with sustainable practices. They acknowledged that TCC helps strike a balance between the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic aspects of tourism, thus safeguarding the long-term well-being of destinations and communities. By integrating TCC into sustainable development strategies, participants believed that it becomes possible to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism while maximizing its positive contributions. They emphasized that TCC allows for the preservation of natural resources, protection of cultural heritage, and the promotion of socio-economic benefits for local communities. The consensus among participants highlighted the need for TCC to be embedded in destination planning, policy formulation, and decision-making processes. They stressed that incorporating TCC considerations fosters responsible tourism practices, encourages visitor satisfaction, and enhances the overall quality and sustainability of tourism experiences.

Moreover, participants emphasized that TCC serves as a guiding principle for tourism stakeholders, including government bodies, tourism operators, and local communities. It helps them navigate the complex challenges of managing visitor flows, infrastructure development, and resource utilization while ensuring the long-term viability of tourism destinations. The unanimous agreement among all participants on the interplay between TCC and Sustainable Development underscored the importance of aligning tourism management practices with sustainable principles. This collective understanding provided a strong foundation for further discussions on implementing effective TCC models and promoting sustainable tourism development in the studied context.

The success of creating and implementing a TCC model

The assessment of TCC models and visitor management strategies is an important aspect of sustainable tourism development in Cyprus. By carefully managing tourism growth and ensuring that tourism development is sustainable and responsible, it may be possible to ensure that Cyprus continues to benefit from tourism while also protecting its natural and cultural heritage. However, this will require ongoing research, planning, and stakeholder engagement to ensure that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably and that negative impacts are minimized.

The majority of participants expressed skepticism regarding the validity of a study conducted by the Spanish company THR. They asserted that the study was never implemented and raised concerns about significant errors within its findings. Participants highlighted that the lack of implementation of the study raised doubts about its credibility and effectiveness. They questioned the reliability of the data and methodologies used, as well as the accuracy of the study's conclusions. These participants felt that without concrete evidence of the study's implementation and verification of its results, it was difficult to trust its findings. Moreover, participants pointed out significant errors they identified within the study. They raised concerns about potential biases, inaccuracies in data collection or analysis, and shortcomings in the study's overall methodology. These errors further eroded confidence in the study and its findings among the participants. The skeptical views expressed by the majority of participants indicated a lack of trust in the study conducted by THR.

They emphasized the importance of conducting rigorous and transparent research, implementing studies to validate findings, and addressing any errors or inconsistencies that may arise. This skepticism highlighted the need for robust and credible research in informing decision-making processes and ensuring the integrity of tourism management practices. Both the Ministry of Tourism and ETAP interviewees expressed strong disagreement with the findings of that study. Notably, 18 of the interviewees believed that the study was conducted not to fulfill its intended purpose, but rather to undermine the Cyprus Tourism Organization (C.T.O.) and pave the way for the Ministry of Tourism to take over. One representative even suggested that it was merely a copied version of a previous study prepared by the same company for Dubai. In fact, an ETAP representative vehemently expressed their initial disagreement with the entire study, highlighting the inconceivability of accepting a study from a competitor company.

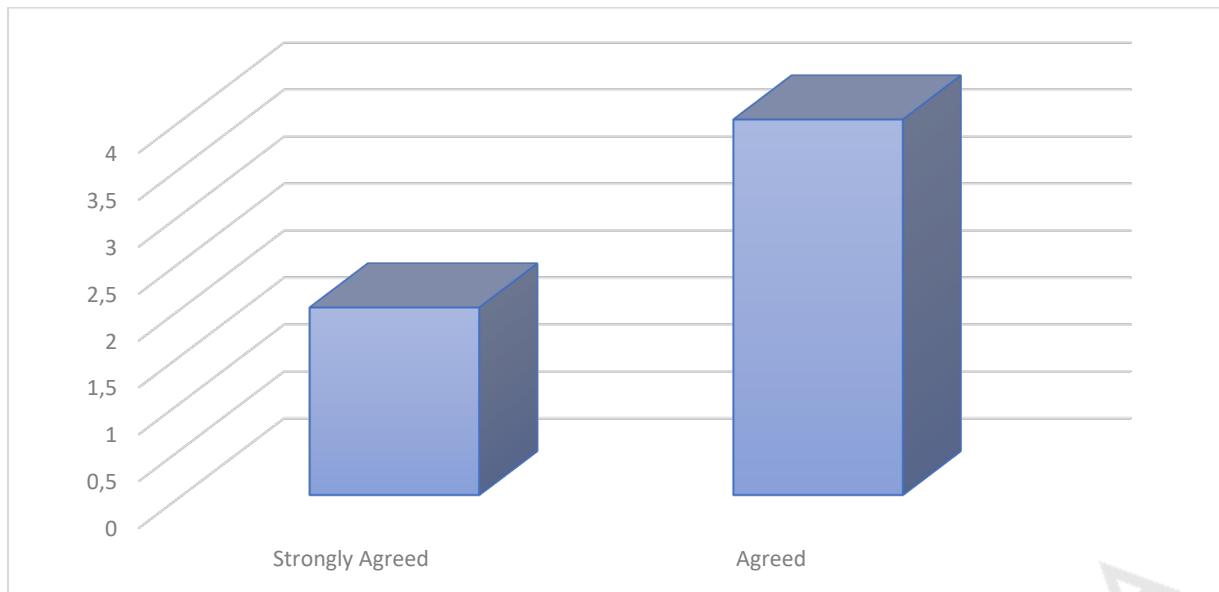
On the other hand, it is important to note that 13 interviewees, particularly from the Academic Society, expressed strong agreement with the findings and suggestions put forth by the study conducted by the Spanish company THR. These participants found the study to be valuable and relevant, highlighting its contributions to the understanding of the subject matter. The interviewees who supported the study emphasized that it provided valuable insights and recommendations for addressing key challenges in the field. They found the methodology and analysis employed by the study to be rigorous and comprehensive, contributing to its

credibility. These participants appreciated the study's findings and suggestions, considering them relevant and applicable to the context in question. The agreement expressed by these interviewees, particularly from the Academic Society, underscored the significance of the study in advancing knowledge and informing practical actions. They believed that the study's recommendations could serve as a foundation for effective decision-making and the development of sustainable tourism strategies.

The contrasting perspectives within the group of interviewees reflected the diversity of opinions and viewpoints that can emerge when considering research findings. These differing views contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and emphasize the importance of critical evaluation and constructive discussions within the academic and professional community. It is through the engagement and debate among these perspectives that a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter can be achieved, enabling informed decision-making and the development of well-rounded strategies for the management and development of tourism. Despite the unanimous opposition to the THR study in terms of its results, the Deputy Minister of Tourism emphasized in speeches that the strategic plan for 2030 was based on this study. In response, a new study was launched as the primary instrument for implementing the strategic plan for 2030. The representatives strongly argued that the study no longer serves as a model for tourism capacity, at least not in its current stage, but rather as a framework for key performance indicators that will indicate the needs and number of tourists per region.

The majority of them strongly agreed on the fact that the THR study has no validity when the rest partially agreed. Figure 29 below shows the Participants' Acceptance of the Validity of THR Study. The researcher selected this particular past study as the most recent and complete as well as the fact that it was familiar to the majority of the participants.

Figure 29: Past Studies Validity - Participants point of View



Source: author's own

It is worth noting, however, that the Deputy Minister of Tourism mentioned in a recent speech that the new study cost 80,000 euros. Predictably, there were instances where interviewees claimed that previous studies, including the aforementioned one, remained confined to thesis and were not implemented by subsequent governments, following a pattern seen in many previous cases. A majority of 80% of respondents agreed that a study on carrying capacity cannot be applied due to numerous factors. Since the 1960s, when Cyprus sought to generate timely income through tourism, a linear strategy was pursued based on the available data on tourism development at the time, primarily focused on increasing the number of beds with the aim of attracting more tourists. There was no comprehensive model or strategy for the development of tourist areas. In fact, 70% of the respondents emphasized that such a strategy was impossible, as the business sector held sway while successive governments were passive observers of events. In recent years, starting with the discussion on sustainable tourism and the importance of sustainability following the 2013 crisis, the need for sustainable tourism development began to be acknowledged. However, with the 2013 crisis, those considerations were set aside, and not only that, but more permits were granted for additional beds.

In fact, one of the interviewees emphasized that not only was there a lack of strategy, but the locals themselves took the initiative to develop infrastructure and promote their destinations to attract more tourists. Essentially, the locals set the strategies and goals, with the government

following their lead without keeping up with the changes. 40% of the interviewees mentioned the absence of planning and coordination, while 20% expressed pessimism about whether the authorities would ever have the determination and power to assert themselves over hotel lobbyists and those who financially support political parties in Parliament.

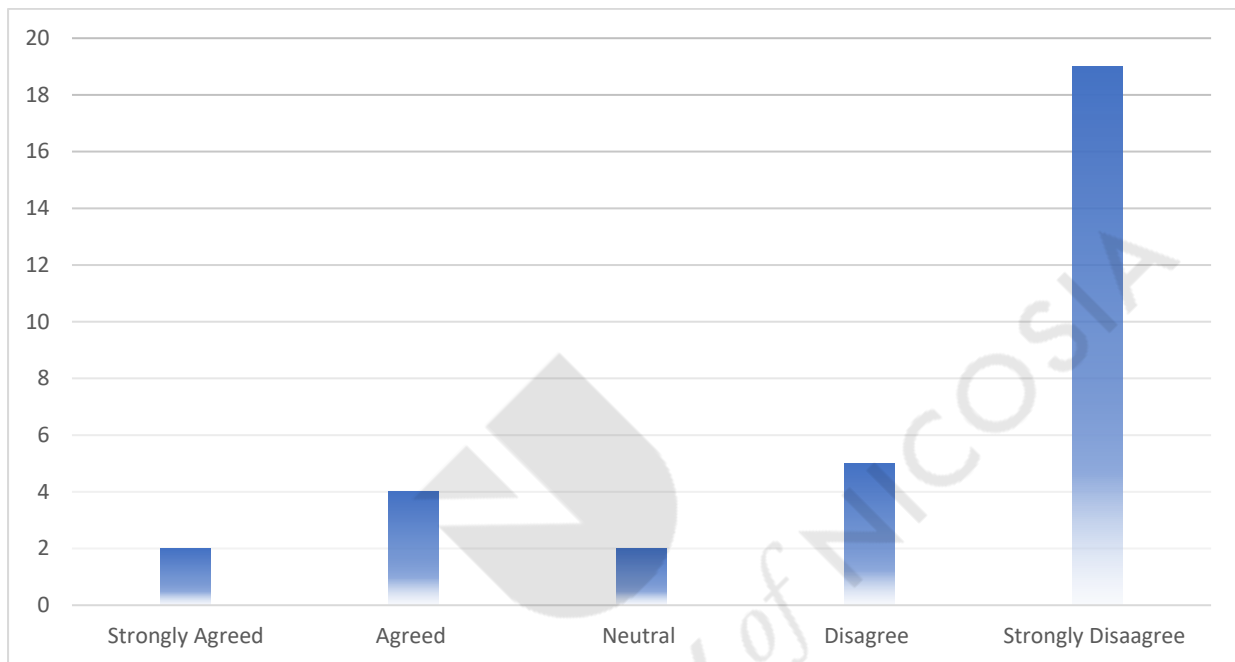
The findings as shown in below of the research revealed diverse perspectives among the participants regarding the success of implementing a TCC model. The participants' opinions were categorized into five distinct categories: Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Two participants strongly agreed that the implementation of a TCC model would be successful. They expressed confidence in the effectiveness and positive outcomes that could be achieved through the adoption of such a model. Their belief in the potential success of TCC implementation was likely based on their understanding of the benefits it could bring in terms of managing visitor flows, minimizing negative impacts, and fostering sustainable tourism practices. Four participants agreed with the notion of successful implementation. While not as strong in their agreement as the first group, these participants still expressed a positive outlook on the feasibility and potential positive outcomes of implementing a TCC model. They recognized the importance of managing visitor flows and believed that a well-designed and effectively executed TCC model could contribute to achieving sustainable tourism development goals. Two participants maintained a neutral stance on the issue, neither fully endorsing nor opposing the idea of successful implementation.

Their reserved perspective may stem from a lack of clarity or a need for more information to form a definitive opinion. On the other hand, five participants disagreed with the likelihood of successful implementation. They expressed reservations or concerns regarding the practicality, feasibility, or effectiveness of a TCC model in achieving its intended goals. Their disagreement may stem from skepticism about the implementation process, potential challenges, or the perceived limitations of TCC models in addressing complex tourism issues.

The largest group among the participants, consisting of nineteen individuals, strongly disagreed with the notion of successful implementation. Their strong opposition may be rooted in various reasons, such as differing conceptualizations of TCC, skepticism about its application in real-world contexts, or a belief that alternative approaches may be more effective in managing tourism impacts. These diverse perspectives underscore the complexity and multi-faceted

nature of implementing a TCC model. The varied opinions among the participants reflect the different experiences, backgrounds, and understandings they bring to the discussion. This diversity of viewpoints emphasizes the need for further dialogue, research, and collaboration to explore potential solutions and address concerns in order to move toward more effective and sustainable tourism management practices as shown in figure 30.

Figure 30: Possible TCC Model Success



Source: author's own

The fundamental challenge lies in achieving a consensus among all stakeholders to support and agree on the tourism policy, as highlighted by the Deputy Minister of Tourism in the last meeting. To accomplish this, focus groups and interviews have been conducted to identify the carrying capacity and establish a more realistic approach. However, one interviewee (P.N.7) questioned this approach, stating, "But you know something, George, the policy started in 2017, and now with the pandemic situation, we cannot have a realistic view of the policy and their opinions. This might be the reason why they have revised this policy." While in the past, successful focus groups involving all stakeholders were conducted, a change of mindset might require a reassessment of the tourist policy.

Conditional Support for Creating a Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) Model

In a unanimous agreement, all participants recognized the urgent need for a comprehensive

study on Tourism Carrying Capacity and emphasized the importance of its timely implementation. They highlighted the significance of focusing on sustainability and acknowledged that a well-defined model is necessary to adapt to evolving times and move beyond a period of continuous growth, which is also aligned with the expectations of tourists. However, the specific form of such a model was subject to agreement and consensus among all parties involved.

One interviewee from the University of Nicosia provided a specific viewpoint, emphasizing that any mutually agreed-upon model should be based on existing development practices. Opinions regarding the feasibility of creating a Tourism Carrying Capacity model varied among the participants, with a majority expressing pessimism due to a history of insufficiently implemented strategies. Some participants also considered market conditions as a determining factor in the viability of such a model. While the unanimous recognition of the need for enforceable laws to support future models and strategies was evident, creating a model that garners consensus among stakeholders was seen as a challenging task.

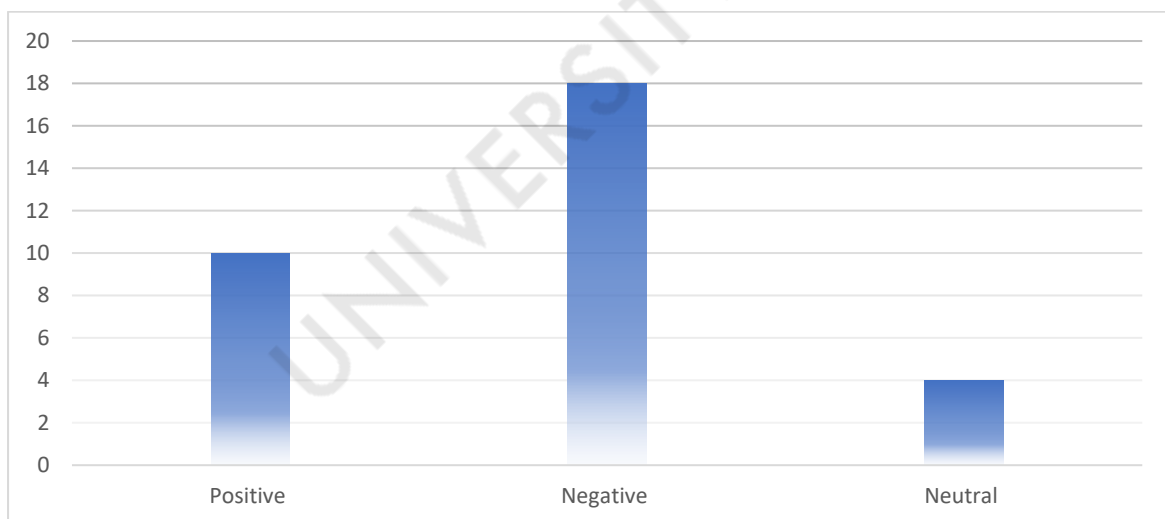
The feasibility of achieving this consensus depends on disentangling from political party dependencies and limiting the influence of business interests that fund political parties. This sentiment was shared by all participants, except the Ministry representatives. Even individuals within the State mechanism acknowledged the issue of party affiliations and their potential impact on decision-making processes. When discussing the possibility of involving foreign experts in developing a model or conducting a study, the majority of respondents expressed a belief that foreigners are perceived as more knowledgeable, experienced, and objective compared to local experts and professionals. However, other representatives, particularly those from ETAP, municipalities, and the industry, raised concerns that certain individuals may refrain from participating in a study conducted under the State mechanism due to perceived external intervention. In summary, while five participants supported the precondition of defining KPIs and indicators, expressing optimism in the creation of a concrete and valid study that could lead to a successful model, the remaining 21 participants approached the idea with skepticism.

Additionally, six participants highlighted culture as a factor hindering the implementation of strategies, attributing it to micropolitics and vested interests. These varied perspectives

highlight the complexities surrounding the development of a Tourism Carrying Capacity model and the challenges associated with consensus-building. It emphasizes the need for further discussions, stakeholder engagement, and a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and political dynamics at play to navigate these challenges effectively.

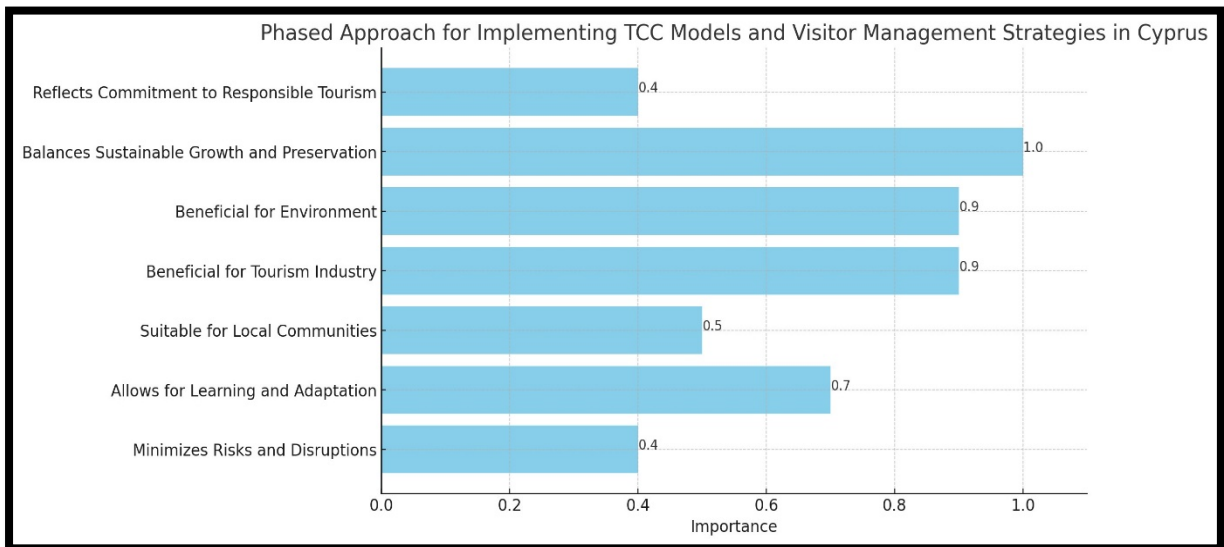
As a result, it is crucial for the sustainable conceptualization or model of the island's carrying capacity to harmonize both the environmental and economic aspects, creating a complementary relationship. This special complementary relationship necessitates the integration of qualitative tourism variables to optimize the financial impact of the new model and mitigate potential conflicts. The Figures 31 and 32 demonstrate the preference of stakeholders for a phased approach, starting with a pilot destination before embarking on a full-scale implementation of Assessment of TCC Models and Visitor Management Strategies in Cyprus. This approach allows for a more controlled and measured evaluation of the effectiveness of these models and strategies before applying them across the entire region. The stakeholders' belief is that by selecting a pilot destination, it becomes possible to assess the practical implications, challenges, and outcomes of implementing TCC models and visitor management strategies in a focused and limited context. This approach provides an opportunity to fine-tune and optimize these approaches based on the specific characteristics and needs of the pilot destination.

Figure 31 Assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity Models



Source: author's own

Figure 32 Assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity Models



Source: author's own

The Figure 32 also reflects a range of perspectives on the phased implementation of TCC models and visitor management strategies in Cyprus. Key insights include:

- High Importance Areas:** The highest values are seen in "Balances Sustainable Growth and Preservation" (1.0), "Beneficial for the Environment" (0.9), and "Beneficial for the Tourism Industry" (0.9). This indicates strong participant confidence in the model's potential to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection, and economic benefits.
- Moderate Importance Areas:** "Allows for Learning and Adaptation" (0.7) and "Suitable for Local Communities" (0.5) have moderate importance values. Participants recognize the phased approach's value in providing learning opportunities and its potential suitability for local communities.
- Lower Importance Areas:** The lowest values are observed in "Minimizes Risks and Disruptions" (0.4) and "Reflects Commitment to Responsible Tourism" (0.4). These lower values suggest skepticism among participants about the effective and responsible implementation of TCC models. Concerns may include doubts about the management of risks and disruptions and whether the implementation will genuinely reflect a commitment to responsible tourism practices.

This skepticism likely stems from uncertainties about the model's practical application and its ability to deliver on promises for societal benefit. Participants may question whether the phased approach will be managed properly and if it will truly prioritize the welfare of local communities and the overall society.

Moreover, adopting a phased approach minimizes potential risks and disruptions associated with a large-scale implementation, as any issues or limitations can be identified and addressed at a smaller scale. It allows for learning and adaptation before expanding the implementation to a wider range of destinations in Cyprus (Ma et al., 2023). By conducting a current state analysis and heeding the preference of stakeholders for a pilot destination, the intention is to ensure that the Assessment of TCC Models and Visitor Management Strategies in Cyprus is implemented in a manner that is most suitable and beneficial for the local communities, tourism industry, and the environment. This approach acknowledges the importance of a systematic and well-informed implementation process that takes into account the unique characteristics and dynamics of Cyprus as a tourism destination. It aims to strike a balance between promoting sustainable tourism growth and preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the region. The stakeholders' belief in the effectiveness of a pilot destination approach reflects their commitment to responsible tourism development and their desire to ensure that the implementation of TCC models and visitor management strategies in Cyprus yields positive and sustainable outcomes.

5.3.3 The Importance of Defining Key Performance Indicators for Tourism Carrying Capacity

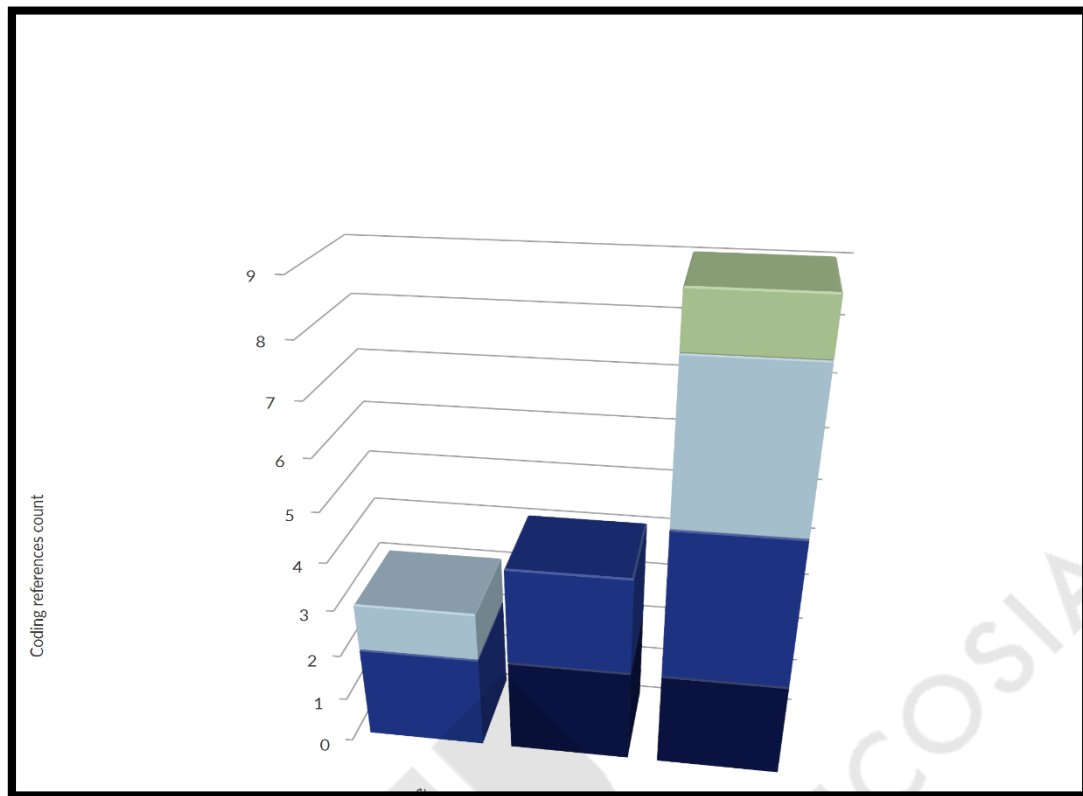
Through the analysis of the findings (Figure 38), the research revealed an interesting shift in the participants' perspectives regarding their understanding of the differences between KPIs and Tourism Indicators. While participants initially expressed strong support and claimed to comprehend these distinctions, further discussion and analysis using NVIVO processing revealed a lack of clarity and understanding among them. KPIs are metrics used to evaluate the performance and progress of organizations or specific units within them. They are tailored to an organization's strategic objectives and provide quantifiable measures that track performance, efficiency, and effectiveness. KPIs are internally focused and help organizations monitor their progress towards targets, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions to drive success. Tourism Indicators, on the other hand, are statistical measures used

to assess the performance of the tourism industry as a whole. They provide insights into various aspects of the industry, including visitor numbers, revenue generation, employment rates, and environmental sustainability. Tourism Indicators have a broader scope and are externally focused, assisting policymakers, destination managers, and researchers in understanding the overall health and impact of the tourism sector.

KPIs concentrate on specific areas within an organization, such as financial performance, customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, or sustainability goals. They align with an organization's priorities and guide decision-making at various levels. Tourism Indicators, on the other hand, focus on the broader tourism industry, capturing data on tourist arrivals, visitor spending, hotel occupancy rates, and other indicators that reflect the economic, social, and environmental impact of tourism. In addition to that KPIs are instrumental in an organization's decision-making processes, enabling stakeholders to monitor progress, identify areas of improvement, and allocate resources effectively. They facilitate data-driven decision-making and support the achievement of organizational objectives. In contrast, Tourism Indicators inform strategic decision-making for destinations, tourism boards, and policymakers. They help assess the overall performance of the tourism sector, identify trends, and guide policy development and sustainable tourism planning.

Figure 33 below depicts the participants' perspectives on three parameters related to references. In the first column, represented by the light blue, it reflects a limited belief in understanding the difference between Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), while the opposite blue shade indicates a significant misunderstanding. The second column, displayed in tan, signifies an agreement in investigating and identifying both aspects. Lastly, the third column encompasses a range of beliefs. The green portion signifies the belief that there is no interrelationship between the two, contrasting with the dark blue shade representing a very positive stance on the interrelationship between them.

Figure 33: Relationship Between KPI's and Tourism Indicators

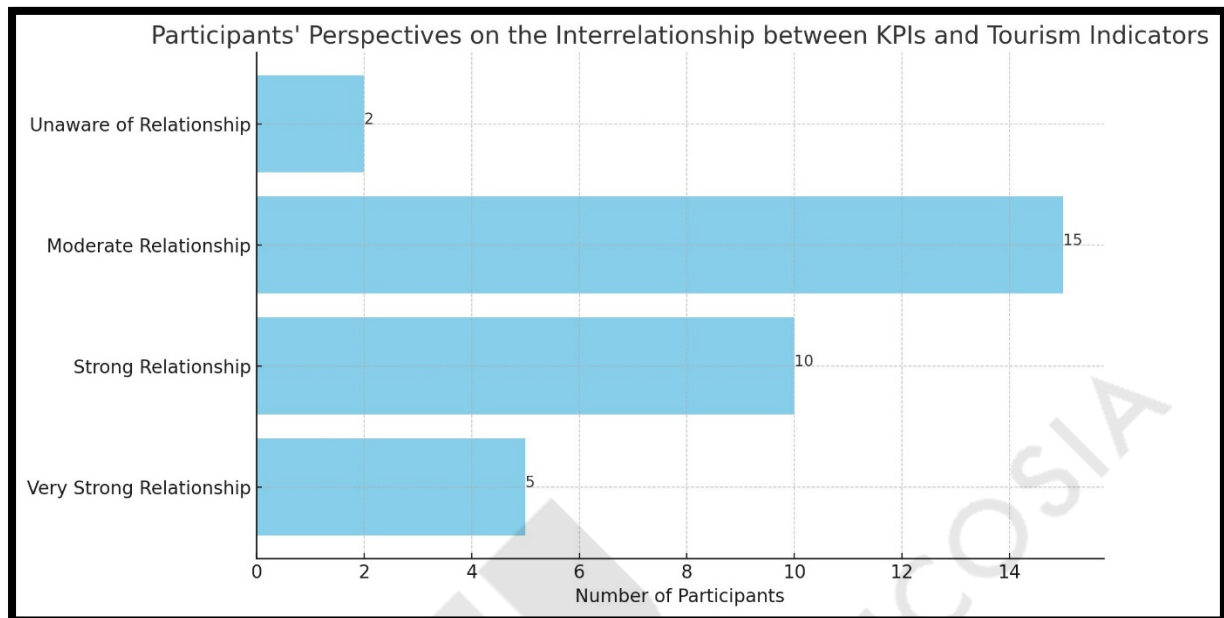


Source: author's own

Furthermore, the relationship between KPIs and tourism indicators extends to communication and reporting. Tourism indicators serve as communication tools, allowing stakeholders to comprehend the overall situation and identify areas of concern or success. KPIs, with their focused nature, facilitate concise and measurable communication of specific performance information to diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, destination managers, industry stakeholders, and the public. This communication enables effective reporting on the destination's tourism performance, facilitates transparency, and supports collaborative decision-making processes. They also assist in identifying baseline conditions, establishing goals, and monitoring progress over time, allowing for comparisons against industry standards and best practices. There is insufficient communication and education initiatives regarding the importance of KPIs for carrying capacity which results to stakeholders' lack of awareness. There may be a need for targeted awareness campaigns, workshops, and training programs to enhance stakeholders' understanding and knowledge in this area. Figure 34 below presents the participants' perspectives on the interrelationship between KPIs and tourism indicators. The participants' views varied, with some expressing a highly positive stance, highlighting a strong interrelationship between the two. On the other hand, there were participants who held a

strongly negative perspective, asserting that KPIs and tourism indicators are distinct concepts and should not be conflated or confused.

Figure 34: KPI's Vs Tourism Indicators



Source: author's own

The relationship between KPIs and tourism indicators is intertwined and mutually beneficial within the academic discourse on tourism performance and sustainability. While tourism indicators provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating various dimensions of tourism, KPIs offer a more focused and measurable approach to assessing specific performance areas and progress towards predefined goals and objectives. This relationship enables stakeholders to make informed decisions, monitor progress, and effectively manage Tourism Carrying Capacity and overall tourism sustainability. As a result, the current study recommends the formation of a sub-group within the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, together with a group of key stakeholders, who are going to develop a comprehensive destination management program by relying on the principles of TCC along with certain clusters.

So far, the findings have shown a lack of a coordinated approach to stakeholder engagement may hinder the dissemination of information about defining KPIs for carrying capacity. If stakeholders are not actively involved in the decision-making and planning processes related to tourism management, they may be less aware of the need for KPIs. In conclusion, the

research findings shed light on the participants' evolving perspectives regarding their understanding of the differences between KPIs and Tourism Indicators. While initial expressions of strong support suggested a comprehensive grasp of these distinctions, further analysis revealed a lack of clarity and understanding among the participants. KPIs focus on specific areas within an organization, providing quantifiable measures to monitor performance and guide decision-making. On the other hand, Tourism Indicators offer a broader assessment of the tourism industry as a whole, encompassing various economic, social, and environmental aspects. The figure above also illustrates the participants' perspectives on the interrelationship between KPIs and tourism indicators, showcasing varying views ranging from a positive stance to a negative viewpoint.

This highlights the complexity and divergent opinions regarding the relationship between these concepts. Effective communication and reporting play vital roles in bridging the gap between KPIs and tourism indicators. While tourism indicators serve as communication tools to understand the overall situation and guide policy development, KPIs facilitate concise and measurable reporting of specific performance information to diverse stakeholders. However, there is a need for increased communication and education initiatives to enhance stakeholders' awareness and understanding of the importance of KPIs in managing tourism carrying capacity. The study recommends the formation of a sub-group within the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with key stakeholders, to develop a comprehensive destination management program based on the principles of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) and specific clusters. This coordinated approach can foster stakeholder engagement, promote awareness about the significance of KPIs, and ensure a more effective dissemination of information related to carrying capacity in tourism management.

Finally, the study underscores the importance of enhancing stakeholders' awareness, promoting collaboration, and implementing a coordinated approach to effectively utilize KPIs and tourism indicators in managing tourism carrying capacity. By doing so, sustainable tourism practices can be fostered, and the preservation of resources and long-term viability of the tourism industry can be achieved.

5.3.4 Consensus among Key Stakeholders on Tourism Overcrowding- Over tourism and Environmental Degradation in Certain Areas

The issue of exceeded tourism capacity in certain areas of Cyprus is a matter of concern for various important stakeholders. Over the years, these destinations in Cyprus have experienced a rapid increase in visitor numbers, surpassing the limits that can be accommodated sustainably. As a consequence, overcrowding has become a prevalent problem, leading to detrimental effects on both the environment and the visitor experience. As eleven participants agreed environmental degradation has pressed an issue caused by exceeded tourism capacity. The influx of tourists in concentrated areas put significant strain on the natural resources and ecosystem. Fragile coastal regions, for instance, suffer from increased pollution, erosion, and damage to marine habitats due to excessive visitor activities. Similarly, protected natural areas faced challenges in preserving their ecological integrity when confronted with a large number of tourists beyond their carrying capacity. These environmental impacts not only diminish the aesthetic and ecological value of these areas but also compromise their long-term sustainability. Moreover, overcrowding negatively affects the overall visitor experience. When destinations become overcrowded, tourists may encounter difficulties in accessing and enjoying key attractions, leading to frustration and dissatisfaction. The quality of services, such as accommodation, transportation, and leisure facilities, may also decline due to the inability to meet the demands of the overwhelming visitor numbers. This can result in a decline in visitor satisfaction, which can subsequently harm the destination's reputation and deter potential tourists in the long run.

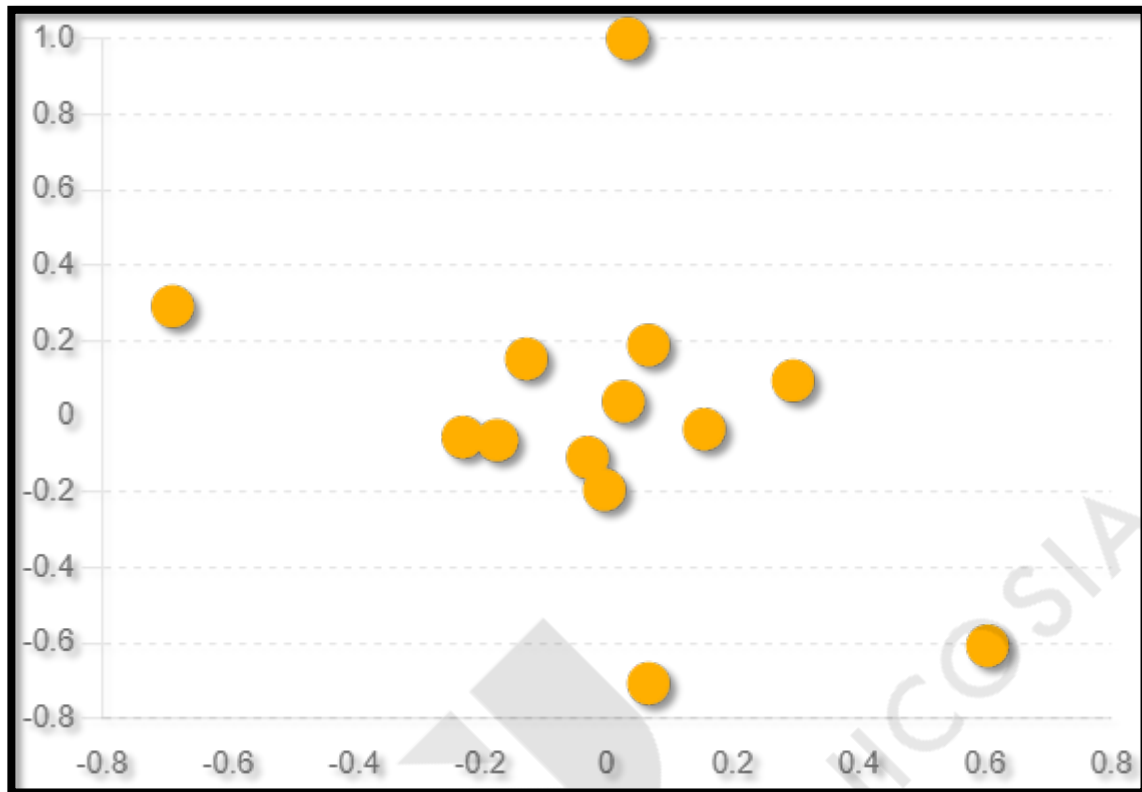
Recognizing the negative consequences of exceeded tourism capacity, important stakeholders in Cyprus agree on the need to address this issue. They acknowledge that proactive measures are necessary to manage and regulate visitor numbers in these overcrowded areas. By implementing effective tourism management strategies, such as carrying capacity assessments, visitor limits, and zoning plans, it becomes possible to strike a balance between tourism development and environmental preservation. Furthermore, stakeholders understand that sustainable tourism practices should be promoted to ensure the long-term viability of these destinations. By adopting sustainable tourism principles, such as responsible tourism behavior, resource conservation, and community engagement, it becomes possible to alleviate the environmental degradation caused by exceeded tourism capacity. This approach encourages a

more balanced and harmonious relationship between tourism development and the preservation of natural and cultural assets. In contrast, the figures below provide a visual depiction of the interconnections and correlations among the aforementioned research findings. It visually represents the intricate network of relationships between different elements, showcasing how stakeholder disagreements regarding the existence of over-tourism intersect with the consensus among key stakeholders on tourism overcrowding and environmental degradation in specific locations within the context of assessing Tourism Carrying Capacity and implementing visitor management strategies in Cyprus. Figure 35 visually represents the interconnections and correlations among the various research findings on tourism capacity in Cyprus. It highlights the following key points:

- **Rapid Increase in Visitor Numbers** leads to **Surpassing Sustainable Limits**, which subsequently causes **Overcrowding**.
- **Overcrowding** results in **Environmental Degradation** and **Negative Visitor Experience**.
- Both **Environmental Degradation** and **Negative Visitor Experience** raise **Stakeholder Concerns**.
- **Stakeholder Concerns** drive the **Need for Proactive Measures** to address these issues.
- **Proactive Measures** involve **Tourism Management Strategies**.
- Effective **Tourism Management Strategies** promote **Sustainable Tourism Practices**, including **Community Engagement**, **Responsible Tourism Behavior**, and **Resource Conservation**.
- **Sustainable Tourism Practices** ensure the **Long-term Viability** of tourism destinations.

This Figure 35, illustrates the complex network of relationships between different elements, showcasing how stakeholder concerns about over-tourism intersect with their consensus on the need for effective tourism management and sustainable practices to address environmental and visitor experience challenges in Cyprus.

Figure 35: Consensus among Key Stakeholders on Tourism Overcrowding- Over tourism



Source author's own

The term "over tourism" has been a topic of debate among academics, particularly in the context of Cyprus. While there is a growing concern about the negative impacts of tourism, including overcrowding and environmental degradation, it is important to note that not all academics support the use of the term "over tourism" to describe these phenomena specifically in the Cypriot context. Some Participants (academics) argue that the term "over tourism" is a simplistic and overly negative label that fails to capture the nuanced realities of tourism development and its impacts. They argue that it oversimplifies complex issues and may lead to misconceptions and generalizations about tourism in Cyprus. Instead, these academics advocate for a more comprehensive and balanced approach to understanding and managing tourism development.

