

**UAE Museums Integrating Female Empowerment Approaches to Capture
Marginalized Emirati Women's' Voices For Preserving Intangible
Cultural Heritage**

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD)
at the University of Leicester

By
Dana Saif Faris Al-Mazrouei

School of Museum Studies
University of Leicester

April 2021

**Abstract: UAE Museums Integrating Female Empowerment Approaches to
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Cultural Heritage**

By Dana Saif Faris Al-Mazrouei

This research reframes the contemporary perspective of museum and heritage studies by exploring how the role of Al Dhafra women as cultural heritage protectors in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) can act as models for female empowerment. This research contributes to global knowledge of production and safeguarding of intangible heritage practices by investigating how Al Dhafra women have transformed the UAE cultural heritage landscape. This under-researched area relates to the correlation between intangible heritage and female empowerment, examined on a cultural level, to illustrate the positive impact on the international field of museum studies, especially in relation to the areas of collaborative practice and community engagement.

The study examines how cultural heritage can be preserved through empowerment of women in rural regions. It presents an understanding of cultural heritage preservation in the UAE linked to the cultural identity of the local community. The research methodology for this study involves qualitative research methods of individual, in-depth interviews, and focus groups held in the Al Dhafra region and in UAE cultural institutions. The thesis demonstrates how Al Dhafra women express their feelings of empowerment through their role as cultural protectors of the UAE's intangible cultural heritage (values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and storytelling) and tangible cultural heritage (handicrafts).

This thesis provides recommendations for governmental organizations and museums to support empowerment of women through their community engagement programmes; its further theoretical contribution is a new model for female empowerment through intangible and tangible cultural heritage protection.

Acknowledgments

This PhD thesis is only possible due to the generous support from Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Scholars Programme from His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces. I thank his daughter Her Highness Sheikha Mariam bint Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Abu Dhabi-based Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation. I thank the Cultural Director of the Tourism and Culture Authority Abu Dhabi, Rita Aoun-Abdo, Education Department Director Ranya Nasser, and my colleagues in the Department for their support. I also thank my mentor Dominique de Font-Réaulx, Chief Curator, Musée Du Louvre, Director of Mediation and Cultural Programmes, helped direct my career in Museum Studies.

I am grateful to Dr. Nuala Morse, whose extensive knowledge of museum studies provided me with useful aid. I thank Dr. Viv Golding for her strategic help with my study & Dr Sheila Watson who supported me till submission. I thank Laura Matzer for proofreading the final thesis.

I especially thank the women from the Al Dhafra region in Abu Dhabi who participated in this study. Without their realistic aspirations for developing cultural heritage community programmes, I would not have the unique theoretical and practical contributions to fill the gap in academic literature and the foundation for future research.

I am incredibly thankful to my mother, Fatma Fadhel Al-Mazrouei, a single parent who has been there for me in the most difficult times. I thank my siblings Alya, Fares, Abdulla, and Hassa, for their encouragement, and my niece and nephew Fatma and Fadhel and my sister-in-law May, who has always believed in everything I do. I am indebted to my husband, Ahmed, who has stood by me throughout this thesis; I dedicate this research to him. Finally, to my late grandmother Fatma and my aunt Alya Fadhel Al Mazrouei that I have unfortunately lost during the pandemic.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This research provides a critical analysis of the various levels of positioning of heritage in local, national, and global museums as an in-depth study of the challenges related to development of UAE national museums. The essential role of women living in the rural region of Al Dhafra in the UAE as guardians of its cultural heritage also reflects their crucial position within the emergent heritage landscape that the country is currently developing, and strategically positioning, as form of significant economic revenue in a post-oil economy, and cultural tourism as a form of statecraft. Empowering these women to oversee the safeguarding of UAE cultural identity correlates to the nation-building they have contributed to with their intangible heritage handicrafts, symbolizing the country's cultural customs and traditions.

This thesis examines how heritage institutions have developed a somewhat misleading portrayal of UAE cultural heritage in prominent tourist attractions that does not accurately reflect the ongoing living heritage practices presently still being undertaken by Emiratis living in the marginalized rural regions like the Al Dhafra women. This lack of heritage staging has been criticized in museum studies for not sufficiently representing the intangible production and numerous community benefits involved in the collaborative creation of cultural handicrafts. This research also compares heritage staging in other museums in the Arabian Gulf region, and how heritage is developing in the UAE as a national state-sanctioned process with more localized examples of heritage practices emerging alongside national, regional, and global forms. This thesis investigates the relationship between intangible cultural heritage practices and female empowerment and to reflect the importance of ensuring an accurate portrayal of these traditional customs. It also provides a critical assessment of female empowerment as a symbolic component of the UAE's cultural resource strategies and the contribution this makes to the UAE's local, regional, and national identity formation.

This study investigates how museum community engagement programmes can support geographically-marginalized rural areas and, in particular, how such programmes can support cultural heritage practices of women who have dominant community roles in

these regions. This research explains how museum community engagement programmes can benefit marginalized regions by giving power to women as the main caretakers in charge of preserving the country's cultural heritage, thereby lending more cultural authenticity and relevancy in sustaining the UAE's national identity. Based on in-depth interviews and focus groups in Al Dhafra region of the UAE, a key aspect of this research centres on exploring the ways in which women living in rural regions are the preservationists of the cultural identity of communities. This thesis explores women's heritage practices and how they can be empowered through museum community engagement programmes. While museum studies literature has connected cultural heritage and cultural identity worldwide, this thesis deepens such understanding by linking these to the importance of promoting this notion for younger generations and how they connect strongly with Al Dhafra women's sense of national identity in the singular context of UAE, a country witness to profound cultural change since the discovery of its oil reserves in the early 1960s. Indeed, such rapid cultural change taking place in the UAE over the past 60 years has transformed virtually every aspect of modern life, and, as a result, has increased opportunities to radically transform the national identity. As such, the UAE's cultural heritage museums, sites, festivals, and other developments hold an unusually significant, if not vital, role, in sustaining the country's authentic cultural heritage, and the cultural identity of its people.

This research examines the notion that Al Dhafra women have a sustainable sense of cultural identity tied to the intangible and tangible cultural heritage of the UAE, in particular, that they have taken on the role and duty of being preservationists without being appointed by any authority. This study examines how and why they have persisted in self-appointing themselves in charge of UAE cultural heritage preservation. The contribution this research explores relates to the inherent benefits of empowerment. By self-selecting their role as cultural heritage preservationists, Emirati women living in rural areas become empowered, regardless of the constraints of their families and the country's social norms, as they have risen to the challenge and, aligned with the characteristic act of mothering, that is, being caring and protective, have proven that they are capable of holding such responsibility. This thesis is an extension of the research conducted which related to empowered Arab women (Ahmed and Rafiuddin, 2018), research that adds a further

dimension to the idea of female empowerment within the context of UAE cultural traditions and societal norms.