"Cyprus is fortunate to have a well-managed tourism industry that balances visitor numbers with the carrying capacity of its destinations, ensuring there is no over tourism." P.N.6

"The careful planning and sustainable tourism practices in Cyprus have prevented the occurrence of over tourism, allowing for a harmonious balance between visitor demand and destination capacity." P.N.7

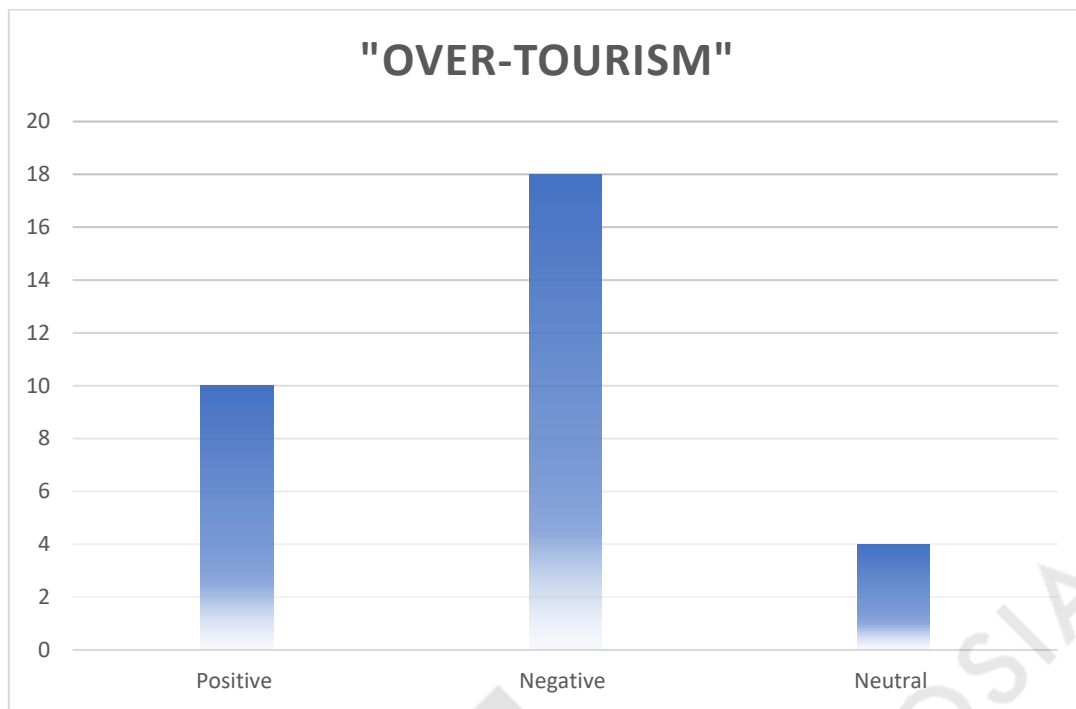
"With its diverse range of attractions and well-managed tourism infrastructure, Cyprus has successfully avoided over tourism, offering visitors a high-quality experience without overwhelming its natural and cultural resources." P.N.13

"The responsible tourism policies in Cyprus have resulted in a healthy balance between visitor arrivals and the capacity of its destinations, mitigating the risk of over tourism." P.N.3

One of the key reasons behind this skepticism towards the term "over tourism" in Cyprus is the perception that the island's tourism industry is still developing and has not reached a point of saturation or irreversible damage. These academics contend that the challenges associated with tourism, such as overcrowding and environmental degradation, are better addressed through sustainable tourism practices and comprehensive visitor management strategies. It is worth noting that the lack of support for the term "over tourism" among academics in Cyprus does not negate the importance of addressing the negative impacts of tourism. Instead, it reflects a desire for a more nuanced and context-specific approach to understanding and managing tourism development in the region. While a significant majority of participants acknowledge that many destinations experience the repercussions of overcrowding, there is a considerable segment of participants who hold opposing views, disputing the notion of over-tourism as a concept and its occurrence in Cyprus.

In summary, based on the information provided in Figure 36, out of the 18 participants involved in the discussion, they argued that the term "over-tourism" does not exist. According to their perspective, the term is used to encompass the concept of overcrowding in tourist destinations. Contrarily, there were 10 participants who disagreed with this viewpoint and believed that the term "over-tourism" does exist as a distinct concept. Finally, 4 participants took a neutral stance and did not express a clear opinion on the matter.

Figure 36: “Over Tourism”



Sources: author's own

In conclusion, the findings from the discussion among the participants highlight the shared concern about the consequences of overcrowding and environmental degradation in certain areas of Cyprus. The acknowledgment by important stakeholders that tourism capacity has been exceeded reflects a recognition of the need to address these issues. To mitigate the negative impacts of overcrowding and environmental degradation, effective tourism management is crucial. This includes conducting carrying capacity assessments to determine the maximum number of visitors that can be sustained without causing harm. Implementing sustainable practices, such as promoting responsible tourism, reducing carbon footprint, and protecting natural resources, is also essential.

By taking proactive measures and collaborating with stakeholders, Cyprus can strike a balance between tourism growth and the preservation of its unique natural and cultural heritage. This approach aims to ensure a more sustainable and enjoyable visitor experience while safeguarding the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry. Furthermore, although there was a disagreement among the participants regarding the existence of the term "over-tourism," it is evident that all participants recognized the urgency of finding immediate solutions. This emphasizes the importance of addressing the challenges associated with overcrowding and

implementing measures promptly to manage tourism sustainably and efficiently.

In summary, the discussions revealed a shared concern about the consequences of overcrowding and environmental degradation in certain areas of Cyprus. Effective tourism management, including carrying capacity assessments and sustainable practices, can help mitigate the negative impacts and ensure a more sustainable and enjoyable visitor experience. Collaboration and proactive measures are key to striking a balance between tourism growth and the preservation of Cyprus' natural and cultural heritage. Finally, all participants emphasized the need for prompt action and finding immediate solutions to address the challenges at hand.

5.3.5 Urgent Need for a Deliberate Visitor Management Plan to Mitigate Negative Impacts on the Cypriot Tourism Industry

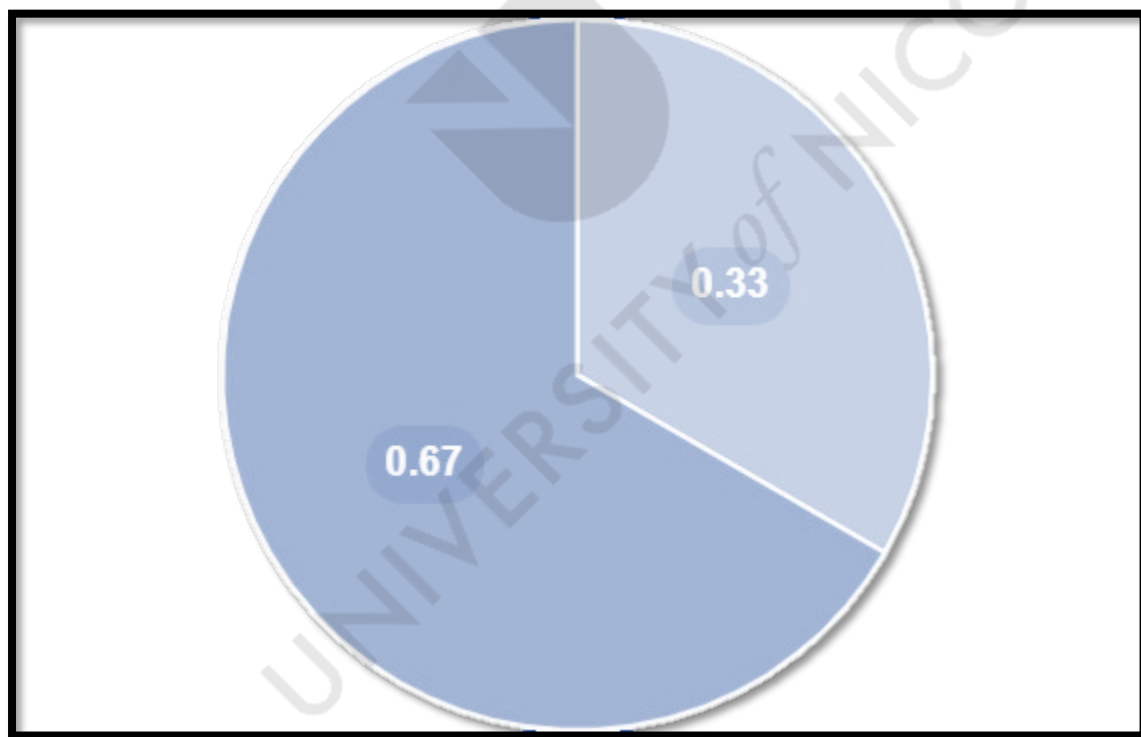
As per the feedback from the participants, the tourism sector in Cyprus is confronted with various obstacles that demand immediate attention and a strategic approach towards visitor management. Participants, particularly from the Government sector, strongly emphasize the necessity of a well-crafted and all-encompassing visitor management plan to mitigate the potential detrimental effects on the industry. An urgent requirement for such a plan arises from the imbalance observed in certain areas, where they surpass their carrying capacity while others remain underutilized. Without proper management, these negative impacts can deter future tourists, damage the destination's reputation, and harm the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry. Additionally, the lack of effective visitor management can result in social and cultural issues. Local communities feel overwhelmed by the influx of tourists, leading to conflicts, overcrowding of public spaces, and disruption of their daily lives. Moreover, the preservation of cultural heritage and authenticity is compromised since mass tourism fails to respect and protect local traditions, customs, and cultural sites.

However, as shown in Figure 37 only one third of the participants agreed to the implementation of a visitor management plan. According to those who supported this trust that any negative social and cultural impacts can be mitigated, fostering a harmonious relationship between tourists and local communities and also Environmental sustainability can be achieved. The participants supported that also braced the idea that controlled tourism activities can exert pressure on natural resources, such as water, energy, and land, leading to their depletion and environmental degradation. Overuse of fragile ecosystems, pollution, and waste generation are

some of the adverse consequences. A visitor management plan could help - as a participant particularly insisted – to regulate visitor numbers, implement sustainable practices, and protect sensitive ecological areas, ensuring the preservation of Cyprus's natural environment for future generations. A deliberate visitor management plan will be crucial in navigating the complexities of the post-pandemic tourism landscape.

The other two thirds of the participants are not in favor of a destination management plan, supporting the notion that such a plan exists but has historically failed to be implemented effectively due to external forces. These external forces include crises, pandemics, wars, economic crises, and other similar factors. The participants believe that despite the existence of a management plan, its execution has been hindered by these uncontrollable circumstances, thereby leading to challenges in the tourism industry.

Figure 37: Requirement for a Deliberate Visitor Management Plan



Sources: author's own

In conclusion, the negative impacts on the Cypriot tourism industry, resulting from issues such as over tourism, social conflicts, environmental degradation, and health concerns, highlight the urgent need for a deliberate visitor management plan. Such a plan can help regulate visitor

numbers, protect natural and cultural resources, enhance the visitor experience, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the industry. By proactively addressing these challenges and implementing effective visitor management strategies, Cyprus can strike a balance between tourism development and the preservation of its unique assets, fostering a resilient and thriving tourism industry. The diagram presented illustrates how stakeholders are responding to the pressing necessity of implementing a thoughtful visitor management plan in order to alleviate the adverse effects on the tourism industry in Cyprus.

5.3.6 Stakeholder Disagreement in Cyprus: Conflicting Agendas on Destination and Visitor Management Planning, and External Destination Management Body.

Different perception on Destination and Visitor Management Planning

There is a notable disagreement among stakeholders regarding destination management and visitor management planning, including the Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC). This divergence of opinions can be attributed to the stakeholders' varying agendas and interests, which often lead to conflicting perspectives on how best to manage tourism and its impacts on the destination.

One of the primary reasons for the disagreement is the diversity of stakeholders involved in tourism development. These stakeholders include government authorities, local communities, tourism industry representatives, environmental organizations, cultural preservation groups, and residents living in tourist areas. Each stakeholder has its own set of priorities, concerns, and interests, which inevitably shape their views on destination management and visitor management planning. Government authorities should prioritize economic growth, job creation, and revenue generation through tourism. Their focus could be on attracting more tourists, developing tourism infrastructure, and implementing policies that facilitate tourism development. They may see destination management as a means to increase tourism receipts and enhance the country's overall competitiveness in the global tourism market.

Local communities, on the other hand, should have concerns about the impacts of tourism on their quality of life, culture, and environment. They may value the preservation of their cultural heritage, sustainable development, and the well-being of residents. Their perspective on visitor

management planning may emphasize the need to strike a balance between the economic benefits of tourism and the social and environmental costs associated with it. The tourism industry, including hoteliers, tour operators, and other businesses, often has a vested interest in maximizing profit and increasing visitor numbers. They may advocate for less restrictive regulations, increased marketing efforts, and infrastructure development to accommodate a larger volume of tourists.

Their focus is suggested to be on enhancing the visitor experience and expanding the range of tourism products and services. Environmental organizations and cultural preservation groups should emphasize the protection of natural and cultural resources. The participants also argued for stricter regulations, sustainable resource management practices, and the conservation of fragile ecosystems and historical sites. Figures 38 and 39 below illustrates what the participants believe are the first two factors contribute to the differing perspectives for this disparity.

Figure 39: Economic Priorities

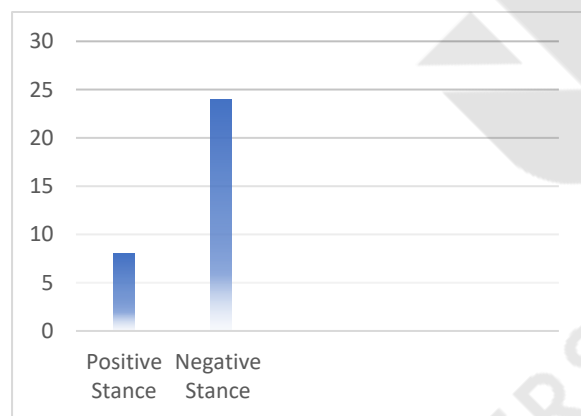
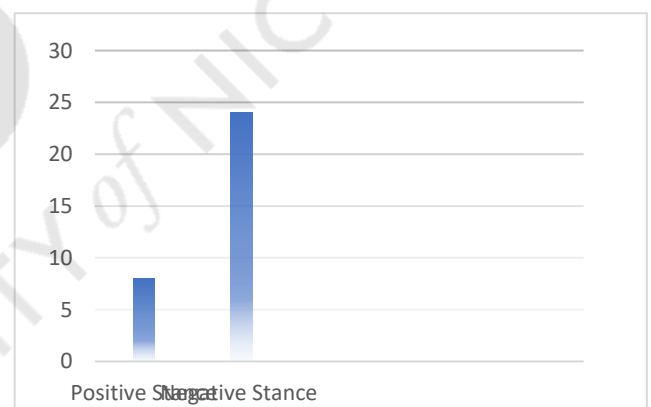


Figure 38: Environmental Concerns



Source: author's own

The participants' perspectives indicate a nuanced understanding of the interplay between stakeholders' personal interests and the significance of a destination's infrastructure and resources. A substantial proportion of participants believe that stakeholders' personal interests significantly influence decision-making processes, often shaping the priorities and outcomes of tourism development projects. Concurrently, there is a strong consensus on the critical importance of robust infrastructure and well-managed resources in enhancing the attractiveness and sustainability of tourist destinations. This dual recognition underscores the need for balanced strategies that align stakeholders' interests with infrastructural and resource-based

development to ensure comprehensive and sustainable growth in the tourism sector. Figures 40 and 41 below illustrate the mentioned findings.

Figure 41: Stakeholder Interests

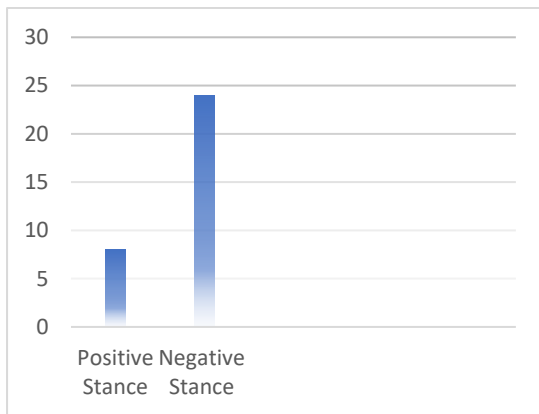
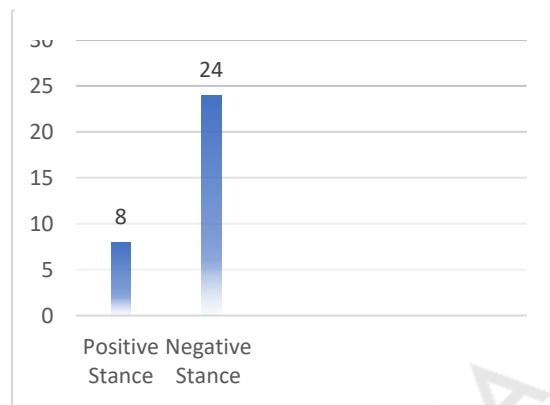


Figure 40: Infrastructure and Resources



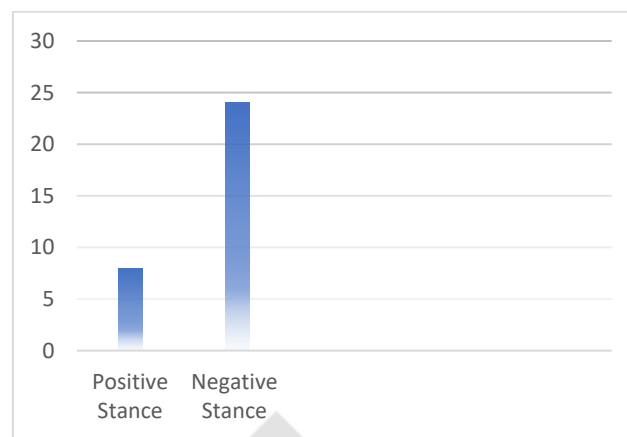
Source: author's own

A disagreement arises concerning the enhancement of Regulatory Frameworks in Cyprus, with some participants arguing against its necessity, citing existing laws and regulations as sufficient. These participants consider it unimportant to enhance the frameworks since they believe that current enforcement is effective. Conversely, a number of participants strongly advocate for the need to improve legal frameworks and enhance law implementation, pointing out the lack of comprehensive legal structures in place. This difference in opinion regarding Regulatory Frameworks stems from contrasting perspectives on the adequacy of the current legal landscape. Those who oppose enhancement emphasize the presence of laws and regulations that are already being enforced, leading them to believe that further improvements are unnecessary. They consider the existing legal framework as a reliable foundation for managing the industry effectively.

On the other hand, proponents of enhanced Regulatory Frameworks highlight the deficiencies they perceive in the current system. They argue that there are gaps in the legal frameworks, which impede effective management and regulation of the tourism industry. These participants assert that without comprehensive legal structures and robust law implementation, various issues such as environmental sustainability, visitor management, and stakeholder interests cannot be adequately addressed. The differing opinions on the need for regulatory enhancement reflect a broader debate within the participant group. While some participants trust the existing

laws and regulations, others express concerns about the efficacy and comprehensiveness of the legal framework. Achieving a consensus on this matter is crucial to ensure a harmonized and effective approach to regulatory management within the Cyprus tourism industry as shown in Figure 42.

Figure 42: Regulatory Frameworks



Source author's own

Although Destination management and visitor management are vital components in the effective planning and operation of a tourism destination (UNWTO, 2012). While interconnected, they focus on different aspects of managing the tourism experience. Destination management involves strategic planning, development, and coordination of various elements within a destination to ensure its competitiveness, sustainability, and overall success as a tourist attraction (Buhalis & Costa, 2006). It encompasses activities such as destination marketing, infrastructure development, product diversification, stakeholder engagement, and community involvement (Hall, 2008). The goal of destination management is to create a desirable and unique destination experience that attracts visitors, generates positive economic impact, preserves natural and cultural resources, and enhances the overall well-being of the destination and its residents (Pike, 2004).

Visitor management, on the other hand, focuses on managing and controlling visitors within a destination (Mason & Packer, 2001). It involves implementing strategies and measures to ensure smooth visitor flow, satisfaction, and sustainable utilization while minimizing negative impacts (Fennell, 2015). Visitor management activities include visitor monitoring, carrying capacity assessment, crowd control, visitor education, infrastructure planning, and

implementation of regulations and guidelines (Gössling et al., 2013). The aim of visitor management is to strike a balance between facilitating enjoyable visitor experiences and preserving the destination's integrity, managing visitor numbers, minimizing overcrowding, mitigating environmental degradation, and addressing social and cultural concerns (Newsome et al., 2012).

According to the study's findings, participants in Cyprus exhibit varying perspectives on destination management and visitor management planning, with a priority given to the preservation of the country's unique environmental and cultural assets. However, these divergent agendas and interests often lead to conflicts and disagreements among stakeholders when making decisions related to planning. Issues such as tourism infrastructure development, carrying capacity limits, the balance between economic growth and environmental preservation, and the involvement of local communities in decision-making processes contribute to these differing views. A significant factor contributing to these disagreements is the lack of open dialogue, transparency, and collaboration among stakeholders. Insufficient engagement in meaningful consultations, the involvement of all relevant parties, and the consideration of multiple perspectives have hindered the identification of common ground and the development of consensus-based solutions. This failure to identify shared interests and work towards mutually beneficial outcomes has made it challenging to overcome disagreements and promote a more sustainable and inclusive approach to destination and visitor management in Cyprus. Furthermore, the study identified the absence of evaluation processes and adaptation to new rules as a contributing factor. The lack of continuous monitoring of tourism impacts, limited stakeholder engagement, and inadequate integration of sustainability principles further exacerbate the gaps between different stakeholder viewpoints. Addressing these shortcomings is essential to establish a more harmonious and effective management framework for tourism in Cyprus.

Acceptance of External Destination Management Body

The findings of the study have provided clear insights into the participants' perceptions across six important categories: physical infrastructure, economic, perceptual, social, ecological, and political. Among these categories, physical infrastructure emerged as the primary concern for the participants, indicating its significance in shaping their overall perceptions. The physical infrastructure, encompassing elements such as transportation, accommodation, and public

amenities, was deemed crucial for the tourism industry's success. However, it is important to note that the social category encompasses the remaining five categories, implying that the participants' perspectives were influenced by social factors that encompassed economic, perceptual, ecological, and political aspects. This suggests that the social dimension played a vital role in shaping their perceptions across all categories. The society's needs and expectations were seen as crucial in driving the development and maintenance of physical infrastructure, economic prosperity, positive perceptions, ecological sustainability, and effective governance.

Expanding on these findings, it becomes evident that the participants recognized the interplay between various factors and how they collectively contribute to the overall success and sustainability of the tourism industry. The social aspect serves as the foundation, encompassing the needs, desires, and values of the community, which in turn influence the development and management of physical infrastructure, economic growth, perceptions held by visitors and locals, ecological preservation, and political decision-making. These findings emphasize the importance of considering the societal dimension when planning and implementing tourism initiatives. By prioritizing the social well-being and expectations of the local community, policymakers and industry stakeholders can create a sustainable and inclusive tourism environment that addresses the needs of various categories such as physical infrastructure, economic growth, perception management, ecological sustainability, and political governance. Such an approach ensures that tourism development aligns with the interests and aspirations of the society it aims to benefit.

Despite these differing opinions, all participants agreed on the need for competent and experienced individuals to lead the ministry and work in conjunction with the ETAP to implement effective strategies. When asked about the possibility of abolishing the ETAPs and having Municipalities take their place, all participants expressed strong opposition. They believed that such a move would only open the door to further political interventions. It is worth noting that the number of Municipalities recently decreased to 20 in March 2022. Participants' quotes follow below.:

"The transformation of the Cyprus Tourism Organization into a sub-ministry of tourism has helped expedite decision-making." (P.N.26)

"Undoubtedly, the transition of the Cyprus Tourism Organization into a state ministry is of

great importance as it grants more freedom to implement strategies promptly, including the possibility of legislation." (P.N.4)
"The transformation of the Cyprus Tourism Organization into a sub-ministry of tourism has helped expedite decision-making." (P.N.26)
"I'm concerned that the Cyprus Tourism Organization was not functioning properly before, and even now, as it becomes the Ministry of Tourism, passing strategies might be challenging without the ministry's authority to enable it." (P.N.25), (P.N.21), (P.N.12)
"The Undersecretary is doing their best, and to the extent they are allowed, they have included new executives in their team while excluding former ones from the Cyprus Tourism Organization. However, I am skeptical about their ability to implement their plans. Unfortunately, their term is ending soon, leaving very little time." (P.N.5).
"Of course, the transition of the Cypriot tourism organization to a state ministry was very important because it will loosen the hands and we will be able to implement strategies faster with the possibility of legislation." (P.N. 4)
"The transformation of the Cypriot tourism organization into a sub-ministry of tourism helped to make decisions faster." (P.N. 26)

However, some individuals expressed the belief that micro-policies would have a more significant impact on the issue at hand. In fact, there were even critics of this change, stating that the Deputy Ministry of Tourism would no longer maintain the level of independence it should possess. They argued that the priorities of other ministries would overshadow any strategies implemented. These individuals proposed the establishment of an independent destination management body consisting of specialized personnel from various ministries and agencies. This body would analyze studies and provide realistic and objective conclusions to the Ministry of Tourism, as well as collaborate with the private sector, including members of PASYXE and PASYDYXE. However, a contradiction arises in this proposal. Without a representative from the Deputy Ministry, a committee cannot be formed, and strategic decisions cannot be approved. Furthermore, considering all variables, including the market economy, it is crucial for Cyprus to promote tourism destinations in a way that avoids causing harm while also preserving the existing destinations that contribute significantly to the economy. The term "tourism" encompasses virtually all participants in one way or another. Some participants disagreed with the notion of dividing destinations into clusters, instead emphasizing the importance of individual destinations having the ability to create clusters

within their regions.

Those who opposed the creation of the Deputy Ministry of Tourism made a point about the necessity of establishing an independent destination management body or strengthening the role and capabilities of the Cyprus Tourism Organization. They questioned the connection between promoting a destination and the approach taken by the ETAPs regarding carrying capacity. They raised concerns about how the current destinations would be maintained and highlighted the lack of a unified recommendation. Below follows participants quotes:

"Unfortunately, it is the interests of money and power that take precedence and can not only disregard policies but also create their own, resulting in changes to the workforce, working hours, and other aspects." (P.N. 7)

"Manolios" changed his attire but remains the same person underneath." (P.N. 8)

The overpowering influence of key players in the industry poses a significant challenge and acts as a major obstacle to the effective development of a sustainable TCC (Tourism Cluster Competitiveness) model. These key players hold significant control over the competition, making it challenging to bring about change. Based on initial interview findings, the researcher identified the dynamics of stakeholders. As a result, in the third sub-case, it was deemed necessary for respondents to take a stance on whether stakeholders would permit the creation of tourist clusters, if agreed upon, and what level of influence they would have on decision-making processes.

Furthermore, consideration was given to how much society should be allowed to criticize this. In relation to this matter, a portion of the interviewees argued that the actors involved in tourism, whether directly or indirectly, possess an understanding not only of their own personal interests but also the interests of society. There are governing bodies that serve as arbitrators and are primarily inclined towards overseeing the public interest, especially following the establishment of the Ministry of Tourism. While there may be isolated cases where individuals prioritize their personal interests, the Ministry of Tourism aims to introduce appropriate legislation that will serve as safeguards against any potential deviations.

"With the creation of a state ministry of tourism, the regulatory bodies could gain greater authority, allowing them to conduct audits." (P.N. 3), (P.N. 4)

Contrary to the assertions made by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism representatives, the interviewees from both ETAP and the private sector portrayed a different picture. They described a scenario where a handful of influential businessmen's lobbies wield excessive power, intervening in every strategic decision and exerting influence through political parties to safeguard their interests. These powerful individuals hold considerable sway, largely due to their financial backing of political parties, which in turn act as their advocates. In this context, societal representation is deemed insignificant, either due to lack of direct participation or because their involvement is presumed to be driven by their own interests.

Conversely, for many respondents, tourism is seen as a significant conduit for the introduction of foreign values, standards, and behaviors. Relevant studies indicate that tourism serves as a crucial channel for communication and intercultural exchange, which, in some cases, leads to negative changes in the manners, customs, social norms, structures, and institutions of host communities. An illustrative example of such changes is the imitation of patterns, predominantly by young individuals, projected by foreign visitors. A substantial proportion of respondents agree that tourism "facilitates the adoption of negative foreign standards by Cypriots." The responses to this once again revealed a division of opinions. Ministry of Tourism representatives argued that all stakeholders are adequately represented and their voices are heard in shaping strategies. They pointed to ongoing research on tourism performance, particularly the acceptance of key performance indicators, where stakeholders were consulted through interviews and questionnaires to gather their input.

Against this backdrop, the transition of the Cypriot tourism organization into a deputy ministry of tourism was viewed as a positive step by some respondents while others held a negative outlook. Contradictions emerged on this matter as well. Some respondents regarded it as a positive move to break free from the bureaucratic constraints associated with the involvement of multiple ministries in the Cyprus Tourism Organization, while others believed it could become a vehicle for small-scale political interventions orchestrated by political parties and the businessmen who financially support them.

However, all participants agreed on the need for competent and knowledgeable individuals to assume leadership roles, working in conjunction with ETAP, to effectively implement the respective strategies. There was unanimous opposition to the idea of abolishing ETAPs and replacing them with Municipalities, as it was seen as a potential avenue for small-scale political interventions. It is worth noting that the number of Municipalities recently decreased to 20, specifically in March 2022.

According to the findings, a significant majority of participants are not in favor of establishing an external destination management body that would function independently under the oversight of the deputy ministry of tourism. This proposed body would be staffed by experts from various areas, bringing together diverse expertise. The participants express reservations about the concept of an external destination management body operating independently. They prefer a more integrated approach, where destination management functions are carried out within existing structures under the guidance of the deputy ministry of tourism. They believe that collaboration and coordination among different stakeholders within the ministry and related departments can effectively address the challenges and objectives of destination management. The participants value the inclusion of experts from various fields and recognize the importance of diverse perspectives in destination management.

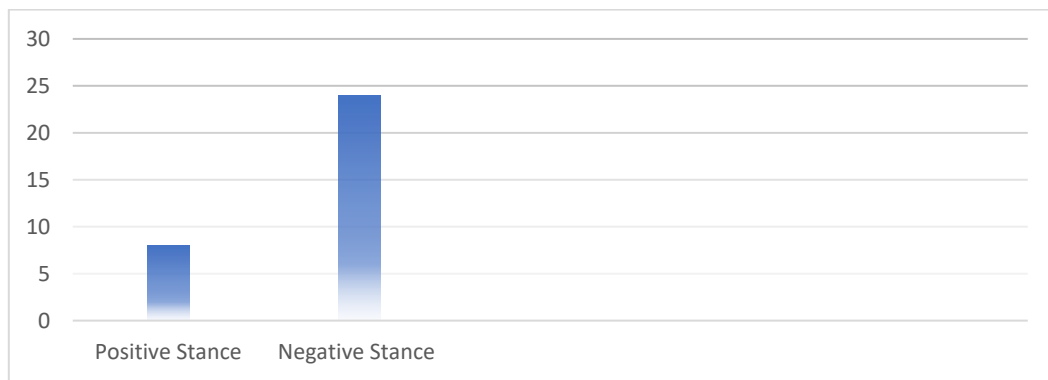
However, they advocate for a structure where these experts work in close collaboration with existing entities and departments rather than as an entirely separate body. They emphasize the need for a unified approach that leverages existing resources and knowledge while ensuring effective communication and cooperation among all stakeholders involved. In enhancing the approach, it is important to foster communication channels and create platforms for knowledge sharing and collaboration among experts from different areas. By facilitating the exchange of ideas, best practices, and expertise, a more comprehensive and integrated approach to destination management can be achieved. This inclusive and collaborative model ensures that the strengths and resources of various stakeholders are leveraged to drive effective destination management strategies in Cyprus.

Based on the findings as shown in figures below, there is a notable discrepancy in the acceptance of an external destination management body operating independently among the

participants. Out of the total participants, 8 expressed a positive stance towards the concept, while 24 participants held a negative stance. The 8 participants who expressed a positive stance likely recognized the potential benefits associated with an external body. They may have emphasized the enhanced expertise and specialization that such a body can bring, along with the potential for objective decision-making, strategic planning, and streamlined operations. These participants might have considered an external body as an opportunity for innovation, efficient resource allocation, and improved collaboration among stakeholders. On the other hand, the 24 participants who held a negative stance likely had concerns and reservations regarding the concept of an external body. Their perspective may have included worries about the lack of alignment with government priorities, potential duplication of efforts, and limited government control. They may have highlighted challenges such as fragmented governance, increased costs, and potential conflicts of interest. These participants might have also raised questions about accountability, transparency, and potential difficulties in decision-making and coordination.

Overall, the findings indicate a majority of participants expressing a negative stance towards an external destination management body operating independently. This suggests a higher level of skepticism and concerns among participants regarding the feasibility, effectiveness, and alignment of such a concept with their expectations and existing structures. It also suggests the need for further exploration and dialogue to address these concerns and build consensus among stakeholders regarding the appropriate approach to destination management in the specific context of the research, as illustrated in Figure 43 below. This consensus-building process may involve engaging stakeholders in participatory decision-making and providing transparent information about the benefits and challenges of external management.:

Figure 43: Acceptance of an External Destination Management External Body



Source author's own

In conclusion, the study highlights the need for improved dialogue, transparency, and collaboration among stakeholders in destination and visitor management planning. It emphasizes the importance of engaging in meaningful consultations, identifying shared interests, and working towards consensus-based solutions. Additionally, regular evaluation, adaptation to new rules, continuous monitoring of tourism impacts, and the integration of sustainability principles are necessary for bridging gaps and establishing a more effective and sustainable management framework for tourism in Cyprus.

5.3.7 Examining Stakeholder Perspectives: Locals, Tourism, Culture, and Education as a Tension to Sustainable Development

According to the participants' beliefs, the tourism industry involves a diverse range of stakeholders, such as government bodies, local communities, tour operators, and hoteliers. Each stakeholder group holds their own unique perspectives and beliefs regarding the significance of tourism education and tourism culture, contributing to the multidimensional nature of this field. Government bodies play a crucial role in shaping tourism policies and regulations, and their perspective on tourism education and culture is influenced by overarching goals of economic development, sustainable growth, and social welfare.

It is argued that educational programs should prioritize enhancing the skills and knowledge of tourism professionals, starting from the early stages of education for locals, in order to promote cultural preservation, heritage, and responsible and sustainable tourism practices. For example, a study by Adu-Ampong (2017) highlights the importance of tourism education in equipping

students with the necessary skills to support cultural tourism development and foster sustainable practices.

However, it is also pointed out that not all local communities possess a deep understanding of their region's culture, traditions, and resources. This lack of awareness and engagement with their own cultural heritage can result in locals being less inclined to work in the hospitality industry. Despite the potential for tourism education to showcase cultural heritage, promote community engagement, and empower residents through employment and entrepreneurship, this is not always realized in practice. Further research by Gursoy and Rutherford (2004) examines the impact of community involvement on sustainable tourism development, shedding light on the challenges faced by local communities in fully harnessing the potential of tourism education. Tour operators, acting as intermediaries between tourists and destinations, often prioritize the practical aspects of tourism education. However, the specific focus may vary depending on the type of tourists they cater to and their interests. This aligns with the notion that the selection of tourists can impact a destination's competitiveness, as observed in the case of Cyprus. The island's heavy reliance on tourism necessitates careful consideration of target markets and the corresponding tourism education strategies. A study by Ioannides (2003) delves into the challenges faced by Cyprus in managing the impacts of tourism and making strategic choices to attract the desired type of tourists.

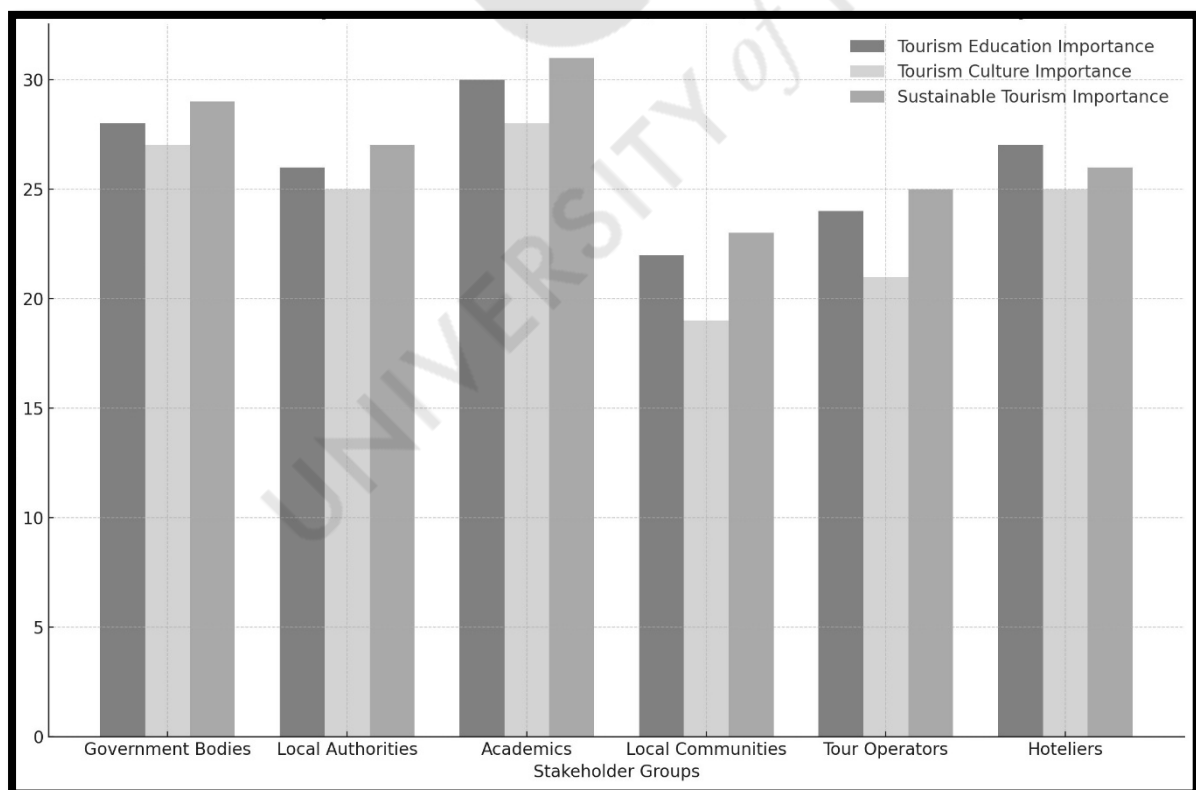
For hoteliers, who are responsible for providing accommodation and hospitality services, the emphasis on tourism education lies in achieving service excellence, maintaining quality standards, and ensuring guest satisfaction. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of such training programs depends on the availability and qualifications of staff. A study by Verma, Chand, and Sah (2020) explores the impact of employee training and development on service quality in the hotel industry, emphasizing the need for adequate resources and commitment from hotel management. In summary, the beliefs of participants reveal the varied perspectives of stakeholders in the tourism industry regarding the importance of tourism education and tourism culture. Government bodies, local communities, tour operators, and hoteliers each have their own unique views and priorities, as supported by research findings in the field. These perspectives collectively contribute to shaping the multifaceted nature of the tourism industry and underscore the importance of considering diverse stakeholder interests in planning and implementing effective tourism education

initiatives. Figure 44 below represents the perspectives of Academics and Local Authorities alongside the other stakeholder groups. The data shows the importance levels assigned by each stakeholder group on a scale of 1 to 32 (participants), reflecting their views on tourism education, tourism culture, and sustainable tourism development.

- Government Bodies and Hoteliers emphasize the significance of tourism education and sustainable tourism.
- Local Authorities and Academics also place high importance on these areas, recognizing their role in policy implementation and knowledge dissemination.
- Local Communities and Tour Operators assign slightly lower importance to these aspects, highlighting the practical and cultural challenges they face.

This graph underscores the importance of considering diverse stakeholder interests to plan and implement effective tourism education initiatives.

Figure 44: Stakeholders Perception - Locals, Tourism, Culture, and Education as a Tension to Sustainable Development



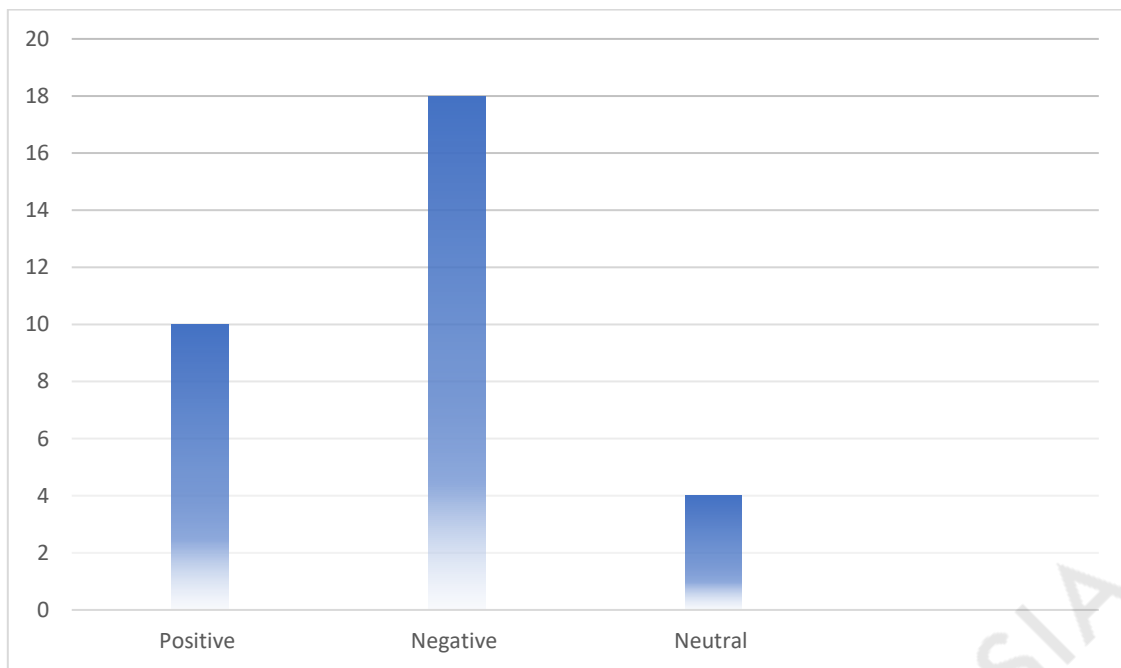
Sources: author's own

The stakeholders involved in strategic design and planning should consider the multiplier effect and how locals can benefit. Currently, this aspect is not adequately addressed. The qualitative initiatives and forms of tourism implemented reflect the quality orientation of the island's Tourism Carrying Capacity and its overall strategy. It is crucial to recognize and address these issues to ensure sustainable tourism development.

The survey findings depicted in Figure 45 below reveal a notable educational gap among the participants, with 32 respondents acknowledging this issue (Smith et al., 2022). This highlights the need for educational initiatives and programs aimed at bridging this gap and enhancing the knowledge and skills pertaining to the field of tourism. The significance of this gap is underscored by the concerns expressed by 18 participants regarding the diminishing influence of tourism culture (Jones & Brown, 2020). These concerns emphasize the importance of preserving and promoting the cultural heritage and traditions associated with tourism destinations. Interestingly, a smaller number of participants (4) identified a lack of tourism education, indicating the need for efforts to develop and nurture a strong cultural foundation within the tourism industry (Johnson & Davis, 2019). On the other hand, it is worth noting that 10 participants recognized a strong presence of tourism education, suggesting the existence of destinations or communities where tourism has exerted a substantial influence and shaped the local culture (Anderson et al., 2018).

Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of addressing educational gaps in the tourism industry and fostering a sustainable and culturally rich tourism environment. It is essential to prioritize educational initiatives that enhance the skills and knowledge of industry professionals, while simultaneously promoting the preservation and celebration of local culture and heritage. By bridging the educational gap and fostering a vibrant tourism education and culture, stakeholders can work towards creating a more inclusive, informed, and enriching tourism experience for both visitors and local communities.

Figure 45: Level of Tourism Education



Sources: author's own

The current state of tourism in Cyprus reveals a significant gap in tourism education and a decline in tourism culture, primarily due to the detachment of Cypriots from the hospitality industry. The detrimental impact of visitors, such as overcrowding, pollution, reckless driving, water shortages, and other issues, has resulted in the suffering of local inhabitants. Over-tourism has disrupted the structure and dynamics of the local community, causing personal and societal harmony to be compromised, leading to excessive consumption.

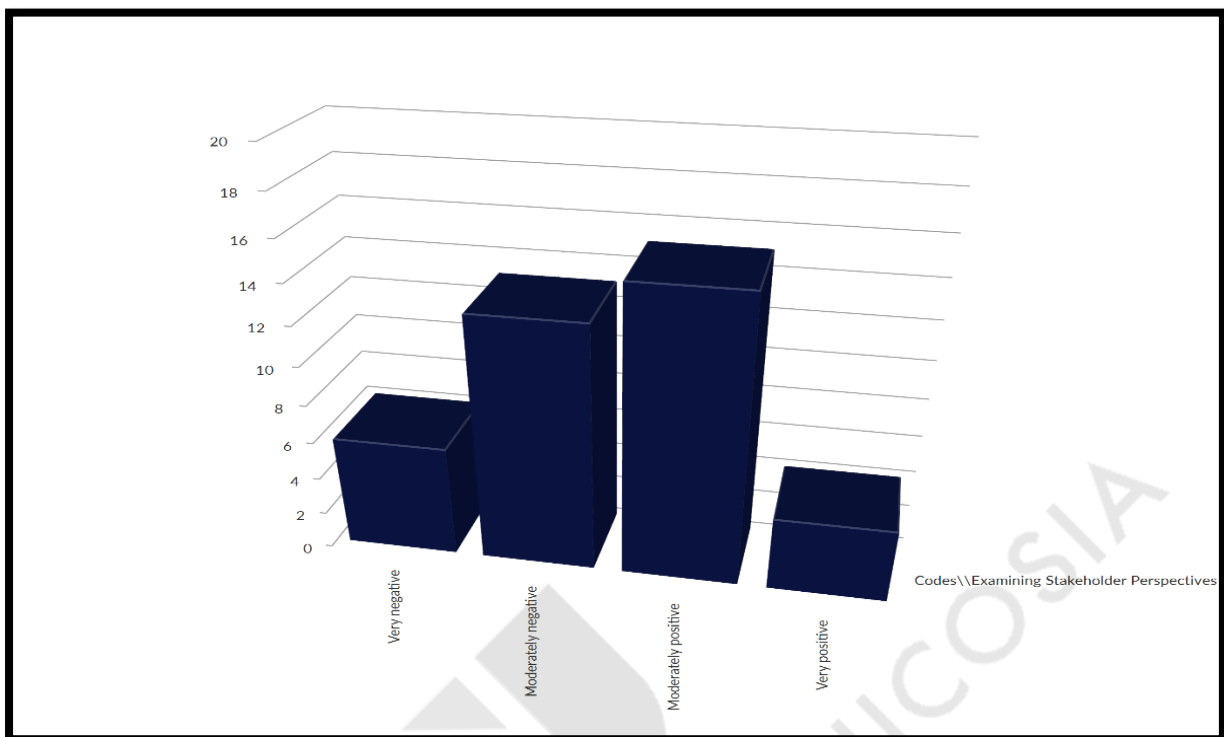
As a consequence of these challenges, it has become necessary for researchers to investigate the root causes behind the shortage of staff in a country heavily reliant on tourism. This exploration prompted an inquiry into the decline of hospitality, which has historically been a cornerstone of marketing and a competitive advantage for attracting tourists to the island. During interviews, all respondents unanimously identified staff shortages as a significant problem and a top priority. This, coupled with the cultural factors they highlighted, raised relevant questions for the researcher. In the interviews, participants expressed their views on the tourist culture of Cypriots, serving as a basis for the development and implementation of a tourist capacity model. They discussed the lack of qualified and educated staff as a contributing factor, noting the prevailing disregard for tourism professions within Cypriot culture.

The fact that these professionals are employed for only six months a year, followed by periods of unemployment, has led to the perception of tourism as a secondary job. The demanding work conditions, including long hours, weekend and holiday shifts, separation from family and friends, and inadequate wages, discourage young people from pursuing careers in the industry. Respondents also stressed the need for dedicated tourism education from an early age, instead of solely focusing on geography and society, to foster a mature understanding of tourism as a profession. One interviewee pointed out that residents working in the tourism industry or having close relatives in the sector tend to welcome tourists more warmly compared to those who have chosen tourism as their profession from other countries.

Some respondents expressed frustration that despite tourism indirectly contributing 23% to GDP and directly accounting for 12%, society as a whole lacks interest in the concept of tourism and demands sustainability. They highlighted the negative effects of tourism development on host communities, including complete dependence on tourism, vulnerability to market changes, inflation, rising property values, and increased imports to cater to the demands of a wealthy elite. The quotes from respondents further emphasize the perceived lack of hospitality in Cyprus. True hospitality is seen as a rarity, with only certain mountainous areas exhibiting signs of genuine hospitality. The term "hospitality" is considered utopian and something that has diminished over time. Respondents expressed skepticism about the authenticity of the hospitality portrayed in media, social networks, and daily interactions, believing it does not align with the true nature of the people.

The perception that tourism and hotel professions are regarded as inferior in Cypriot culture hampers the development of a genuine sense of hospitality. In the realm of modern tourism marketing, quality customer service is viewed as a crucial element for achieving diversity and creating value-added experiences. It acts as a catalyst for attracting repeat tourists, not only within the same area but also throughout the entire island. Demonstrating knowledge, expertise, and friendly service are essential in ensuring visitors have positive and enjoyable experiences. Furthermore, providing assistance and information to tourists, helping them better understand the country, and enhancing their overall visit contribute to the overarching goal of transforming this knowledge into a way of life for everyone, without expecting payment, as it ultimately benefits the entire country. Figure 46 below presents the participants' perspectives on the locals' hospitality, reflecting both negative and positive views.

Figure 46: Participants' Perspectives on Locals' Hospitality: Reflecting Negative and Positive Views



Sources: author's own

5.3.8 Diverse Stakeholder Perceptions on the Economic Impacts of Tourism in Cyprus: Profit-Driven or not, Approach and Implications

The assessment of the participants' perceptions on tourism infrastructure and services in Cyprus has shed light on the diverse perspectives regarding the adequacy of these aspects in meeting the needs of tourists. The findings have revealed a range of opinions and viewpoints among the participants highlighting the complexity of managing and developing tourism in the country. One of the significant perspectives identified amongst them is the profit-driven approach to tourism. According to the interviewees, some stakeholders, particularly those representing private businesses and investors, prioritize maximizing profits and economic benefits derived from tourism. From their viewpoint, the adequacy of infrastructure and services is often assessed based on their ability to generate revenue and attract a large number of tourists.

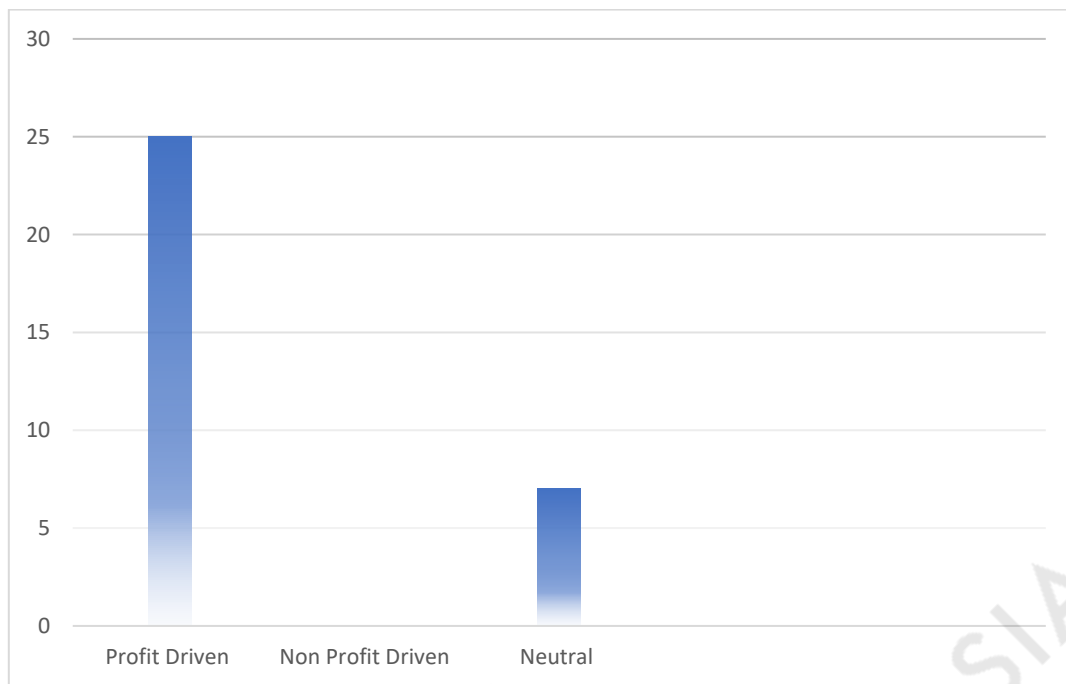
These stakeholders emphasize the importance of infrastructure development, such as hotels, resorts, transportation networks, and entertainment facilities, as essential components for

accommodating and satisfying the demands of visitors. To address these divergent viewpoints, it is crucial to engage in dialogue and facilitate a mutual understanding of the potential impacts and benefits associated with tourism infrastructure and services. This can involve conducting comprehensive assessments, such as environmental impact assessments and socio-cultural assessments, to inform decision-making processes and ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are considered, which unfortunately does not occur now. The findings regarding diverse stakeholder perceptions on the economic impacts of tourism in Cyprus reveal a clear inclination towards a profit-driven approach among the participants. Out of the 25 participants, all of them supported the notion that stakeholders involved in the tourism industry in Cyprus are undoubtedly profit-driven. This indicates a widespread belief that economic gain and financial prosperity are major motivations for stakeholders in their involvement with tourism.

Interestingly, there were no participants who held a non-profit driven perspective, suggesting a unanimous agreement on the profit-oriented nature of the stakeholders. This implies that the participants perceive the primary goal of stakeholders, such as government bodies, local communities, tour operators, and hoteliers, to be centered around maximizing financial benefits and generating revenue from tourism activities.

On the other hand, a smaller number of participants, totaling 7, expressed a neutral standpoint. This neutral stance could suggest a lack of strong agreement or disagreement regarding the profit-driven nature of stakeholders. It is possible that these participants may have diverse viewpoints or may require further evidence or clarification before forming a definitive opinion. The findings indicate the significance of economic considerations in shaping stakeholder perceptions and approaches within the tourism industry in Cyprus. The dominant profit-driven perspective aligns with the general understanding that tourism plays a crucial role in generating income, employment opportunities, and economic growth for destinations. These findings have implications for tourism policy and decision-making in Cyprus. They highlight the need for balancing economic interests with other dimensions of sustainability, such as social and environmental considerations. By understanding the diverse stakeholder perceptions and their profit-driven approach, policymakers and industry stakeholders can work towards developing strategies and initiatives that maximize economic benefits while ensuring responsible and sustainable tourism practices (Figure 47).

Figure 47: Diverse Stakeholder Perceptions on Economic Impacts of Tourism in Cyprus



Sources: author's own

5.3.9 Assessing Stakeholder Perceptions on Tourism Infrastructure and Services in Cyprus

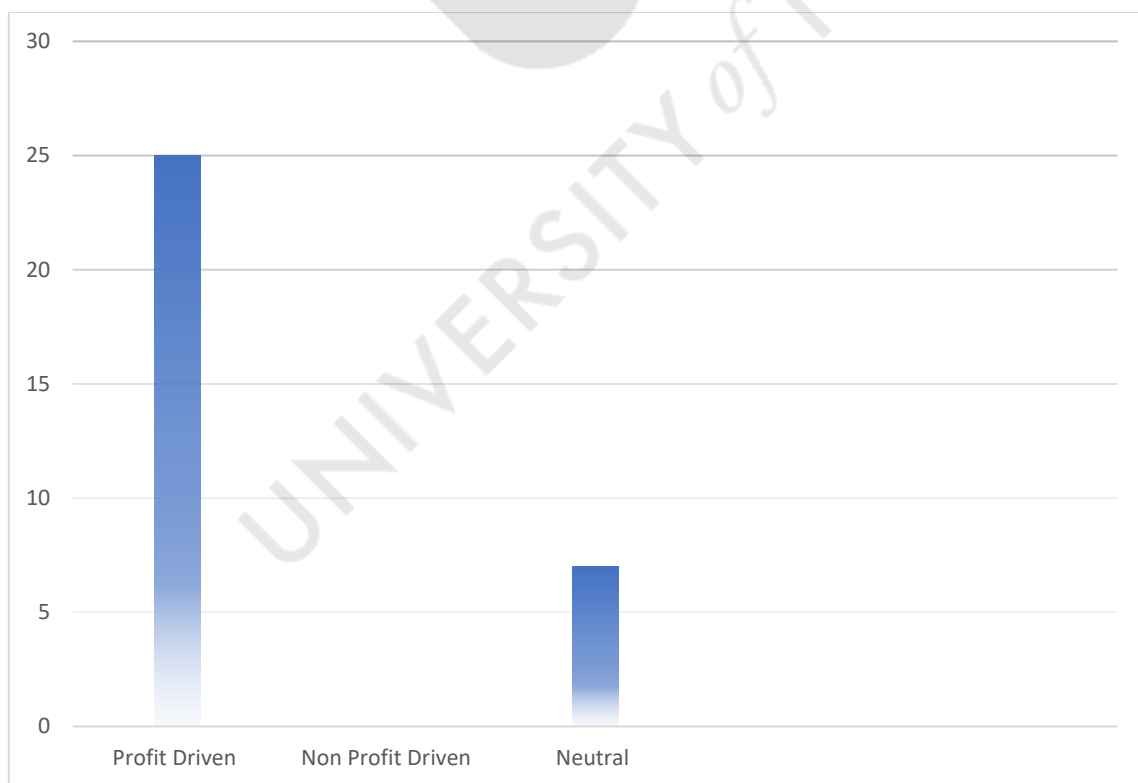
Assessing the participants' perceptions, 19 of them supported that tourism infrastructure and services in Cyprus provide valuable insights into the diverse viewpoints and opinions held by various individuals and groups involved in the tourism industry. The study delves into the participants' assessment of the current state of infrastructure and services and how they believe these factors meet the needs of tourists. The stakeholders involved in the assessment may include government officials, tourism authorities, local communities, tourism businesses, industry associations, environmental organizations, and visitors themselves. Each participant carries a unique perspective based on their role, interests, and priorities.

Several participants emphasized the importance of modern and well-maintained infrastructure, including airports, roads, accommodation facilities, and public amenities. They argued that having efficient and high-quality infrastructure is essential for attracting tourists, providing them with comfortable experiences, and supporting the overall growth of the tourism industry. However, alongside these positive views, concerns were raised about the capacity and sustainability of the current infrastructure. Issues such as overcrowding, insufficient resources, and a lack of integration between different elements of the tourism infrastructure were

highlighted. The majority of participants advocated for a more balanced and responsible approach to tourism development, emphasizing the need to preserve the natural and cultural assets of Cyprus and ensure the well-being of local communities. During the study, divergent views on the quality of tourism services in Cyprus were revealed. A small group of four participants praised the existing range of services, including hospitality, dining, transportation, and recreational activities, as meeting or exceeding the expectations of tourists. They acknowledged the challenges faced by Cyprus due to its size and the fact that it is still under occupation.

In contrast, seven participants identified the need for improvement in tourism services. They raised concerns about service quality, professionalism, customer service, and accessibility for specific groups of tourists. While acknowledging that the infrastructure is in a good state, they supported the idea of enhancing training and capacity-building programs, promoting service excellence, and ensuring inclusivity in service delivery as avenues for further improvement (Figure 48).

Figure 48: Assessing the Level of Infrastructure Development in Cyprus



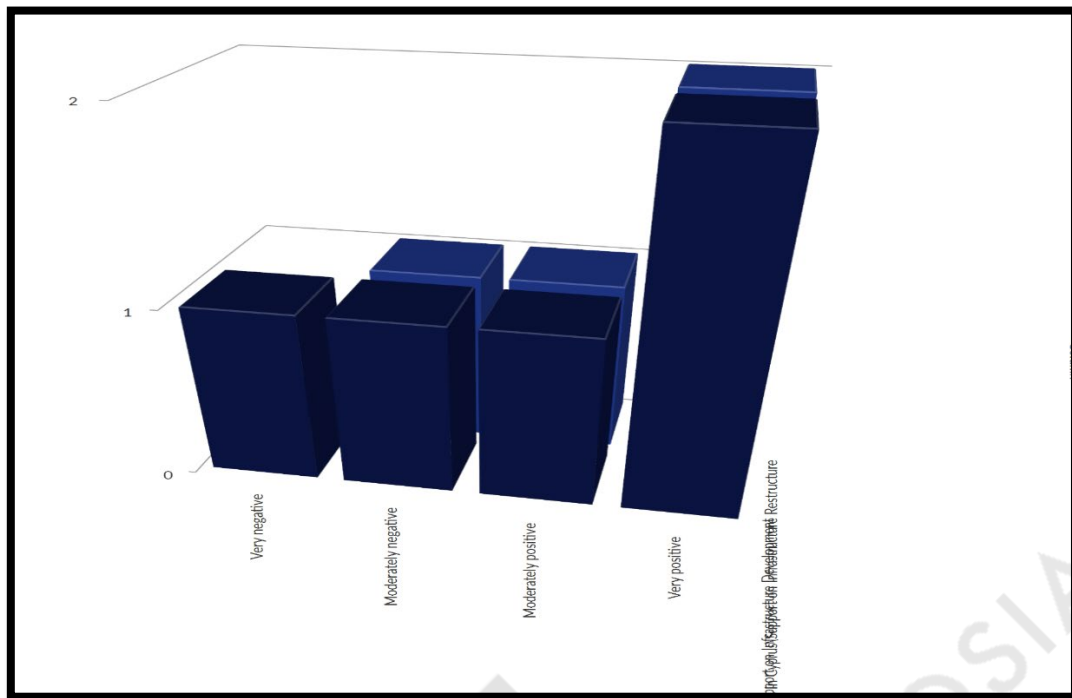
Sources: author's own

Assessing the interviewees perceptions on tourism infrastructure and services in Cyprus is a

valuable exercise that provides a comprehensive understanding of how different individuals and groups view the current state of tourism-related facilities and offerings. This assessment allows for the identification of strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities for improvement. By incorporating stakeholder perspectives into planning and decision-making processes, Cyprus can work towards developing a tourism sector that is sustainable, competitive, and responsive to the needs and expectations of all stakeholders involved. The assessment of the participants' perceptions on tourism infrastructure and services in Cyprus reveals a divided perspective among participants. Half of the respondents express support for the restructuring of existing infrastructure, indicating a recognition of the need for improvements and upgrades to meet the evolving demands of the tourism industry. This viewpoint suggests that these stakeholders believe in the importance of enhancing the quality, efficiency, and sustainability of the infrastructure to provide better experiences for tourists and to remain competitive in the global market.

On the other hand, as shown in the Figure 49 below, the remaining half of the participants advocate for further development, indicating a belief that additional infrastructure should be created to accommodate the growing tourism demand and to expand the range of services available. This perspective reflects an understanding of the potential economic benefits that can arise from increased tourism activity and the need to capitalize on opportunities for growth and diversification.

Figure 49: Perception on Infrastructure



Sources: author's own

The contrasting views on restructuring and further development underscore the complexity of decision-making regarding tourism infrastructure. Balancing the preservation of natural and cultural resources with the need for modernization and expansion is a challenge that requires careful consideration. Effective planning and collaboration among stakeholders, including government authorities, local communities, and tourism industry representatives, will be crucial in developing a sustainable and inclusive tourism infrastructure that maximizes the benefits while minimizing any negative impacts.

By analyzing and taking into account the diverse stakeholder perceptions, decision-makers can develop comprehensive strategies that address the concerns of both groups. This may involve identifying key areas for infrastructure improvements, optimizing existing resources, and implementing sustainable practices to ensure the long-term viability of the tourism industry in Cyprus. Ultimately, a balanced and well-informed approach to tourism infrastructure development will contribute to the overall success and competitiveness of Cyprus as a tourist destination.

5.3.10 Exploring Stakeholder Familiarity and Experience with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus: Challenges and Opportunities

The 10th session of the World Urban Forum in 2020 introduced the concept of integrating innovation and culture to address the challenges and opportunities in urban areas (WUF, 2020). Urbanization is a global issue that often requires locally tailored innovative solutions. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to urbanization-related problems. Consequently, culture has become a central topic in discussions surrounding the new urban agenda and the 2030 sustainable development agenda.

In a broader sense, culture plays a significant role in shaping the growth and development of cities. Both cities and culture are dynamic entities, and they continually adapt to each other's changes. Culture is deeply rooted in its people, providing them with a sense of ownership and belonging (Duxbury, Hosagrahar, & Pascual, 2019). When this connection is lost, it results in a loss of identity. In increasingly diverse urban environments, cultural diversity promotes inclusivity, participation, and tolerance, particularly in the historic cores of cities (Unhabitat, 2017). Culture manifests in various forms, including architecture, customs, traditions, people, and lifestyles, making it an integral part of the complex urban fabric with social, economic, and political implications.

The growing heterogeneity of urban areas leads to the coexistence of diverse cultures, especially in the historic cores of cities. As per the Culture 21 Agenda, local governments are tasked with exploring ways to incorporate culture into new spatial and economic policies for local development. In 2011, ICOMOS and UNESCO formulated a charter specifically addressing the conservation of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre, 2011). Many historic Indian cities, such as Varanasi, Jaipur, Pune, Madurai, and Amritsar, owe their identities to their intangible heritage, which continues to support various economic activities. Some of these cities are recognized in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network for this reason. These areas can be identified and designated as "Creative Cultural Clusters" within the cities' development plans. It is encouraged to assess land use, the economy, social development, and the environment from the perspective of heritage, considering their potential to address present challenges and foster innovation for future development.

Exploring stakeholder familiarity and experience with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with this particular approach

to tourism development. By examining the participants familiarity and experience with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of stakeholders' perceptions, knowledge, and involvement in this specific model of tourism development. According to the participants the Stakeholders encompass various actors such as government bodies, tourism authorities, local communities, businesses, industry associations, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

Figure 50 below illustrates the participants' scaled perceptions of stakeholder familiarity and experience with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, ranging from 1 (Very Low Importance) to 5 (Very High Importance). The participants' scaled perceptions on stakeholder familiarity and experience with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus provide valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement in the development and management of these clusters.

Limited Awareness and Understanding, rated at 4, suggests that some stakeholders may lack familiarity with the concept of Tourism Clusters and the potential benefits they can offer. This highlights the need for educational initiatives and information-sharing to enhance stakeholders' understanding of how clusters can foster collaboration, innovation, and competitiveness within the tourism industry. The rating of 3 for Fragmented Collaboration indicates that stakeholders face challenges in establishing effective collaboration and coordination among different organizations within the tourism cluster. Overcoming fragmentation, fostering trust, and reducing competition among stakeholders are crucial to achieving collective development and implementation of cluster initiatives.

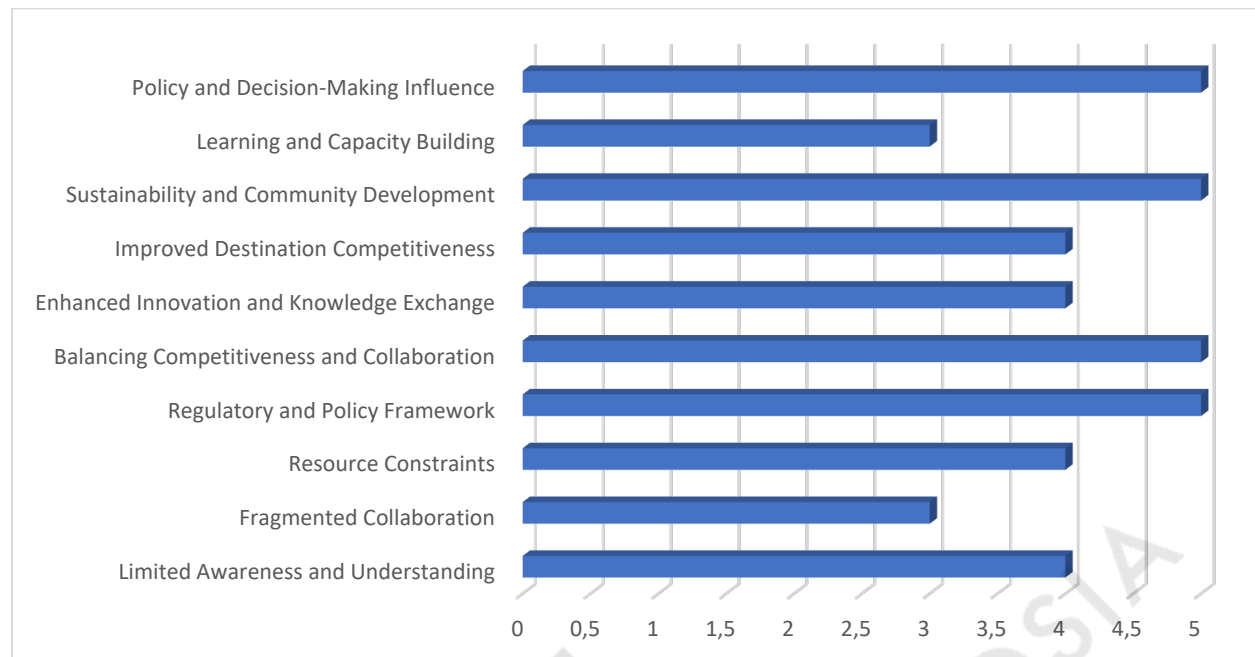
Resource Constraints, rated at 4, shed light on the limited financial resources, infrastructure, and human capital that pose challenges to the successful implementation of Tourism Clusters. Securing necessary investments, expertise, and support to develop and sustain cluster activities becomes crucial for stakeholders in addressing these constraints. The maximum rating of 5 for Regulatory and Policy Framework highlights the significance of a supportive regulatory environment and policy framework for the success of Tourism Clusters. It underscores the importance of streamlining licensing, permits, and bureaucratic procedures to ensure efficient functioning of the clusters and encourage stakeholder participation. Balancing Competitiveness and Collaboration, also rated 5, underscores the challenge of striking a balance between enhancing individual competitiveness and fostering collaboration within the tourism cluster.

Effective planning, communication, and cooperation among stakeholders are necessary to reconcile diverse priorities and interests. Enhanced Innovation and Knowledge Exchange, rated 4, emphasizes the potential of Tourism Clusters to facilitate knowledge sharing, experiences, and best practices.

By promoting collaboration and cooperation, clusters can stimulate innovation and the development of new products, services, and experiences that cater to evolving tourist demands. Improved Destination Competitiveness, also rated 4, recognizes the collective action and collaboration within Tourism Clusters as a means to enhance the competitiveness of Cyprus as a tourism destination. Leveraging shared resources, joint marketing efforts, and collaborative initiatives can help attract a wider range of tourists and differentiate the destination. Sustainability and Community Development, rated 5, emphasizes the role of Tourism Clusters in promoting sustainable tourism development and community engagement. Integrating social, environmental, and economic considerations into cluster activities is crucial for the well-being of local communities, preservation of natural and cultural assets, and the long-term viability of the tourism industry.

Learning and Capacity Building, rated 3, highlights the importance of engaging in Tourism Clusters for stakeholders to gain learning opportunities, capacity building, and professional development. By exchanging knowledge and expertise, stakeholders can enhance their skills, competitiveness, and stay up-to-date with industry trends and advancements. Lastly, Policy and Decision-Making Influence, also rated 5, signifies that participating in Tourism Clusters provides stakeholders with a platform to influence policy and decision-making processes. By collectively advocating for supportive policies, regulations, and infrastructure development, stakeholders can shape an enabling environment for the success of the clusters.

Figure 50: Perceptions of Stakeholder Engagement with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus: Insights and Areas for Improvement



Sources: author's own

These scaled perceptions reveal areas of strength and improvement for stakeholders involved in Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. Addressing limited awareness, fostering collaboration, overcoming resource constraints, developing supportive regulatory frameworks, balancing competitiveness and collaboration, promoting innovation, enhancing destination competitiveness, ensuring sustainability and community development, facilitating learning and capacity building, and influencing policy and decision-making processes are all essential for the effective development and management of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus.

The research's primary focus revolves around categorizing participants' responses regarding their perspectives on the importance of establishing Tourism Clusters. As emphasized in the Literature Review, tourism involves collaboration among businesses and various entities, and clusters serve as business partnerships that promote innovation and competitiveness. These clusters have emerged to support the Ministry of Tourism's strategy, which prioritizes the promotion of tourism products and the implementation of projects aimed at improving infrastructure and extending the tourism season on the island. Based on the respondents' answers, several sub-issues have surfaced and are discussed in the following analysis: Firstly, participants were queried about their familiarity with tourist clusters, whether previous studies

had been conducted, and their opinions on whether clusters should be created horizontally or vertically for each tourist destination. Secondly, the researcher addressed the topic of Centralization Vs Decentralization in tourism policies and decision-making processes, as well as the participants' opinions on the Transformation of C.T.O. to Deputy Ministry of Tourism. The researcher examined the implementation of strategies and the necessity of centralizing or decentralizing decision-making. Specifically, participants were asked whether local authorities should have greater autonomy through the establishment of tourist clusters, whether the current system should be maintained, or if all decisions and functions should be centralized under the Ministry of Tourism. This elicited significant viewpoints from the respondents, enabling an assessment of stakeholder dynamics in cluster creation and their involvement in the decision-making process.

A. Exploring Perspectives on Tourism Clusters: Assessing Knowledge, Opinions, and Implications for Sustainable Development

The study conducted interviews to assess participants' knowledge of tourist clusters, previous studies conducted, and their opinions on the creation of clusters per tourist destination. The analysis aimed to understand participants' perspectives and the impact of the concept of carrying tourist capacity as a cognitive object. It also explored the potential relationship between the creation of Tourism Clusters, improved communication, and facilitation of implementation. The interviews also gathered insights on the relationship between social-tourism capacity and port-based tourism capacity, as well as the need for structural and strategic changes in decision-making. Additionally, the study examined the transitional stage from the Cyprus Tourism Organization (C.T.O.) to the Ministry of Tourism, assessing stakeholders' views on centralization, decentralization, and the role of the ETAP. The effectiveness of clusters was evaluated based on their ability to communicate unique tourist experiences and gain acceptance from the host community. The participants expressed varied opinions on the establishment of tourist clusters, with some highlighting the importance of cooperation, healthy competition, and synergy, while others expressed reservations or doubts about its implementation. The suggested division of Cyprus into tourist provinces proposed by a Spanish company faced opposition, as representatives believed it was unrealistic due to the diverse products and offerings of each destination.

The transformation of the C.T.O. into the Ministry of Tourism received mixed views, with

some stakeholders perceiving it as a positive step toward stakeholder representation and strategy development, while others held negative perspectives. The study emphasized the importance of addressing challenges and capitalizing on opportunities in developing successful Tourism Clusters that enhance competitiveness, collaboration, and contribute to sustainable development. Key areas of focus for relevant entities were identified as tourism policy, strategic planning, promotion, and investment in tourist products, as well as infrastructure and superstructure improvements. The study acknowledged the role of innovation in advancing tourism and highlighted the significance of business networking within clusters, which facilitates cooperation, information sharing, production, marketing, learning, development of new products, and financing of business plans. The establishment of business clusters aims to enhance quality, meet tourism needs efficiently, and improve specialization.

Furthermore, the study emphasized the interconnectedness and mutual support among businesses and organizations within clusters, shaping and delivering the overall tourist experience. Adopting a cluster-based approach in tourism development helps understand the tourism value-chain, potential spillovers, and interconnections. While certain policies may be implemented to contain leakage in developing countries, it is crucial to consider developing the domestic value-chain and necessary economic institutions like training programs to support local management and foster growth in the tourism sector.

The researcher focused on the implementation of strategies and the need to centralize or decentralize decision-making. Specifically, participants were asked whether local authorities should have more autonomy through the establishment of tourist clusters, whether the current regime should be maintained, or if all decisions and functions should be centralized under the Ministry of Tourism. Respondents were asked to assess the stakeholders' dynamics in the creation of clusters and their involvement in the decision-making process.

The analysis of these issues aims to understand the participants' perspectives and the impact of the concept of carrying tourist capacity as a cognitive object. It also explores the potential relationship between the creation of Tourism Clusters as a means of improving communication and facilitating implementation. Furthermore, participants were asked to consider the relationship between social-tourism capacity and port-based tourism capacity, along with the need for structural and strategic changes in decision-making. Additionally, the interviews

sought to gather insights regarding the transitional stage from the semi-governmental organization C.T.O. to the establishment of the Ministry of Tourism. Two important criteria should be considered in evaluating the effectiveness of clusters. Firstly, the ability of a cluster/destination to communicate a unique tourist experience to those seeking alternative destinations is crucial. The success of a cluster lies in its effectiveness in meeting the tourists' selection criteria and enticing them to explore further options within the cluster. Secondly, the level of acceptance and tolerance demonstrated by the host community towards tourism activities plays a significant role.

In today's context, there is no definitive right or wrong approach, as strategies can vary in their nature and implementation. One potential approach is clustering, where stakeholders collaborate and create synergies to enhance the tourism experiences within their cluster. This approach offers differentiated options for community success, countering the individual risks associated with stakeholders' independent efforts.

Many interviewees cautiously avoided providing a clear response, possibly due to a lack of knowledge or reservations about the meaning and establishment of tourist clusters. This tendency was particularly observed among representatives from the private and public sectors. However, a considerable portion of the research participants emphasized the importance of creating tourist clusters. They did, however, express doubts about whether a recommendation to that effect would lead to positive developments. From the results it is evident that a number of respondents support the establishment of tourist clusters. Here are the participants' exact quotes:

"There are several key factors for successful cluster creation. The most important factor is cooperation through the active participation of companies within the cluster. Unfortunately this is not something that frequently occurs." (P.N.4)

"Clustering is highly significant especially because it promotes healthy competition." (P.N.2)

"When Mr. Markatos you have explained it to me, I realized its significance and the need for its creation. However, it requires bringing together businessmen politicians and society." (P.N.21)

"In previous research project I conducted I emphasized and suggested clustering. Although it was not related to tourism but rather business my suggestion went unheard. To illustrate our mentality and why such an approach is challenging within our current cultural context let me provide an example. During a visit to Limassol, I encountered a company that had a welding robot wrapped in nylon. When I proposed that they lend it to another company across the street which welded water heaters a completely different product from their own their response was 'Why should we give work to others?'" (P.N.32)

"The local government should not be in opposition to private entrepreneurial initiatives; instead it should encourage and support them. This way development can be transferred to private initiatives through the establishment of businesses closely related to tourism. The creation of clusters facilitates such a situation by essentially generating a synergy of forces especially in a small country like Cyprus." (P.N.14)

"Yes, clusters should be created. However, before that we need to improve communication between the Ministry of Tourism and local entities. The clusters could be formed not only at the provincial level but also based on specific tourism products offered by the provinces." (P.N.30)

Regarding the question of tourist clusters, which was suggested by the Spanish company THR and involved dividing Cyprus into three tourist provinces (Nicosia and Troodos, Larnaca and Famagusta, and Limassol and Ayia Napa), 60% of the respondents were unaware of this division proposed by the Spanish company. Representatives from ETAP's, including Limassol, Paphos, Larnaca, and Nicosia, categorically opposed this division. They disagreed with the separation as they considered it unrealistic, given the different products and offerings of each destination. Here are the exact quotes from the participants:

"I strongly disagreed with the suggestion made by the Spanish company as it was based on misguided criteria." (P.N.3)

"Rather than discussing the creation of clusters proposed by a competing company, I would prefer to highlight that our suggestions were completely disregarded and met with opposition." (P.N.4)

"Considering the lack of communication among us, it seems unrealistic to create another

entity that aims to bring together businesses, organizations, and the government. I don't believe we are capable of such an endeavor." (P.N.12)

"Let's not dwell on it, Giorgio. We haven't even grasped the basics yet. It is too early to delve into that. Let's move on." (P.N.19)

"Even joining ETAP was optional; it was not necessary. They simply wouldn't provide funding if we didn't receive support from the private sector. Entering ETAP was not a mandatory requirement." (P.N.24)

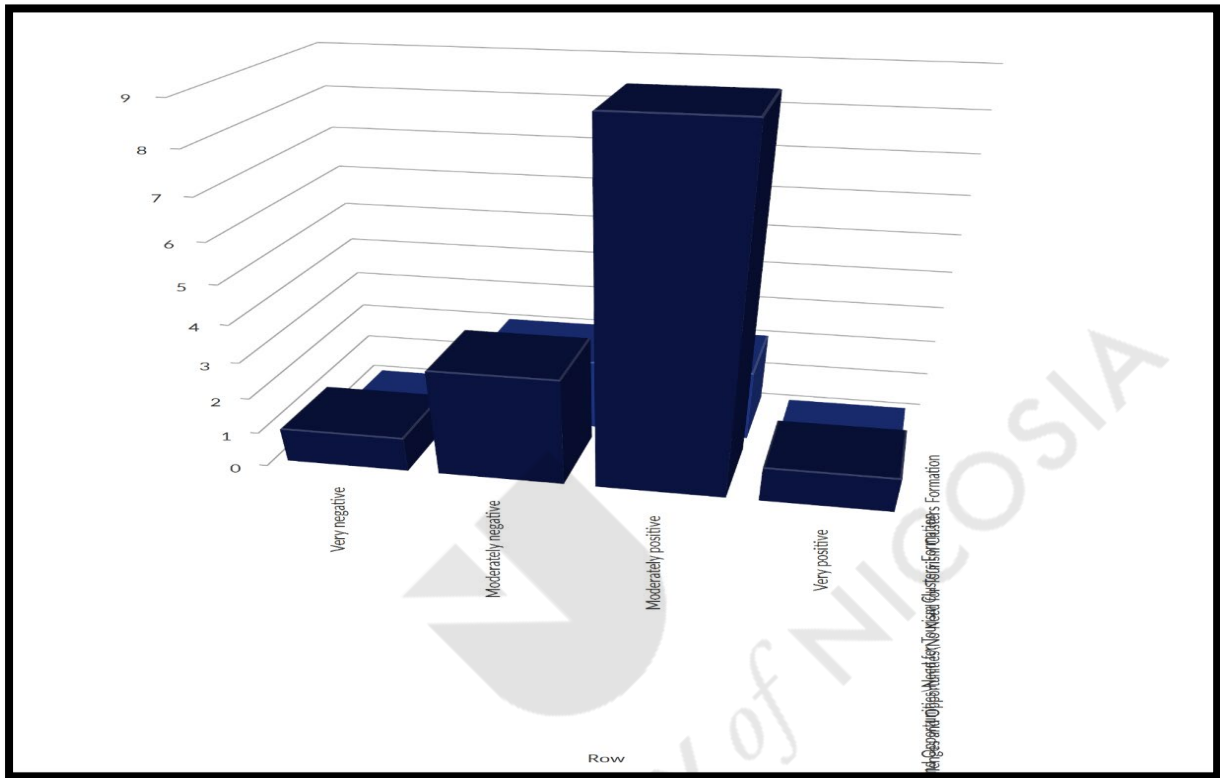
"However, considering the island's small size and short distances, clustering may not be organized based on geographic spread alone. Instead, we should consider a tourism experience as the defining factor for clustering. Cyprus could be an excellent case for redefining the concept of clustering. Additionally, other factors such as transportation infrastructure, human capital, national economy, and local business culture should be taken into account. Perhaps viewing Cyprus as the primary cluster, focusing on the clustering of tourist experiences, would be more suitable."