The conceptual framework that underpins this research positions the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage of Al Dhafra women as the foundation for female empowerment in UAE. Empowerment within heritage studies can be defined as a way to provide gender equality so that women's needs and opinions will be considered, especially in cultural tourism projects (Cole, 2018, pp. 4-7). Empowerment refers to the power or authority which can be given to people, to help them become stronger so they will be more confident in taking control of their life. While empowerment usually refers to gaining political, economic, social, educational, or psychological freedom and rights, this thesis focusses on the cultural empowerment gained by Al Dhafra women as they protect UAE's cultural heritage.

While Al Dhafra women have chosen to make it their priority to protect the community from losing its cultural heritage in the face of rising social globalization and rapid cultural change in the region, they are also amenable to teaching their children the cultural handicrafts and intangible heritage traditions in community programmes. As this thesis demonstrates, national museums can empower Al Dhafra women by strategically designing and implementing community outreach programmes to engage families, in order to create relevant community cultural activities, festivals, and workshops in the remote region of Al Dhafra, as well as in the more urban areas of the UAE. Such community outreach programmes can provide an outlet to encourage families in remote regions to learn about art and share their knowledge about the UAE's cultural heritage. Museums, in providing empowerment to Al Dhafra women by collaborating with them in offering authentic educational programmes and workshops, will help children learn about and gain a deeper appreciation of their unique cultural heritage.

The value this thesis provides to the heritage and museums studies literature is the specific analysis of Al Dhafra women empowering themselves through their role in UAE cultural heritage preservation. This research emphasizes that Al Dhafra women are a proud community of strong, empowered cultural heritage caretakers who, when properly valued for their cultural heritage expertise, should be considered by museum professionals during the development of any community programmes in the region. As the analysis of individual

interviews demonstrates, Al Dhafra women believe it is necessary, as part of their empowered role, to participate in community engagement decision-making. Engaging and empowering Al Dhafra women through the advancement of their cultural handicrafts and family activities in community engagement programmes will ensure the long-term relevancy and success of any future museum programmes.

This thesis' contribution fits within the museum studies literature by expanding upon an understudied aspect of female empowerment, to specifically address the needs and expectations of Al Dhafra women in the UAE as role models for cultural heritage preservation within community engagement programmes offered by national museums and cultural institutions. The development of a new female empowerment model for cultural heritage preservation in UAE, as asserted here, focusses on women holding greater responsibility and power to protect these practices. Such a model also supports how the UAE government plans to develop cultural tourism projects in the region of Al Dhafra include their commitment to support women being empowered as protectors of their cultural heritage.

This study explores how cultural heritage preservation can be a part of museum community engagement programmes in the Al Dhafra rural region of Abu Dhabi. This research assesses the possibility of Abu Dhabi national museums developing community engagement programmes for families in Al Dhafra, specifically the Liwa and Madinat Zayed regions. The thesis also explores if museum community engagement programmes can empower women to protect UAE's intangible and tangible cultural heritage by making cultural handicrafts in training workshops where they can also pass down their cultural traditions to future generations of children. In this way museums can support local and regional manifestations of national identity.

This research investigates the issues related to past museum outreach programmes in the rural Al Dhafra region to examine if key points that were identified can be resolved in future programmes. Some of these issues include Al Dhafra women wanting to participate in the decision-making of museum community engagement programmes, ensuring activities, events, festivals, and projects are aligned with the UAE's cultural heritage, and being involved with future museum community engagement, assisting them

in developing their cultural handicrafts and providing family activities and educational workshops for teaching their children.

The value this thesis provides to the literature is the specific analysis of Al Dhafra women empowering themselves through their role in sustaining UAE cultural heritage preservation. Al Dhafra women believe it is necessary for their empowered role as cultural heritage preservationists, to participate in community engagement programme decision-making. Engaging and empowering Al Dhafra women through the advancement of their cultural handicrafts and collaborating in the design and delivery of community engagement programmes will ensure culturally relevant experiences, leading to the long-term success of any museum projects for the future.

This study investigates the reasons why Al Dhafra women have been disappointed in past museum cultural activities they have participated in, particularly when they feel they are being set up to perform their intangible and tangible demonstrations of crafts for tourists. This research suggests that cultural performances are as much about the role the women have in producing a form of local, regional, and national identity as about cultural tourism, and these meanings should be understood by museums who organize such handicraft demonstrations. The literature emphasizes how critical it is to gather additional research on remote communities to evaluate the contributions of marginalized peoples whose living, cultural and traditional practices are ongoing. The empowerment of Al Dhafra women should focus on their critical role in preserving intangible cultural heritage practices in the UAE's broader heritage landscape.

1.2 Organizational Profile-Department of Culture & Tourism Abu Dhabi (DCTAD)

Within the UAE government are many different cultural entities which are helping establish new programmes and initiatives for enhancing lifelong learning through libraries, community centres, art galleries, and museums. DCTAD is the main regulatory agency, established in 2012 by UAE government, to develop and promote cultural heritage projects, events, and activities, such as festivals and parades throughout the region. DCTAD has an educational and professional development governmental department which provides community outreach programmes in collaboration with Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK). These two entities were created to promote Emirati

cultural heritage within educational institutions and affiliated community facilities, train educators in art and culture workshops, develop outreach programmes in schools for museums, and ensure schools visit museums, art exhibitions, and heritage festivals in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, and Al Dhafra.

These cultural institutions in UAE promote Emirati traditional handicrafts in festivals and other heritage events. Significant Emirati handicrafts include a variety of pottery, leather products, ornaments, household goods spun or woven from camel or sheep wool, date palm tree branch fronds and other materials. Some innovative Emirati cultural handicrafts include baskets, floor mats, rugs, purses, clothing and household decorations.

Cultural institutions, festivals and events have been operating and ongoing for several years; however, the expanded role of women being empowered and more involved in decision making is a new aspect that such governmental entities are beginning to realize has been neglected in the past. This topic is the focus of this thesis; the work presented here links directly to UAE government initiatives in supporting the development of the concept of relevant museum community engagement for the Al Dhafra region.

1.3 Background of the Topic in UAE

The academic context of this thesis is based upon “social or political relationships with museums as a part of power formation and the cultural transient nature of heritage” (Wakefield, 2014). This research also pertains to communities learning how to develop “sustainable cultural destination where they can protect and enhance their heritage on both local and global venues” (Aubry, 2014, pp. 96-97). Other significant concepts from the literature on empowerment which framed this thesis involve how female empowerment is key to social transformation for women in marginalized communities.

The background of the topic in the UAE which is investigated in this study relates to the context of women living in rural regions and how they could benefit from particular aspects of research in museum studies and community engagement. This research explores a unique perspective of female empowerment related to cultural heritage, from the point of view of Al Dhafra women, which has never been researched before, nor in such depth. This female empowerment related to cultural heritage is a neglected area within an otherwise widespread discourse of female empowerment (Dumper and Larkin, 2012). Previous

research of current government-led heritage initiatives conducted in recent years have, to date, not truly addressed how women experienced or have been strategically involved in these community engagement programmes. Exploring this perspective is what this thesis seeks to do and its research findings indicate that empowerment is significantly important to these women.