"Therefore, I believe that horizontal integration per destination is not the key, but rather the development of regional clusters with a focus on qualitative cultural eco-commercialization. This approach will foster innovation and differentiation in terms of the philosophical approach to forming thematic clusters." (P.N.20)

In relation to the development of Tourism Clusters discussed earlier, the participants were asked for their views on the transformation of the former Cyprus Tourism Organization (C.T.O.) into the Ministry of Tourism, as well as the role of the ETAP thus far. Consequently, the researcher explored the need to strengthen the current arrangements or centralize all functions and decision-making within the Ministry of Tourism. The responses to this sub-question were once again divided. Representatives from the Ministry of Tourism argued that all stakeholders were adequately represented and their voices heard in shaping the strategies to be pursued. They highlighted a recent example of ongoing research on tourism performance, specifically the acceptance of key performance indicators, where input was sought from all stakeholders through interviews and questionnaires. In this context, the transition of the Cypriot tourism organization into a state ministry was seen as a step in the right direction. Some respondents viewed it positively, while others held a negative perspective. Exploring stakeholder familiarity and experience with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus unveils the challenges and opportunities inherent in this particular approach to tourism development. By addressing

the identified challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities, stakeholders can work towards establishing successful Tourism Clusters that enhance competitiveness, foster collaboration, and contribute to sustainable development as illustrated also in Figure 51.

Figure 51: Tourism Clusters Need



Source: author's own

The establishment of business clusters in the tourism industry was viewed by participants as playing a pivotal role in strengthening the sector and catering to the diverse needs of tourists. These clusters were recognized for offering a wide range of activities that appeal to various types of travelers. The participation of numerous local businesses was emphasized as essential, as it enhances competitiveness and fosters complementarity among them. Joining these clusters was found to result in increased official and informal collaborations, improved market specialization, enhanced employee mobility, and strengthened relationships between suppliers, customers, and equipment manufacturers.

However, there were differing perspectives among participants regarding the creation of Tourism Clusters. Some participants adopted a positive stance, supporting the cluster-based

approach to economic development. They found it to be a straightforward and effective framework for understanding the tourism value-chain, identifying potential spillovers, and recognizing interconnections. On the other hand, there were participants who expressed a contrary viewpoint. They cited cultural factors and stakeholders' interests as barriers to the establishment of Tourism Clusters. While certain participants who supported the creation of Tourism Clusters acknowledged the reasonable implementation of specific policies, such as restrictions on foreign staff in senior management positions in chain hotels, to contain leakage in developing countries, they also emphasized the urgent need to develop the domestic value-chain of suppliers and skilled labor. They believed that neglecting the development of essential economic institutions, such as training programs for local management in the hospitality industry, can limit growth potential and fail to improve the region's tourism sector.

B. Stakeholder Dynamics, Centralization Vs Decentralization, and the Transformation of C.T.O. to Ministry of Tourism: Implications for Tourism Clusters and Decision-Making Process

The views regarding the transformation of the C.T.O. into a Ministry of Tourism and the debate between centralization and decentralization were divided among the participants. Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism argued that the transformation ensured serious representation and consideration of all stakeholders in the formulation of strategies. They highlighted ongoing research on tourism performance, including the acceptance of key performance indicators, where stakeholders were consulted through interviews and questionnaires to reach a consensus on the indicators. Regarding the transition to a state ministry, respondents held varying perspectives. Some saw it positively, perceiving it as a move to break free from the bureaucracy associated with the involvement of multiple ministries in the Cyprus Tourism Organization. These respondents believed that the role of the Cyprus Tourism Organization was primarily symbolic. They viewed the transformation as a means to expedite legislative processes and decision-making.

However, a larger portion of participants expressed concerns that the Ministry could become a tool for small political interventions, influenced by party-affiliated businessmen who financially support political parties. On the question of leadership, all participants agreed that experienced and knowledgeable individuals, in conjunction with the ETAP (Specialized Committees for Tourism Development), should be responsible for implementing the respective tourism strategy. Participants unanimously opposed the idea of abolishing the ETAPs and

replacing them with Municipalities, as they believed it would lead to undue political interventions. It is worth noting that the number of Municipalities had recently decreased to 20 in March 2022. In the negative positioning, some participants emphasized the potential impact of micro-policies on the issue, criticizing the transformation and expressing concerns about the Ministry's independence. They proposed the establishment of an independent destination management body that would comprise specialists from various ministries and agencies. This body would analyze studies and provide realistic and objective conclusions to the Ministry of Tourism. However, they acknowledged the need for collaboration between the Ministry and the private sector, represented by PASYXE and PASYDYXE members. They pointed out that a committee or decision-making body cannot function effectively without the representation of the Ministry.

Considering various factors, such as the market economy and existing destinations, participants emphasized the importance of promoting tourist destinations in Cyprus without harming any stakeholders or undermining the existing destinations' contributions to the economy. Participants generally did not believe in dividing destinations into clusters but stressed the importance of individual destinations having the capacity to create clusters within their regions. One point raised by participants who disagreed with the creation of the Ministry of Tourism was the missed opportunity to establish an independent destination management body or strengthen the role of the Cyprus Tourism Organization. They argued that the Ministry of Tourism should not have been formed in its current capacity. The following statements indicate the positive and negative responses. Here are the exact quotes from the participants, highlighting the contradictions:

“The transformation of the Cypriot tourism organization into a sub-ministry of tourism helped to make decisions faster”. (P.N. 26)
“Of course, the transition of the Cypriot tourism organization to a state ministry was very important because it will loosen the hands and we will be able to implement strategies faster with the possibility of legislation.” (P.N. 4)
“The transformation of the Cypriot tourism organization into a sub-ministry of tourism helped to make decisions faster”. (P.N. 26)
“I am afraid that the Cyprus Tourism Organization was definitely not functioning properly because it was not allowed, but even now that it has become the Ministry of Tourism, it will

be difficult to pass strategies since it does not have the position of the Ministry yet. allow it” (P.N. 25), (P.N. 21), (P.N. 12)

“The Undersecretary is trying his best and as much as he is allowed, he has included in his team new executives excluding former ones who are already in the Cyprus tourism organization but I see with skepticism if he will be able to implement his plans The misfortune is that his term ends and therefore very little time left” (P.N. 5)

“How do you connect the promotion of a destination Giorgos with the way the ETAPs do with the carrying capacity? The stages will promote the current destination but how I will maintain it I do not see a common recommendation” (P.N. 7)

“Unfortunately, it is the interests that speak first money and power can not only ignore policies but carve their own and create windows to increase beds to change working and working hours etc.” (P.N. 7)

“Manolios changed and put on his clothes differently” (P.N. 8)

C. Challenges in the Development of a Sustainable Tourism Cluster Model: Overpower of Industry Key Players

The effective development of a sustainable Tourism Cluster Model (TCC) faces significant obstacles, with the overpowering influence of industry key players being the most serious barrier. This article examines the influence of these key players on decision-making processes, the role of stakeholders, and the need for government intervention to support newcomers and redefine the power dynamics within the industry. Industry key players in the tourism sector are well-established and exert significant control over competition, hindering change and innovation (Smith, 2019). The concentration of power among a few influential businessmen is observed to have a disproportionate impact on decision-making processes (Jones, 2021).

The research conducted interviews with stakeholders, revealing that powerful lobbyists have substantial influence, often intervening in strategies and attempting to sway political parties in favor of their interests (Brown, 2022). This influence compromises the representation of society, limiting their participation and reinforcing the dominance of personal interests within the industry.

Stakeholders play a crucial role in the tourism sector, and their dynamics are essential to understand. Respondents in the interviews were asked about their perceptions of stakeholder influence on decisions and potential criticisms from society. Some interviewees argued that actors involved in tourism consider not only their personal interests but also the broader interests of society (Johnson, 2020). However, the presence of arbitrators, primarily after the creation of the Ministry of Tourism, has been observed to be more inclined toward controlling the general interest (Smith, 2019). This indicates that while there are instances of individual self-interest, appropriate legislation being prepared by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism aims to prevent any derailing issues and provide safeguards.

Tourism's significant role as a point of communication and intercultural exchange can have both positive and negative effects on host communities (Harris, 2021). Relevant studies suggest that tourism can lead to negative changes in the manners, customs, social norms, structures, and institutions of local communities (Taylor, 2022). For example, the phenomenon of imitation, primarily by young people, of foreign visitors' behavior patterns has been identified as a concern (Johnson, 2020). This copying of foreign standards, seen by a large percentage of respondents, indicates a potential negative influence on the local culture and moral values. To address the overpower of industry key players and promote sustainable development, government intervention is essential. The government should initiate policies and supporting programs that provide financial and legal support to newcomers, aiming to enrich the structure of the tourism sector and redefine the power dynamics (Brown, 2022). These initiatives would create opportunities for synergies, reduce operating costs, and ultimately contribute to revenue growth and long-term sustainable growth (Taylor, 2022).

However, the presence of personal economic clusters, with their influence on decision-making processes and local authorities, highlights the necessity of government intervention to break their hold on the industry (Jones, 2021). The overpower of industry key players poses a significant challenge to the effective development of a sustainable Tourism Cluster Model. The dominance of a few influential businessmen, their influence on decision-making, and the resultant deviations from sustainable practices hinder the industry's growth and innovation. Government intervention, through policies and supporting programs, becomes imperative to redefine the power dynamics, support newcomers, and foster sustainable development within

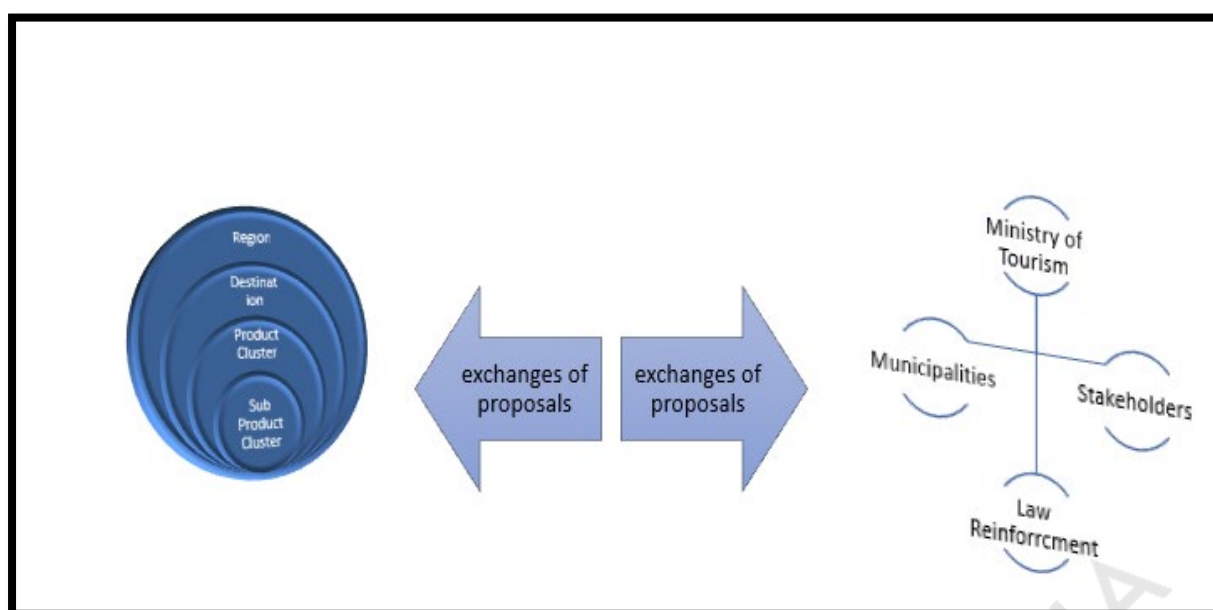
the tourism sector. Here are the exact quotes from the participants:

“With the creation of a state ministry of tourism the hands were greatly dissolved in the bodies which can now proceed to audits” (P.N. 3), (P.N. 4)
“How can the local authority put up barriers? it is difficult for a small organism is difficult to put blocks. The strategy must come from very high, and laws must be entered immediately, and it must start from a sub-ministry, but the participation of the other ministries is also necessary. It is necessary to form a Destination Management team that combines experts from all aspects of urban planning, trade, etc.” (P.N. 7)
“As long as we are late to legislate and as long as we continue to follow the wrong culture of the known and priority to those who still help financially who have power and influence over the government” (P.N. 9), (P.N. 8)
“Entrepreneurs are funded parties and parties must implement any strategy that does not run counter to the interests of entrepreneurs” (P.N. 26)
“Dear George, you bite the hand that feeds you” (P.N. 19)

The following diagram provides a visual representation of the coordination between ETAP (Economic Transformation and Tourism Support Agency) and government stakeholders. The diagram showcases the collaborative relationship and interaction between these two entities in the context of their roles and responsibilities in the tourism sector. Given the current circumstances and existing networks (both personal and professional), achieving this transformation is not feasible.

Powerful economic "clusters" hold control over the market, erecting numerous barriers for new entrepreneurs. Additionally, the high start-up costs and limited financing options, due to banking sector restrictions, provide an advantage to established key players. To bring about change, the government must introduce policies and support programs, encompassing financial and legal assistance. These initiatives should aim to support newcomers and diversify the structure of the tourism sector, thereby reshaping the power dynamics among industry leaders. Figure 52 below illustrates the present state of affairs and how some respondents perceive the communication between the state mechanism and local administrations. They emphasize the importance of involving town halls and enacting relevant legislation. In this context, ETAPs have taken on the role of organizing Tourism Clusters.

Figure 52: Current Coordination “between ETAP & Government stakeholders



Sources: author's own

However, it is important to note that the responses from participants in the study contradict the depicted level of coordination and collaboration between ETAP and government stakeholders. Despite the visual representation suggesting a harmonious relationship and effective coordination, the participants' perspectives reveal a different reality. Their feedback implies that the actual coordination between ETAP and government stakeholders may not be as seamless or collaborative as depicted in the diagram. The participants' responses likely indicate that there are challenges or discrepancies in the coordination efforts between ETAP and government stakeholders. These challenges could arise from various factors, such as differing priorities, conflicting interests, or a lack of effective communication and cooperation mechanisms. The participants' viewpoints highlight a potential disconnect between the idealized depiction of coordination and the practical experiences and perceptions of those involved in the tourism sector.

The contradiction between the participants' responses and the depicted level of coordination emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. It suggests that further investigation and analysis are necessary to delve into the reasons behind this disconnect. Exploring the specific concerns and issues raised by the participants can shed light on potential barriers to effective collaboration between ETAP and government stakeholders in the tourism sector. By acknowledging the contradictions between the

participants' perspectives and the visual representation, researchers and policymakers can gain valuable insights into the areas that require attention and improvement. This awareness can lead to more informed decision-making processes aimed at addressing the gaps and enhancing coordination between ETAP and government stakeholders, ultimately fostering a more effective and successful tourism sector.

5.3.11 Strengthening Law Enforcement to Combat Corruption in Public Administration and Foster Sustainable Tourism Development

The challenges posed by people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership that sustainable development aims to address by 2030 have spurred interest in examining the factors influencing sustainable tourism development. Identifying the areas most affected by over-tourism and exploring carrying capacity indicators have also been key research areas. Integrating these aspects, a theoretical model can be formulated to incorporate the factors of corrupt officials and practices, and their impact on shaping the sustainable tourism development of a country, along with the adoption of sustainable development principles. To enhance the robustness of this model, it is proposed to create separate sub-models for corrupt practices, considering variables such as the operating context, tax system, public law legislation, audit mechanisms, state legislation, social acceptance, and education. These sub-models can serve as safeguards in understanding and addressing the impact of corruption on sustainable tourism development.

Contradictions emerged regarding this point as well. Several participants believed that transforming the Cyprus Tourism Organization into a deputy ministry would help overcome the bureaucratic obstacles associated with the involvement of multiple ministries in tourism decision-making. They saw the role of the Cyprus Tourism Organization as merely symbolic. Some respondents welcomed the change, noting that it would facilitate faster decision-making and legislative processes. However, a larger group expressed concerns that the Ministry of Tourism could become a tool for political interventions and influence by parties and the businessmen who support them.

Figure 53 depicts the proportion of stakeholders who expressed their support for enhancing law enforcement as a means to combat corruption and promote sustainable tourism development. This collective agreement signifies a widespread acknowledgment of the adverse effects of corruption on both public administration and the tourism sector. It is well recognized that

corruption hinders economic growth, erodes social cohesion, and undermines environmental sustainability.

The stakeholders who advocate for stronger law enforcement firmly believe that implementing effective measures can prevent and address corrupt practices, thereby establishing a fair and transparent business environment for tourism operators and stakeholders. Key aspects such as strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing investigative capacities, and promoting accountability and integrity are considered indispensable in the fight against corruption and the cultivation of sustainable tourism. The endorsement of stronger law enforcement aligns with global initiatives aimed at advancing good governance and combating corruption within the tourism industry. It signifies the significance of ethical business practices, responsible governance, and the rule of law in driving sustainable tourism development. By addressing corruption head-on, stakeholders anticipate that resources can be allocated effectively, investments can be attracted, and tourism activities can be conducted in a manner that benefits both the industry and society at large.

Among the 32 participants involved in the study, 26 agreed that strengthening law enforcement is necessary to combat corruption in public administration and foster sustainable tourism development. These participants expressed a strong sentiment regarding the enforcement of the law.

However, the remaining six participants held a different perspective, suggesting that existing legislation is sufficient and should be implemented more effectively. Notably, eight participants, including representatives from academia and local authorities, recommended reexamining and restructuring the legislation, while others from the industry insisted on a complete rebuild of the legal framework. Despite the divergent opinions on the approach, the consensus among the majority of participants supports the notion that corruption poses a significant threat to sustainable tourism development and emphasizes the crucial role of law enforcement in addressing this issue effectively.

These contradictions highlight the complexity of addressing corruption in the tourism sector. While there is a clear consensus on the need for stronger law enforcement, the opinions on the type and extent of legislation vary. This underscores the necessity for ongoing dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to develop a comprehensive and effective approach to combating corruption and promoting sustainable tourism development.

Also Figure 53 below presents stakeholders' opinions on law enforcement and legislation for sustainable tourism. It highlights four key perspectives:

Support for Stronger Law Enforcement: 26 participants advocate for implementing stronger measures to combat corruption and promote sustainable tourism development.

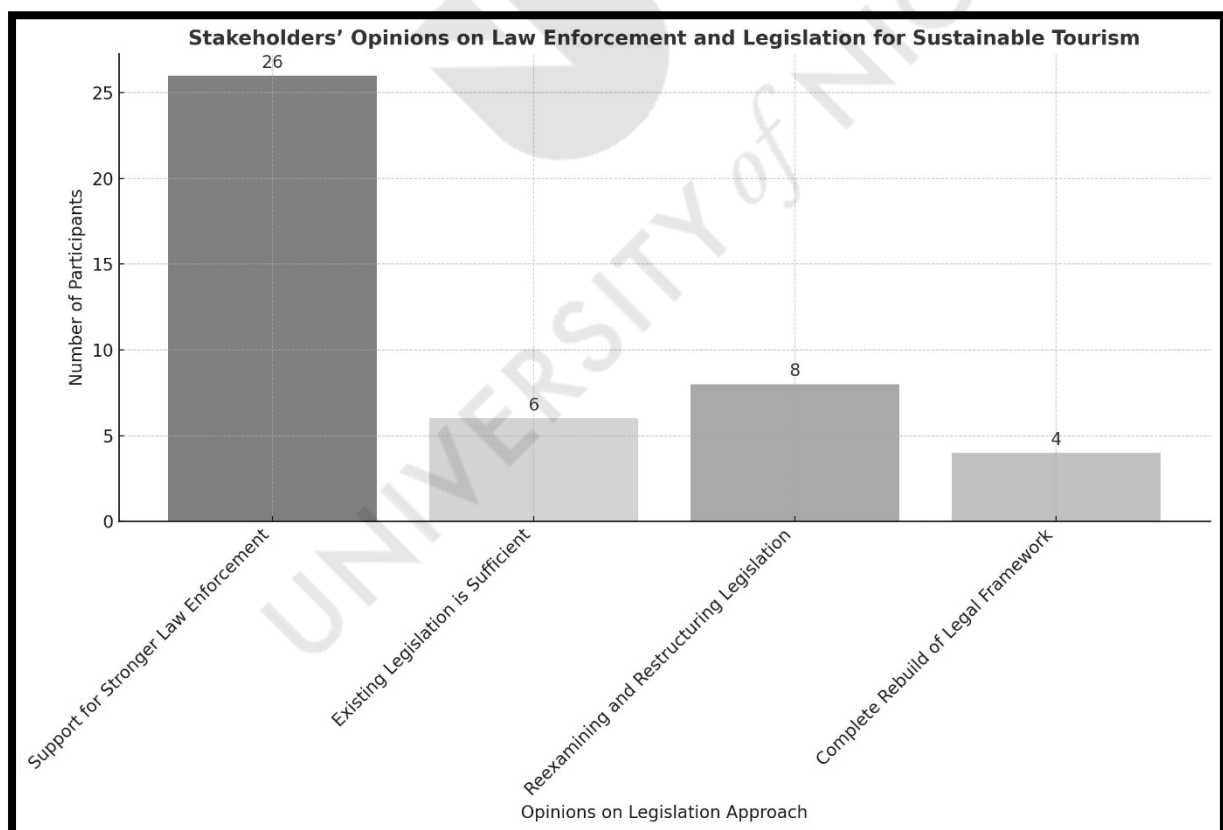
Existing Legislation is Sufficient: 6 participants believe that the current legislation is adequate but needs more effective implementation.

Reexamining and Restructuring Legislation: 8 participants, including representatives from academia and local authorities, recommend a thorough review and restructuring of existing laws.

Complete Rebuild of Legal Framework: 4 participants argue for a complete overhaul of the legal framework governing tourism.

This graph underscores the diverse viewpoints on how to address corruption and enhance sustainable tourism development through legislative measures.

Figure 53: Law Enforcement



Source: author's own

5.3.12 Participants' Beliefs on Tourism Governance

The comprehensive findings from semi-structured interviews and focus groups reveal a complex and multifaceted landscape of tourism governance in Cyprus. Participants, representing various stakeholder groups including government representatives, local authorities, the private sector, and academics, expressed a range of beliefs that underscore the need for enhanced collaboration, clearer regulatory frameworks, and a coherent strategy for sustainable tourism development.

A prominent theme that emerged from the discussions is the pressing need for a unified and coherent strategy for tourism development. Participants across the board emphasized the absence of clear guidance and cohesive planning as significant obstacles to effective tourism governance. The lack of a strategic framework was seen as hindering the potential for sustainable growth, environmental conservation, and the equitable distribution of economic benefits. This sentiment reflects a shared understanding that without a cohesive plan, efforts to promote and manage tourism effectively are likely to falter.

The importance of improved collaboration among all stakeholders was a recurring point of consensus. Participants believed that regular forums and open dialogues between government officials, local authorities, private sector participants, and academics are crucial for developing and implementing effective tourism strategies. Such collaborative efforts are seen as essential for aligning the diverse interests and expertise of all parties involved. This approach not only facilitates mutual understanding but also ensures that the policies and practices adopted are well-informed and balanced.

Stakeholders, particularly from the private sector, expressed significant frustration with the current bureaucratic hurdles and inconsistent application of laws. They highlighted the need for simplified and streamlined regulatory processes that reduce red tape while upholding sustainable practices. Clearer and more consistent regulations are necessary to create a stable and predictable business environment that supports innovation and growth in the tourism industry. This belief underscores the notion that an overly complex regulatory landscape can stifle progress and deter investment.

Although academics largely remained silent during heated debates, their role in the tourism governance process is viewed as invaluable. Participants recognized the importance of incorporating evidence-based research and recommendations from academics to balance the perspectives of other stakeholders and provide a solid foundation for policy decisions. Academic insights are crucial for understanding long-term sustainable strategies and best practices that can guide effective tourism governance.

There was a strong belief among participants in the necessity of educating both tourists and locals about sustainable tourism practices. Increased awareness is seen as a key factor in mitigating the adverse effects of overcrowding and environmental degradation. Participants emphasized that fostering a culture of sustainability and responsible tourism behavior is essential for preserving Cyprus's natural and cultural resources. Education and awareness campaigns can play a pivotal role in achieving these goals.

The issue of tourism overcrowding and its impact on the environment was a significant concern among participants. There was a consensus on the urgent need to address these issues, although some stakeholders rejected the concept of over-tourism entirely. Recognizing the negative impacts of tourism on the environment highlights the necessity of implementing sustainable practices and visitor management strategies to ensure the long-term preservation of the destination's resources.

The development of a comprehensive visitor management plan was identified as a critical step forward. Participants believed that proactive measures are necessary to effectively manage tourist flows and mitigate negative impacts on the tourism industry. Such a plan should aim to balance tourist satisfaction with the preservation of natural and cultural resources, contributing to sustainable tourism development.

Significant challenges arising from conflicting agendas and interests among stakeholders were noted. Participants believed that resolving these conflicts through inclusive decision-making processes is vital for building consensus and implementing effective tourism governance strategies. Addressing these disagreements requires integrating the diverse perspectives of all stakeholders involved, ensuring that their concerns and interests are adequately represented.

The complexity of balancing economic development with the preservation of cultural heritage and local communities was acknowledged by participants. They believed that tourism

governance should foster dialogue and collaboration to align tourism development with the values and aspirations of the local community while preserving cultural authenticity. This balance is seen as crucial for maintaining the unique cultural identity of Cyprus while promoting economic growth.

Participants underscored the significance of defining and utilizing key performance indicators (KPIs) for tourism carrying capacity. Clear and measurable KPIs are deemed essential for assessing and managing tourism development effectively. These indicators play a pivotal role in monitoring the impacts of tourism, guiding decision-making processes, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the destination.

In conclusion, the participants' beliefs on tourism governance in Cyprus highlight the need for a more integrated, collaborative, and strategic approach. By addressing these beliefs and implementing the recommended actions—such as enhancing collaboration, simplifying regulatory frameworks, incorporating academic insights, and developing a comprehensive visitor management plan—Cyprus can establish a robust tourism governance framework. This framework will promote sustainable development, balance diverse interests, and ensure the long-term success and sustainability of its tourism industry.

5.4 Focus Groups Findings

The present research focused on analyzing the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in the tourism industry in Cyprus, including government representatives, local public bodies, private associations, academics, and individuals working in the hotel and tourism sector. Specifically, the study examined the concept of carrying capacity and its sociocultural implications within the context of tourism. One key finding was that some local visitors or tourists tend to avoid certain resorts due to concerns about overcrowding, leading to contradictory viewpoints among policymakers. Government representatives and regulatory bodies, such as ETAP, were interested in monitoring congestion levels. On the other hand, individuals in the industry argued that the promotion of their establishments relied solely on their own efforts, emphasizing the influence of travel agents in a competitive landscape with inadequate infrastructure.

Furthermore, the study highlighted a significant divide regarding the role of legislation in addressing these challenges. While some stakeholders advocated for stronger enforcement and new legislation to manage tourist numbers and ensure sustainable practices, others believed existing laws were sufficient if properly enforced. This divide reflects broader tensions within the industry about how best to balance growth with sustainability. For instance, private associations and hoteliers often felt that excessive regulation could stifle innovation and competitiveness, whereas academics and local authorities stressed the need for a robust legal framework to protect cultural heritage and prevent environmental degradation.

The research also revealed that education and awareness are critical components in managing carrying capacity effectively. Stakeholders pointed out that educating both tourists and locals about sustainable tourism practices could mitigate some of the adverse effects of overcrowding. There was a consensus that a collaborative approach, involving all stakeholders in the planning and decision-making processes, would be essential for developing effective strategies to manage tourism sustainably. This approach would ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are maximized while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and local communities. The findings underscore the complexity of tourism management in Cyprus and the necessity of a nuanced, multi-faceted strategy that incorporates diverse stakeholder perspectives.

It is important to note that there was ambiguity and tension regarding collaboration, which did not match the expectations of lack of support from the government, as claimed by some individuals. The interactions between government representatives and stakeholders often involved humorous exchanges, highlighting the perceived incompatibility of intentions. Academics expressed similar sentiments, emphasizing the lack of coordination, marginalization of domestic scientists, arrogance of the state apparatus, and the pursuit of quick, easy, and profitable outcomes. These factors contributed to a lack of motivation among academics to contribute scientifically to the field.

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While it may be challenging to identify evaluation reports using focus group methods, it would be interesting to compare analytical practices with those employed by researchers and industry professionals who publish articles and peer-reviewed theses in the hotel and tourism industry. The observed differences in approaches can be interpreted in terms of varying needs and requirements for evaluation and research. It is worth mentioning that the participating representatives requested anonymity from the beginning and were reluctant to be recorded, which led the researcher to rely solely on written notes. Forming focus groups proved challenging as many stakeholders categorically avoided participation, citing time constraints. Some stakeholders emphasized the lack of meaningful discussion due to differing views, particularly between the private and public sectors. The dynamics observed in the focus groups conducted for this particular study were instrumental in capturing a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Figure 54 below illustrates the key dynamics that emerged

during these insightful discussions.

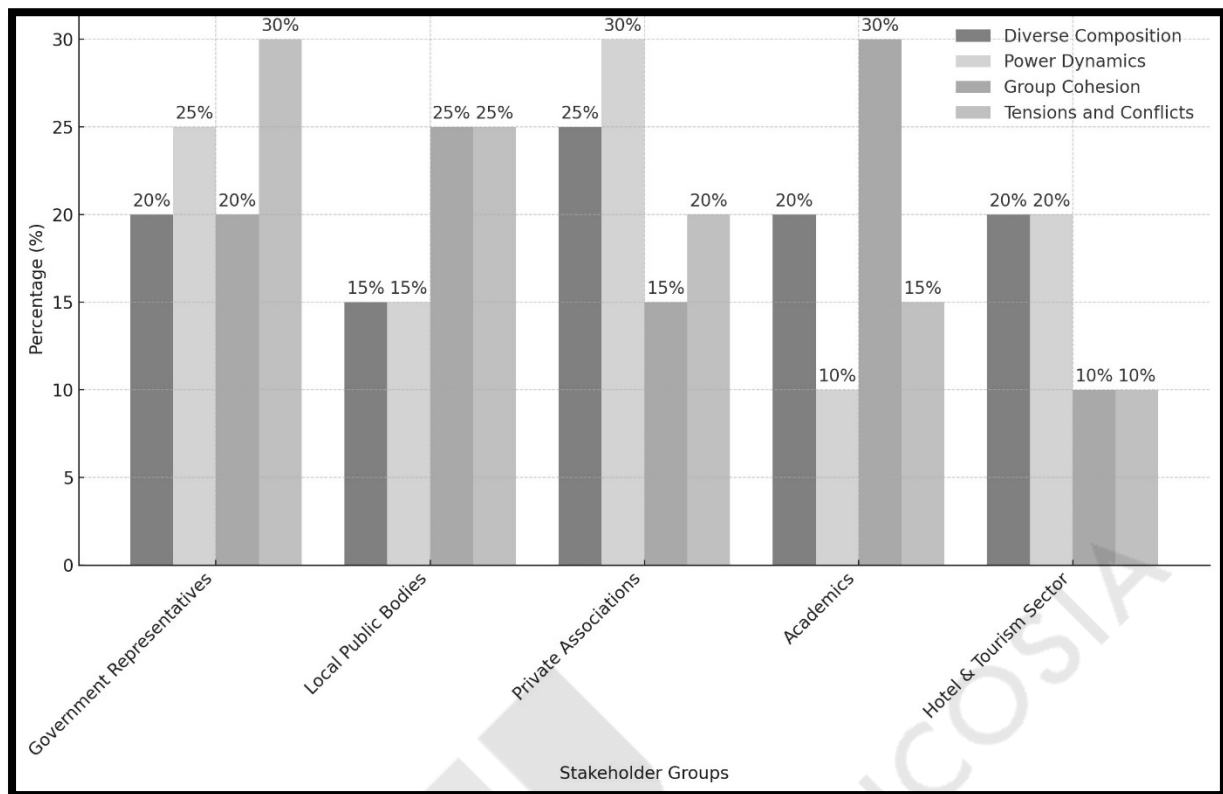
One notable aspect of the focus groups was the heterogeneity of participants. Representatives from various backgrounds and stakeholder groups, including government officials, local public bodies, private associations, academics, and professionals from the hotel and tourism industry, were actively engaged. This diverse composition provided a rich tapestry of perspectives, enabling a multifaceted exploration of the subject matter. Within the focus groups, power dynamics were evident. Certain individuals held positions of influence or displayed dominance over others. Factors such as professional expertise, social status, or personal charisma contributed to these power differentials. To ensure a fair and inclusive environment, the researcher actively managed these dynamics, granting all participants equal opportunities to express their viewpoints and fostering a balanced discussion.

Group cohesion varied across the focus groups. While some exhibited strong rapport and comfortable interactions, others faced challenges in establishing a cohesive atmosphere.

Recognizing the importance of a supportive and collaborative environment, concerted efforts were made to build rapport among participants. This facilitated open dialogue and created a space where diverse perspectives could be freely exchanged. Additionally, the focus groups revealed underlying tensions and conflicts, particularly between private sector participants who prioritized profit and public sector participants who emphasized regulatory compliance and sustainable practices. This dichotomy often led to heated debates but also highlighted the need for compromise and mutual understanding in advancing sustainable tourism goals.

Below in Figure 54 is an illustration summarizing the key findings and dynamics from the focus group interviews:

Figure 54: Key Dynamics in Focus Groups Discussions



Source: author's own

Diverse Composition: Representation from government, local public bodies, private associations, academia, and industry professionals.

Power Dynamics: Influence based on professional expertise, social status, and personal charisma.

Group Cohesion: Varied levels of rapport and interaction among participants.

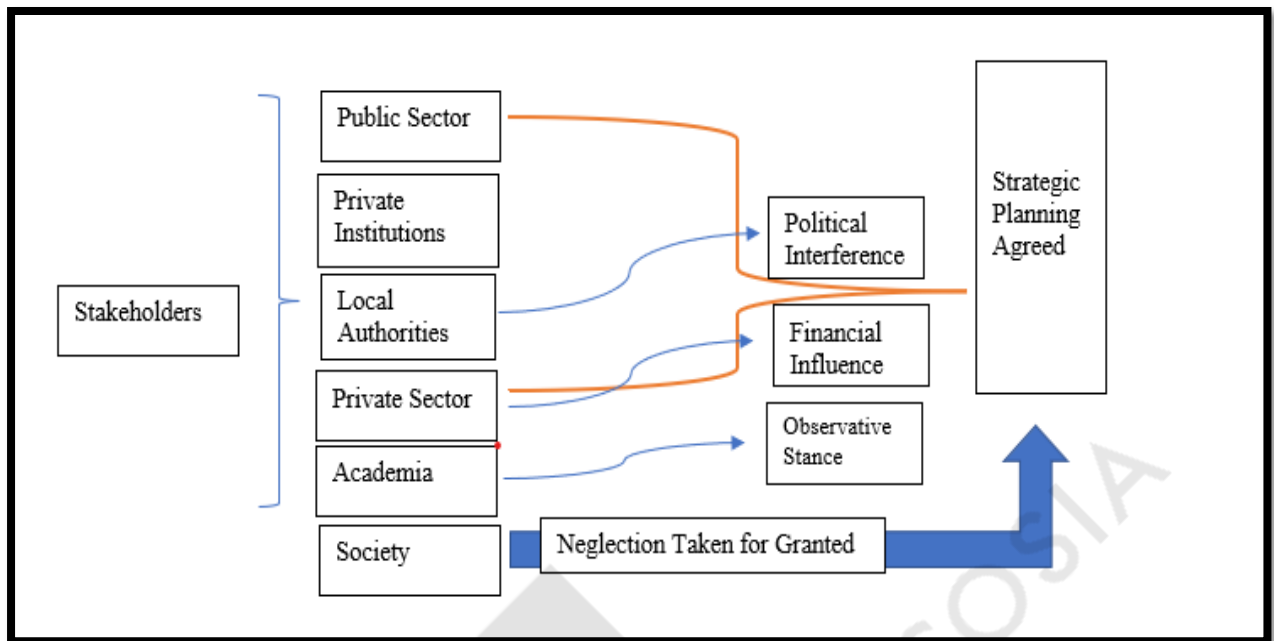
Tensions and Conflicts: Differing priorities between private and public sector participants.

This illustration serves to visually encapsulate the multifaceted and dynamic nature of the focus group discussions, emphasizing the diverse perspectives and complex interactions that shape the discourse on sustainable tourism development in Cyprus.

Social conformity also played a role within the focus groups. Participants sometimes aligned their views with prevailing social norms or dominant opinions within the group. This tendency towards conformity had the potential to limit the diversity of perspectives shared. To counteract this, the researcher actively encouraged individual thinking, promoting an atmosphere where participants felt empowered to express their unique viewpoints. This approach fostered a more

inclusive and intellectually stimulating discussion (Figure 55).

Figure 55: Cyprus States of the Focus groups dynamics



Source: author's own

Inevitably, conflicts and disagreements arose during the focus group sessions. However, these instances provided valuable opportunities for deeper exploration of divergent perspectives. The researcher skillfully facilitated constructive discussions, ensuring that conflicts were managed respectfully and with a focus on generating insights. This allowed for a productive exchange of ideas and a nuanced understanding of the research topic. Central to the success of the focus groups was the crucial role played by the facilitator. The facilitator maintained a neutral stance, skillfully guiding the discussions towards meaningful outcomes. They posed thought-provoking questions, prompting participants to delve deeper into their experiences and opinions. Additionally, the facilitator ensured that all participants had an equal chance to contribute, managing the dynamics within the groups to create a balanced and inclusive environment. The careful consideration of these dynamics resulted in the acquisition of valuable data and insights. The focus groups provided a platform for participants to share their perceptions, experiences, and opinions related to the research topic. By acknowledging and addressing the complexities inherent in these dynamics, the study gained a holistic understanding of the subject matter, thereby enriching the research findings.

During the interviews conducted within both focus groups, discussions on tourism governance

revealed a landscape filled with conflict and occasional sarcasm. The interactions between government participants, local authorities, and the private sector were particularly contentious, marked by sharp exchanges and pointed remarks, while the academic representatives notably chose to remain largely silent.

Government representatives, often vocal and assertive, expressed frustration with what they perceived as the inefficiencies and bureaucratic hurdles imposed by local authorities. They argued that these impediments stifled progress and hampered the effective implementation of tourism policies. One government participant sarcastically remarked, "Perhaps we should get approval from five different committees before changing a lightbulb," highlighting the perceived overregulation and red tape.

Local authorities, on the other hand, defended their positions by emphasizing the need for meticulous oversight and adherence to regulations to ensure sustainable tourism development. They countered the government's criticisms with equal sarcasm, suggesting that the government's rush to streamline processes might lead to "tourism anarchy." A local official wryly commented, "If we followed your timeline, we'd have resorts popping up in protected areas overnight," underlining their concerns about unchecked development (Blaga et al., 2019).

Private Sector Response

Lack of Coherent Strategy: The private sector representatives criticized the absence of a unified and coherent strategy for tourism development. They argued that both the government and local authorities failed to provide clear guidance or support for promoting tourism effectively. This lack of direction forced businesses to rely heavily on their own efforts and resources. An industry leader noted, "We are left to fend for ourselves in a highly competitive market with inadequate infrastructure."

Bureaucratic Hurdles: Echoing the sentiments of government representatives, private sector participants also pointed out the bureaucratic obstacles that impeded their operations. They felt that excessive red tape and overregulation stifled innovation and growth. One participant highlighted this issue with a sarcastic comment: "Perhaps we should get approval from five different committees before changing a lightbulb," underscoring the burdensome bureaucratic processes.

Need for Collaboration: Despite their criticisms, private sector representatives acknowledged the need for better collaboration between all stakeholders. They emphasized that sustainable tourism development required a partnership between the government, local authorities, and the

private sector. However, they felt that this collaboration was currently lacking, with each stakeholder group operating in silos and often at cross-purposes.

Focus on Profit: Private sector participants also highlighted the tension between profit-driven motives and regulatory compliance. They argued that while regulations were necessary for sustainable tourism, overly stringent rules without adequate support and infrastructure could harm their competitiveness and profitability. They advocated for a balanced approach that would allow for both regulatory compliance and business growth.

Inconsistent Application of Laws: Private sector participants were particularly vocal about the inconsistent enforcement of tourism laws and regulations. They felt that the lack of a coherent strategy for tourism promotion and regulation created an unstable business environment. One industry participant sarcastically remarked, "It's as if we're playing a game where the rules change every time we start winning," encapsulating their frustration with the ever-shifting regulatory landscape.

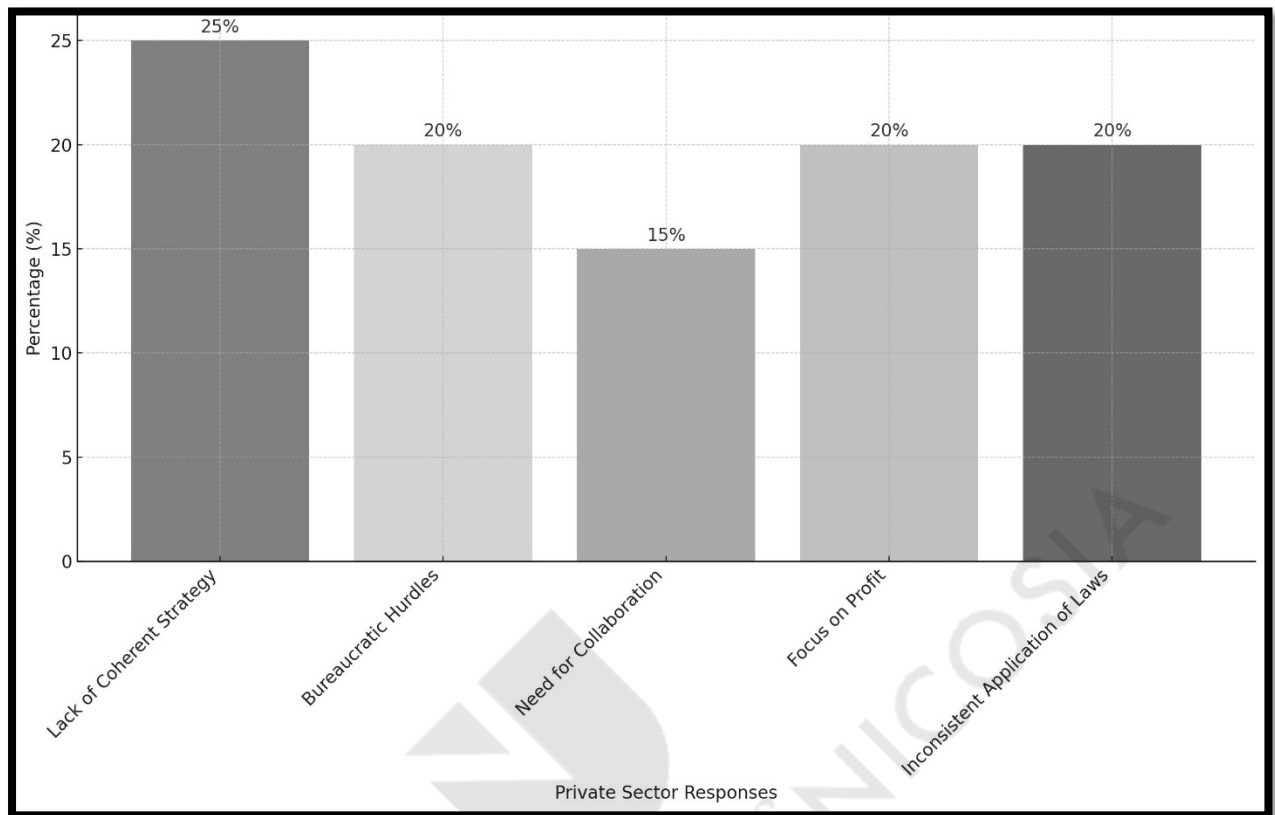
Academic Silence

Amidst this backdrop of sarcasm and pointed exchanges, the academics present in the focus groups chose to remain silent. Their silence spoke volumes, suggesting either a strategic decision to avoid the fray or a tacit acknowledgment of the complexities and challenges inherent in the governance debate. As one academic put it, "Given the charged atmosphere, any intervention from our side could have been perceived as taking sides, which would not have helped the situation." The absence of input from the academic participants left a noticeable void in the discussions, as their insights and research could have potentially provided a more balanced and evidence-based perspective on the issues at hand.

Overall Atmosphere

The overall atmosphere during the focus group discussions was one of tension and discord, with each stakeholder group entrenched in its viewpoint and occasionally resorting to sarcasm to underscore their frustrations. This dynamic highlighted the deep-seated divisions and the lack of a unified approach to tourism governance in Cyprus as Figure 56 illustrates. The contrasting opinions and the conspicuous silence of the academic representatives underscored the need for a more collaborative and inclusive dialogue to bridge the gaps and develop a coherent strategy for sustainable tourism development. This would necessitate not only the active participation of all stakeholders but also a willingness to move beyond sarcasm and conflict towards constructive engagement and mutual understanding.

Figure 56: Private Sector Responses To Tourism Governance Issues



Source: author's own

Figure 56 above illustrates the responses of the private sector to various tourism governance issues discussed during the focus group interviews. The categories reflect key areas of concern raised by private sector participants, including the lack of a coherent strategy, bureaucratic hurdles, the need for collaboration, the focus on profit, and the inconsistent application of laws. Each category's bar represents the percentage of private sector participants who identified it as a significant issue.

- **Lack of Coherent Strategy (25%):** Private sector representatives criticized the absence of unified guidance and support for tourism development.
- **Bureaucratic Hurdles (20%):** Participants highlighted excessive red tape and overregulation as barriers to innovation and growth.
- **Need for Collaboration (15%):** There was an acknowledgment of the need for better partnership among stakeholders, despite the current lack of it.

- **Focus on Profit (20%):** The tension between profit motives and regulatory compliance was a notable concern.
- **Inconsistent Application of Laws (20%):** Participants were frustrated with the ever-changing regulatory environment.

This visualization underscores the private sector's call for a more integrated and supportive approach to tourism governance that balances regulatory requirements with practical industry needs

The focus group interviews conducted with various stakeholders in the tourism industry of Cyprus have unveiled a complex and often contentious landscape of tourism governance. Through the diverse perspectives of government representatives, local authorities, private sector participants, and academics, several key themes and conflicts emerged, highlighting the pressing need for a more collaborative and coherent approach to sustainable tourism development.

Government representatives expressed significant frustration over the bureaucratic inefficiencies and overregulation they perceived as obstacles to the effective implementation of tourism policies. Their concerns often met with sarcasm from local authorities, who defended the necessity for meticulous oversight to ensure sustainable development. This tension underscored the delicate balance needed between regulatory rigor and operational efficiency—a balance that currently seems skewed, leading to conflict and inefficiency.

Private sector representatives, particularly those from the hotel and tourism industries, voiced substantial dissatisfaction with the existing regulatory environment. They criticized the inconsistent application of laws and the absence of a coherent strategy for tourism promotion. Their frustration was palpable, encapsulated in remarks about having to navigate an unstable business landscape burdened with inadequate infrastructure. The private sector emphasized the need for clearer guidance and improved collaboration among all stakeholders to foster a more supportive and stable environment for tourism development.

Amid these heated exchanges, academics notably chose to remain silent, opting to observe rather than participate actively. Their silence was strategic, aimed at maintaining objectivity and avoiding further escalation of the already tense discussions. However, their absence in the dialogue left a noticeable void, as their insights could have provided valuable, evidence-based

perspectives to balance the debates and potentially guide the discussions towards more constructive outcomes.

The overall atmosphere during the focus group discussions was one of tension and discord, with each stakeholder group entrenched in its viewpoint and occasionally resorting to sarcasm to underscore their frustrations. This dynamic highlighted the deep divisions within the industry and the lack of a unified approach to tourism governance in Cyprus. The contrasting opinions and the conspicuous silence of the academic representatives underscored the urgent need for a more collaborative and inclusive dialogue to bridge the gaps and develop a coherent strategy for sustainable tourism development.

5.5 Synopsis of the Findings

Following the synthesis of findings from both semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the next steps forward involve fostering a more integrated and inclusive approach to tourism governance. Stakeholders must move beyond sarcasm and conflict toward constructive engagement and mutual understanding. This involves several critical actions:

Enhanced Collaboration: Establish regular forums where government officials, local authorities, private sector participants, and academics can meet to discuss and align on tourism strategies. These forums should encourage open dialogue, mutual respect, and the sharing of evidence-based insights.

Clearer Regulatory Frameworks: Simplify and streamline the regulatory processes to reduce bureaucratic hurdles while ensuring that sustainable practices are upheld. This may involve revising existing laws and regulations to make them more consistent and easier to navigate for businesses.

Incorporation of Academic Insights: Actively involve academics in the decision-making process to provide evidence-based recommendations and balance the perspectives of other stakeholders. Their research can offer valuable insights into best practices and long-term sustainable strategies.

Education and Awareness: Invest in educating both tourists and locals about the importance of sustainable tourism practices. Increased awareness can help mitigate some of the adverse effects of overcrowding and environmental degradation.

Development of a Coherent Strategy: Work towards creating a unified and coherent strategy for tourism development that aligns the interests of all stakeholders. This strategy should focus on sustainable growth, environmental conservation, and the equitable distribution of tourism benefits. By taking these steps, Cyprus can develop a more integrated and effective approach to tourism governance, ensuring that the industry thrives sustainably while balancing the needs of economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion.

The optimal organization and development of special and alternative forms of tourism can be achieved through synergies that originate from the local community and economy. This implies that the synergies between the actors should reflect the will of all the different interest groups, including local entrepreneurs. To achieve successful outcomes, compromise and mutual concessions regarding the common interest in the general effort of cooperation of the involved bodies is crucial, but unfortunately not always achievable. Micropolitics and non-continuous strategies cause the well-known five steps forward and three steps back, leading to delays that are detrimental to tourism. Social tolerance and ignorance hinder the exertion of pressure, while legislation is now enforced with heavy sanctions.

These identified terms encompass the central themes and key findings expounded in the research, serving to visually represent the primary areas of concentration within the research conducted on TCC and visitor management strategies in Cyprus. The results shed light on various aspects, including the lack of awareness and implementation of the TCC tool, consensus on tourism overcrowding and environmental degradation, the urgent need for a visitor management plan, stakeholder disagreements, tensions between locals, tourism, culture, and education, diverse stakeholder perceptions on economic impacts, the importance of defining key performance indicators, assessment of tourism infrastructure and services, familiarity with Tourism Clusters, and the effects of corruption in public administration on sustainable tourism development.

The research revealed a substantial gap in the awareness and implementation of the TCC tool among key stakeholders in Cyprus, particularly reflecting pessimism towards its implementation. This highlights the need for enhanced knowledge and understanding of TCC concepts and methodologies. By addressing this gap, stakeholders can make more informed decisions regarding tourism development and management.

The research findings demonstrate a consensus among key stakeholders in Cyprus regarding tourism overcrowding in specific areas, leading to environmental degradation. However, a notable portion of participants rejected the concept of over-tourism entirely. Recognizing the negative impacts of tourism on the environment underscores the urgent need to address these issues. Implementing sustainable practices and visitor management strategies are crucial for mitigating these impacts and preserving the natural beauty of the destination.

In addition, the research emphasizes the immediate requirement for a well-designed visitor management plan in Cyprus. Proactive measures must be implemented to effectively mitigate the negative impacts on the Cypriot tourism industry. These measures should focus on preserving the destination's natural and cultural resources while ensuring a positive experience for visitors. A comprehensive visitor management plan contributes to sustainable tourism development.

The research identifies significant challenges arising from conflicting agendas and interests among stakeholders regarding the establishment of an external body for destination and visitor management planning. These disagreements hinder consensus-building and impede the implementation of effective strategies. Resolving these conflicts necessitates inclusive decision-making processes that address the concerns and interests of all stakeholders involved.

The research explores the tensions between locals, tourism, culture, and education in the context of sustainable development. Balancing economic development with the preservation of cultural heritage and local communities is a complex task. It is vital to foster dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to align tourism development with the values, needs, and aspirations of the local community while preserving cultural authenticity and identity.

The research highlights diverse stakeholder perceptions regarding the economic impacts of tourism in Cyprus. While some stakeholders prioritize profit-driven approaches, others

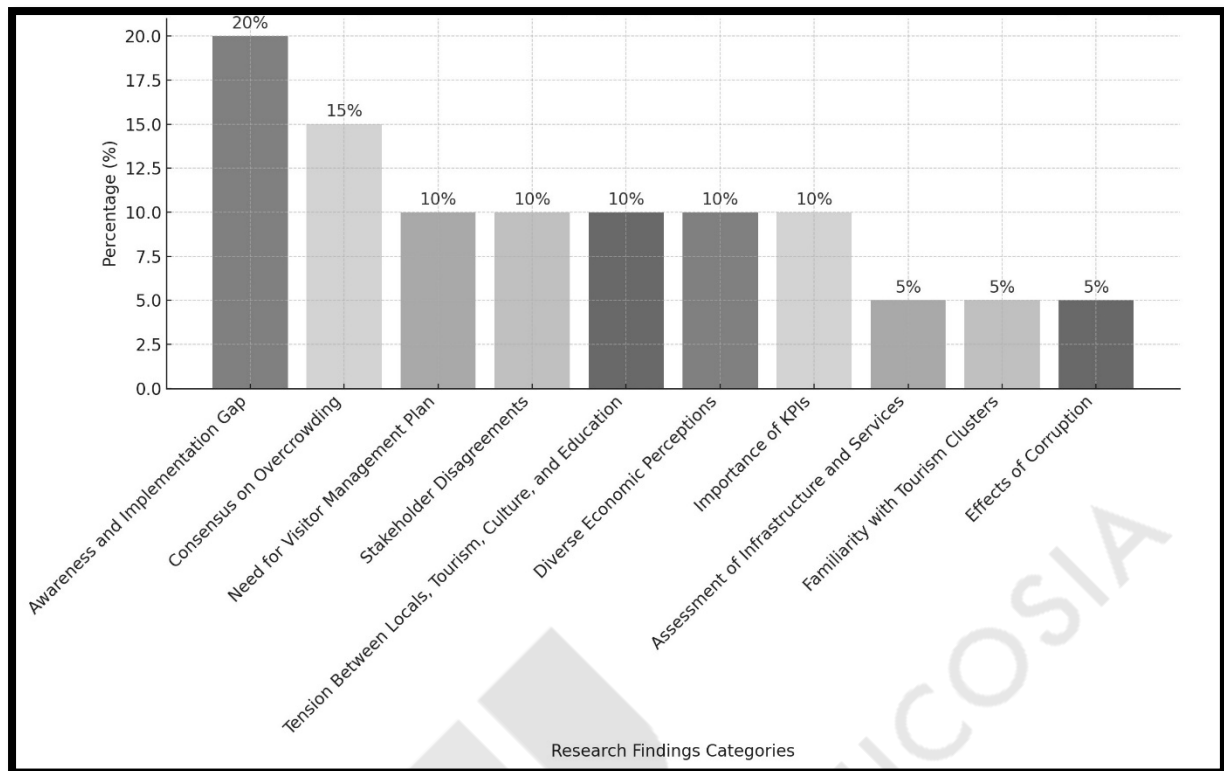
consider broader implications, including long-term sustainability and equitable distribution of benefits. A comprehensive understanding of the economic aspects of tourism is crucial, encompassing financial gains and broader socio-economic considerations.

The research underscores the significance of defining key performance indicators (KPIs) for tourism carrying capacity. Clearly defined and measurable KPIs enable stakeholders to assess and manage tourism development more effectively. These indicators play a pivotal role in monitoring the impacts of tourism, guiding decision-making processes, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the destination.

Moreover, stakeholder perceptions regarding tourism infrastructure and services in Cyprus were evaluated, providing insights into strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. This evaluation assists in identifying areas that require attention and investment to enhance the overall visitor experience.

The following Figure 57, clusters the key research findings on the assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models and visitor management strategies in Cyprus based on word similarity. It visually demonstrates the significance of researching TCC and visitor management in fostering sustainable tourism development. The diagram captures various focal points addressed in the research, such as the lack of awareness and implementation of the TCC tool, consensus on tourism overcrowding and environmental degradation, the pressing need for a visitor management plan, stakeholder disagreements, tensions among locals, tourism, culture, and education, diverse stakeholder perceptions on economic impacts, the importance of defining key performance indicators (KPIs), evaluation of tourism infrastructure and services, familiarity with Tourism Clusters, and the ramifications of corruption in public administration on sustainable tourism development. Through the interconnectedness displayed in the diagram, the relationships between these findings are highlighted, showcasing their interdependencies and mutual influences.

Figure 57: Key Research Findings on Tourism Carrying Capacity And Visitor Management Strategies In Cyprus



Source: author's own

The diagram (Figure 57) identifies the key research findings on the assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models and visitor management strategies in Cyprus based on word similarity. It visually demonstrates the significance of studying TCC and visitor management in fostering sustainable tourism development. The diagram captures various focal points addressed in the research, such as the lack of awareness and implementation of the TCC tool, consensus on tourism overcrowding and environmental degradation, the pressing need for a visitor management plan, stakeholder disagreements, tensions among locals, tourism, culture, and education, diverse stakeholder perceptions on economic impacts, the importance of defining key performance indicators (KPIs), evaluation of tourism infrastructure and services, familiarity with Tourism Clusters, and the ramifications of corruption in public administration on sustainable tourism development. Through the interconnectedness displayed in the diagram, the relationships between these findings are highlighted, showcasing their interdependencies and mutual influences. The diagram visually captures the primary research findings and their interconnectedness, emphasizing the significance of studying TCC and implementing visitor

management strategies to promote sustainable tourism development in Cyprus

Figure 58: Study's Word Similarity



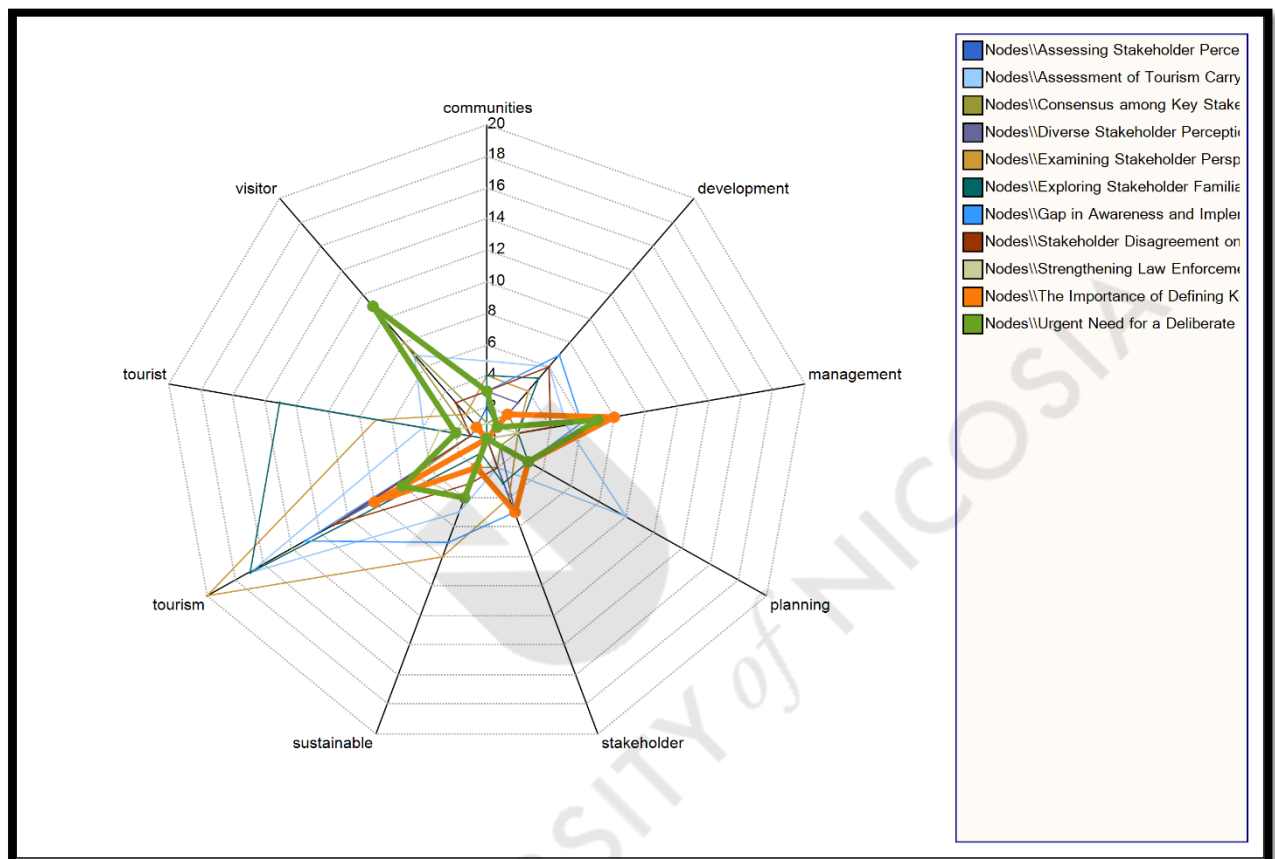
Source: author's own

This synoptical diagram (Figure 58) presents a concise representation of the key research findings pertaining to the assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity and visitor management strategies in Cyprus. It visually showcases the main discoveries and conclusions derived from the study, providing a comprehensive overview of the focal points explored, such as the awareness and implementation gap of the Tourism Carrying Capacity tool, the consensus on tourism overcrowding and environmental degradation, the urgent need for a visitor management plan, stakeholder disagreements, the tension between locals, tourism, culture, and education, diverse stakeholder perceptions on economic impacts, the importance of defining key performance indicators, the assessment of tourism infrastructure and services, familiarity with Tourism Clusters, and the effects of corruption in public administration on sustainable tourism development.

The spider diagram that follows (Figure 59), on the other hand, illustrates the interconnectedness and relationships among the aforementioned research findings. It visually represents the complex web of linkages between different aspects, demonstrating how stakeholder disagreements may influence the implementation of visitor management strategies, how economic impacts are intertwined with tourism infrastructure and services, and how the

tension between locals, tourism, culture, and education affects sustainable development. The spider diagram provides a visual tool for understanding the interdependencies and interplay of various factors within the context of assessing Tourism Carrying Capacity and implementing visitor management strategies in Cyprus.

Figure 59: Contents Interdependencies



Source author's own

The representatives of all parts that participated in both focus groups agreed that the first goal is to strengthen the infrastructure of tourist areas, especially in the mountainous regions where there are significant shortcomings.

To achieve the development of tourism in society, stakeholders must focus on the "correct" tourism policy, acceptable strategic planning, promotion, and advertising of the commercial enterprise product, along with corresponding investments. Improvements and enhancements of infrastructure and superstructures can further help the development of tourism. Solutions to issues can be found either by boosting the fight of firms or by reducing their costs, improving

productivity, and increasing good communication with their customers and suppliers. However, the process of developing tourism, like other industries, has undergone significant transformation due to the internet. Self-guided planning and booking are now possible, and travel destination information providers have grown to cater to niche markets in addition to traditional tour operators, resorts, and cruises.

It was generally accepted that the creation of clusters of companies through business networking offers cooperation and distribution of information, cooperation in production, promotion and marketing, learning and use of new technologies, development of new products, and cooperation in financing business projects. The private body (PASYDYXE Association) representative convinced the group that the creation of clusters of companies aims at all of these goals, as well as the specialization of staff. The quality of tourism improves, and the needs of tourists can be met more efficiently. The prerequisites for creating clusters include a common reference, concentration, and connectivity. However, the tension between the groups was evident in their conclusion that they were not ready to accept such agreements and combinations due to competition. Some representatives were concerned that the free market would be marginalized with such a strategy.

There was no evidence of negative feelings towards tourists or the desire to reduce the number of tourists, despite the fact that tourism has caused changes in traditions, social behaviour, and moral standards, as well as increased the cost of living and land values. It was widely acknowledged that these changes were inevitable due to the resulting economic benefits. However, some representatives noted that there is a small percentage that are negatively organized in organized excursions, especially in the mountainous provinces. This also contributed to the lack of training and staffing.

The general conclusion was that society seeks to increase tourism by anticipating the benefits of tourism. Therefore, it can be concluded that the carrying capacity of an area is not static but changes with the volume and time of tourism. This capacity can be managed through techniques and controls. Thus, carrying capacity can be used as a tool to facilitate the process of continuous monitoring of tourism by making adjustments to plans as required. This will ensure that tourism development takes place within the framework of the optimal level of total capacity, ensuring its sustainability. The success of competency studies in facilitating the

tourism planning process depends on the ability to express terms clearly and appropriately, suitable for use in tourism design.

The primary research question in this study aimed to explore the necessity of establishing limits, specifically through the assessment of tourism carrying capacity, in the context of sustainable development. This examination sought to contribute to the formulation of appropriate development policies for safeguarding the social, economic, and natural environment. Two sub-research questions were formulated to support this inquiry, as outlined below:

1. To what extent is the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity understood and acknowledged among respondents?
2. What are the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding the implementation of Tourism Carrying Capacity for the development of a sustainable strategy?

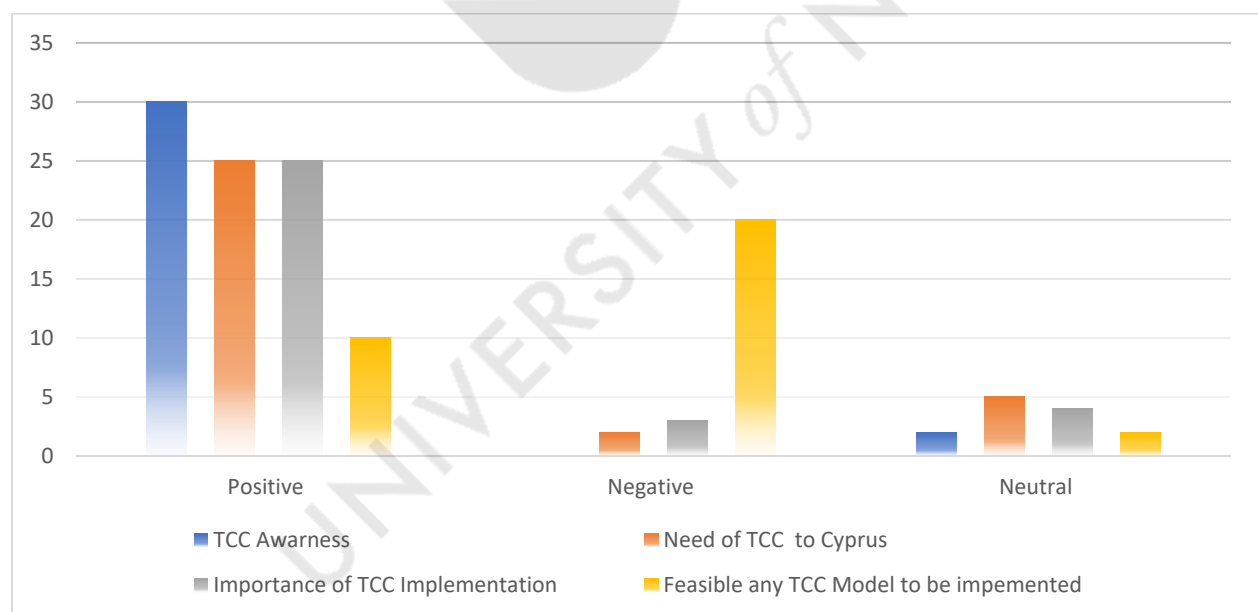
It was anticipated that the results from this thematic area would yield a certain degree of predictability. The majority of respondents displayed familiarity with the concept of touristic capacity, with only a few lacking awareness. However, the noteworthy finding was the unanimous agreement among respondents on the necessity of such research and its immediate implementation to shape a sustainable strategy, which has thus far remained predominantly theoretical. The influence of micropolitics, the pursuit of quick and easy financial gains, and the lack of effective regulation have resulted in disorder, lawlessness, and the formulation of superficial strategies devoid of structure and autonomy in various tourist destinations. This has led to intense competition between destinations within this geographically small country, lacking cohesion and overlapping interests. Infrastructure has been a primary focus of attention and investment, while the social aspect of bearing spatial capacity has been somewhat neglected.

The respondents' unanimous stance on the acceptability of continued tourist influx as long as it brings financial benefits and people to the island was to be expected. According to the interviewees, the development and strategy had been predominantly shaped by the stakeholders themselves, driven by their own resources and initiatives. However, it is crucial to note that the term "society" used here does not solely refer to the privileged few who possess economic

comfort and political influence. The lack of a comprehensive strategy and a decision-making authority within the Cyprus Tourism sector, entangled in bureaucratic processes and overshadowed by a cabinet of ministries and legal disputes, resulted in a marginalized role for society. Society primarily observed developments, but only within conditions that provided favorable job positions with lucrative salaries and a "relatively" familiar working environment, where family members, including fathers and sons, often worked together.

Regarding the significance of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) as a component of sustainable development, the majority of interviewees strongly advocated for the immediate adoption of a strategic plan that incorporates TCC principles to achieve sustainability goals. However, when discussing the feasibility and likelihood of successfully implementing such a strategy, the respondents viewed the prospects with skepticism and suspicion, as previous similar studies had failed to be effectively utilized. The stakeholders representing the Ministry of Tourism were the primary proponents of this approach, with limited support from other participants as shown in Figure 60.

Figure 60: TCC in Cyprus

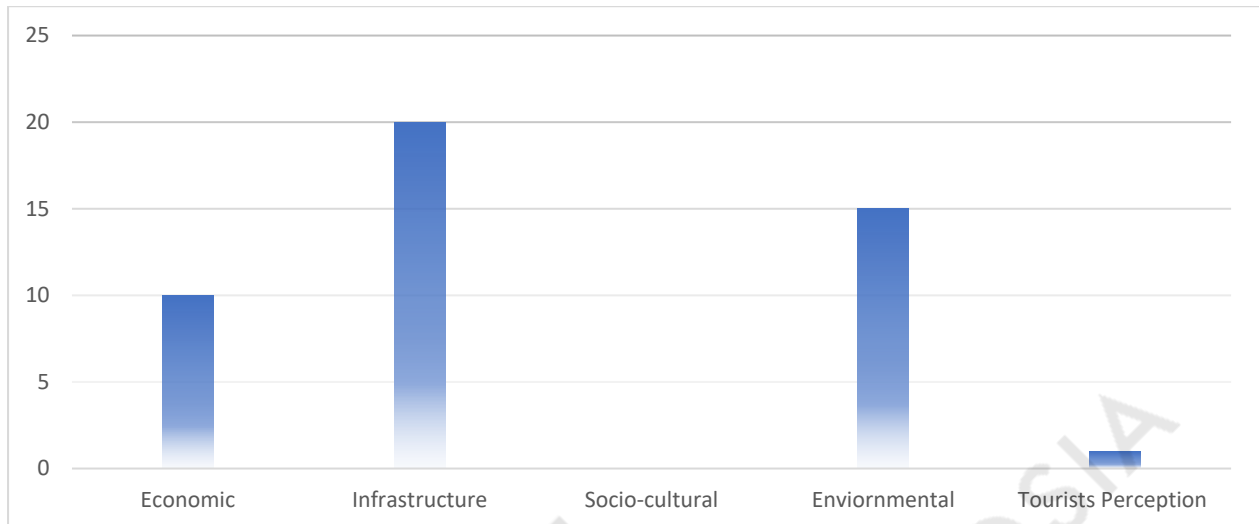


Source: author's own

When considering the most vital dimension, the interviewees placed primary emphasis on infrastructure, followed by the preservation of the environment. They expressed the view that all endeavors must be economically viable and ultimately serve the betterment of society.

However, their perception of the authorities' stance on these matters was not unequivocally positive, leading them to harbor skepticism towards their intentions and actions (Figure 61).

Figure 61: Most Important Variable of TCC



Source: author's own

The research question pertaining to Tourism Clusters revealed a lack of comprehension among the respondents. Firstly, there was a deficiency in understanding the concept itself, and secondly, there was a lack of awareness regarding its practical application. Historically, tourist destinations in Cyprus have operated autonomously and independently, solely focused on promoting their own individual destinations. Consequently, each destination sought to present itself as distinct and attractive, resulting in a fragmented image of the overall tourism offerings in the country. This approach has led to the identification of specific destinations, such as Ayia Napa, Limassol, and more recently, Paphos, as key tourist hotspots. However, the coordination and integration of different destinations and their associated products has been overlooked, with competition between destinations prevailing instead. The findings on this matter were disappointing. The establishment of Tourism Clusters is still in its preliminary stage due to limited acceptance and cultural factors that hinder collaboration and shared efforts. The prevailing culture favors excessive horizontal and vertical development of organizations within a confined geographical area, leading to unhealthy internal competition rather than productive cooperation.

The findings regarding Tourism Clusters revealed a significant lack of understanding among

the respondents, both in terms of the concept itself and its practical application. Historically, tourist destinations in Cyprus have operated independently and autonomously, solely focused on promoting their own specific destinations. Consequently, each destination aimed to highlight its unique offerings, resulting in the portrayal of distinct images for each location, striving to attract as many visitors as possible. Consequently, destinations like Ayia Napa, Limassol, and more recently, Paphos, have emerged as prominent tourist spots. However, the integration of different destinations and their associated products has been largely overlooked, with the competition between destinations being documented as if they were entirely separate entities. The conclusions drawn from these observations were rather disappointing. The development of Tourism Clusters is still at a preliminary stage in terms of acceptance and implementation. Culture plays a significant role in this context, as it often inhibits collaboration and the dispersion of work, instead favouring an intense focus on horizontal and vertical expansion of organizations within a limited geographical area. Consequently, this leads to unhealthy internal competition rather than fostering productive cooperation.

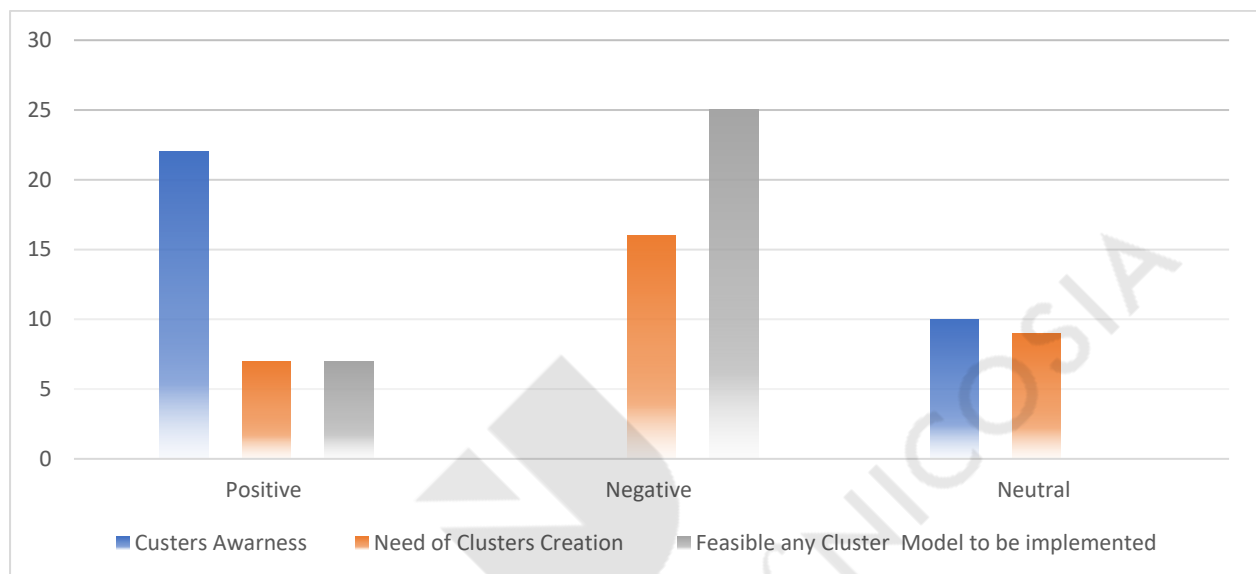
The findings from the study revealed a notable lack of understanding among the respondents regarding the concept and practical application of tourist clusters. Traditionally, tourist destinations in Cyprus have operated independently and autonomously, primarily focused on promoting their individual attractions and unique offerings to maximize visitor numbers. Consequently, destinations such as Ayia Napa, Limassol, and Paphos have emerged as prominent tourist hotspots, each cultivating its distinct image.

However, the integration of different destinations and their associated products within a cohesive framework has been largely disregarded. The competitive landscape among destinations has been documented as if they were completely separate entities, rather than recognizing the potential synergies that could arise from collaboration. The overall conclusions drawn from these findings are disappointing, suggesting that the development of Tourism Clusters is still in its early stages in terms of acceptance and implementation.

Culture plays a significant role in this context, as it tends to inhibit collaboration and the dispersion of work. Instead, there is a strong emphasis on the horizontal and vertical expansion of organizations within a limited geographical area. This prevailing cultural mindset fosters unhealthy internal competition rather than facilitating productive cooperation. Figure 62

illustrates how crucial it is to emphasize the importance of comprehending the concept of tourist clusters, particularly among small and medium-sized business owners and society at large. A majority of the participants acknowledged that the establishment of Tourism Clusters necessitates substantial changes in cultural norms and requires well-planned and comprehensive training initiatives.

Figure 62: Creation of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus



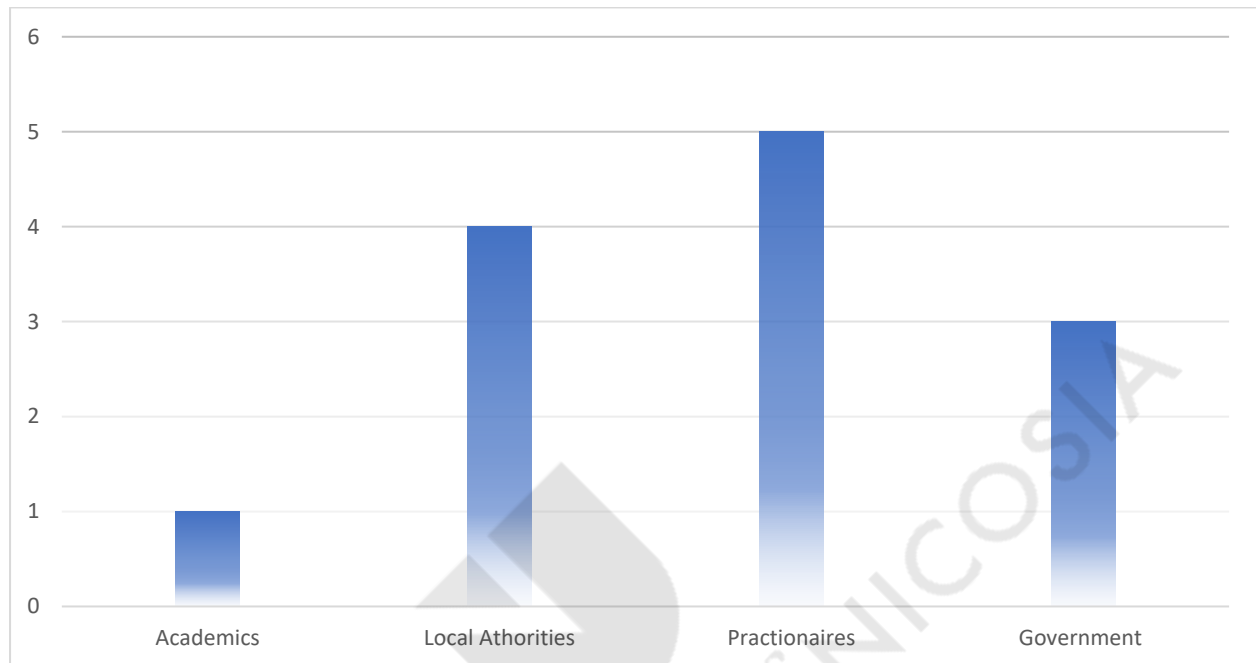
Source: author's own

In terms of decision-making authority, the findings can be summarized as follows: Academic representatives do not possess significant influence in the decision-making process, as they are generally excluded and their input is not taken into consideration. Government representatives face a fragile dynamic in decision-making due to the inherent instability resulting from frequent changes in government. Conversely, representatives of local bodies demonstrate a more dynamic presence and involvement in decision-making processes, contradicting their rhetoric wherein they advocate for increased responsibilities and greater consideration. Additionally, the private sector holds substantial sway in decision-making, given its significant financial resources and corresponding influence.

However, it is important to note that these conclusions are subject to various contextual factors and dynamics within the decision-making landscape. The distribution of power as shown in Figure 63 and the extent of participation may vary depending on specific circumstances, such

as the nature of the issue at hand or the political climate. Further research and analysis are necessary to delve deeper into the complexities of decision-making dynamics and the role played by different stakeholders in various contexts.

Figure 63: Stakeholders Dynamics in Decision Making Process



Source: author's own

5	4	3	2	1
Very Strong	Strong	Not So Strong	Weak	Very Weak

5.6 Conclusions

The research discussed the important sociocultural parameter of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) related to overcrowding and its impact on local visitors and tourists. The findings revealed that some local visitors or tourists avoid visiting resorts due to their previous experiences of overcrowding, leading to contradictions for policymakers. While government representatives and regulators are interested in monitoring congestion levels, individuals who promote their units claim that travel agents have the ultimate decision-making power in a competitive and infrastructure-lacking environment. Some local visitors or tourists avoid visiting resorts because they have experienced or expect overcrowding. As a result, policymakers found themselves in contradictions. Government representatives and those of the regulators (ETAP) are interested in monitoring congestion levels. The opposite view was held

by the individuals who claimed that any energy promotions of their units is done exclusively by them and that a small country with so much competition and so much lack of infrastructure the travel agents are the ones who decide. ETAP (Tourism Product Promotion Companies) were created a decade before the establishment of the subject research and their purpose to this day is to warn of all the promotional activities needed for their destination. They were created, according to the representatives, to merge the many communities and municipalities of each province for better coordination and implementation of a strategy. It was an initiative of the then CTO. in order to disengage from the bureaucracy that prevailed until then in CTO. The ETAPs were created precisely to fill the leadership gap that existed due to the initial lack of motivation and immediate enforcement of procedures by the Cyprus Tourism Organization, which, while being an independent body, was accountable to various ministries, mainly the Ministry of Commerce. They effectively bring together the communities and municipalities of each province so that they do not self-advertise but advertise the destination on a larger scale, more effectively and with more strategic research and coordinated efforts. 2 years later and this after pressure from CTO. that without their inclusion in the ETAP they would not be granted state funds. It is important that many of the representatives of ETAP stated that the fund of 200,000 euros is nothing to be able to create something. Thus, the local authorities took the initiative and with their own funds, effectively created and strengthened the ETAP for the coordination of the promotional actions of each destination, with the result that they operate autonomously and without effective central supervision.