The background research provided by the literature allowed this thesis to present a more refined research enquiry about what might be the role of museums and how they can better understand the people of these rural regions to develop relevant community engagement programmes that authentically sustain and perpetuate the country's national identity. While past community engagement programmes in Al Dhafra have had some success, they have not been sustainable for the long term. This thesis suggests that this is mainly due to museum officials failing to involve the community members in decision-making. This thesis uncovered this information during the research process and the findings related to this issue are investigated in-depth in Chapters 5 and 6.

During the course of this research, the specific issue in the Al Dhafra region of the UAE related to examining how the women in that community sought to expand their individual and collective empowerment through their cultural handicrafts practice in community engagement programmes. The problem this research examines relates to how community engagement programmes, when collaboratively designed for cultural relevance, can better protect the cultural heritage of the UAE and empower Al Dhafra women to pass on cultural traditions to their children. The UAE government has future plans to develop the rural region of Al Dhafra, which is one of the main areas where the community still practices many ancient cultural customs and traditions. The women in this rural region have long been responsible for safeguarding the UAE's cultural heritage and the cultural identity of the country (Sharaf, 2018).

This thesis' literature review verifies the magnitude of research on communities' capacity to contribute practical and positive perceptions of artisans for museum studies and heritage management. The Al Dhafra women are among the remaining few UAE Nationals who continue to carry on the traditional and cultural daily routines which have been passed down for generations. Al Dhafra women find themselves also in charge of ensuring that these cultural traditions are preserved for posterity. As the research will demonstrate, these

women wish to have community engagement programmes that will empower them to design and manage training workshops for teaching their children how to make precious UAE cultural handicrafts. Past community interrogations focussed on practical strategies, but often without consulting the women to obtain their input or feedback. This research examines the significance of involving community members in all aspects of the strategic design, organizing, and decision-making for organizations that are interested in developing authentic and relevant cultural heritage programmes, not only for tourism but for sustaining the country's national identity.

The UAE government has a variety of cultural initiatives in accordance with the Abu Dhabi Vision 2030 and UAE Vision 2021, each masterplans which prioritize making the country into a knowledge economy through urban and economic planning, and in judicial and security planning, respectively. These initiatives include focussing on education and cultural heritage preservation throughout the country. However, this thesis argues that UAE government strategies need to take into consideration and leverage museum community engagement programmes in order to provide more support for empowering women in rural regions like Al Dhafra to preserve the country's cultural heritage. The thesis also argues that the UAE government must prioritize museum community engagement programmes to be developed collaboratively to ensure the continuance of Al Dhafra women passing on the UAE's intangible cultural identity and national identity to future generations.

This thesis research underscores and promotes the argument that Emirati women in Al Dhafra have a vested interest in continuously safeguarding cultural heritage handicrafts and disseminating such knowledge widely, given their view that such activities are a means of retaining the cultural heritage and cultural identity for the entire country. Indeed, these women have gained a reputation as the national caretakers of the UAE's cultural heritage as they are some of the last remaining generation of Emiratis who retain the unique expertise for producing such traditional handicrafts. This has helped reposition these women to be empowered as cultural heritage preservation role models throughout the community. One initiative examined in this research relates to the UAE government's commitment to assist Al Dhafra women in safeguarding cultural handicrafts as a way to ensure the country's cultural identity will be preserved. This study is significant to the

wider understandings of cultural heritage and the broader subject of cultural heritage studies because of its examination of the importance of both gender, and gender in relation to cultural norms, in relation to cultural heritage preservation. As well, this study is relevant to future cultural projects, particularly those with imported concepts or worldview, in how to best integrate with not only urban but remote audience needs and desires. This research also investigates the underlying meanings of intangible cultural heritage as it pertains to protecting tangible artefacts in cultural heritage management and museum studies.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions for this thesis are:

- What are the cultural heritage practices of women in the Al Dhafra region and how do they link to ideas of cultural identity and national identity?
- How have women experienced previous cultural initiatives in the region and what have been some of the limitations of these programmes?
- How can museums in UAE improve cultural heritage positioning and better understand Al Dhafra women and their interests in cultural heritage handicrafts to develop museum community engagement programmes with them?
- How can museum community engagement programmes support female empowerment in preserving UAE cultural heritage and nation-building?

1.5 Research Aims

The main aim of this research is to investigate the most significant methods for preserving intangible and tangible cultural heritage through museum community engagement programmes. The research aims to demonstrate how the principles of collaboration are important, particularly in international settings, where shared cultural identity is not a given. Secondary research aims involve assessing the Al Dhafra rural region to identify issues which could provide valuable insight into sustaining intangible and tangible cultural heritage practices, to encourage cultural cohesion, that is, shared values and shared well-being. Other research aims address how the needs of Al Dhafra women can be better met by the UAE government in order to enable them to strategically design and deliver museum community engagement programmes which will further empower them to safeguard the country's cultural heritage.

This research focusses on discovering the cultural heritage practices of women in the Al Dhafra region. This understanding is critical for developing relevant museum community engagement programmes which can benefit the UAE government's cultural and educational initiatives for empowering Al Dhafra women to continue being the preservationists of the country's cultural heritage and to recognize such activities as a point of pride. An important aim of this thesis is to provide my individual contribution to the museum studies field through this study's findings and in developing a model of female empowerment while preserving UAE's cultural heritage. Another aim of this thesis is to provide useful, strategic recommendations for UAE government and cultural institutions on ways to collaborate effectively and further empower Al Dhafra women in future museum community engagement programmes. A final aim of this thesis is to illustrate how the cultural heritage producers in a rural region such as Al Dhafra in the UAE link to other communities worldwide, in recognizing that to keep and maintain a country's cultural and national identity is to be in conversation with (rather than for) its cultural heritage artisans.

1.6 Research Objectives

Building upon the research questions and broad aims described above, the specific objectives for this thesis are designed to provide recommendations to Abu Dhabi national museums and cultural institutions. These objectives are:

- To identify what are the UAE intangible and tangible cultural heritage practices of women in the Al Dhafra region
- To examine how museums in the UAE can better understand Al Dhafra women and their interests in intangible and tangible cultural handicrafts in order to develop more authentic and relevant community engagement programmes with them
- To assess past community museum engagement programmes from the perspectives of Al Dhafra women who participate in them, in order to improve future museum programmes
- To build upon the current ambitions of museums and investigate how museum community outreach programmes can create workshops to empower women to teach tangible cultural handicrafts to children in the Al Dhafra rural region in order

to pass these traditions on to future generations and sustain the UAE's national identity

1.7 My Conceptual Framework: Female Empowerment Model in Al Dhafra--Museum Community Engagement Programmes To Preserve UAE Cultural Heritage

A review of the existing literature offers the prevailing viewpoints which are particularly vital to this research. The conceptual framework of this thesis is founded on various theoretical frameworks related to museum development in Arabian Peninsula, as researched by Exell and Rico (2016) in their studies on Arab cultural heritage. The framework developed in this thesis was created as a model aligning government's support for national museums to establish museum community engagement programmes for empowering Al Dhafra women in the UAE. The model supports female empowerment in the Al Dhafra community to ensure the continuation of UAE cultural heritage for posterity, as discussed in similar research by Soare (2013). This thesis is based upon ideas that both tangible and intangible cultural heritage should be preserved to ensure future generations may benefit from them, as supported in cultural heritage research by Carrozzino (2016). This model displays how both the intangible and tangible cultural heritage must be protected in cultural community programmes through the involvement of the female participants, as argued in research on community cultural heritage projects by Perkin (2010).

This framework focusses on supporting existing theories of female empowerment, yet expands them to new dimensions to show how women can gain power and control during the cultural heritage preservation process due to their unique capabilities of creating handicrafts, as discussed by Malt (2007) in their own work on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It involves developing museum community engagement programmes for empowering women in the UAE to create examples of their intangible cultural heritage with unique cultural handicrafts. These artefacts reflect their distinctive intangible cultural heritage capabilities, which is grounded in theoretical discourse about community cultural heritage, in that even the “‘idea’ of intangible heritage is transforming

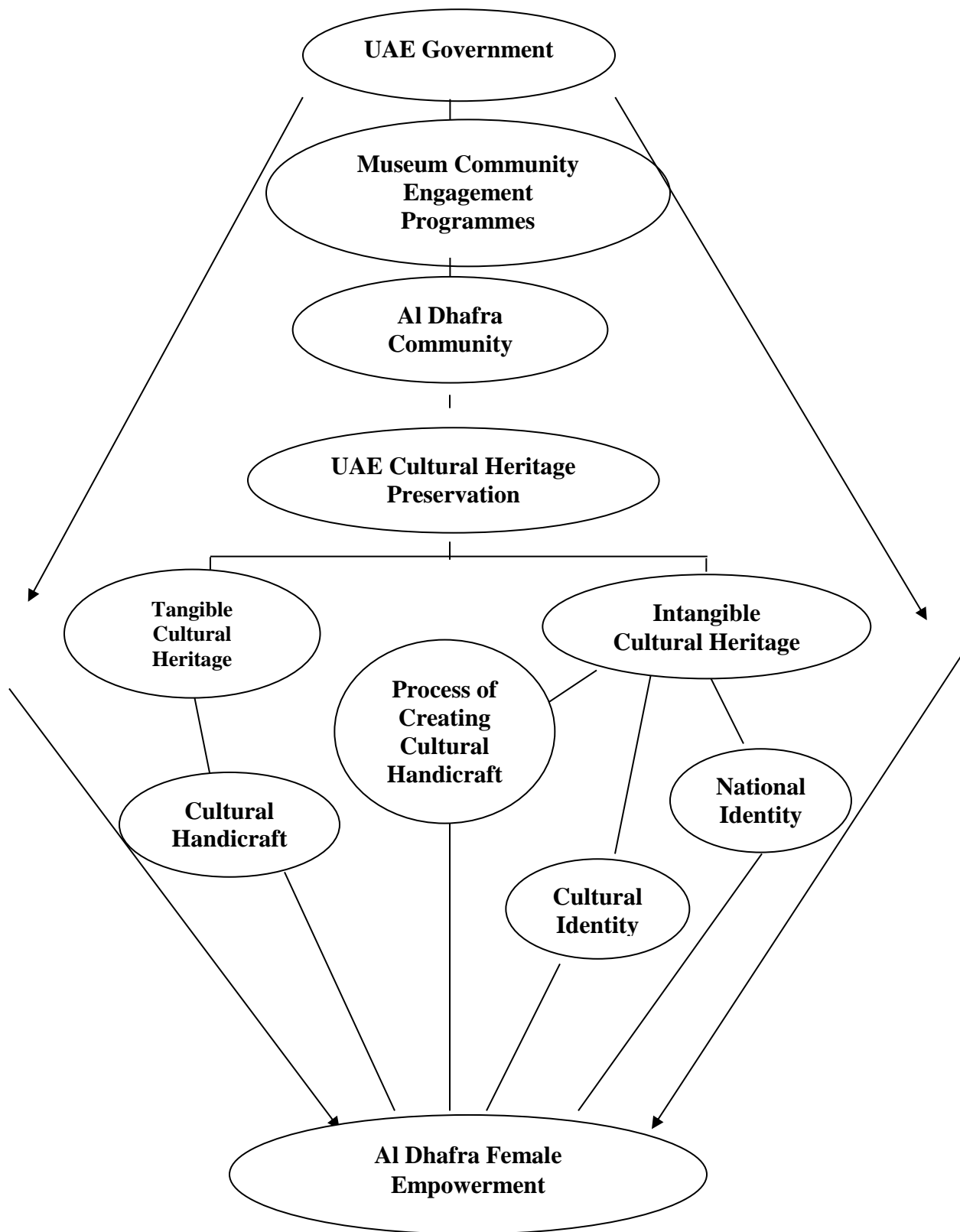
our broader engagements with cultural transitions in the contemporary world” (Harrison, 2011, p. 280-282).

This thesis contributes to academic literature by expanding on that study to establish gender-related underlying themes concerning cultural heritage. This thesis also incorporates concepts from research by Mezzino (2017) which proposed a specialized method for integrating cultural knowledge in Myanmar to prevent the loss of craftsman skills during rising, globalization. Such a method is an essential, key element to this thesis research, which focusses on protecting the “social, cultural and environmental sustainability of heritage conservation” (Mezzino, 2017, p. 24). Providing equality and justice within cultural heritage values aids in empowering women’s social roles and cultural identities (Smith, 2015). Many debates in the literature argue that marginalized communities can be empowered through cultural heritage to gain recognition and both political and social power (Howard, 2008). Such themes are emphasized in this thesis, as they support the essential need to empower Al Dhafra women as part of a comprehensive cultural heritage preservation strategy throughout the region as a means of ensuring their intangible and tangible cultural heritage encourages cultural cohesion and continues for posterity.

Similar research has been conducted as a foundation for theoretical frameworks that assess cultural heritage preservation by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in rural regions (Marrie, 2009). This thesis’ conceptual framework model uses Marrie’s underlying cultural heritage preservation themes to reflect how Al Dhafra women can be empowered to preserve their intangible cultural heritage. This thesis also includes an investigation of Al Dhafra women’s knowledge, skills, and process of creating cultural handicrafts as an integral part of their cultural identity and national identity, which is similar to themes by Shindler (2014). This thesis’ conceptual framework promotes how women, as distinguished and valued cultural heritage safeguards in sustainable cultural tourism programmes, benefit from female empowerment, similar to studies on strengthening community heritage by Jamieson (2017). This literature provides a critical analysis of the main underlying concepts of this study related to giving power to

marginalized women to acknowledge their contributions to cultural heritage in sustaining national identity.

**Female Empowerment Model For Al Dhafra Women–Museum Community
Engagement Programmes To Preserve UAE Cultural Heritage**



This conceptual framework supports this thesis' research and original contribution to the field of museum studies by evaluating cultural empowerment through the lens of intangible heritage practices. Within the UAE, intangible heritage practices are an under-researched area of female empowerment, so this study could greatly impact the international field of museum and heritage studies, particularly in relation to the areas of collaborative practice and community engagement. This research explains how the textual and layered nature of national identity formation and the role of national museum institutions in the Arabian Peninsula / Gulf region are influenced by the countries' cultural heritage practices. This research explains how the layered nature of national identity formation and the role of museums in the Gulf region are influenced by the countries' cultural heritage practices. This thesis concentrates on how the Emirati cultural identity is symbolized through the heritage positioning of their intangible cultural heritage, and how the UAE's cultural heritage museums, sites, festivals, and other developments hold an unusually vital role in sustaining the country's authentic cultural heritage, and the cultural and national identity of its people, given the rapid cultural change that has taken place in the UAE over the past 60 years.