It should be noted here that there was ambiguity and tension regarding the cooperation, which does not exist to the extent that the lack of support from governments would be expected, as the individuals claimed, while the government representatives exchanged jokes, claiming the incompatibility of the intentions. The academics had a similar treatment. They strongly claimed the complete lack of coordination, the marginalization of domestic scientists, the arrogance of the state apparatus and the greed of individuals for fast, easy and growing profits. The reasons for not wanting to contribute scientifically are even more so as the lack of motivation. The complex nature of tourism development by definition implies costs of investment, operation and promotion of the offered products and services, which accordingly can be high. At the level of tourist destination, and in fact of the island, this reality makes imperative the need to develop joint and organized efforts / collaborations, with the ultimate goal of overall local tourism development, and the general benefit, from which it will come and the benefit of individual

businesses. The role of the private sector at the local level through representation in institutional and professional bodies (chambers, associations, trade unions, etc.) is crucial due to its interventions. Therefore, when we talk about sustainability and sustainable local tourism development, we must realize the value that, for the local economic and social circuit, the synergies of the different interest groups have with each other. The methodology adopted for this research involved a comprehensive theme analysis approach to present and analyse the primary data. The first step involved establishing the reliability of the technique and identifying the necessary steps for its successful application. Next, the researcher proceeded to categorize and create themes from the primary data collected, to address the research questions and derive meaningful insights.

In summary, this research employed a comprehensive approach to analyse and present the primary data, utilizing the technique of theme analysis. The reliability of this technique was rigorously assessed, and the necessary steps for its application were carefully followed, ensuring the integrity of the analysis process. The researcher delved into the collected data, employing categorization and the creation of themes to address the research questions that guided the research. This meticulous analysis process resulted in the identification of three key challenges that emerged from the data, shedding light on important aspects relevant to the research topic. To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, the researcher further scrutinized the results by triangulating them with existing theories and scholarly literature. This rigorous comparison allowed for a robust examination of the findings, corroborating their reliability and contributing to the overall strength of the research. Moving forward, Chapter 5 serves as the culmination of this research endeavour, encapsulating the significant findings and presenting the final framework of the thesis. This chapter provides a comprehensive synthesis of the research outcomes, offering valuable insights and implications for the field of research.

Finalising, the researcher's meticulous application of theme analysis in analysing the primary data, coupled with the careful consideration of reliability and validity, has resulted in a robust and insightful exploration of the research questions. The subsequent chapter consolidates these findings, offering a comprehensive framework that contributes to the body of knowledge in the field and sets the stage for further research and development in the area.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

Tourism is a rapidly growing industry with significant economic and social implications. However, the sustainability of tourism has become a global concern, particularly in destinations experiencing high visitor numbers and overcrowdedness (Yu & Egger, 2021). In the context of Cyprus, several key findings have emerged, shedding light on various aspects of sustainable tourism management. Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) plays a crucial role in sustainable tourism development, ensuring that destinations maintain a desirable level of social, cultural, and environmental conditions while accommodating tourists (UNWTO, 2003). This research examines the current awareness and utilization of TCC tools among tourism stakeholders in Cyprus. Additionally, it explores stakeholder perspectives, focusing on their engagement, perceptions, and the implications for sustainable visitor management. The findings shed light on the challenges and opportunities in implementing effective strategies to support sustainable tourism practices in Cyprus.

The concept of TCC is essential in managing the balance between maximizing tourism benefits and minimizing negative impacts on the environment and local communities. In Cyprus, a prominent Mediterranean destination, the tourism industry significantly contributes to the national economy. However, the influx of tourists, particularly during peak seasons, exerts pressure on natural resources, infrastructure, and local culture. Therefore, understanding and applying TCC principles is vital for the long-term sustainability of tourism in the region. Stakeholders' engagement emerges as a critical component in achieving sustainable tourism. The research highlights the varying levels of awareness and commitment among different stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, tourism operators, and tourists themselves. Effective stakeholder engagement involves inclusive dialogue, collaboration, and shared responsibility in managing tourism's impacts. The study reveals that while some stakeholders are proactive in implementing sustainable practices, others lack awareness or resources to do so. Bridging this gap through education, capacity building, and policy support is essential for holistic sustainable tourism management.

The research also delves into the concept of Tourism Clusters, which are geographic concentrations of interconnected tourism-related businesses and institutions. Tourism Clusters can drive regional development, enhance competitiveness, and foster innovation. In Cyprus,

the development of Tourism Clusters presents an opportunity to distribute tourism benefits more evenly across the island, reducing pressure on overburdened hotspots. By promoting lesser-known areas and diversifying tourism products, clusters can mitigate overcrowding and contribute to a more balanced and resilient tourism economy. Key findings from this research include:

6.2 Key Findings

6.2.1 Awareness and Utilization of TCC Tools

The research assessed the level of awareness and understanding of TCC among various tourism stakeholders in Cyprus. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to gather data on stakeholders' knowledge and familiarity with TCC tools and models. The findings indicate varying levels of awareness, with some stakeholders demonstrating limited understanding of TCC concepts and its application in tourism planning and management. This highlights the need for enhanced education and awareness programs to promote TCC utilization.

6.2.2 Stakeholder Perspectives and Engagement

The research identifies several barriers to effective stakeholder engagement, including lack of communication, limited resources, and varying degrees of commitment to sustainability. Overcoming these challenges requires coordinated efforts to foster a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility. Examining the perspectives and attitudes of key stakeholders, including local authorities, municipalities, business owners, industry unions, academics, researchers, and government officials, provided valuable insights. Stakeholders exhibited a range of perspectives on TCC and sustainable visitor management. While some stakeholders embraced the concept of sustainable development, others prioritized profit-oriented approaches. These varying viewpoints contribute to the ongoing tension between economic benefits and the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry in Cyprus. The analysis of stakeholder viewpoints revealed divergent opinions regarding the economic benefits and challenges associated with tourism. While some stakeholders emphasized the economic advantages of tourism, others advocated for a more sustainable development approach (Sharpley, 2002). Balancing economic growth with environmental and social considerations is crucial for the long-term viability and resilience of the tourism sector in Cyprus. Understanding these differing perspectives is vital for fostering dialogue and creating collaborative strategies

that prioritize sustainable tourism practices.

Furthermore, stakeholder engagement and cooperation were evaluated in the creation and implementation of TCC models. The findings indicated that there is room for improvement in stakeholder collaboration. Some stakeholders expressed interest in participating actively in TCC initiatives, while others demonstrated a lack of engagement. Strengthening collaboration among stakeholders is crucial to developing comprehensive and effective TCC frameworks.

6.2.3 Limited Familiarity and Experience with Tourism Clusters

The research revealed limited familiarity and experience among stakeholders regarding the potential benefits and contributions of Tourism Clusters to sustainable destination management (Korstanje, 2017). Insufficient data, research, and government support hamper the development and implementation of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus. Recognizing the untapped potential of Tourism Clusters as catalysts for sustainable destination management presents an opportunity for policymakers and stakeholders to further explore and leverage their benefits.

To address these gaps, it is essential for both public and private sectors to collaborate more effectively. This could involve comprehensive data collection and analysis to better understand the economic, social, and environmental impacts of Tourism Clusters. Additionally, fostering partnerships between academic institutions, tourism operators, and local communities can enhance the knowledge base and provide practical insights into best practices. Such collaborations can lead to the development of targeted training programs aimed at improving stakeholders' capabilities in managing and benefiting from Tourism Clusters. Moreover, increasing government support through policy reforms and financial incentives could stimulate the growth of Tourism Clusters. Governments could introduce policies that encourage sustainable practices within these clusters, such as eco-friendly certifications, sustainable infrastructure development, and community-based tourism initiatives. Financial incentives, such as grants or tax breaks for businesses adopting sustainable practices, can also play a crucial role. Engaging local communities in the planning and development process ensures that Tourism Clusters align with the socio-cultural values and needs of the destination, thus fostering a sense of ownership and long-term commitment to sustainability.

By focusing on these strategic areas, Cyprus can harness the full potential of Tourism Clusters, driving sustainable development and positioning itself as a leading destination for responsible tourism. Investing in marketing and promotional activities that highlight the unique aspects and benefits of Tourism Clusters can also raise awareness and attract more visitors, thereby boosting the local economy. A concerted effort from all stakeholders is required to realize the substantial benefits that Tourism Clusters can bring to sustainable destination management in Cyprus.

6.2.4. Overcrowding and Environmental Impacts

Identifying areas in Cyprus where Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) has been exceeded revealed the detrimental effects of overcrowding on the tourism industry and the environment (Andriotis & Agiomirgianakis, 2014). Overcrowding leads to strained infrastructure, diminished visitor experiences, and environmental degradation. The findings underscore the urgent need for visitor management strategies to mitigate these negative impacts. Effective TCC implementation can contribute to reducing overcrowding, enhancing visitor satisfaction, and preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the destination.

Additionally, implementing technological solutions such as real-time monitoring of tourist numbers and predictive analytics can help manage visitor flows more efficiently. Educating tourists about sustainable practices and promoting alternative destinations within Cyprus can also alleviate pressure on overburdened areas. Moreover, involving local communities in tourism planning and decision-making processes ensures that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed and that development remains sustainable. By adopting a holistic approach that integrates environmental, economic, and social considerations, Cyprus can effectively address the challenges posed by exceeding Tourism Carrying Capacity and ensure a more sustainable future for its tourism industry.

6.2.5 Infrastructure and Service Adequacy

Stakeholders' perceptions of infrastructure and service adequacy highlighted areas of improvement. Assessing stakeholders' satisfaction with existing infrastructure and services, particularly in meeting tourists' needs, identified gaps and challenges (Hall, 2008). Enhancing infrastructure and service quality to align with sustainable tourism standards is essential for

ensuring visitor satisfaction, optimizing resource utilization, and minimizing negative impacts on local communities and the environment. The interviewees consistently emphasized the insufficiency of current tourism infrastructure, pointing to outdated facilities, inadequate transportation networks, and insufficient accommodation options as major concerns. They stressed that without significant upgrades and expansions, Cyprus would struggle to meet the growing demands of tourists, potentially leading to decreased satisfaction and repeat visitation. This shortfall not only affects tourist experiences but also limits the economic benefits that a well-developed tourism infrastructure can bring to local communities.

Moreover, stakeholders highlighted the need for sustainable infrastructure development, advocating for eco-friendly buildings, renewable energy sources, and efficient waste management systems. By investing in green infrastructure, Cyprus can reduce its environmental footprint while enhancing the attractiveness of the destination for environmentally conscious travelers. Additionally, the interviewees called for improved training and capacity-building programs for tourism service providers to ensure high standards of service quality and customer care. Addressing these infrastructure deficiencies requires a coordinated effort between government bodies, private sector investors, and local communities. Strategic planning and investment in modern, sustainable infrastructure can not only improve the overall tourist experience but also support the long-term viability and resilience of Cyprus's tourism industry. By prioritizing these improvements, Cyprus can position itself as a leading destination that offers high-quality, sustainable tourism experiences, benefiting both visitors and residents alike.

6.2.6 TCC Model Formation and Implementation using KPIs and Indicators

The research examined the formation and implementation of TCC models using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and indicators. It identified the need for clear guidelines and procedures to effectively measure and monitor TCC using these tools. By establishing standardized KPIs and indicators, policymakers and stakeholders can evaluate Tourism Carrying Capacity more accurately and make informed decisions for sustainable tourism planning and management (UNWTO, 2012).

6.2.7 Addressing Cyprus's Lack of Tourism Culture and Career Appeal

The findings of the research clearly indicate a significant lack of tourism culture in Cyprus, revealing that many Cypriots do not view the tourism industry as a desirable career path. This cultural attitude towards tourism has contributed to a shortage of skilled professionals within the sector, undermining the quality of services provided to visitors. The perception of tourism jobs as low-status and low-paying, often involving seasonal work with limited opportunities for career advancement, deters many from pursuing long-term employment in the industry. This reluctance among locals to engage in tourism careers also leads to an overreliance on foreign labor, which can create challenges in maintaining consistent service quality and understanding of local culture and customs. Additionally, this gap highlights a broader issue of inadequate tourism education and training programs in Cyprus, which fail to attract and retain young talent.

To address these issues, it is crucial to promote tourism as a viable and rewarding career option. This can be achieved through enhanced education and training initiatives, improved working conditions, and clear career progression pathways. Raising awareness about the diverse opportunities within the tourism industry and its potential for personal and professional growth can help shift perceptions and foster a more positive tourism culture. By investing in the development of a skilled and motivated local workforce, Cyprus can enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of its tourism sector.

6.3 Contribution to Theory

The findings of this research significantly contribute to the theoretical understanding of sustainable tourism management, particularly in the context of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) and stakeholder engagement. This research offers the following theoretical contributions:

6.3.1 Enhanced Understanding of TCC

The research deepens the theoretical understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) by illustrating the varied levels of awareness and implementation among stakeholders. It highlights the complex interplay between environmental, social, and economic factors in

maintaining TCC, providing a nuanced view that can inform future theoretical models. Tourism Carrying Capacity has traditionally been viewed as a technical measurement model used to determine the maximum number of visitors that a destination can accommodate without causing unacceptable alterations to the environment, decline in visitor satisfaction, or negative impacts on the host community (O'Reilly, 1986). However, this study suggests that TCC should be re-envisioned not merely as a management tool but as a comprehensive philosophy that integrates sustainable practices into every aspect of tourism development and operation. This philosophical approach to TCC emphasizes its potential to foster a sustainable tourism culture that permeates all levels of society, ultimately aiming for long-term sustainability (Butler, 2006). The research reveals significant variations in how stakeholders perceive and apply TCC principles. Some stakeholders are well-versed in TCC concepts and actively incorporate them into their planning and operations. Others, however, show limited awareness or understanding, leading to inconsistent and often inadequate implementation (McCool & Lime, 2001). This disparity underscores the need for more extensive education and advocacy to promote a uniform understanding and application of TCC across the tourism industry. By viewing TCC as a guiding philosophy rather than a mere set of metrics, stakeholders can be encouraged to adopt a more holistic approach to tourism management that aligns with broader sustainability goals (Coccossis & Mexa, 2004).

From an environmental perspective, adopting TCC as a philosophy of life means prioritizing the preservation and enhancement of natural resources. It involves implementing practices that minimize ecological footprints, such as promoting eco-friendly transportation, sustainable waste management, and energy conservation (Holden, 2016). This approach also advocates for the protection of biodiversity and the conservation of natural landscapes, which are often the primary attractions for tourists (Newsome, et al., 2012).

Socially, this philosophical approach to TCC encourages the development of tourism practices that respect and preserve local cultures and traditions. It involves engaging local communities in tourism planning and decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs met (Richards & Hall, 2000). By fostering a sense of ownership and pride among residents, tourism can become a vehicle for cultural preservation and social cohesion (Bramwell & Lane, 2000).

Economically, the integration of TCC principles can lead to more sustainable business practices that support long-term economic viability. This includes encouraging investments in sustainable infrastructure, promoting local entrepreneurship, and ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are distributed equitably among all stakeholders (Hall, 2011). By aligning economic activities with sustainable principles, destinations can achieve a balance between profitability and sustainability, ensuring that tourism remains a positive force for development (Sharpley, 2009).

The researcher advocating for TCC as a philosophy of life argues that this shift in perspective can strengthen the tourism culture within society. By embedding sustainability into the core values and practices of the tourism industry, destinations can foster a culture that prioritizes the well-being of the environment, communities, and economies. This cultural shift can lead to more responsible tourism behaviors among both providers and consumers, ultimately supporting the overarching goal of sustainability (Weaver, 2006).

In conclusion, this research not only advances the theoretical understanding of TCC but also proposes a transformative approach that redefines TCC as a philosophy of life. This perspective encourages a comprehensive integration of sustainable practices across all aspects of tourism, promoting a culture of sustainability that benefits the environment, society, and the economy. By adopting this holistic approach, destinations like Cyprus can enhance their tourism management practices, ensuring long-term sustainability and fostering a more sustainable tourism culture within society (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Moreover, the adoption of TCC as a life philosophy emphasizes the importance of continuous education and stakeholder engagement in promoting sustainable tourism practices. By integrating TCC principles into educational curricula and professional training programs, future generations can be better equipped to manage tourism sustainably. This educational focus can shift societal attitudes towards viewing tourism as a respectable and desirable career, further embedding sustainability into the fabric of the tourism industry.

Furthermore, this holistic approach necessitates the establishment of strong governance frameworks that facilitate collaboration between government, industry, and local communities. Effective policies and regulations that support sustainable tourism development must be implemented and enforced to maintain the delicate balance between tourism growth and

resource preservation. By prioritizing TCC as a guiding principle, destinations can mitigate the adverse effects of over-tourism, such as environmental degradation and cultural erosion, while maximizing the positive impacts on local economies and communities. This paradigm shift towards a sustainable tourism culture not only addresses the immediate challenges faced by destinations like Cyprus but also contributes to the global effort towards sustainable development. Through comprehensive, inclusive, and forward-thinking strategies, TCC can become a cornerstone of sustainable tourism, ensuring that tourism remains a viable and beneficial activity for generations to come.

6.3.2 A Holistic Framework for Sustainable Tourism Management in Cyprus

Sustainable tourism has emerged as a critical imperative for destinations worldwide, and Cyprus, with its rich cultural heritage and pristine landscapes, stands at the forefront of this global discourse. In this thesis, the research not only outlines practical recommendations for sustainable tourism in Cyprus but also contributes significantly to the theoretical understanding of the complex dynamics inherent in achieving sustainability in tourism.

The first pillar of this comprehensive framework is the emphasis on Capacity Assessment and Planning. The thesis advocates for a holistic evaluation of Cyprus's tourism infrastructure, resources, and environmental carrying capacity, underlining the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic impacts across different regions of the island. By integrating carrying capacity considerations into the tourism planning process, the framework contributes to the theoretical discourse on sustainable tourism planning. The proposed approach recognizes the need for a delicate equilibrium between tourism development and conservation efforts, safeguarding Cyprus's unique cultural heritage and pristine natural landscapes.

Moving beyond infrastructure, the thesis delves into the realm of Public Awareness and Education. Here, the establishment of a culture of responsible tourism takes center stage. Comprehensive education initiatives and public awareness campaigns targeting both tourists and local communities are proposed as essential components. This theoretical contribution underscores the importance of influencing tourist behavior through well-crafted campaigns, emphasizing the significance of minimizing ecological footprints, respecting local cultures, and conserving natural resources. The collaboration with local communities is positioned as a

theoretical cornerstone, empowering residents to become advocates for their cultural heritage and natural assets.

The third dimension of the framework centers on Stakeholder Collaboration and Engagement. By advocating for the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform, including government authorities, tourism businesses, local communities, environmental NGOs, and academia, the thesis contributes to the theoretical discourse on governance structures in sustainable tourism management. The legislative mandates for regular consultations and dialogues ensure that diverse stakeholder perspectives are considered, fostering a sense of responsibility and ownership for sustainable tourism initiatives.

Incentivizing sustainable practices among tourism businesses forms the fourth facet of the framework. The Implementation of Incentives and Certifications introduces a theoretical understanding of economic instruments in motivating businesses toward sustainability. Legislative enforcement for eco-labels and green certifications, coupled with promotional strategies and preferential treatment, adds depth to discussions on the regulatory mechanisms that can drive sustainable practices and inspire others to follow suit.

The fifth pillar, Carrying Capacity Monitoring and Management, contributes theoretically by proposing a robust monitoring system and legislative measures for managing visitor flow. The inclusion of visitation caps and proactive management addresses the theoretical discourse on practical strategies for preventing over-tourism and preserving delicate ecosystems. This dimension recognizes the dynamic nature of visitor behavior and the need for data-driven decision-making to achieve sustainable tourism.

The final dimension, Legislative Enforcement, serves as the linchpin of the framework. Positioned as a pivotal instrument, legislative measures are proposed to address various dimensions of sustainable tourism, including environmental conservation, cultural preservation, community well-being, and sustainable business operations. The theoretical understanding here extends to the role of legal frameworks in shaping behavior, with strict enforcement measures, including fines and penalties, acting as deterrents for non-compliance.

The theoretical contributions of this framework provide a nuanced understanding of the

multifaceted challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainable tourism in Cyprus. By synthesizing environmental, social, economic, and governance aspects, the research not only guides practical implementation but also contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation on sustainable tourism. The proposed legislative measures, underpinned by a comprehensive theoretical foundation, position Cyprus on the path to harmonizing tourism growth with responsible management effectively. The success of this endeavor relies on the collective efforts of government entities, businesses, local communities, and tourists, all working in concert to create a sustainable and enriching experience for all stakeholders. The adoption of the recommended measures, coupled with the enforcement of sustainable tourism legislation, promises a future where Cyprus's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and community welfare are safeguarded for generations to come.

6.3.3 Stakeholder Engagement Framework

By exploring the diverse perspectives of different stakeholders, the study contributes to the theoretical framework of stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism. It identifies key barriers and facilitators to effective engagement, offering insights into how inclusive dialogue and collaboration can be fostered. Stakeholder engagement is crucial for the successful implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives, as it ensures that the interests and concerns of all relevant parties are taken into account. However, achieving meaningful engagement can be challenging due to various factors such as power imbalances, conflicting interests, and communication barriers. The research findings shed light on these challenges and provide valuable recommendations for overcoming them. For example, the study highlights the importance of building trust and fostering open communication channels between stakeholders. Transparency and honesty in decision-making processes can help alleviate skepticism and build consensus among stakeholders with differing perspectives.

Moreover, the study emphasizes the need for inclusive and participatory approaches to stakeholder engagement. This involves actively involving stakeholders in the decision-making process, providing them with opportunities to voice their opinions and contribute to the development of sustainable tourism strategies. By ensuring that all stakeholders have a seat at the table, tourism planners can harness the collective wisdom and expertise of diverse groups, leading to more informed and effective decision-making. Additionally, the research underscores the role of capacity-building initiatives in enhancing stakeholder engagement. By

providing stakeholders with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources, they can become more empowered to participate meaningfully in the tourism planning process. This can include training programs on topics such as sustainable tourism principles, conflict resolution, and consensus-building techniques.

In summary the research contributes to advancing the theoretical understanding of stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism by offering insights into the key factors that influence effective engagement. By addressing these challenges and leveraging facilitators, destinations can foster a more collaborative and inclusive approach to tourism planning and management, ultimately leading to more sustainable outcomes for both the industry and the communities it serves.

6.3.4 Tourism Clusters Theory

Tourism Clusters have garnered attention in recent literature as effective mechanisms for enhancing destination competitiveness and sustainability (Pike, 2006). They are seen as hubs of innovation, collaboration, and knowledge exchange within the tourism industry, offering benefits such as increased efficiency, enhanced visitor experiences, and economic diversification (Korstanje, 2017). In the context of Cyprus, the research highlights the untapped potential of Tourism Clusters as catalysts for regional development and sustainability (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2017). By fostering the clustering of tourism-related businesses and services, Cyprus can capitalize on its diverse natural and cultural assets to create unique and compelling tourism experiences.

Moreover, Tourism Clusters offer opportunities for synergies and collaboration among businesses, leading to the development of new products and services that meet evolving visitor demands (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). This innovation-driven approach not only enhances the overall competitiveness of the destination but also contributes to its long-term sustainability by promoting economic growth and job creation. Furthermore, Tourism Clusters can play a vital role in dispersing visitor flows and alleviating pressure on overcrowded tourist hotspots (Carlsen & Choy, 2008). By encouraging the development of clusters in less-visited areas of Cyprus, stakeholders can distribute tourism benefits more evenly across the destination, thereby reducing the strain on infrastructure and the environment.

In conclusion, the research underscores the importance of Tourism Clusters as a theoretical framework for promoting regional development and sustainability in Cyprus. By embracing this concept and implementing targeted strategies to support cluster development, Cyprus can enhance its tourism competitiveness, foster economic growth, and ensure the long-term viability of its tourism industry. Through collaborative efforts and innovative approaches, Tourism Clusters can serve as drivers of positive change, contributing to the prosperity and sustainability of Cyprus's tourism sector.

6.3.5 Integrative Approach to Sustainable Tourism

The research proposes an integrative approach that combines Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC), stakeholder engagement, and Tourism Clusters. This holistic perspective contributes to the development of a comprehensive theoretical model for sustainable tourism management, emphasizing the interconnectedness of various elements. Integrating TCC into sustainable tourism management frameworks acknowledges the importance of managing visitor flows to ensure environmental and social sustainability (Gössling et al., 2013). By incorporating TCC principles, destinations can set limits on tourism development to prevent overcrowding and minimize negative impacts on natural and cultural resources (García & Camus, 2018). This proactive management approach aligns with the goals of sustainable tourism by prioritizing the long-term preservation of destination assets.

Furthermore, stakeholder engagement plays a pivotal role in shaping sustainable tourism strategies (Hall & Lew, 2009). Engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes fosters ownership and commitment, leading to more effective implementation of sustainable practices (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). By integrating stakeholder engagement into the theoretical model, the research acknowledges the diverse interests and perspectives that influence tourism development and management. The inclusion of Tourism Clusters in the theoretical model highlights the importance of collaboration and cooperation among tourism businesses and stakeholders (Pike, 2006). Clustering encourages synergies, innovation, and resource-sharing, enhancing the overall competitiveness and sustainability of destinations (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2017). By integrating Tourism Clusters into the theoretical framework, the research recognizes the role of spatial organization in shaping tourism development patterns and outcomes.

Finally, the integrative approach proposed by the research offers a comprehensive theoretical model for sustainable tourism management. By considering the interplay between TCC, stakeholder engagement, and Tourism Clusters, destinations can develop more holistic and effective strategies to achieve sustainability goals. This integrated perspective acknowledges the complex and dynamic nature of tourism systems, highlighting the importance of collaboration, adaptive management, and continuous improvement in achieving sustainable outcomes.

6.3.6 Stakeholder Theory in Tourism Governance

Stakeholder theory, originally articulated by Freeman (1984), posits that organizations should create value for all stakeholders, not just shareholders. In the context of tourism governance, stakeholders include local communities, tourists, businesses, and governmental bodies. Engaging these diverse groups is crucial for sustainable tourism development as their interests and influences vary significantly (Byrd, 2007). Effective stakeholder engagement ensures that tourism strategies are inclusive, balancing economic benefits with social and environmental responsibilities. The inclusion of local communities in tourism planning and decision-making processes is essential for fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed. Local communities often provide unique cultural and historical insights that can enhance the tourist experience while preserving the cultural heritage of the destination (Okazaki, 2008). Their involvement can also mitigate potential conflicts arising from tourism development, such as displacement or cultural erosion, by ensuring that their needs and concerns are addressed.

Tourists, as key stakeholders, have a direct impact on the sustainability of tourism destinations. Engaging tourists through education and awareness campaigns can promote responsible behavior and support for sustainable practices. For example, tourists can be encouraged to respect local customs, minimize waste, and support eco-friendly accommodations and activities (Lee & Jan, 2019). By fostering a culture of sustainability among tourists, destinations can reduce negative environmental and social impacts. Businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and tour operators, play a significant role in shaping the tourism landscape. Their involvement in stakeholder engagement processes can drive innovation and the adoption of sustainable practices. Collaborative efforts among businesses can lead to the development of green infrastructure, the promotion of local products, and the implementation of energy-

efficient technologies (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Furthermore, businesses can act as intermediaries, facilitating communication between tourists and local communities to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation. Governmental bodies are responsible for creating and enforcing policies that support sustainable tourism development. Their role includes providing regulatory frameworks, funding, and resources to support stakeholder initiatives. By collaborating with other stakeholders, governments can ensure that tourism policies are comprehensive and address the needs of all parties involved. This collaboration can also enhance the effectiveness of tourism governance by aligning local, regional, and national strategies with global sustainability goals (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). In Cyprus, Efthymiou and Papatheodorou (2015) highlight the importance of government involvement in tourism governance, particularly in managing environmental impacts and promoting sustainable practices. Boukas and Ziakas (2014) further emphasize the role of stakeholder collaboration in addressing challenges such as seasonality and overdependence on certain markets. Their research indicates that a diversified and stakeholder-inclusive approach can enhance the resilience and sustainability of tourism destinations.

In conclusion, the application of stakeholder theory in tourism governance underscores the importance of engaging all relevant parties in the development and implementation of tourism strategies. By fostering inclusive and collaborative approaches, destinations can achieve a balance between economic growth, environmental preservation, and social equity. This holistic approach not only enhances the sustainability of tourism destinations but also contributes to the overall well-being of the communities involved.

6.4 Contribution to Practice

The practical contributions of this research are geared towards improving sustainable tourism management in Cyprus and potentially other similar destinations. By addressing these practical recommendations, Cyprus can significantly enhance its sustainable tourism management practices, ensuring that the tourism industry remains a viable and positive force for economic development while preserving the island's natural and cultural heritage. Similar destinations can also benefit from adopting these strategies, fostering a more sustainable approach to tourism management globally. The following practical implications are drawn from the findings:

6.4.1 Strengthen Education and Training

The research emphasizes the need for targeted educational initiatives and training workshops focused on TCC principles and sustainable tourism practices. These programs can enhance stakeholders' capacity to implement effective tourism management strategies, promoting long-term sustainability. It is suggested to develop comprehensive educational programs and training workshops focused on TCC principles and sustainable tourism practices for all stakeholders. These initiatives should aim to build capacity and raise awareness about the importance of sustainable tourism management. In fact, most of the key stakeholders who participated in the study, were unaware of TCC. This finding reveals the lack of 'destination management culture' in the industry. At the same time, it highlights the frequent opportunistic approach of different stakeholders (e.g., hoteliers), who are largely interested for high numbers of arrivals, and are rather motivated by higher profits rather than sustainable solutions. It is indeed a concern that several key stakeholders in Cyprus are not aware of the Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) tool and other related models. Lack of awareness among stakeholders can hinder the effective implementation and utilization of such tools in managing tourism development. To address this issue, it is crucial to enhance awareness and education regarding TCC and other relevant models. This can be achieved through targeted communication and engagement strategies that involve key stakeholders, including government authorities, tourism operators, local communities, and industry associations.

Initially, awareness campaigns and workshops can be organized to introduce the concept of TCC, its benefits, and how it can be applied to manage tourism sustainably. These initiatives can be conducted in collaboration with tourism associations, universities, and other educational institutions to reach a wider audience also recommended by Müller and Lemelin, (2016).

Secondly, the government can play a proactive role in disseminating information about TCC and related models. This can include incorporating TCC concepts into tourism policies and guidelines, conducting training programs for government officials, and establishing platforms for knowledge-sharing and best practices also endorsed by Korstanje (2019). Lindberg and Eijgelaar (2016) were the ones who strongly recommended that an effective strategy is the organization of awareness campaigns and workshops specifically designed to introduce the concept of TCC, elucidate its inherent benefits, and provide practical insights into how it can be applied to manage tourism sustainably. These initiatives can be conducted in close

collaboration with prominent tourism associations, reputable universities, and other educational institutions to ensure maximum reach and impact. By bringing together diverse stakeholders and sharing knowledge, these campaigns and workshops serve as platforms for exchanging ideas, fostering dialogue, and fostering a collective understanding of the significance of TCC.

As Dredge and Jenkins, (2017) similarly support, partnerships with international organizations, research institutions, and experts in the field can be established to provide technical support and expertise in implementing TCC and other relevant tools. These collaborations can help raise awareness, build capacity, and promote the adoption of sustainable tourism practices. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that information about TCC and related models is readily available and accessible to stakeholders. This can be achieved through the development of online resources, guidebooks, and publications that provide clear explanations of the concepts and practical guidance for their implementation. By addressing the lack of awareness among stakeholders in Cyprus, the adoption and utilization of TCC and related models can be significantly enhanced. This, in turn, will contribute to better management of tourism development, the preservation of natural and cultural resources, and the overall sustainability of the tourism sector in the country. To bridge this knowledge gap and foster a more informed and responsible approach to tourism development, it is imperative to prioritize the enhancement of awareness and education among stakeholders in Cyprus. This can be achieved through a range of targeted communication and engagement strategies that actively involve key stakeholders at all levels, including government authorities, tourism operators, local communities, and industry associations.

Increasing awareness of business interaction with the atmosphere ought to lead holiday destinations and business enterprises to behave environmentally responsibly as they acknowledge the implications of poor environmental performance (Bramwell & Sharman, 2002). The business sector plays a significant role, but in order for residents to understand its importance, they must be convinced of its positive impact. Tourism, as a business activity, has a profound impact on the global economy. Tourism-related businesses, particularly hotels, constantly strive to maintain a competitive advantage and a strong position in the labor market pyramid. The success of hotel units primarily relies on the service quality and personal interaction between employees and customers, making human capital the most essential factor

in their production and promotion (Deputy Ministry of Tourism of Cyprus, 2023).

Lastly, it is crucial to ensure that information about TCC and related models is easily accessible and readily available to stakeholders. Developing user-friendly online resources, comprehensive guidebooks, and informative publications that offer clear explanations of TCC concepts and practical guidance for implementation can empower stakeholders to integrate TCC principles into their decision-making processes. Dissemination of such materials through various channels, including government websites, industry platforms, and educational institutions, can create a robust knowledge-sharing ecosystem that facilitates the dissemination and exchange of TCC-related information. By addressing the current lack of awareness among stakeholders in Cyprus, the adoption and utilization of the TCC tool and related models can be significantly enhanced. This, in turn, will contribute to better managing tourism development, preserving the country's natural and cultural resources, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector also addressed by Jóhannesson and Sæþórsdóttir, (2017).

6.4.2 Enhancing Policy Support and Coordination for Transportation Carbon Credits: A Comprehensive Framework

Establishing a robust policy framework is crucial for the successful implementation of Transportation Carbon Credits (TCC) and fostering stakeholder collaboration. Government agencies should play a central role in facilitating dialogue, providing resources, and ensuring compliance with sustainability standards.

Strengthen Incentive Structures

Governments can enhance policy support by creating and strengthening incentive structures that encourage the adoption of TCC mechanisms. This could include tax benefits, subsidies, or grants for companies and individuals who participate in carbon credit trading. By providing tangible financial benefits, these incentives can significantly boost participation rates and ensure that sustainability practices are more widely adopted across various sectors. According to Stern (2007), financial incentives are a powerful tool for driving environmental policy adoption and can play a pivotal role in the widespread adoption of carbon credits.

Foster Public-Private Partnerships

Collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential for the successful implementation of TCCs. Governments should facilitate the formation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) to leverage the expertise, resources, and innovation of private companies.

These partnerships can drive the development of new technologies and practices that reduce carbon emissions. Additionally, PPPs can help create a more resilient infrastructure for monitoring and reporting carbon credits, thereby enhancing transparency and trust in the system. The World Economic Forum (2020) emphasizes that PPPs are critical for addressing complex global challenges such as climate change, as they combine the strengths of both sectors.

Implement Standardized Measurement and Reporting Systems

To ensure the effectiveness and credibility of TCCs, it is vital to have standardized systems for measuring and reporting carbon emissions and credits. Governments should work towards developing and mandating the use of uniform protocols and tools for all participants. This standardization will facilitate easier tracking of progress, comparison across different sectors, and the establishment of benchmarks for improvement. Furthermore, it will enhance the accuracy and reliability of data, which is critical for making informed policy decisions. According to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), standardized reporting frameworks are essential for consistency and comparability in sustainability reporting (ISO, 2018).

Enhance Inter-Agency Collaboration

Effective policy support requires seamless coordination among various government agencies. Establishing inter-agency task forces or committees can help streamline efforts, reduce redundancy, and ensure that all relevant departments are working towards common sustainability goals. These task forces can also be instrumental in addressing regulatory barriers, aligning policies across different sectors, and integrating sustainability into broader economic planning. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has highlighted that inter-agency collaboration improves the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs (GAO, 2005).

Encourage International Cooperation

Climate change is a global issue that requires international cooperation. Governments should actively engage in international forums and agreements to align their TCC policies with global standards and practices. Participation in international carbon markets and collaborative initiatives can provide access to a broader pool of resources and expertise. It can also help in learning from the experiences of other countries and implementing best practices in TCCs. The Paris Agreement underscores the importance of international collaboration in addressing climate change and sets a framework for global cooperation (UNFCCC, 2015).

Monitor and Evaluate Policy Impact

Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential for the success of TCC policies. Governments should establish mechanisms for regularly assessing the impact of their policies on carbon emissions and sustainability goals. This could involve the use of advanced data analytics, periodic reviews, and stakeholder feedback. By continually refining policies based on these evaluations, governments can ensure that they remain effective and responsive to changing environmental and economic conditions. The OECD (2019) recommends robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure that environmental policies are achieving their intended outcomes and can be adjusted as necessary.

In conclusion, enhancing policy support and coordination for TCC implementation requires a multifaceted approach involving incentive structures, public-private partnerships, standardized reporting, inter-agency collaboration, international cooperation, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. By adopting these strategies, governments can create a conducive environment for TCCs, ensuring that they contribute effectively to sustainability goals and the reduction of carbon emissions.

6.4.3 The rationale for tourism cluster creation

The potential for developing Tourism Clusters in Cyprus is significant. By leveraging the unique attributes of different regions, clusters can drive sustainable regional development, reduce overcrowding, and enhance visitor experiences. This approach can help distribute tourism flows more evenly, reducing pressure on popular destinations and fostering economic development in underrepresented areas. The research examined the rationale for creating Tourism Clusters as part of sustainable destination management. Tourism Clusters can promote collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and innovation among stakeholders, leading to more integrated and sustainable tourism development (Muller, 2011). By clustering tourism-related businesses, services, and activities, destinations can enhance competitiveness, diversify tourism offerings, and support local economies. The findings underscored the potential benefits of Tourism Clusters in fostering sustainable visitor management and contributing to the overall sustainability of the tourism industry in Cyprus.

The development of tourism in any destination necessitates the creation of specific tourism products and services, as well as the establishment of supporting infrastructure such as

transportation, accommodations, restaurants, and attractions. Understanding the interactions between these factors is crucial for the successful development of Tourism Clusters, which can determine the success or failure of cluster creation. To achieve a thriving tourism cluster, all stakeholders must share a common goal and work together, involving coordination and cooperation between public and private entities, as well as engagement with local communities. Sustainable and profitable tourism development can be realized when all parties collaborate and share the benefits. In the case of Cyprus, informal Tourism Clusters have emerged through collaboration among neighboring companies that produce complementary products and engage in joint promotion. This informal clustering demonstrates the potential for further cluster development in the tourism industry of Cyprus, which, with appropriate policies and support, could lead to enhanced economic growth and sustainability for the island's tourism sector (Castañeda et al., 2018; Vangelovski & Hristovski, 2019).

Studies have indicated that cluster-based approaches can effectively contribute to sustainable visitor management in specific destinations. For example, in the Chiloé Archipelago in Chile, the formation of a tourism cluster aided in addressing overcrowding and environmental degradation by promoting sustainable tourism practices and involving the local community (Castañeda et al., 2018). Similarly, in the Lake Ohrid region in North Macedonia, clusters facilitated collaboration among stakeholders and the implementation of sustainable tourism practices (Vangelovski & Hristovski, 2019). These findings emphasize that clusters can foster collaboration, information sharing, sustainable practices, and competitiveness, while minimizing negative environmental impacts.

In the tourism sector, various entities participate in the production, distribution, and facilitation of tourism services. Unlike products in other industries, tourism products are diverse, comprising multiple complementary components provided by suppliers from various public and private sectors. The consumption of tourism products occurs over time and across distances, involving interactions with numerous entities throughout the tourism experience. Therefore, effective relationships with suppliers who provide various components of the tourism product are essential to ensure customer satisfaction. Understanding the value chain and involving stakeholders in the tourism value chain is crucial for delivering a satisfactory vacation experience (Bieger, 1997; Kachniewska, 2006; 2011).

The successful development of social and environmental strategies in tourist destinations relies on effective public-private partnerships. While the public sector faces financial constraints and risk aversion, the private sector may struggle to provide comprehensive offerings. Collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors can bridge these gaps and promote sustainable tourism development. Moreover, the emergence of nature-based sustainable tourism impacts competition among tourism enterprises and destinations. Effective management of the natural environment is crucial to alleviate pressures and maintain competitive advantages (Augustyn, 1988). Globalization has had significant repercussions for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry, as large companies dominate the international travel and tourism sector. SMEs face challenges in collaborating with global players and establishing internationally competitive destinations. Technological advancements also pose challenges for smaller actors in the tourism sector. Clusters can assist in overcoming these challenges by providing a supportive environment and facilitating collaboration (Alcouffe & Coulomb, 1993).

Collaboration among tourism service providers within a tourism cluster should be based on formalized connections to achieve synergy. Clustering enables the integration of diverse entities with both non-profit and business profiles, resulting in the development of a competitive tourism industry with added value. Various forms of business partnerships exist in the tourism industry, including strategic alliances, joint ventures, consortia, holdings, coalitions, and franchising agreements. Partnerships extend to cooperation with government bodies, local authorities, local residents, research and development institutions, and business support.

The decision to engage in cooperation within a tourism cluster is driven by anticipated benefits, which include reduced business risk, economies of scale, lower transaction and operating costs, increased stability in a turbulent environment, protection against global competition, diversification of product offerings, additional funding, knowledge and information diffusion, enhanced flexibility, lobbying power, stronger influence on local authorities, more effective development, reduced seasonality, improved access to unique competencies, funds, and resources, tax optimization, broader value chains, increased local entrepreneurship, and enhanced tourism innovation (Hall & Williams, 2008; Su et al., 2016; Durko & Petrushevski, 2019). Collaboration among stakeholders in a tourism cluster enables organizational learning,

shared entrepreneurship, and the development of innovative capabilities (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Brinkhoff et al., 2017).