This thesis' conceptual framework provides a critical analysis of the need for museum community engagement programmes to collaborate with and empower Al Dhafra community members, particularly women who are caretakers of UAE cultural heritage, in developing community and cultural tourism activities. Similar studies were conducted in Arabian Peninsula nations, highlighting distinctive ways museums can promote both cultural identity and national identity in countries like the UAE (Schwarzer et al, 2014, pp. 214; Cooke, 2014, pp. 162-164). Their research found that museum professionals have attempted to develop community engagement strategies in the past to help protect cultural heritage; however, they have not always been successful, mainly due to their neglect in receiving essential input from the participants through a lack of collaboration. This thesis expands on their studies with specific focus on the UAE rural region of Al Dhafra.

This study investigates how cultural heritage is symbolized by both tangible examples (physical artefacts such as cultural handicrafts, pottery, and jewellery), and intangible examples (abstract concepts like values, beliefs, knowledge, and skills). Tangible cultural heritage is represented by the cultural handicrafts created by Al Dhafra

women that they still practice daily, and pass on to younger generations through educating their children, as seen in findings from other Middle Eastern studies by Schwarzer, et al (2014, pp. 218-220). Intangible cultural heritage is signified in the knowledge and skills involved in the process of making tangible cultural handicrafts, as well as the cultural identity and national identity of the Al Dhafra community, where all members share a common sense of belonging, as demonstrated in similar geographic research by Domsic (2013).

This study expands on these ideas by focussing on how female empowerment, as gained in the process of cultural heritage preservation, as expressed in the practices of Al Dhafra women, encourages continuity in cultural safekeeping and therefore is passed along successfully in posterity, which promotes cultural cohesion and sustains the national identity. This thesis' contribution will add to the understanding of the importance of cultural heritage in the UAE, in addition to existing research and published studies. This thesis confirms some previously asserted insights, yet presents certain aspects new to the museum studies field, such as the studies' focus on children's education in order to sustain cultural heritage traditions, and that cultural handicrafts are part of much broader, everyday tradition, rather than a practice apart from daily life, which has implications for thinking about how to present such content in a museum community engagement programme. The contributions of this thesis also seeks to provide a current understanding of cultural heritage in the UAE, in order to contribute an in-depth case study in a historically under-researched area.

Cultural heritage can be a “means of sustainable social and economic development and an important element of tourist motivation” (Domsic, 2013, p. 14). Tangible and intangible examples of the UAE's cultural heritage highlight the country's traditions, customs, beliefs, and values. Cultural heritage in Asia and other regions reflects the cultural identity of the people and can be utilized to contribute to the local tourism industry, as “the process of conserving a heritage is derived from the individuals, institutions, or communities that decide what is worth conserving, as they represent something worth remembering and their past that should be passed to future generations” (Hasbollah and Hasbollah, 2015, p. 31). The model of female empowerment developed in this thesis, as gained in the process of cultural heritage preservation, reflects the context of heritage

tourism development in the UAE. However, one significant challenge is the question of how female empowerment is accomplished and how it is measured, as it has not been clearly distinguished in most literature (Mosedale, 2005).

It is argued, through this thesis, that ensuring the transfer of knowledge and skills of the UAE's cultural heritage, and creating tangible cultural handicrafts, can provide female empowerment to Al Dhafra women. Furthermore, it is argued that by teaching the younger members of the community these tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements, the Al Dhafra community is empowered to preserve the UAE's cultural heritage and national identity as a whole, enabling the community to successfully pass the knowledge, skills, and value of these traditions to future generations.

The relevance of cultural heritage in relation to the economic development of various regions was assessed in a comparative analysis of cultural activities throughout the world, exploring how cultural heritage defines the cultural identity of countries, reflecting their creativity, self-expression, and social cohesion, and offers models on they can enhance these critical elements (Van and Russo, 2016). Museums wanting to create authentic, culturally relevant, community engagement programmes need to recognize the importance of collaborating with the community in order to better understand what its community members find valuable, important, and desirable. Tangible cultural heritage represented by the cultural handicrafts created by Al Dhafra women both protect UAE's cultural heritage and demonstrate the relevance of museum community engagement programmes, encouraging community pride through activities celebrating cultural and national identity, which is related to research about similar strategies in other Arab rural regions (Dayaratne, 2012, pp. 309-311; Melotti, 2014, pp. 71-76; Golding and Modest, 2013, pp. 14-17). These authors and a range of other academic studies have significantly contributed to both the conceptual framework of this thesis and the female empowerment models asserted here.

1.8 Gap Which Will Be Filled By This Research

My research fills the gap in existing museum studies literature in two significant ways:

- Contextually—exploring how museums can develop community engagement programmes linking cultural heritage to community learning projects and recreational tourism activities, such as festivals and events, in the geographical context of the Al Dhafra rural region of Abu Dhabi, UAE. Further, while encouraging female empowerment is a key priority for particular initiatives of the UAE government, this concept is a largely unresearched topic with few studies related to cultural heritage, as the focus has instead been on business and government (Ahmed and Rafiuddin, 2018)
- Theoretically—examining the theoretical frameworks related to creating cultural heritage preservation strategies for female empowerment that promote the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the UAE; this thesis provides significant research on this topic in order to better understand how to provide female empowerment within museum community engagement programmes while simultaneously preserving the cultural heritage in rural regions in the UAE. Existing museum studies literature has largely focussed upon community engagement programming on cultural heritage from institutional viewpoints rather than in-depth research from women's perspectives. This thesis presents a framework wherein the activities of preserving cultural heritage encourage female empowerment, to persuade governmental policy adoption. Specifically, this framework investigates how Al Dhafra women are negotiating their power and positionality within the local society through their cultural heritage expertise

This research explains the gap in existing literature linking museums to the community engagement programmes the UAE government wishes to develop in the Al Dhafra rural region of Abu Dhabi, UAE. Museum community engagement programmes need to engage Al Dhafra community members, especially women who are the preservationists of UAE cultural heritage, as researched in other Middle Eastern studies by Golding and Modest (2013, pp. 14-17). The overall value that this study brings to the broader museum studies field and female empowerment development studies relates to investigating how women can gain power through intangible and tangible cultural heritage preservation within the Middle East. This thesis' specific contribution to museum studies'

literature is in providing an in-depth analysis of the particular Middle Eastern rural region of Al Dhafra and how women there have empowered themselves through the production of cultural handicrafts that preserve the UAE's cultural heritage. This thesis' research seeks to add valuable insight to global cultural heritage studies on female empowerment and especially to women in rural regions as the guardians of cultural heritage in the Arab world.

1.9 Research Methods & Limitations

The research design is based on semi-structured, one-hour interviews with a guide of 10 questions distributed to a total of 60 Emirati women from the Al Dhafra region, aged 30-40 years. The personal interviews included 15 individual interviews and 15 focus groups of 60 Emirati women. Each group was divided into 5 women to make it easier to interview them within the group, and to share ideas and feedback. The research also includes three interviews with key stakeholders from public and private cultural organizations based in Abu Dhabi.

The research methods of personal interviews and focus groups allowed the author to gain more in-depth personal responses from the Al Dhafra women on their past community engagement programme experiences and their expectations for the future. The main limitation of this research was accessibility to the Al Dhafra region as it is geographically remote, so meeting with the women living there was somewhat restricted. Another research limitation were the number of interviews with officials, which could be increased in future research initiatives, to receive more information on the topic from their perspective. Interviews and focus groups with 60 Al Dhafra women provided a reasonable number of community participants to represent the small town while gaining an understanding of the community overall and select women's viewpoints.

1.10 Al Dhafra Background

The Al Dhafra region (previously named Al Gharbia) is a part of Abu Dhabi city located in a rural region of the UAE. The Al Dhafra region consists of seven main towns, including Madinat Zayed, Liwa, Mirfa, Ghayathi, Ruwais, Silaa, and Delma. Geographically, Al Dhafra encompasses 83% of the Abu Dhabi Emirate, with 60,000 km² and it holds the largest gas and oil reserves in the UAE, generating 40% of the gross domestic product (GDP). However, Al Dhafra comprises only 8% of Abu Dhabi's total

population, with 112,000 people, including 16,500 who are UAE Nationals (Peterson, 2017). Al Dhafra's population is projected to rise to 450,000 by 2030 with many economic developments anticipated to increase employment opportunities for expatriate workers in the region. Al Dhafra also holds potential to be a significant environmental/alternative energy hub and cultural heritage tourist destination. For these reasons, it is vitally important to protect the UAE's cultural heritage during the implementation of so many high-profile projects (Peterson, 2017).



Figure 1.1: Al Dhafra Rural Region Map Showing Main Towns

(Source: Al Dhafra Municipality, 2017)

As a significant part of Abu Dhabi Emirate within the country of the UAE, Al Dhafra is the largest region in the geographic area, despite being less developed than the towns of Al Ain or the capital city of Abu Dhabi. The map above reveals the undeveloped desert areas and small towns of Al Dhafra region, highlighted in orange. The small towns of Madinat Zayed, Ruwais, Ghayathi, and Liwa, within Al Dhafra, are the main focus of this thesis, as they have the communities where Al Dhafra women make cultural handicrafts. The region holds an abundance of desert land surrounding the main towns, which are not easily accessible to the considerably more developed capital city of Abu Dhabi.

The UAE government is strategically developing the remote Al Dhafra region of Abu Dhabi as a significant cultural heritage tourist area to appeal to global investors, businesses, residents, and tourists, in order to increase economic sustainability in that part of the Emirate. The Etihad Rail project, estimated to be completed in 2030, will allow each of the seven Emirates to be easily reachable by a fast train for transporting supplies. With new universities, major solar and nuclear facilities, and other large-scale projects being completed within the next several years, Al Dhafra will provide numerous educational and employment opportunities for Emiratis and expatriates. Forecasts demonstrate there will also be a major increase in tourists to the remote regions of all of the Emirates, especially Al Dhafra, as one of the main cultural heritage tourist destinations in the UAE (Suresh, 2017).

1.11 Al Dhafra Festivals & Events

Some of the most popular Al Dhafra cultural heritage tourist and sporting events and annual festivals that attract both local and international tourists include:

- Tel Moreeb Festival—January (in Liwa); desert driving on the largest sand dunes in the world, with 50-degree inclines to the top
- Al Dhafra Camel Festival—December (in Madinat Zayed); the only global camel beauty contest; 15 million attendees, 25,000 camels, 1500 contestants, 72 competitive rounds
- Al Dhafra Water Sports Festival—April (in Al Mirfa); dragon boating, kite surfing, dhow racing, swimming competitions
- Al Dhafra Falconry Festival—December (in Madinat Zayed); falcon flying competitions
- Al Dhafra International Festival—January (in Madinat Zayed); cultural heritage event with different types of global foods, clothing, tourist items and events
- Liwa Date Festival—July (in Liwa); every kind of date prepared in different foods to taste and purchase; many types of date tasting and a variety of fresh date jams, cookies and pastries (DCTAD, 2018).

Al Dhafra Cultural Programmes

There are several successful cultural and educational programmes in Al Dhafra that present traditional customs and cultural heritage activities of the UAE people. One Abu Dhabi governmental cultural initiative, entitled Sougha, in Al Dhafra, was created by the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development (KFED) to provide business opportunities for young Emiratis, and for those who may find it difficult to find and hold jobs as they lack college degrees yet want to become entrepreneurs. The Sougha project also helps to preserve Emirati cultural heritage by helping UAE Nationals in Al Dhafra and other regions develop ways to showcase their talents, producing cultural handicrafts such as painting and basket weaving.

Such governmental projects are examples of how new cultural initiatives are promoted through annual festivals and exhibitions that attract global tourists and thereby increase cultural knowledge of UAE traditions and customs (Sougha, 2012). According to the UAE Department of Transport, the Al Dhafra Transport Master Plan is being developed for the Etihad Railway train first stage, bus stations, roads, freeways, and infrastructure improvements. The many strategically-planned projects being developed within Al Dhafra region will require linking the cities to other major Emirates with the Emirates Railway, which sets the stage to encourage future tourist initiatives. Such economic development could have both positive and negative effects on the Al Dhafra community. Increased economic development and infrastructure in the region will provide more opportunities for cultural tourism events, to feature cultural handicrafts; however, such developments will likely also increase the number of expatriate workers and tourists that could jeopardize the distinctive cultural identity and traditional practices of Emiratis living there (UNESCO, 2015).

1.12 UAE Future Cultural Heritage Expansion

This study was influenced by Wakefield (2014) in relation to avoiding a “divergence between global and local heritage which could lead to differences in ideas that could result in strong opposition between handicraft artisans and government or museum organizations”. A reflection of how similar authors and their works affected this study demonstrates that one of the most crucial points is how essential it is for countries to avoid corruption of authentic heritage during staging points in cultural events like festivals; it is

also critical for cultural organizations to prevent exploitation of the local nationals who still practice such cultural heritage traditions.

The UAE has extensive expansion and development plans for the future which focus on economic sustainability in all Emirates, especially remote areas which require increased investment to boost the economy. The UAE government's strategies and vision for becoming an innovative business model for economic, environmental, and cultural heritage sustainability are being implemented yearly according to the UAE Vision 2021 and Abu Dhabi Vision 2030 frameworks. However, ensuring the preservation of a cultural heritage sustainable business model is one of the most critical priorities for the UAE government as well (Sharaf, 2018).

The UAE is attempting to become an international business model for museum tourism with its promotion of artistic creativity and cultural heritage innovation. However, in the more remote regions, UAE's cultural heritage traditions are still being practiced and hold an important role in Emirati people's daily lives. Ensuring that there is supervision of the cultural re-enactment and heritage positioning of UAE heritage practices like creating handicrafts must be considered essential for an inclusive form of national identity.