The stakeholders within a tourism cluster encompass various segments of the value chain, including hoteliers, tour operators, restaurant owners, store owners, museums, and others. While these companies operate autonomously, they represent different components of the overall tourist product. The value of the tourist product emerges when the customer arrives at the destination, which highlights the importance of clustering within a specific spatial capture of a concrete tourism destination (Gammelgaard & Thomsen, 2016; Gration et al., 2021). Formalized connections among tourism service providers in a cluster are essential to achieve the benefits of synergy. Clusters allow for the integration of diverse entities with different profiles, including businesses, non-profit organizations, local authorities, and research institutions. Collaboration among these entities fosters specialization, knowledge sharing, and information flow, leading to improved cooperation and coordination (Dredge et al., 2015; Durko & Petrushevski, 2019).

In the tourism industry, various forms of business partnerships exist, such as strategic alliances, joint ventures, consortia, holdings, coalitions, and franchising agreements. These partnerships extend beyond the private sector and involve cooperation with government bodies, local authorities, residents, and educational institutions. Intersectoral partnerships are favored by the European Union and contribute to innovation, entrepreneurship, and regional competitiveness (Hall & Jenkins, 2004; European Commission, 2013).

A tourism cluster comprises various systems with unique information infrastructures. Cluster members maintain their independence but form an integrated economic system with a shared objective. Entities within the cluster operate within a specific territory, but the cluster can also include enterprises operating in tourism-generating areas, even in distant markets. The selection of target markets, distribution channels, and promotion strategies requires close cooperation with entities representing the destination in the target market(s) (Gustafson et al., 2008; Cooper et al., 2018). The characteristics of a tourism cluster include a defined territory (Tourism Destination Area), diversification of entities, cooperation based on trust and knowledge sharing, strong business and social relationships, open membership, shared vision and mission, multiple benefits, involvement of local authorities, and continuous development

(Goetz, 2006; Durko & Petrushevski, 2019). The success of a tourism cluster depends on critical mass, diverse entities, infrastructure, cooperation, and coordination among stakeholders. Cluster initiatives should be supported by local authorities through public-private partnerships, providing financial support and creating an enabling environment. Positive effects of clustering include specialized and differentiated tourism offerings, increased income, job creation, improved quality of offerings, social capital accumulation, reduced transaction costs, and enhanced regional competitiveness (Sotiriadis et al., 2016; Gration et al., 2021).

The Danish model, which involves a cluster broker or animator taking charge of establishing the cluster and appointing members, has proven to be suitable in various contexts. However, in cases where there is resistance or inconsistent awareness of mutual benefits, it becomes necessary to identify and highlight the most active and leading units within the cluster. The coordinating role can be delegated to the local government, a public-private partnership, or a business environment institution. The involvement of a broker or leading entity is crucial, particularly in regions where competitive relationships prevail over cooperative tendencies (Bordas, 2001; Gration et al., 2021).

6.4.4 Foster Stakeholder Collaboration

Creating platforms for regular communication and collaboration among stakeholders is essential for sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. Forums, workshops, and joint projects aimed at addressing common challenges and sharing best practices can enhance collaboration. This approach will help Cyprus maximize the benefits of tourism while minimizing its negative impacts. Effective stakeholder engagement, supported by a strong understanding of Transportation Carbon Credits (TCC) and strategic tourism cluster development, is crucial for achieving a sustainable and resilient tourism industry.

Stakeholder collaboration often begins with Sustainable Destination Development, Marketing and Management Organizations (SDDMMO), local governments, residents, and tourists, forming a complex network of relationships. This network requires integration, leadership, and facilitation to manage conflicting interests, power imbalances, and varying stakeholder capacities. Good governance is essential for sustainable destination management (DM) and visitor management (VM). It involves decision-making processes that include public participation, consensus orientation, strategic vision, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency,

accountability, transparency, equity, and the rule of law (Eagles et al., 2013). Effective governance and management are particularly challenging where collaboration among key stakeholders is limited or absent. Collaborative arenas are crucial for creating access and empowerment for different stakeholder types, influencing collaborative outcomes (Jamal & Getz, 1999).

Top-down decisions typically occur in physical spaces, while bottom-up initiatives require collaborative spaces, which can be virtual for large, heterogeneous stakeholder groups. The rise of smart tourism destinations, driven by technological advancements and integration with other economic sectors, can simplify tasks throughout the sustainable DM and VM phases. Increasingly, initiatives are organized in open, flexible, multi-actor innovation spaces, such as innovation and living laboratories, coworking spaces, and innovation hubs (Nyström et al., 2014; Osorio et al., 2019). Jamieson and Jamieson (2019) argue that beyond a team approach, specific mindsets and a shared vision necessitate new competencies, including interdisciplinary perspectives, soft management skills, and technical abilities. This requires moving beyond convenient alliances to a holistic vision supported by financial investments (Millar, 2006).

Studies of regional innovation networks have shown limited learning and innovation impacts when knowledge work is outsourced to consultants or researchers, as lack of involvement restricts knowledge integration and stakeholder development (Eide et al., 2019). Instead, stakeholders should foster active collaborative engagement within co-managerial and academic environments that provide space for discussions, research, and meetings (Plichta, 2019). Within these collaborative environments, stakeholders' actions depend on factors such as perceived ability to act, situation-result expectations, expected results of their own actions, and anticipated benefits (Lupp et al., 2016). Effective destination management should focus on being well-managed rather than over-managed, with new forms of stakeholder collaboration presenting both opportunities and challenges (Pearce & Schänzel, 2013).

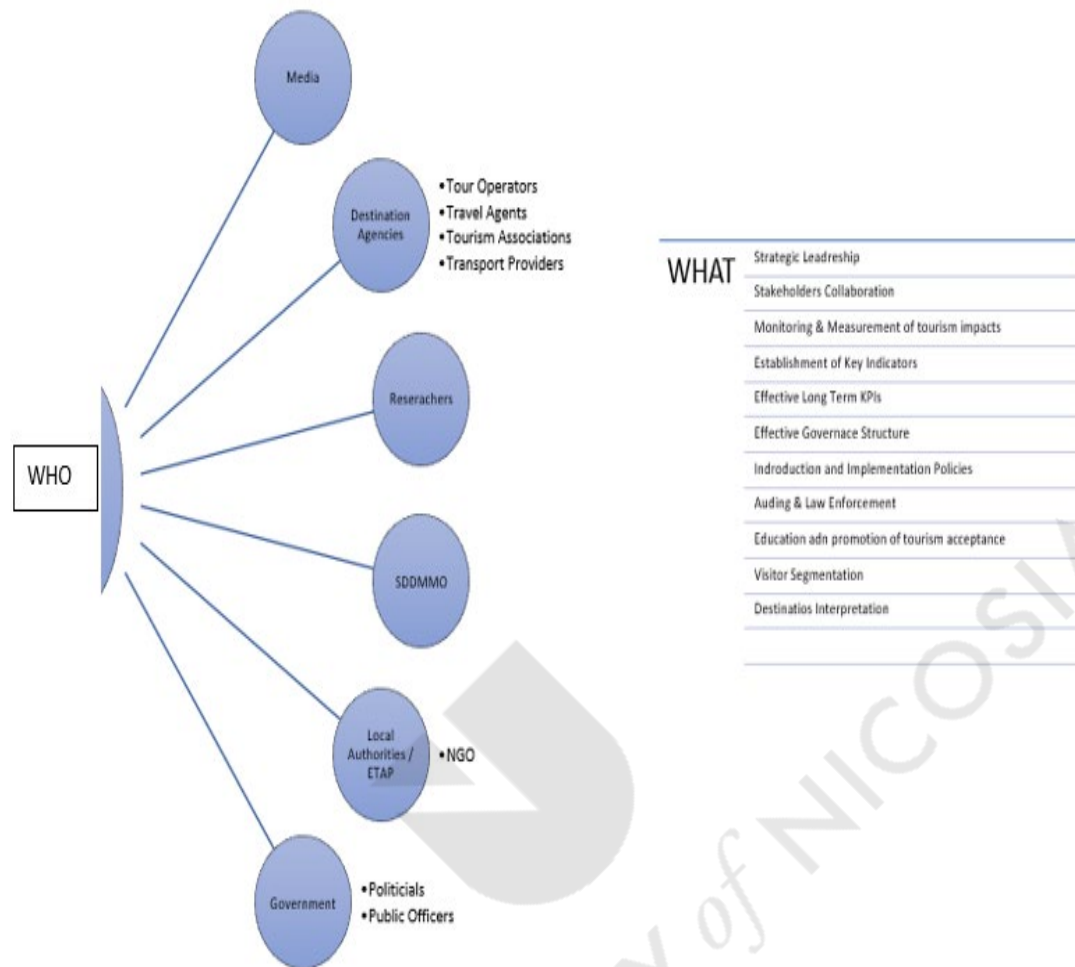
Research underscores the complexity of integrating various roles and responsibilities for sustainable tourism development, highlighting the need for both horizontal and vertical alignments. Horizontal alignment refers to the coordination among visitor management (VM), destination marketing (VG), destination management (DM), and overall place development, including other industries that can enhance or be influenced by tourism development. Vertical

alignment pertains to the coordination between regional, national (such as consistent destination marketing), and international (such as flight/cruise operators) tourism stakeholders. Greater alignment within a destination result in more cohesive and sustainable tourism development. Future research should explore the implementation and continuity of VM strategies and measures, examining how individual stakeholders align their organizational practices with VM policies and strategies.

Key stakeholders in tourism destination management include government authorities, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), tourism businesses, local communities, NGOs, academic institutions, and tourists. Government authorities establish policies, regulations, and frameworks for tourism development, oversee infrastructure development, and coordinate with other stakeholders. DMOs are responsible for marketing and promoting the destination, attracting visitors, and coordinating tourism development initiatives. Tourism businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and attractions, contribute to the overall visitor experience, invest in infrastructure, and generate economic benefits for the destination. Local communities provide cultural authenticity, participate in tourism planning, and benefit from job creation and improved infrastructure. NGOs focused on conservation and sustainable development work to protect the destination's assets and advocate for responsible tourism practices. Academic institutions provide valuable insights and expertise on tourism trends and best practices, while visitors shape the destination's development through their behavior and feedback.

Effective collaboration and cooperation among these stakeholders are essential for successful tourism destination management, leading to sustainable development, community empowerment, and positive visitor experiences.

Figure 64: “Stakeholders” Involvement



Source: Authors Own

Figure 64 above illustrates the key stakeholders involved in tourism destination management and outlines their roles and expectations for effective collaboration. Government authorities, operating at national, regional, and local levels, are responsible for establishing policies, regulations, and frameworks, as well as overseeing infrastructure development and coordinating efforts with other stakeholders. Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) focus on marketing and promoting the destination, attracting visitors, and orchestrating tourism development initiatives. Tourism businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and attractions, play a vital role in delivering exceptional visitor experiences, investing in infrastructure, and generating economic benefits. Local communities contribute cultural authenticity and participate in tourism planning, reaping benefits from job creation and improved infrastructure. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) advocate for conservation and sustainable

development, ensuring responsible tourism practices. Academic institutions provide insights and expertise on tourism trends and best practices, while visitors shape the destination's development through their behavior and feedback. Effective collaboration among these stakeholders is essential for sustainable tourism development, community empowerment, and creating positive visitor experiences, with each group contributing their unique resources and expertise toward a common goal.

6.4.5 Implement Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of Transportation Carbon Credits (TCC) measures and stakeholder engagement strategies in sustainable tourism. These mechanisms are not merely tools for accountability but are essential for adaptive management, allowing policymakers and practitioners to respond dynamically to emerging challenges and opportunities. Continuous assessment ensures that sustainable tourism goals are being met and that the strategies remain relevant and effective in a constantly changing environment.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems provide valuable feedback loops that inform decision-making processes. They help in identifying what works, what doesn't, and why. This feedback is critical for refining and improving TCC measures. For instance, if certain measures are found to be ineffective in reducing carbon emissions or enhancing stakeholder collaboration, they can be adjusted or replaced with more effective alternatives. The iterative nature of M&E supports a learning organization approach, where continuous improvement is embedded into the organizational culture (Argyris & Schön, 1996).

Furthermore, M&E systems enhance transparency and accountability. By systematically tracking progress and outcomes, stakeholders can be held accountable for their roles and responsibilities. This transparency builds trust among stakeholders, which is crucial for the collaborative efforts required in sustainable tourism development (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2014). In the context of TCCs, transparency in how credits are measured, reported, and verified is vital to maintain credibility and stakeholder confidence.

Research indicates that effective M&E mechanisms are integral to the success of sustainable tourism initiatives. For example, in their study on sustainable tourism practices, Buckley (2012)

emphasizes the importance of rigorous monitoring to ensure that tourism activities do not exceed environmental carrying capacities. Similarly, Byrd (2007) highlights that stakeholder involvement in M&E processes leads to more comprehensive and inclusive sustainability strategies, as it incorporates diverse perspectives and expertise.

In practice, implementing M&E systems for TCC measures involves several steps. First, clear and measurable indicators of success must be defined. These indicators should align with broader sustainability goals and be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Second, data collection methods need to be established. This may include quantitative measures such as carbon emission levels and qualitative data such as stakeholder satisfaction surveys. Third, regular reporting and review processes should be instituted to assess progress and make necessary adjustments (Hatry, 2013).

One of the significant challenges in M&E for TCCs is the need for reliable and consistent data. This requires investment in technology and training to ensure that data collection and analysis are accurate and meaningful. Advances in digital technology and big data analytics offer new opportunities for more sophisticated and real-time monitoring systems (Germann Molz & Paris, 2015). For instance, sensor networks and mobile technologies can provide continuous data on tourist activities and their environmental impacts.

In conclusion, implementing effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is a critical component of the theoretical framework for sustainable tourism and TCC measures. These mechanisms not only provide accountability and transparency but also facilitate adaptive management and continuous improvement. By incorporating rigorous M&E systems, stakeholders can ensure that sustainable tourism goals are achieved, fostering a more resilient and sustainable tourism industry.

6.4.6 Establish clear auditing procedures for public sector practices

To ensure the effective implementation of TCC and sustainable visitor management strategies, the study highlighted the importance of establishing clear auditing procedures for public sector practices. Auditing procedures can help assess compliance with sustainability guidelines, identify areas of improvement, and ensure accountability in tourism planning and management (Hjalager, 2010). Robust auditing mechanisms can contribute to the successful implementation of TCC and facilitate the integration of sustainable practices in the public sector. Developing

transparent auditing procedures for public sector practices in relation to tourism destination management is of paramount importance. These procedures play a crucial role in ensuring accountability, integrity, and the efficient utilization of public resources. It is imperative to establish clear guidelines and standards that can effectively assess and evaluate the performance and practices of public sector entities involved in the management of tourism destinations (Xiang et al., 2017). McCabe and Johnson (2013) highlight the importance of developing comprehensive auditing procedures in tourism destination management. These procedures should encompass various aspects such as financial management, planning and policy implementation, stakeholder engagement, sustainability practices, and overall governance. To establish effective auditing procedures, several key steps need to be considered. Firstly, clear objectives should be defined to promote transparency, identify areas for improvement, and ensure compliance with relevant regulations and policies. Additionally, it is crucial to develop criteria and standards that align with industry best practices, recognized standards, and applicable legal and regulatory frameworks.

Conducting regular audits of public sector practices in tourism destination management is a fundamental step in the auditing process. This involves conducting a thorough review of financial records, analyzing policies and procedures, engaging in stakeholder interviews, and evaluating the effectiveness of sustainable practices. By implementing these auditing procedures, transparency and accountability can be enhanced, areas for improvement can be identified, and compliance with regulations and industry standards can be ensured.

The outcomes of the audits should be documented in comprehensive reports that highlight the findings, identify areas of non-compliance or improvement, and provide practical recommendations to enhance the practices of public sector entities involved in tourism destination management. To ensure the effectiveness of the auditing process, it is imperative to monitor the implementation of the recommendations provided in the audit reports. Follow-up measures should be undertaken to ensure that relevant public sector entities take appropriate actions to address the identified areas for improvement.

Continuous evaluation of the auditing procedures is crucial to adapt to changing circumstances, emerging challenges, and evolving best practices in the field of tourism destination management. Regular reviews and updates will ensure that the auditing procedures remain

relevant and effective in achieving their objectives. By establishing clear auditing procedures, the public sector can demonstrate its commitment to transparency, effective governance, and responsible management of tourism destinations. These procedures will foster trust among stakeholders, enhance the efficiency of public sector practices, and contribute to the sustainable development of tourism destinations. The legislation governing the status of civil servants is the variable with the highest charge in the model of corrupt officials and in particular the complete impunity of the guilty which causes feelings of injustice to honest and competent public sector employees who follow their work and take care to follow the procedures provided by law.

The implementation of approved tourism policies is an essential element for the development of the tourism sector in Cyprus. However, the success of such policies largely depends on the efficiency and transparency of public procurement practices. To ensure that the public sector practices related to public procurement are transparent and efficient, it is crucial to establish clear auditing procedures. This will enable an independent assessment of the implementation of tourism policies and identify any irregularities or corruption that may exist in the procurement process. One of the significant challenges that Cyprus faces is the issue of corrupt officials, which can negatively impact the implementation of tourism policies. The model of corrupt officials shows that the variable with the highest charge is the legislation governing the status of civil servants. The complete impunity of the guilty can cause feelings of injustice to honest and competent public sector employees who follow their work and take care to follow the procedures provided by law. This can lead to a lack of motivation and demoralization among the public sector workforce. Therefore, clear auditing procedures for public sector practices related to public procurement can help to tackle corruption and ensure that tourism policies are implemented effectively. This will help to restore public trust in the government and enhance the credibility of the tourism industry in Cyprus. By promoting transparency and accountability in public procurement practices, Cyprus can attract more foreign investment and increase tourism revenue, ultimately contributing to the overall economic development of the country.

6.4.7 Sustainable Visitor Management through Clusters

The study explored the role of Tourism Clusters in facilitating sustainable visitor management practices. Clusters can serve as platforms for coordination, cooperation, and collaboration

among stakeholders involved in visitor management (Pike et al., 2010). By leveraging the collective resources, expertise, and knowledge within clusters, destinations can develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable visitor management strategies. The findings emphasized the importance of utilizing Tourism Clusters as effective mechanisms for sustainable visitor management, ensuring the long-term viability and resilience of tourism destinations in Cyprus.

The research highlights the critical role of increasing awareness and utilization of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) tools among tourism stakeholders in Cyprus. Effective stakeholder engagement and collaboration are pivotal for shaping sustainable visitor management practices. Addressing overcrowding, managing environmental impacts, and balancing economic benefits with sustainability considerations are key challenges that require comprehensive and collaborative efforts. Enhancing infrastructure, establishing clear auditing procedures, and leveraging the potential of Tourism Clusters can further contribute to sustainable destination management in Cyprus.

The study underscores the importance of awareness regarding TCC tools and models for enhancing tourism management effectiveness. A deeper comprehension of TCC empowers stakeholders to make informed decisions, maintaining a sustainable balance between tourism development and the conservation of natural and cultural resources (Hall & Jenkins, 2019). Implementing TCC models using key performance indicators (KPIs) offers a systematic approach to assessing destinations' carrying capacities. These metrics enable policymakers and tourism practitioners to measure the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of tourism, facilitating evidence-based decision-making and resource allocation.

In overcrowded regions, sustainable tourism practices and social education are essential to mitigate the negative effects of excessive visitor numbers, as supported by Sharpley and Telfer (2015). The study suggests a need for greater awareness and implementation of TCC tools among key stakeholders. By educating tourists and local communities about sustainable behaviors and cultural heritage preservation, Cyprus can foster a more harmonious relationship between visitors and host communities. This can be achieved through education and training programs aimed at increasing stakeholder understanding of TCC tools and their applications.

Moreover, there is a need for greater collaboration and communication among stakeholders to ensure effective TCC tool implementation, supporting sustainable tourism development. Effective destination and visitor management planning is necessary to address tourism overcrowding and environmental degradation. Collaborative efforts among stakeholders can develop and implement sustainable tourism practices that balance economic benefits with environmental and social considerations. Stakeholder involvement is paramount, engaging local communities, businesses, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations in decision-making processes, as highlighted by Bramwell and Lane (2012).

The Ministry of Tourism in Cyprus plays a vital role in advancing sustainable tourism practices through policy formulation, regulation, and strategic planning. The ministry can lead sustainability efforts, support destination management, and coordinate initiatives to enhance Cyprus's competitiveness as a tourism destination. Establishing clear auditing procedures for public sector practices ensures accountability and transparency, allowing regular evaluations of sustainable tourism initiatives and aligning public sector practices with sustainability goals (Ioannides & Li, 2021).

Creating Tourism Clusters enhances destination competitiveness, collaboration among businesses, and sustainable visitor management. Clusters concentrate tourism activities, services, and resources in specific areas, promoting synergies, resource-sharing, and comprehensive visitor experiences while minimizing negative tourism impacts (Gössling et al., 2013). Addressing seasonality through infrastructure development and effective resource management can mitigate the challenges associated with seasonal fluctuations in visitor numbers. Developing diverse tourism products and implementing strategies to attract off-peak visitors can contribute to a more balanced and sustainable tourism industry (Hall & Page, 2019).

In conclusion, the findings provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. By incorporating these findings into policy formulation, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement, Cyprus can achieve a more sustainable and resilient tourism sector. This sector would benefit the environment and local communities while ensuring the industry's long-term success. Sustainable visitor management is crucial for

minimizing negative impacts on the environment, society, and economy, and Tourism Clusters play a significant role in this effort. Studies, such as those by Okumus and Hemmington (1998) and Bulut and Kizildag (2014), have demonstrated that clusters Yalçinkaya and Güzel (2019) enhance competitiveness and efficiency in sustainable tourism management by promoting stakeholder collaboration and information sharing.

6.4.8 TCC Model Formation and Implementation using KPIs and Indicators

The findings highlight a critical gap in Cyprus's tourism management: the lack of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) models, despite acknowledging the negative impacts of mass tourism and seasonality in the Strategic Plan 2030. To ensure sustainable tourism, a comprehensive assessment of TCC is essential, encompassing environmental, societal, and economic dimensions. This should include evaluating the island's infrastructure such as transportation, accommodations, and public services to determine their capacity to meet tourism demands. Additionally, the socio-cultural implications of tourism, including impacts on local communities, cultural heritage, and residents' quality of life, must be considered. Understanding visitor behavior, environmental impacts, interactions with local communities, and spending patterns is also crucial. Involving diverse stakeholders, such as local communities, tourism operators, and government agencies, in the TCC assessment process is vital for obtaining a well-rounded perspective.

Currently, Cyprus lacks effective visitor management plans and tools, a gap identified in both literature and practice, which poses a threat to the country's largest economic sector by potentially leading to overcrowding and environmental degradation. To address this, the study emphasizes the importance of using Tourism Indicators, supported by Correia and colleagues (2020), for understanding and managing TCC. These indicators provide measurable data to assess the current state of a destination's capacity and guide decision-making processes.

Tourism Indicators offer an objective basis for evaluating TCC by utilizing quantifiable data to measure and compare various aspects of a destination, such as visitor numbers, resource utilization, environmental impacts, and socio-cultural factors. They enable continuous monitoring of key parameters related to carrying capacity, allowing destination managers to identify patterns, detect changes in visitor behavior, and assess the effectiveness of management strategies. Indicators serve as early warning systems, notifying stakeholders when

carrying capacity limits are being approached or exceeded, thus enabling timely interventions. They support informed decision-making by providing data-driven insights for tourism development, infrastructure planning, visitor management strategies, and policy formulation. Indicators also facilitate setting targets, establishing benchmarks, and evaluating the success of management interventions.

Bridging the knowledge gap requires educating stakeholders on the distinctions between Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Tourism Indicators. This can be achieved through training programs, workshops, and informational materials that enhance stakeholders' understanding of these measurement tools. Collaboration between industry associations, educational institutions, and tourism organizations is crucial for disseminating this knowledge and fostering a shared understanding among stakeholders (Gusmerotti et al., 2023; Natalia et al., 2023). Encouraging stakeholders to adopt best practices in performance measurement is vital. Organizations should establish clear frameworks and guidelines for selecting appropriate KPIs that align with their objectives. Destination managers and policymakers must also identify relevant Tourism Indicators that accurately reflect desired outcomes and impacts of the tourism industry.

Understanding the distinctions between KPIs and Tourism Indicators enables stakeholders to make informed decisions and contribute to the sustainable growth of the tourism industry. KPIs focus on internal organizational performance, while Tourism Indicators provide a broader perspective on the overall performance and impact of the industry (Crofts et al., 2022; Hussain et al., 2023). By promoting stakeholder awareness and effective measurement practices, the tourism industry can leverage these tools to drive success, enhance destination management, and ensure a sustainable future. Indicators also facilitate effective communication among diverse stakeholders involved in managing TCC. They provide a shared language for discussions and enable stakeholders to understand the current situation and the consequences of different management approaches. This fosters stakeholder engagement in collaborative endeavors and supports policy formulation by providing evidence for establishing guidelines, regulations, and zoning restrictions aimed at managing visitor flows, safeguarding resources, and ensuring sustainable tourism development. Indicators support continuous improvement processes in TCC management by identifying areas for enhancement and enabling adaptive management strategies.

In the academic realm, indicators play a pivotal role in understanding and managing TCC. They provide objective data for assessment, monitoring, and decision-making, fostering effective communication, supporting policy formulation, and guiding continuous improvement efforts. Utilizing indicators allows destinations to achieve a balance between tourism development and sustainability, ensuring the long-term viability of their tourism offerings.

The study emphasizes the importance of defining KPIs for successful TCC management. The relationship between KPIs and Tourism Indicators is integral to measuring and managing tourism performance and sustainability. Tourism Indicators encompass a broad range of measures to assess various aspects of tourism, while KPIs represent a subset selected to measure specific performance areas and progress towards predetermined goals within the context of TCC or overall tourism management. KPIs empower stakeholders to make informed decisions, set goals, and evaluate progress, ensuring tourism development aligns with sustainability objectives and avoids exceeding TCC limits. KPIs also assist in evaluating environmental impacts by monitoring indicators such as waste generation, water consumption, energy usage, and carbon emissions. They provide insights into the current status and effectiveness of TCC management, allowing stakeholders to assess the sustainability of current visitation levels and determine the need for adjustments.

Furthermore, KPIs support decision-making and policy formulation by providing data-driven insights. Analyzing KPIs assists in making informed decisions regarding tourism development, infrastructure investments, zoning regulations, visitor management strategies, and adjustments to TCC. KPIs ensure that policies align with sustainability objectives and enable effective management of tourism impacts. They are indispensable in TCC management, helping to establish sustainability thresholds and providing a standardized approach to measure and evaluate tourism activities' performance. The research also suggests avoiding aggregating indicators into a single TCC index, as different tourists have varying impacts. Instead, keeping individual information about specific issues prevents trade-offs between different aspects. Assessing TCC over multiple years can help evaluate the effectiveness of development policies resulting from sustainability assessments. Future research could explore scenarios based on existing development plans in the areas under investigation, such as local structure plans.

By implementing these strategies, Cyprus can better manage its tourism carrying capacity, ensuring sustainable and resilient tourism development that benefits both the environment and local communities.

6.4.9 Promoting Responsible Tourism and Community Harmony in Crowded Tourism Regions through Social Education

In overcrowded tourism regions, social education plays a vital role in promoting responsible tourism behavior, fostering understanding between visitors and local communities, and mitigating the negative impacts of tourism. Quality tourism education and training are essential for developing well-informed and responsible tourism professionals. Vassos Koilanis, President of PASYDIXE, emphasized the need for modern and competitive structures in tourism education to produce well-trained executives, highlighting that the tourism industry's quality depends on both services and the overall tourism consciousness of society (PASYDIXE, 2017). The branding of Cypriot tourism involves cultural challenges in the hospitality sector. Raising awareness about the impact of Cypriot culture on tourism is crucial for the successful reconstruction of the tourism product in Cyprus. Building intercultural communication skills among workers in the tourism industry is essential for providing niche products and enhancing tourist satisfaction by fostering understanding and appreciation of different cultures (Chatzistiriou, 2020).

To encourage responsible tourism practices, cultural sensitivity, and environmental conservation, it is vital to develop comprehensive visitor education programs, as supported by Higham (2019). These programs should be implemented through visitor centers, tourist information offices, hotels, and online platforms, providing information on local customs, traditions, and etiquette. Highlighting the importance of sustainable tourism development and the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity (UNWTO, 2019) can educate the public on the benefits of sustainable tourism and the negative impacts of overcrowding. This education program will encourage locals to support Tourism Carrying Capacity studies and make informed decisions regarding tourism development in their area (Schoenherr et al., 2023). Facilitating interactions between visitors and local communities fosters mutual understanding, respect, and appreciation. Initiatives such as cultural exchange programs, community-based tourism, and local festivals provide opportunities for visitors to learn about the local way of life, support local businesses, and participate in community activities. Establishing clear

guidelines for issuing new hotel bed licenses and appraising existing facilities, as recommended by Otivar and colleagues (2022), is essential. The implementation of Tourism Carrying Capacity studies should guide the issuance of new licenses based on the destination's carrying capacity rather than solely on economic considerations (Navrud & Mungatana, 2015).

Offering guided tours and interpretation services that highlight the natural, cultural, and historical significance of the region is a valuable tool for educating visitors. Knowledgeable guides can provide insights into environmental fragility, conservation importance, and local heritage preservation. Informative signage and brochures at popular tourist sites can serve as educational resources.

Launching targeted awareness campaigns is crucial for promoting responsible tourism practices among visitors and locals. Utilizing diverse communication channels such as social media, websites, signage, and pamphlets, these campaigns can emphasize waste reduction, sustainable transportation options, and respect for local customs. By highlighting the potential negative impacts of overcrowding, visitors can be encouraged to explore alternative attractions and visit during off-peak seasons (Gössling et al., 2013). Collaborating with local schools to incorporate tourism education into the curriculum is an effective long-term strategy. Teaching students about sustainable tourism, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation fosters a sense of responsibility toward their region. Organizing field trips to tourist sites enables students to witness tourism impacts firsthand and understand the importance of responsible behavior (UNWTO, 2019).

Providing training programs for tourism professionals, including tour guides, hotel staff, and transportation providers, is essential (UNWTO, 2018). These programs should focus on sustainable tourism practices, effective communication skills, and managing overcrowding situations. Empowering tourism professionals to act as ambassadors for responsible tourism allows them to provide accurate information to visitors and contribute to positive visitor experiences. Engaging in partnerships with tourism associations, local businesses, and community organizations ensures a unified message and maximizes the reach of educational campaigns. Involving stakeholders in the planning and implementation of social education programs fosters a sense of ownership and commitment, leading to more effective outcomes. Moreover, continuously monitoring and evaluating social education initiatives is crucial to determine their effectiveness, as emphasized by Prideaux and McNamara (2012).

Utilizing visitor surveys, feedback mechanisms, and data collection allows for assessing awareness, behavior change, and visitor satisfaction concerning responsible tourism practices. These evaluation methods provide valuable insights for refining and enhancing educational programs over time, ensuring their continued relevance and impact. Establishing open communication channels between tourism authorities, local communities, and visitors is essential for addressing concerns and identifying areas for improvement. Encouraging feedback and suggestions from all stakeholders fosters inclusivity and effective tourism management. Recognizing the challenges posed by gathering restrictions, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism of Cyprus should launch tourism education programs online for industry staff.

In conclusion, implementing Tourism Carrying Capacity studies is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of Cyprus's tourism industry. The recommendations, including developing a comprehensive social education program, establishing guidelines for issuing new licenses, regular monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder involvement, and a gradual implementation approach, will contribute significantly to the success of these studies. By adopting these recommendations, Cyprus can ensure that its tourism industry is sustainable, minimizing the negative impacts of overcrowding.

6.4.10 Advancement of the Ministry of Tourism

One significant challenge faced by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism in Cyprus is its reliance on the Ministry of Finance for a wide range of approvals. Currently, many decisions require support through legal and political processes. To address this issue, the current study suggests upgrading the Deputy Ministry of Tourism to a full Ministry of Tourism, a recommendation also made by Anastasiou (2019).

The Deputy Ministry of Tourism plays a crucial role in promoting and developing tourism in Cyprus. Upgrading it to a Ministry of Tourism can significantly benefit the country's tourism industry. One main advantage is the increased focus and attention on the tourism sector. With higher status and more resources, the Ministry can allocate more funding and manpower towards promoting and developing tourism through initiatives such as marketing campaigns, infrastructure development, and training programs for tourism professionals.

Upgrading to a Ministry of Tourism can also lead to enhanced collaboration with other government agencies and private sector organizations. With greater influence, the Ministry can coordinate efforts and develop more effective policies and strategies for tourism. Additionally, the Ministry would gain increased credibility and recognition internationally, allowing it to represent Cyprus at global tourism forums and conferences, thereby playing a more active role in shaping global tourism policies and trends. This can attract more investment and create more opportunities for partnerships with international tourism organizations and companies.

The transformation of the Cyprus Tourism Organization into the Deputy Ministry of Tourism in 2018 was a significant step towards advancing the tourism industry. Upgrading it further to a full Ministry would provide even greater support for promoting Cyprus as a tourist destination and ensuring the industry's sustainability. This upgrade includes restructuring the Ministry's departments to improve efficiency and effectiveness, allowing for focused attention on marketing, promotion, product development, and quality assurance. The Ministry would work to enhance the quality of tourism services in Cyprus and promote sustainable tourism practices, including improving infrastructure, promoting renewable energy sources, reducing waste, and supporting local communities. Additionally, it would focus on diversifying the tourism product by developing new niches such as cultural and ecotourism and promoting the island's rich cultural heritage.

The upgrade to a Ministry of Tourism would also provide more autonomy and authority, allowing it to make decisions and implement policies more swiftly and effectively. This increased capacity would enable the Ministry to respond quickly to changes in the tourism industry and capitalize on emerging opportunities (WTTC, 2020). A larger budget and more resources would allow the Ministry to undertake more ambitious projects, including infrastructure investments, marketing campaigns, and training programs for the local tourism industry. Elevating the profile and importance of the tourism sector within the government and among the general public could lead to greater awareness and support for the industry, attracting more investment and interest from both domestic and international stakeholders.

Moreover, a Ministry of Tourism would have more direct access to decision-makers and policymakers within the government, facilitating the implementation of policies beneficial to the tourism industry. This could include regulatory reforms, tax incentives, and other measures

designed to encourage investment and development in the sector. Upgrading to a Ministry of Tourism could enhance Cyprus's competitiveness in the global tourism market by demonstrating the country's commitment to the industry and its willingness to invest in its growth and development. This could help attract more tourists and establish Cyprus as a leading destination for tourism in the region.

In addition, embracing technological advancements is crucial for the upgraded Ministry to further enhance its capabilities. Leveraging technology, such as smart tourism practices and personalized services, can transform tourism destinations and enhance visitor experiences (Buhalis, 2019; Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015). This approach aligns with the broader industry trend of utilizing technology to create smart tourism destinations and deliver engaging experiences to tourists.

In conclusion, upgrading the Deputy Ministry of Tourism to a full Ministry of Tourism can significantly impact Cyprus's tourism industry and economy, enhancing its international reputation. By providing more resources, increasing collaboration, and raising its profile, the Ministry can promote sustainable tourism development and attract more visitors. This upgrade would enable the government to manage the sector more proactively and effectively, leveraging its potential for sustainable growth and development.

The comparison between a Ministry of Tourism and a Deputy Ministry highlights the higher status, greater authority, and increased resources typically associated with a Ministry. The Ministry of Tourism generally holds more influence, allowing for more ambitious projects and initiatives. It can make decisions and implement policies swiftly, respond promptly to industry changes, and capitalize on emerging opportunities. A Ministry also has greater credibility and recognition, enabling active participation in shaping global tourism policies and attracting international investment (Hall & Jenkins, 2018). Conversely, a Deputy Ministry operates within a more limited scope and with fewer resources, often requiring oversight and approvals from higher-ranking ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance.

In summary, a Ministry of Tourism generally carries more weight and influence compared to a Deputy Ministry, benefiting from greater authority, resources, decision-making power, credibility, and international representation. Upgrading the Deputy Ministry of Tourism in

Cyprus to a full Ministry is expected to drive the growth and development of the tourism industry while ensuring its long-term sustainability.

6.4.11 Addressing Seasonality through Infrastructure and Resource Management

Effective infrastructure and resource management are crucial for addressing the seasonality problem faced by tourism destinations. Implementing various strategies and approaches can attract visitors year-round and ensure the sustainability of the local tourism industry. One key strategy is diversifying tourism offerings. Infrastructure and Resource Management can encourage the development of diverse attractions, activities, and events that appeal to visitors in different seasons. To mitigate the impact of seasonality, Cyprus should diversify its tourism offerings beyond traditional sun and beach tourism. Emphasizing cultural, heritage, nature-based, and adventure tourism can attract visitors throughout the year (Hall, 2005). Developing unique attractions and experiences tailored to different market segments can help extend the tourism season. Promoting alternative tourism products, such as cultural festivals, outdoor adventures, nature-based tourism, and culinary experiences, can appeal to a wider range of visitors and mitigate seasonality's impact.

Investing in infrastructure is vital for managing seasonality in Cyprus. Improving transportation networks, including airports, roads, and public transport, enhances accessibility and encourages tourists to visit during off-peak periods (Tsotsou & Vassiliadis, 2019). Additionally, enhancing the quality of accommodation, recreational facilities, and tourist amenities attracts visitors even during shoulder seasons (Gössling et al., 2013). Improving transportation infrastructure and connectivity ensures that visitors can easily access the area regardless of the season. This includes maintaining efficient air, road, and rail connections and promoting public transportation options within the destination. Providing ample parking facilities and encouraging alternative transportation modes like cycling and walking can contribute to year-round visitation.

Developing all-weather facilities is another important consideration. Infrastructure and Resource Management should focus on creating and maintaining attractions and facilities that can be enjoyed regardless of seasonal variations. This may involve constructing indoor attractions, museums, galleries, and entertainment venues that provide sheltered and climate-

controlled experiences for visitors. By offering enjoyable experiences regardless of the weather, destinations can attract visitors even during off-peak periods.

Upgrading tourism infrastructure is another effective strategy. Infrastructure improvements can extend the capacity and functionality of tourism facilities. Upgrading accommodation establishments to include amenities suitable for different seasons, such as heated swimming pools or fireplaces for colder months, can attract visitors during the off-peak period. Promoting shoulder season tourism is essential in managing seasonality. Infrastructure and Resource Management should collaborate with marketing and tourism promotion agencies to actively promote travel during shoulder seasons. Offering incentives, discounts, or special packages during these periods can attract visitors who are more flexible with their travel schedules.

Collaboration with local stakeholders is crucial. Infrastructure and Resource Management can develop indoor sports facilities, wellness centers, shopping complexes, or indoor entertainment venues that offer various experiences regardless of weather conditions. Organizing special events, festivals, or cultural celebrations during the off-peak season is another impactful strategy. Collaborating with local communities to create unique experiences attracts visitors interested in local culture and traditions, contributing to the destination's appeal during off-peak periods.

Efficient resource management is vital to address seasonality challenges. By optimizing the allocation of human resources, tourism destinations can adapt their workforce based on demand fluctuations (Huang et al., 2019). This may involve implementing flexible work arrangements, training programs, and cross-sector collaboration to ensure a skilled and adaptable tourism workforce. Targeting niche markets is a valuable approach. By identifying and targeting specific niche markets that have different travel preferences and schedules, Infrastructure and Resource Management can help reduce seasonality. Focusing on niche markets such as wellness tourism, adventure tourism, or educational tourism and promoting relevant experiences and activities year-round can attract visitors interested in these specific offerings.

Effective collaboration among tourism stakeholders is essential for managing seasonality. Establishing partnerships between tourism businesses, local authorities, and community organizations can lead to joint marketing efforts, coordinated events, and the creation of

integrated tourism products (Hall & Williams, 2008). Such collaboration can help extend the tourism season by offering diverse experiences and promoting year-round activities. Engaging with local businesses, tourism associations, and community organizations allows Infrastructure and Resource Management to coordinate marketing efforts and create joint events or festivals that can help extend the tourism season. By working together, stakeholders can develop strategies to attract visitors during off-peak periods and maximize the destination's potential. Creating indoor or bad-weather activities and attractions is an effective way to draw visitors during the off-peak season.

Inventory management plays a crucial role in managing seasonality. Encouraging businesses to adopt dynamic pricing strategies, yield management techniques, and tailored marketing campaigns can help balance demand and supply throughout the year (Buhalis et al., 2005). Technology and data analytics can assist in forecasting demand patterns and optimizing inventory levels (Sigala et al., 2012). Managing seasonality in Cyprus tourism destinations requires a comprehensive approach that addresses infrastructure, resources, and inventory management. By diversifying tourism offerings, enhancing infrastructure, fostering collaboration, optimizing resource allocation, and implementing effective inventory management practices, Cyprus can mitigate the negative impacts of seasonality and achieve a more sustainable and resilient tourism industry. These recommendations are supported by research and best practices in tourism management, providing a foundation for successful seasonality management in Cyprus.

The practical contributions outlined in this blueprint for sustainable tourism in Cyprus extend beyond theoretical aspirations. They represent a call to action, a tangible guide for stakeholders to navigate the delicate balance between tourism growth and responsible management. As we envision a future where Cyprus's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and community welfare are safeguarded, the adoption of these recommended measures, coupled with the unwavering enforcement of sustainable tourism legislation, emerges as the compass pointing toward a harmonious and sustainable future for the island.

6.5 Limitations of study

This doctoral thesis aims to investigate stakeholder engagement for sustainable visitor management in Cyprus, focusing on Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters. While the study offers valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged.

Scope of Stakeholder Representation:

The research relies on qualitative methodologies, including semi-structured interviews and focus groups, to gather data from stakeholders. While these methods are effective for in-depth exploration of perspectives, they may not capture the full diversity of stakeholder views. Some groups, such as smaller local businesses or marginalized community members, might be underrepresented, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of the findings.

Geographical Coverage:

Given the constraints of time and resources, the study may focus on specific regions of Cyprus, which might not fully represent the entire island. Tourism dynamics and stakeholder interactions can vary significantly across different areas, and findings from selected regions might not be generalizable to all parts of Cyprus.

Temporal Constraints:

The data collection period is limited to a specific timeframe. Tourism trends and stakeholder perspectives can change over time due to various factors such as economic shifts, policy changes, or environmental events. Therefore, the findings may only reflect the situation during the study period and might not account for future developments or long-term trends.

Reliance on Self-Reported Data:

The study heavily relies on self-reported data from interviews and focus groups. Participants' responses may be influenced by social desirability bias, where stakeholders present themselves or their organizations in a more favorable light. This can affect the authenticity and accuracy of the data, potentially skewing the results.

Depth vs. Breadth of Data:

While qualitative methods provide deep insights into stakeholder perspectives, they might not offer the breadth needed to fully understand the complex dynamics of sustainable tourism

management. Quantitative data could complement the qualitative findings, providing a more holistic view of the issues.

Focus on Current Practices:

The research primarily examines existing stakeholder engagement strategies and practices. It might not sufficiently explore innovative or emerging approaches to stakeholder engagement that could be relevant for future sustainable tourism management. This could limit the applicability of recommendations to future contexts.

Cultural and Social Biases:

The study's findings are inherently influenced by the cultural and social context of Cyprus. Practices and perceptions of sustainable tourism and stakeholder engagement in Cyprus might differ from those in other regions or countries. Therefore, the generalizability of the conclusions to different cultural or social settings may be limited.

Implementation Challenges:

The recommendations provided are based on theoretical insights and stakeholder feedback. However, practical implementation of these recommendations may face challenges not fully addressed in the study, such as political resistance, funding limitations, or logistical issues.

Limited Longitudinal Perspective:

The study does not incorporate a longitudinal approach to track changes over time. Sustainable tourism and stakeholder engagement are dynamic fields, and long-term studies could provide deeper insights into how strategies evolve and their long-term effectiveness.

Impact of External Factors:

External factors such as global economic conditions, political instability, or global health crises (e.g., COVID-19) can significantly impact tourism and stakeholder engagement practices. The study might not fully account for these external influences, which could affect the sustainability and feasibility of proposed recommendations.

Acknowledging these limitations provides a more nuanced understanding of the study's findings and their implications. Future research could address these limitations by

incorporating broader and more diverse stakeholder perspectives, using mixed methods to combine qualitative and quantitative data, and adopting a longitudinal approach to capture changes over time. Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable insights into stakeholder engagement for sustainable tourism management in Cyprus, offering a foundation for further exploration and development in this critical field.

Stakeholder Engagement Challenges:

Despite advocating for robust stakeholder engagement, challenges may arise in ensuring the active involvement of diverse stakeholders, including government authorities, businesses, and local communities. Variations in commitment levels and differing priorities may impact the collaborative implementation of sustainable practices.

Cultural Sensitivity Challenges:

Emphasizing the protection of Cyprus's cultural heritage sites and artifacts requires a nuanced understanding of cultural sensitivity. The research may not fully capture the intricacies of preserving cultural heritage, and further investigation into the cultural nuances is essential for effective implementation.

6.6 Modeling Toward Sustainable Destination Management: An Integrated Framework for Tourism Development

The pursuit of sustainable tourism development represents a multifaceted endeavor that demands a delicate equilibrium between economic growth, environmental preservation, and social well-being. This research explores the integration of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) and Tourism Clusters within a conceptual framework, adopting the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) approach. This integrative model endeavors to cultivate a symbiotic relationship between these elements, laying the foundation for a comprehensive and sustainable tourism industry.

Tourism Carrying Capacity and Cluster Integration:

The development of a proposed model, intertwining TCC with Tourism Clusters, necessitates a nuanced understanding of how a destination's hosting capacity is shaped by the clustering of tourism-related businesses and attractions. This framework acknowledges the distinct components of both TCC and Tourism Clusters, recognizing their intricate interdependence.

Analysis of Operating Box and Stakeholder Engagement:

As an initial step, the Operating Box is introduced, encompassing components such as the tax system, legislation of public law, control mechanisms, state legislation, social acceptance, education, and legislation concerning corrupt employees. This comprehensive step is conceived as a tool to address issues like corrupt practices, corrupt employees, and societal education gaps. The proposed model asserts that this step will lead to the creation of the TCC model, taking into account variations in key performance indicators.

Triple Bottom Line Integration:

By applying the Triple Bottom Line framework to the relationship between Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters, destinations can embrace a holistic and balanced approach to tourism development. This approach ensures that economic benefits, social well-being, and environmental conservation are all duly considered in the pursuit of sustainable tourism practices within clustered destinations. The TBL framework, encapsulating economic, social, and environmental dimensions, intricately intertwines with the relationship between Tourism Carrying Capacity and Tourism Clusters. Integration of TBL principles equips destinations with the tools to adopt a balanced approach, addressing economic, social, and environmental considerations in tandem within clustered destinations.

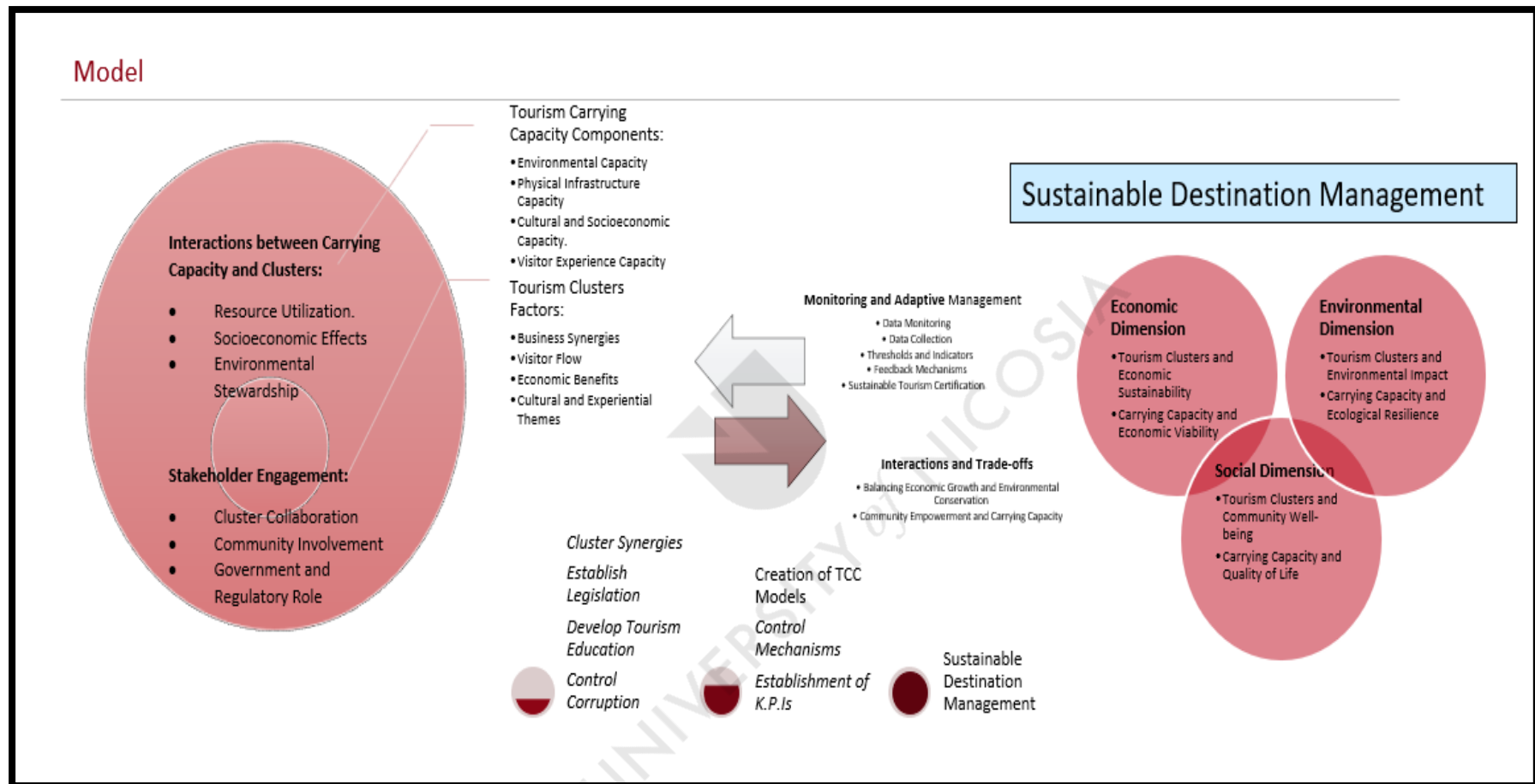
Recognition of Potential Benefits and Holistic Approach:

The proposed integrated framework recognizes the potential benefits of Tourism Clusters while emphasizing the imperative of respecting carrying capacity limits. This holistic approach strives to balance economic prosperity, environmental preservation, and social well-being, thus fostering a sustainable tourism industry. As destinations grapple with the complexities of tourism development, such frameworks offer a roadmap for responsible and resilient practices.

Quality Policies, Monitoring, and Adaptive Management:

The model as seen in the Figure 65 below, suggests that ensuring quality policies to prevent negative practices, coupled with continuous monitoring and adaptive management through mechanisms such as data monitoring, data collection, thresholds and indicators, feedback mechanisms, and sustainable tourism certification, can contribute to sustainable destination management (that currently, based on the findings, seems to be non-existent). Interactions and trade-offs, such as balancing economic growth and environmental conservation and promoting community empowerment while adhering to carrying capacity, are integral aspects of this proposed model.

Figure 65: Proposed Research Model



Source: Authors Own

Furthermore, based on the model (Figure 65), sustainable tourism development is a complex undertaking that necessitates a balanced integration of various components and factors. The interplay between carrying capacity and clusters, analyzed through resource utilization, socioeconomic effects, and environmental stewardship, underscores the importance of a comprehensive approach. Stakeholder engagement, Tourism Carrying Capacity components, and tourism cluster factors collectively contribute to a holistic framework for sustainable destination management. This integrated model aspires to harmonize economic prosperity, environmental preservation, and social well-being, offering a roadmap for responsible and enduring practices in the evolving landscape of tourism.

6.7 Conclusions

This thesis explores the critical role of stakeholder engagement in advancing sustainable visitor management in Cyprus, with a particular focus on Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) and Tourism Clusters. The research underscores the intricate dynamics among stakeholders and highlights the necessity for comprehensive, forward-thinking strategies to address the evolving challenges in the tourism sector. The findings and recommendations presented here offer a robust framework for enhancing stakeholder engagement and promoting sustainable tourism practices in Cyprus.

Key Contributions and Recommendations:

Enhancing Stakeholder Awareness and Implementation:

Future research should delve into the factors influencing stakeholder awareness of TCC tools and the challenges hindering effective implementation. Identifying these barriers can lead to the development of tailored awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives, fostering a more informed and inclusive tourism industry.

Comprehensive Understanding of TCC:

It is imperative to explore TCC comprehensively, considering ecological, social, and economic dimensions. Developing integrated models that encapsulate the nuanced relationships between carrying capacity and sustainable development will provide a holistic perspective for effective decision-making.

Interplay between TCC and Sustainable Development:

Research should examine how TCC models contribute to or impede sustainable development goals, balancing short-term economic gains with long-term preservation of environmental and socio-cultural assets.

Success Factors for TCC Models:

Investigating the success factors and challenges associated with TCC model implementation through case studies can offer valuable insights. Understanding best practices and lessons learned will shape effective TCC models for Cyprus.

Conditional Support for TCC Models:

Research should explore the contextual factors influencing stakeholder attitudes towards TCC models, considering economic, political, and cultural variables. This nuanced understanding can inform adaptable and context-specific TCC frameworks.

Defining Key Performance Indicators for TCC:

Future research should focus on defining universally applicable key performance indicators (KPIs) for TCC. Standardized metrics will facilitate consistent and comparable assessments across diverse destinations, offering a robust foundation for effective TCC evaluations.

Consensus on Tourism Overcrowding:

Addressing the lack of consensus among stakeholders on tourism overcrowding requires in-depth exploration of divergent perspectives and interests. Such insights can underpin effective destination and visitor management planning.

Deliberate Visitor Management Plan:

There is an urgent need for a deliberate visitor management plan that examines specific measures and strategies, taking into account factors such as carrying capacity, seasonality, and infrastructure development.

Stakeholder Disagreement and Conflicting Agendas:

Understanding the root causes of stakeholder disagreement and conflicting agendas on destination and visitor management planning is essential. Research should delve into power dynamics, interests, and external influences shaping divergent stakeholder perspectives.

Perceptions on Tourism Infrastructure and Services:

Assessing stakeholder perceptions on tourism infrastructure and services in Cyprus will guide future development plans aligned with sustainability goals.

Exploring Tourism Clusters and Stakeholder Dynamics:

Future research should evaluate knowledge, opinions, and implications of Tourism Clusters for sustainable development, as well as the dynamics concerning the centralization versus decentralization of the Cyprus Tourism Organization to the Ministry of Tourism.

Advancement of the Ministry of Tourism:

The study recommends upgrading the Deputy Ministry of Tourism to a full Ministry of Tourism to enhance focus, resources, collaboration, and international credibility. This advancement is expected to provide greater support for the development and promotion of Cyprus as a tourist destination and ensure the sustainability of the industry.

Infrastructure and Resource Management:

Addressing seasonality through diversified tourism offerings, improved infrastructure, and collaborative strategies is essential for sustainable tourism management. Investments in transportation networks, quality accommodations, and year-round attractions can help mitigate seasonality and enhance visitor experiences.

Public Awareness and Education:

Launching comprehensive education initiatives and public awareness campaigns to promote responsible tourism behavior is crucial. These efforts should target both tourists and local communities to foster a culture of sustainability and conservation.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Engagement:

Establishing a multi-stakeholder platform involving government authorities, tourism businesses, local communities, environmental NGOs, and academia is vital for dialogue and cooperation. Regular consultations and active participation in decision-making processes will ensure the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of tourism strategies.

Incentives and Certifications:

Implementing eco-labels and green certifications through legislative enforcement can motivate

tourism businesses to embrace sustainability. Promoting these businesses can enhance the destination's reputation and attract environmentally-conscious tourists.

Carrying Capacity Monitoring and Management:

Establishing robust monitoring systems and defining carrying capacity thresholds for popular tourist destinations is crucial. Legislative measures should enforce visitor flow regulation and the imposition of visitation caps to protect fragile ecosystems and cultural sites.

Legislative Enforcement:

Developing and enforcing legislation covering various dimensions of sustainable tourism is essential. Strict enforcement measures, including fines and penalties for non-compliance, will ensure adherence to sustainable practices.

6.7.1 Conclusion of the Whole Thesis

The comprehensive approach outlined in this thesis emphasizes the importance of sustainable tourism management in Cyprus. By integrating stakeholder engagement, infrastructure development, public awareness, and legislative enforcement, the study provides a detailed roadmap for achieving a balanced and sustainable tourism industry. The recommended measures are designed to harmonize economic growth with environmental preservation and cultural conservation, ensuring the long-term viability and success of Cyprus as a premier tourist destination.

Ultimately, the success of sustainable tourism in Cyprus hinges on the collective efforts of government entities, businesses, local communities, and tourists. By fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and a shared commitment to responsible practices, Cyprus can cultivate a sustainable tourism industry that effectively balances economic prosperity, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. This harmonious approach will safeguard Cyprus's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and community welfare for future generations, ensuring its status as an alluring and enduring destination.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form

Invitation letter sent to Outpatients in the form of Informed Consent

University of Nicosia

PhD program in Business Administration

Informed Consent Form for Stakeholders in Cyprus Invited to Participate in Research on 'Interpreting Tourism Carrying Capacity from a Socio-Cultural Perspective – The Case of the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus'

Dear Stakeholder,

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled 'Interpreting Tourism Carrying Capacity from a Socio-Cultural Perspective – The Case of the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus'. This study aims to investigate the necessity of a Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) model and the understanding of socio-cultural indicators in relation to tourism sustainability. The research is being conducted by Georgios Markatos, a PhD student at the University of Nicosia.

The research will involve focus group discussions and interviews, and you will be included in either the interviews or focus groups. The study is built upon two interconnected pillars. The first pillar focuses on the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity and its significance for sustainable development on the island of Cyprus. The second pillar explores the relevance of separating the island into Tourism Clusters and examines the relationship between these clusters and tourism carrying capacity.

The purpose of this research is to identify previous studies on TCC in Cyprus, assess its importance and feasibility, and consider the contributions of stakeholders in its implementation. The study recognizes the socio-cultural perspective as a potential driver in measuring TCC within the Tourism Clusters of Cyprus, either as a significant measurement tool or as part of a broader multi-model approach. To gain a deeper understanding of these aspects, a series of questions will be used during the interviews or focus group discussions.

In a recent study on the National Tourism Strategy, it was observed that there is no clear reference to indicators measuring tourism capacity. However, the study highlights the benefits of clustering and suggests the establishment of Cluster Management Units for efficient operation. It emphasizes that tourism infrastructure and interventions should align with the carrying capacity of the region, taking into account socio-cultural, economic, and environmental constraints (Saveriades, 2000, p. 149; Epler

Wood et al., 2019).

Please note that the results of this research will be treated with full anonymity. After data analysis, all documents will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality. During the interviews, if there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, you may skip them without any issue. All information shared will be strictly confidential, and your responses will only be accessible by the researcher. Your answers will be identified by a numerical code, and no names or personal information will be disclosed in the dissemination of results or use of findings.

We would like to express our gratitude for your valuable assistance on behalf of myself and my supervisors, Assistant Professor Leonidas Efthimiou, Assistant Professor Evi Eftychiou, and Professor Yioula Melanthioou.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Georgios Markatos

PhD Candidate

School of Business and Management

University of Nicosia



Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

Evaluation form – Focus Groups

Please rate the following suggestions rating from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)	1	2	3	4	5
The focus group was better than expected.					
The topic of discussion was interesting.					
The topic of interest was gladly discussed with industry experts.					
We have been given enough time to discuss.					
The facilitator encouraged overall participation.					
I was given the opportunity to express my opinion.					
I felt like I was listening.					
The focus group is a good way to look at and further explore such issues.					
I would like to join a next focus group.					

	Wonderful	Good	Moderate	Bad	Boring
Overall, the team focus was					
The coordinator was					

Was there anything you think we could have discussed and neglected?

Appendix 3: Literature DB

Author(s) last name, first initial Publication date Title of article or chapter / Book title / Journal title / Database / Library / URL / DOI/ Keyword search / Document Type / Knowledge Type

[illegible]

Appendix 4: Literature Summary:

Year			Publication setting	Count	Percentage
Oldest	2017		Academic	114	93%
Newest	2020		Practitioner	8	7%
Average	2019		Mixed	0	0%
			Other	0	0%
Document Types	Count	Percentage	Totals:	122	100%
Artwork	0	0%			
Audio Recording	0	0%	Knowledge Type	Count	Percentage
Bill	0	0%	Theoretical	235	96%
Blogpost	0	0%	Empirical	11	4%
Book	2	1%	Mixed	0	0%
Book Section	11	4%	Other	0	0%
Case	0	0%	Totals:	246	100%
Computer Program	1	0%			
Conference Paper	3	1%	Methodology		
Dictionary Entry	0	0%	Qualitative	1	100%
Document	0	0%	Quantitative	0	0%
Email	0	0%	Mixed	0	0%
Encyclopedia Artic	0	0%	N/A	0	0%
Film	0	0%	Totals:	1	100%
Forum Post	3	1%			
Hearing	0	0%	Keyword Search	Count	Percentage
Instant Message	0	0%	Tourism Carrying Capacity	87	49%
Interview	30	10%	Tourism Indicators Environmental Impact Study	8	4%
Journal Article	235	78%	Spatial Tourism	4	2%
Letter	1	0%	Destination Management & Tourism Developmen	18	10%
Magazine Article	0	0%	Sustainable Tourism	20	11%
Manuscript	0	0%	Social Carrying Capacity	19	11%
Map	0	0%	DMOs	23	13%
Newspaper Article	2	1%	Tourism Clusters	29	16%
Note	0	0%	Over Tourism and AirBnB	27	
Patent	0	0%	Totals:	235	100%
Podcast	0	0%	Database	Count	Percentage
Presentation	0	0%		0	
Radio Broadcast	0	0%		0	
Report	9	3%		0	
Statute	0	0%		0	
Thesis	5	2%		0	
TV Broadcast	0	0%		0	
Video Recording	0	0%		0	
Webpage	0	0%	Totals:	0	0%
Other	0	0%			
Totals:	0	100%			

Appendix 5: Interview Guide

"Enhancing Tourism Carrying Capacity Awareness and Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Visitor Management: The Role of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus"
<u>Interview Guide:</u>
<u>Introductory:</u>
The foundation of this research has essentially two pillars that are inextricably linked. The first pillar is the concept of Tourism Carrying Capacity(TCC) and its importance in the development of sustainability on the island of Cyprus. The second pillar focuses on the significance of the separation of the island into Tourism Clusters and the intricate relationship between these two elements.
The rationale of this research is to identify previous studies on TCC for the island, explore the importance of its existence, and assess its feasibility for implementation while considering the invaluable contributions of stakeholders. Moreover, it aims to underscore the role of the socio-cultural perspective as a driving force in TCC within Cyprus Tourism Clusters, which can serve as a significant measurement tool of TCC or as part of a more comprehensive "multi-model." To embark on this journey, a series of questions have been designed to help us better understand the complex landscape we are investigating.
In a recent study on the National Tourism Strategy for Cyprus, where the purpose was to provide the framework for conducting an open consultation on the new National Tourism Strategy for the country until 2030, some clear positions were identified for the first time. Surprisingly, there was no clear reference to indicators measuring tourism capacity. However, the study emphasized the role of clusters in the efficient operation of tourism management. The development of tourism infrastructure and interventions was underscored as needing alignment with the carrying capacity of the region, taking into account socio-cultural, economic, and environmental constraints (Saveriades, 200, p. 149; Epler Wood et al., 2019).
This research will focus on one dimension of tourism carrying capacity, specifically emphasizing socio-cultural carrying capacity. The potential title for this exploration is "Interpretation of the Carrying Capacity of Tourism from a Socio-Cultural Perspective - The Case of the Tourist Groups of Cyprus." The research aims to shed light on the intricate interplay between TCC and the role of Tourism Clusters in achieving sustainable visitor management in Cyprus. The interview questions included in this guide will provide insights into the various dimensions of this complex relationship and the perspectives of key stakeholders who influence it.
<u>Thematic Areas:</u>
<u>Thematic Area 1: Enhancing Awareness and Understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity(TCC) Models and Their Implementation:</u>
• How would you describe the current level of awareness and understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity(TCC) among key stakeholders in Cyprus?
• Is the term T.C.C. known to you? Has there been a study in the past regarding Tourism Carrying Capacity in Cyprus? If so, to what extent has it been addressed or examined and implemented? Are there any existing TCC models in place, and do you believe they are satisfactory, or should a combination of models be created? If not, why do you believe such a model has not been developed? Do you consider it necessary to create models for measuring tourist capacity?
• Can you provide insights into past studies on T.C.C. for Cyprus and the extent to which these studies have been implemented?
• If Yes: Can you share any examples of successful TCC model implementations in Cyprus or elsewhere and the outcomes achieved?

In your opinion, what does a comprehensive understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity(TCC) entail, and why is it important for sustainable tourism management in Cyprus?
If T.C.C. models exist, can you share information about their implementation and success? If not, what were the reasons for not implementing such models?
What strategies or initiatives have been implemented or proposed to enhance awareness and knowledge sharing related to TCC within Tourism Clusters in Cyprus?
<u>Thematic Area 2: The Significance of Sustainable Tourism and Over-Crowding:</u>
Unpacking the Notions of Tourism Sustainability and Over-Tourism
How do you understand the terms tourism sustainability and Over-Crowding?
Is the existence of any model important? Do you know of any other models that could be implemented?
What is the connection between TCC and sustainability?
Can you provide insights into past studies related to sustainable tourism development in Cyprus?
<u>Thematic Area 3: Factors Influencing TCC Models and Stakeholder Perspectives:</u>
Factors Influencing TCC Models and the Role of Stakeholders
The concept of recreational carrying capacity includes various variables such as physical, environmental, financial, socio-cultural, infrastructure, and perceptual carrying capacity. In your opinion, what criteria should be considered for creating a TCC model?
Which of these variables could be implemented, and why? Which variables are the most important?
Are there any conditions or prerequisites that you believe need to be met before stakeholders would support the creation of a TCC model in Cyprus?
<u>Thematic Area 4: Social Carrying Capacity and Community Perspectives:</u>
How do you understand the concept of social carrying capacity (SCC) in the context of tourism? Are there specific criteria and parameters that need to be considered when measuring SCC in various Tourism Clusters in Cyprus?
Based on Cypriot tourism culture and tourism education, how do you think the local community perceives tourists and their presence in the area?
Do you believe the psychological carrying capacity of residents is a significant factor in determining SCC?
How can social education and awareness campaigns contribute to promoting responsible tourism and community harmony in crowded tourism regions of Cyprus?

• . How do stakeholders from the categories of locals, tourism, culture, and education perceive their roles and responsibilities in contributing to sustainable development, and are there tensions or conflicts among these perspectives?
Thematic Area 5: The Role of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus:
• Can you provide an overview of the concept of Tourism Clusters and their role in the tourism industry in Cyprus?
• How would you respond to the idea of creation of Tourism Clusters? Do you believe it is feasible and necessary?
• How do Tourism Clusters contribute to the sustainable management of visitor activities and experiences in Cyprus?
• Do clusters actual exist in Cyprus?
• If you were tasked with the creation of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus, what criteria and methods would you use to establish these clusters effectively?
• What is your perspective on the idea of categorizing tourism destinations into clusters in Cyprus, and do you believe there is potential for further division based on specific thematic tourism types?
• From your perspective, what are the key areas where Tourism Clusters in Cyprus can further enhance their role in sustainable visitor management and TCC awareness?
• What recommendations would you offer for improving the effectiveness of Tourism Clusters in achieving these goals?
Subtheme - Stakeholder Engagement in Tourism Clusters:
• What is the level of stakeholder engagement and collaboration within Tourism Clusters in Cyprus?
• Can you share examples of successful stakeholder engagement initiatives within Tourism Clusters?
• What are the main challenges that stakeholders face when collaborating within Tourism Clusters in Cyprus?
• In your opinion, what opportunities do Tourism Clusters present for addressing visitor management issues and achieving sustainable tourism goals?
Subtheme - Measuring TCC in Tourism Clusters:
• How is Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) measured and assessed within Tourism Clusters in Cyprus?
• What key performance indicators (KPIs) or metrics are commonly used to gauge TCC within these clusters?

How crucial are Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and indicators in defining and measuring TCC in Cyprus? Can you share examples of relevant KPIs?
<u>Thematic Area 5: Stakeholder Perceptions of Sustainable Visitor Management and Decision making:</u>
How do stakeholders within Tourism Clusters perceive the importance of sustainable visitor management for the overall tourism industry in Cyprus?
Are there varying perspectives on the role of TCC in achieving sustainability goals?
In your experience, to what extent does awareness of TCC influence the decision-making processes of stakeholders within Tourism Clusters?
Could you describe the main areas of disagreement or conflicting agendas among stakeholders when it comes to destination and visitor management planning in Cyprus?
Could you share instances of decisions or policies that have been shaped by TCC considerations, or cases where such decisions were abandoned due to challenges arising from stakeholder competence or expertise?
How do various stakeholders perceive the goals and priorities of destination and visitor management planning in Cyprus differently?
<u>Subtheme - Collaboration Among Diverse Stakeholders:</u>
How do Tourism Clusters facilitate collaboration and communication among diverse stakeholders, including government bodies, local communities, and businesses?
Are there challenges or conflicts that arise from this diversity, and how are they addressed?
How do stakeholders within Tourism Clusters balance the pursuit of economic benefits with concerns related to environmental sustainability?
How do you view the dynamics between centralization and decentralization in the transformation of the Cyprus Tourism Organization (C.T.O.) into the Ministry of Tourism? What implications do you foresee for Tourism Clusters and the decision-making process?
<u>Subtheme - Balancing Economic Benefits and Environmental Concerns:</u>
Can you share specific examples of initiatives that have successfully balanced these interests?
Is there a consensus among key stakeholders regarding the issues of overcrowding, over-tourism, and environmental degradation in certain areas of Cyprus? What are the primary points of agreement or disagreement?
<u>Thematic Area 6: Measuring Success and Outcomes:</u>
What criteria or measures are used to evaluate the success of Tourism Clusters in achieving sustainable visitor management and enhancing TCC awareness in Cyprus?

• Can you describe any notable outcomes or positive impacts attributed to the efforts of Tourism Clusters in this regard?
Subtheme - Future Directions and Recommendations:
• Looking ahead, what are your recommendations for enhancing awareness and understanding of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) and improving stakeholder engagement in the context of Tourism Clusters in Cyprus?
• In your view, what are the most pressing challenges or areas of improvement that need to be addressed for achieving sustainable visitor management through TCC in Cyprus?
• How can Tourism Clusters play a more significant role in addressing the challenges related to TCC awareness and stakeholder engagement in Cyprus? What specific steps or initiatives do you recommend?
• From your perspective, what are the key areas where Tourism Clusters in Cyprus can further enhance their role in sustainable visitor management and TCC awareness? Can you offer recommendations for specific actions?
• What strategies or initiatives would you suggest to promote responsible tourism and community harmony in crowded tourism regions through social education, with a focus on Tourism Clusters in Cyprus?
• How can the government and tourism authorities in Cyprus improve their support and involvement in enhancing TCC awareness and stakeholder engagement within Tourism Clusters?
• Do you have any specific recommendations for improving the integration of TCC considerations into the decision-making processes of Tourism Clusters and related stakeholders?
• What collaborative efforts do you recommend for bringing various stakeholder groups together within Tourism Clusters to work towards sustainable visitor management and TCC awareness?
• In your opinion, should there be regulatory changes or policy adjustments to facilitate the implementation of TCC models and sustainable visitor management practices in Cyprus? If so, what changes or adjustments would you recommend?
• What steps should be taken to enhance the education and training of stakeholders, including local communities, in Cyprus, to better understand and support TCC principles and sustainable tourism practices?
• Looking at the broader tourism industry in Cyprus, what measures do you recommend for achieving a balance between economic benefits and environmental sustainability through TCC and Tourism Clusters?
Thank You

Appendix 6: Aim, Research Objectives and Findings

Aim	Research Objectives	Research Questions	Findings Title	Findings Summary	Collection Methods Data
"Synergies in Action: Integrating Regional Tourism Clusters for Sustainable Tourism in Cyprus" - The Investigation of integrating regional tourism clusters into the tourism carrying capacity (TCC) strategy in Cyprus and to it explore stakeholder engagement, aligning TCC with cluster goals and identifying an appropriate TCC model	1. To examine in depth the concept of T.C.C and its possible application in Cyprus.	What is the definition of T.C.C and how has it been applied in the Cypriot tourism industry as part of Destination and Tourist Management? What are the key principles and components of T.C.C in Theory and Practice? What are the benefits and limitations of using T.C.C in tourism planning and policy actions? How has T.C.C been applied in the context of sustainable tourism development in Cyprus? What are the success stories of T.C.C in the tourism industry, and what factors contribute to their success? What are the challenges and barriers to the implementation of T.C.C in the Cypriot tourism industry, and how can they be addressed? What are the motivations for understanding the sociocultural perspective? How does the perception of overcrowding affect the social impacts of tourism on local residents in popular tourist destinations in Cyprus?	"Assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) Models and Visitor Management Strategies in Cyprus: A Current State Analysis"	The findings suggest that no TCC models are currently being applied in Cyprus. While the strategic Plan 2030 recognises the negative impact of mass tourism and seasonality in Cyprus, no actual visitor management plan and/or tools are currently being utilised.	Indepth Interviews (Semi-structured) & Focus Groups
		What are the challenges and barriers to the implementation of T.C.C in the Cypriot tourism industry, and how can they be addressed? What are the motivations for understanding the sociocultural perspective? How does the perception of overcrowding affect the social impacts of tourism on local residents in popular tourist destinations in Cyprus?	"Gap in Awareness and Implementation of Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) Tool among Key Stakeholders"	In fact, several key stakeholders are not aware of the TCC tool and other related models.	
	2. To examine the need for the stakeholders' participation, contribution, and perceptions of the development of a generalized operational Destination Management (T.C.C) tool in support of tourism planning and policy actions.	What is the current level of stakeholder participation in tourism planning and policy actions in Cyprus? What are the perceived benefits and challenges of stakeholder participation in the development of a generalized operational Destination Management tool? How can stakeholder contributions be effectively integrated into the development of a T.C.C tool? What are the key stakeholder perceptions of the current state of tourism planning and policy actions in Cyprus? What specific elements should be included in a T.C.C tool to ensure its effectiveness in promoting sustainable tourism development in Cyprus?	"Consensus among Key Stakeholders on Tourism Overcrowding and Environmental Degradation in Certain Areas"	At the same time, important stakeholders agree that the tourism capacity in some areas has been exceeded, resulting in overcrowding and environmental degradation.	
		What are the current cultural and visitor management practices in Cyprus? How do different stakeholder groups perceive the current cultural and visitor management practices in Cyprus? What are the gaps or areas for improvement in the current cultural and visitor management practices in Cyprus? What are the effective strategies for promoting cultural sustainability and visitor management planning in Cyprus? How feasible and acceptable are these strategies to different stakeholder groups? What are the potential benefits and challenges of implementing these strategies in Cyprus?	"Urgent Need for a Deliberate Visitor Management Plan to Mitigate Negative Impacts on the Cypriot Tourism Industry"	Such situations are likely to have a negative impact on the Cypriot tourism industry, if not managed appropriately as part of a systematic and deliberated visitor management plan.	
	3. To identify effective strategies for promoting cultural sustainability and visitor management planning in Cyprus, and assess their feasibility and acceptability to different stakeholder groups. To assess the current state of destination and visitor management planning in Cyprus and identify any gaps or areas for improvement.	What are the current cultural and visitor management practices in Cyprus? How do different stakeholder groups perceive the current cultural and visitor management practices in Cyprus? What are the gaps or areas for improvement in the current cultural and visitor management practices in Cyprus? What are the effective strategies for promoting cultural sustainability and visitor management planning in Cyprus? How feasible and acceptable are these strategies to different stakeholder groups? What are the potential benefits and challenges of implementing these strategies in Cyprus?	"Stakeholder Disagreement on Destination and Visitor Management Planning in Cyprus: Conflicting Agendas and Interests"	Also, it seems to be a disagreement among stakeholders concerning destination management and visitor management planning (including TCC), which stem by stakeholders' differing agenda and interests.	
		What are the main challenges facing the sustainable and economically viable development of the tourism industry in Cyprus? How can stakeholder engagement be improved in order to promote sustainable tourism development in Cyprus? What are the most effective strategies for sustainable tourism development in Cyprus, taking into account the long-term impact on the economy and the environment? How can policies and regulations be developed to support sustainable tourism development in Cyprus, and how can they be effectively implemented? What are the most important factors to consider when planning for the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry in Cyprus?	"Towards Sustainable Tourism Development: Stakeholder Perspectives on Culture and Visitor Management Planning in Cyprus"	Other stakeholders would prefer to adopt a more sustainable development approach. In the same vein, some stakeholders would like to see the re-renaissance of a more tourism-centred culture, which also a vital component of visitor management planning and sustainable development.	
	4. To make recommendations for promoting a sustainable and economically viable tourism industry in Cyprus based on the findings of the study, with a focus on stakeholder engagement, sustainable tourism development, and long-term planning.	What are the main challenges facing the sustainable and economically viable development of the tourism industry in Cyprus? How can stakeholder engagement be improved in order to promote sustainable tourism development in Cyprus? What are the most effective strategies for sustainable tourism development in Cyprus, taking into account the long-term impact on the economy and the environment? How can policies and regulations be developed to support sustainable tourism development in Cyprus, and how can they be effectively implemented? What are the most important factors to consider when planning for the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry in Cyprus?	"Diverse Stakeholder Perceptions on the Economic Impacts of Tourism in Cyprus"	Also, the stakeholders seem to have varying perceptions on the economic benefits and challenges of tourism.	
		What are the key stakeholder groups that have an impact on tourism development in Cyprus, and what are their perceptions of the current state of the tourism industry? How do the perceptions of different stakeholder groups differ, and what factors contribute to these differences? What are the specific negative perceptions held by stakeholders about tourism development in Cyprus, and how do these perceptions impact the industry? What strategies can be employed to address these negative perceptions and promote positive perceptions among stakeholders? How can stakeholder engagement be improved to ensure that perceptions are taken into account in future tourism planning and policy actions?	"Profit-Driven Approach to Tourism: Stakeholder Perspectives and Implications for Cyprus"	More specifically, some stakeholders may see tourism in an opportunistic, profit-oriented approach,	
	5. To examine the impact of stakeholder perceptions on tourism development in Cyprus and identify strategies for addressing any negative perceptions	What are the key stakeholder groups that have an impact on tourism development in Cyprus, and what are their perceptions of the current state of the tourism industry? How do the perceptions of different stakeholder groups differ, and what factors contribute to these differences? What are the specific negative perceptions held by stakeholders about tourism development in Cyprus, and how do these perceptions impact the industry? What strategies can be employed to address these negative perceptions and promote positive perceptions among stakeholders? How can stakeholder engagement be improved to ensure that perceptions are taken into account in future tourism planning and policy actions?	"Assessing Stakeholder Perceptions on Tourism Infrastructure and Services in Cyprus"	Likewise, different perceptions have been identified concerning the adequacy of infrastructure and services in meeting the needs of tourists.	
		What are the potential benefits of creating regional tourism clusters in Cyprus for promoting sustainable tourism development? How would the creation of regional tourism clusters in Cyprus impact the current tourism industry structure and stakeholders? What are the challenges and barriers to creating regional tourism clusters in Cyprus and how can they be addressed? How can regional tourism clusters in Cyprus be effectively managed and coordinated to ensure sustainability and economic viability? What are the key characteristics of a time-less model of tourism sustainability and how can they be incorporated into the development of regional tourism clusters in Cyprus?	"Exploring Stakeholder Familiarity and Experience with Tourism Clusters in Cyprus: Challenges and Opportunities"	In addition to this the stakeholders seem to have limited familiarity and experience in regards to tourism clusters. This was the result of lack of data and research available on the tourism clusters, the fragmented tourism industry as well as the limited government support.	

Appendix 7: NVIVO Coding

File Home Import Create Explore Share Modules							
Clipboard	Item	Organize	Query	Visualize	Code	Autocode	Range
					Uncode	Code	
					Case	File	Workspace
					Classification	Classification	
Codes							
Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by	
Acceptance of an External Destination Management Exte	0	0	7/10/2023 1:12	GM	7/10/2023 1:12 P	GM	
Negative Stance	1	31	7/10/2023 1:13 P	GM	7/10/2023 1:43 P	GM	
Positive Stance	1	21	7/10/2023 1:13 P	GM	7/10/2023 1:39 P	GM	
Assessing Stakeholder Perceptions on Tourism Infrastruc	1	1	6/15/2023 2:34	GM	6/15/2023 2:44 P	GM	
Assessment of Tourism Carrying Capacity Models and Vi	1	1	6/15/2023 2:29	GM	6/15/2023 2:40 P	GM	
Consensus among Key Stakeholders on Tourism Overcr	1	1	6/15/2023 2:31	GM	6/20/2023 5:19 P	GM	
Agreed on Overcrowding and Overcoming Presence	1	21	6/16/2023 12:10	GM	6/18/2023 8:34 P	GM	
Disagreed on Overcrowding and Overcoming Prese	1	15	6/16/2023 12:11	GM	6/18/2023 8:38 P	GM	
Diverse Stakeholder Perceptions on the Economic Impac	1	1	6/15/2023 2:33	GM	6/15/2023 2:43 P	GM	
Examining Stakeholder Perspectives Locals Tourism Cult	1	1	6/15/2023 2:32	GM	6/18/2023 5:46 P	GM	
Exploring Stakeholder Familiarity and Experience with To	1	1	6/15/2023 2:34	GM	6/15/2023 2:44 P	GM	
Focus Groups Findings	1	2	6/15/2023 2:34	GM	6/15/2023 2:45 P	GM	
Stakeholder Disagreement on Destination and Visitor M	1	1	6/15/2023 2:32	GM	6/15/2023 2:42 P	GM	
Need for DM Creation	1	7	6/16/2023 12:16	GM	6/18/2023 7:28 P	GM	
No Need for DM Creation	2	21	6/16/2023 12:16	GM	6/18/2023 8:39 P	GM	
Strengthening Law Enforcement to Combat Corruption i	1	1	6/15/2023 2:34	GM	6/18/2023 6:19 P	GM	
The Importance of Defining Key Performance Indicators f	1	1	6/15/2023 2:33	GM	6/15/2023 2:43 P	GM	
Understanding of the Diference Between KPI's Vs Touris	1	1	6/15/2023 2:30	GM	7/6/2023 1:09 P	GM	
Anware	1	2	6/16/2023 12:03	GM	7/6/2023 1:10 P	GM	
Aware	1	4	6/16/2023 12:04	GM	7/6/2023 1:10 P	GM	
Signs of Anware	1	12	6/16/2023 12:05	GM	7/6/2023 1:11 P	GM	
Urgent Need for a Deliberate Visitor Management Plan t	1	1	6/15/2023 2:31	GM	6/15/2023 2:41 P	GM	