For this reason, remaining cultural customs currently in daily practice must be sustained, protected, and coordinated with government and private institutions like museums to develop suitable community engagement programmes which focus on promoting their preservation. Al Dhafra has been targeted by the UAE government as holding future potential for profitable global business investments related to construction, healthcare, education, tourism, and alternative energy projects. During this time of significant economic growth and development in Al Dhafra, the UAE government created Al Dhafra 2030 vision to promote the cultural heritage preservation of the country. Al Dhafra has been chosen to become a cultural heritage tourist destination for the UAE, to ensure the protection of the culture, traditions, beliefs, values, and customs which are the underlying foundation of the country and its people (Sharaf, 2018).

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role of a collaboratively planned community engagement programmes within the context of encouraging female empowerment, and the role of heritage in communities and tourism. It also examines how a co-developed community engagement programme can be a mutually-beneficial strategy

between the UAE government and the Al Dhafra community for guaranteeing the conservation of UAE's cultural heritage within the region and sustaining national identity across the country. Therefore, this thesis is a proposal for integrating innovative community-focussed preservation strategies for protecting the UAE's cultural heritage traditions and values in the Al Dhafra region, in collaboration with museums and other relevant institutions, to support increasing awareness of other cultures in order to further develop cultural cohesion between the rural and urban regions of Abu Dhabi. Such activities will increase children's cultural knowledge and help them apply their core cultural values to lifelong learning for future generations (Sharaf, 2018).

1.13 Justification for the Research

The justification for this research is that there are currently not enough government programmes in place to protect the intangible and tangible cultural heritage of the UAE, placing the continuity of such traditions, and the national identity of the country, at risk. This thesis investigates how to empower women in rural regions with a tailored, community-based, bottom-up approach for collaborating and co-creating museum community engagement programmes to encourage preservation of cultural heritage. This thesis promotes the assertion that there must be increased awareness of strategies that successfully preserve intangible and tangible cultural heritage, especially in rural regions where these traditions have not been lost to societal modernization and are still being practiced.

This thesis suggests that the UAE government should enhance the role of national museums, to deliver collaborative cooperation between museum officials and Al Dhafra women to be preservationists of the intangible cultural heritage and developing strategic programmes that sustain and pass on the tangible cultural heritage of handicrafts. Other justifications for this thesis research is that this is the first piece of published work to conduct in-depth consultation with women in the Al Dhafra region, as their perspective has not been included in community project development in the past. Despite the challenges of the past, this research investigates how UAE national museums can develop a stronger, collaborative role with the community of Al Dhafra women in the region so their cultural

heritage programmes are more culturally authentic, relevant, and they are actively engaged with communities in their specific geographic settings.

1.14 Summary

This introductory chapter explained the preliminary issues related to women in the rural region of Al Dhafra, in their desire to ensure they prolong their self-designated role as the protectors of the UAE's intangible and tangible cultural heritage. This thesis provides in-depth research of a community cohort, Al Dhafra women, which illustrates their community needs, to encourage the UAE government to develop relevant museum community engagement programmes for the region. This thesis also investigates how to help Al Dhafra women gain power and authority in the perpetuation of their role as safekeepers of the intangible and tangible cultural heritage and cultural identity of the country. This thesis' assessment of research data provides a foundation in better understanding the consequences of the lost intangible and tangible cultural heritage of the UAE, should the Al Dhafra women not be empowered to continue safekeeping and passing on the country's cultural traditions.

The outline of this thesis follows the standard PhD format of Abstract, Introduction, and also includes a unique, in-depth UAE Case Study (Chapter 2), to provide background information on the country and the Al Dhafra region, and the planned developmental expansion for the future, which may threaten the continuance of the UAE cultural heritage practices that the Al Dhafra women strive so fervently to protect. This thesis also includes an academic Literature Review (Chapter 3) of published materials related to cultural heritage, cultural identity, female empowerment, and the impact of globalization, with a particular focus on the Arab world and MENA region. The thesis also includes a Research Methodology (Chapter 4), a detailed Results and Analysis section over two chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), providing in-depth responses from Al Dhafra women, applied to the context of the global literature, and the Recommendations (Chapter 7) and Conclusion (Chapter 8) sections detail possible suggestions for improvement of the UAE national museums' community engagement programmes in order to empower Al Dhafra women in the future, while simultaneously protecting UAE cultural heritage practices.

The academic context of this thesis involves investigating various aspects of heritage management and museum studies to better understand the diverse elements of female empowerment, and gender as linked to identity and the role of women in relation to cultural heritage preservation. A thorough review of significant literature from both heritage management studies and museum studies greatly influenced this thesis, examining how this research and assessment can inform a wider academic scholarship of concepts and theoretical frameworks in these scholarly fields. This literature review included significant authors which critically analyse how heritage and gender link to identity, how social remembering and memory is associated with heritage studies and preservation, how to provide female empowerment through cultural heritage community programmes, and how heritage symbolizes cultural and national identities (Smith, 2015) (Howard, 2008) (Cornwall and Anyidoho, 2010) (Bunning, 2018) (Walby, 2005) (Gokcigdem and Seaters, 2013) (Erskine-Loftus, Al-Mulla and Penziner-Hightower, 2016) . Other significant research within the Arabian cultural context was relevant and beneficial to this thesis came from studies on cultural heritage in the Arabian Peninsula and another that examined different aspects of museum development within the Middle East as it pertains to socioeconomic status in global communities (Exell and Rico, 2016) (Abu-Lughod, 2009) (Penziner-Hightower, 2014) (Dayaratne, 2012) (Wakefield, 2014). This thesis' research and assessment was also influenced by a study outlining challenges related to developing sustainable community cultural heritage tourism projects and how UNESCO workshops can be beneficial for heritage management and cultural tourism (Jamieson, 2017).

CHAPTER 2: UAE CASE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the UAE as a case study, including an economic, social, and cultural overview of the local society and tourism trends, and, in particular, the Al Dhafra region, where the study is based. The UAE government is presently developing a strategy dedicated to ensuring the protection of the country's cultural heritage for future generations, which includes several cultural heritage initiatives which reflect the UAE government's continuous investment in preserving the local cultural identity. An important element of the UAE government's commitment to cultural heritage protection is conveyed in how they support Al Dhafra women's efforts in the region to conserve local cultural identity through their creation of innovative cultural handicrafts.

This case study provides details about the development of the UAE society, in particular its tourism projects, the emergent heritage landscape, and the role of Al Dhafra women as caretakers of an element of the country's cultural heritage. A critical interrogation of the emergent cultural heritage landscape in UAE demonstrates that its museums are evolving into some of the most distinctive cultural venues for displaying Emirati cultural heritage.

The UAE has undergone several different levels of staging heritage in their positioning of content for various local, national, regional, and international scenes, establishing cultural activities like museum exhibitions, heritage festivals, and collaborating with international organizations to promote and preserve its heritage. While UAE government attempts to ensure cultural tourism projects preserve the authenticity (genuineness and accuracy) of Emirati heritage, as seen in recent initiatives such as 'Culturall' (DCTAD, 2021), issues remain with staging heritage in festivals for tourists that need to be addressed, to ensure there is no exploitation of Bedouin Emirati women who create and sustain the tangible heritage of handicrafts.

The Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) region includes UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman and has recently been expanding its museum development and heritage institutions to promote unique cultural artefacts and artworks as symbols of local, regional and national identities. UAE cultural heritage has also been continually

developing as a national, state-sanctioned process with many localized forms of heritage that have emerged alongside, and in opposition to, these broader national, regional, and global types.

According to Wakefield (2014), heritage can be strategically positioned to construct a cosmopolitan identity, which can marginalize the everyday aspects of autochthonous heritage practices, creating a gap between the practices of handicraft artisans and the aim of government or museum organizations. As outlined in this thesis, a strategic collaboration with handicraft artisans, such as those in Al Dhafra, can carefully bridge the gap between a desire to culturally modernise while retaining the traditional handicraft practices essential to maintaining societal cultural identity and its inherent meaning. Indeed, learning how to analyse heritage repositioning and contextualizing the possible cultural components that could contribute to its transformation in specific cultural contexts is essential to avoid corruption of authentic heritage (Wakefield, 2014).

Schwartz et al. (2014, pp. 215-220) examine this issue of repositioning by analysing the museum curator function to become cultural producers which reimagine how museums could be, instead of what the world expects them to be, just to please visitors. Museum curators should consider their target audiences and aim to exceed their expectations, offering transformational educational opportunities, positioning content to expand mind-sets and encourage a reconsideration of one's worldview. However, they must also take into account the major objective of cultural heritage organizations, which is to ensure the long-term continuance of the country's most notable heritage as its future legacy (Schwartz et al. 2014, pp. 215-220).

These issues were critically evaluated to consider the influence of cosmopolitanism when introduced by different cultures, and the ensuing challenges involved in Abu Dhabi's cultural heritage positioning. Understanding these positioning challenges on the local and international levels have led to "transcultural formations" in modern museums (Wakefield, 2014, pp. 103-104, 122). Such transculturalism relates to communities like Abu Dhabi, viewing their own cultural achievements as they relate to social or political relationships with museums as a part of power formation and the cultural transient nature of heritage (Wakefield, 2014). Schwarz et al. (2014, pp. 215-220) asserts that there is a strong need to create museums that reveal the local aspirations of the Emirati people who are still living

examples of the heritage today. Forming a unique local model that reflects UAE cultural heritage as accurately as possible is the goal of Emiratis working in the museum field. This museum business model may have some inspiration from Western museums, but should be more influenced by local Emirati people and their exclusive living cultural traditions that have endured throughout history (Schwarzer et al, 2014, pp. 215-220).

Within heritage and museum studies, critically evaluating how heritage is franchised with different partners that want to promote it to the world is essential, to ensure these presentations retain the unique qualities that make such heritage culturally authentic. “It is the value of the museum brand that makes it more or less desirable within the symbolic economy. The importance of the tourism economy is significant... culture as an investment that can be an important factor within economic development” (Wakefield, 2014, pp. 121-122).

As an Emirati researcher, this literature influenced my thinking in recognizing the numerous initiatives involving festivals, workshops, and museum programmes the UAE government has launched in order to protect its heritage from being overly-influenced by other cultures. While the UAE government continues to promote its heritage worldwide, to position itself strategically within the realms of other global cultures, it also hopes to retain the distinctive local characteristics that make its heritage unique. This thesis investigates how to overcome cross-cultural challenges that governments and museums face in their heritage positioning on an international stage.

This thesis proposes that critically appraising these Bedouin traditions means that the UAE government must take extra precaution and care when requesting women to partake in local festivals where they may sometimes be put on display to perform their cultural duties in making handicrafts for tourists to watch. While there are some Emirati women who may enjoy this method of positioning UAE cultural heritage as a crucial part of their cultural tourism strategies, for other women it could be viewed as a form of heritage staging which may feel somewhat false compared to the true, complicated personal process involved in this delicate and cherished activity. To avoid inadvertently offending women who are so essential to preserving UAE heritage for posterity, any strategies by museum officials or other cultural institutions should take into account the need for such care.

This thesis evaluates how within each of these GCC nations, individual cities also strategize and compete on their own national level in cultural heritage production and preservation. In the UAE, every Emirate has undergone cultural transformations, shaping the country's cultural heritage in relation to its archaeological discoveries, and the artifacts, artworks, and handicrafts from each region. The cultural trends in Al Dhafra reflect the broader global trends of heritage production and preservation in other emerging nations' rural regions. This thesis reveals how the cultural heritage landscape is situated in a dynamic context, adapting to the challenges of regional cultural tourism projects and globalization.

2.2 Critical Analysis of UAE Heritage

A critical analysis of the UAE cultural heritage landscape can be investigated through various authors whose literature presents in-depth arguments on the challenges of retaining the authenticity of culture and heritage positioning in a global context and their relationship to cultural tourism. Schwarzer et al. (2014, pp. 215-220) explores an innovative perspective of how UAE museums position their heritage to provide an equal balance between both the international influences and the local culture to avoid making them like so many others worldwide. This can only be achieved by having Emirati art, culture, and museum professionals responsible for the progression of an updated museum model (Schwarzer et al., 2014, pp. 215-220).

Significant heritage studies' concepts which framed my study and influenced my thinking on the topic include how an "emphasis on the relation between event, place and the community in the selected context (which) will provide a different vantage point from where to explore the importance of religious festivity and ethnic diversity in tourism development" (Alraouf, 2010, pp. 53). Indeed, heritage production taking place in manufactured contexts, such as festivals or in museum programmes, requires great care in its interpretation, particularly in working with the heritage practitioners conveying their handicraft practices to audiences ready to consume such heritage experiences, as the context is a constructed one, and, as such, cannot be considered fully authentic.

This thesis asserts that although tangible heritage theorists like Schwarzer et al., (2014, pp. 215-220) argue that cultural objects have specific value to the promotion of a

country's heritage; it is actually intangible heritage which expresses the untold stories, travels, triumphs, and experiences of a country. Intangible heritage is orally passed down throughout families as the cultural lessons and traditions which they hope will continue for future generations. This research examines how a new generation of Emirati museum professionals, interested in incorporating intangible heritage into a novel UAE museum business framework, more accurately reflect the cultural history of the country and its people. This reflects how Emirati women working in cultural institutions are prepared to fight for adhering to the sensitivity required for heritage to be presented in a local context to endorse UAE's cultural expansion rather than just allow it to be altered to global influences (Schwarzer et al., 2014, pp. 215-220).

Alraouf (2010, pp. 53-54) argues how aligning communities to cultural events allows for a more clarified positioning on cultural tourism. Schwarzer et al., (2014) explores an innovative perspective of how UAE museums position their heritage to provide an equal balance between both international influences and the local culture to avoid making them like so many others worldwide. "Museums might stand as national monuments... and strengthen the sense of national identity; however they risk destabilizing the local culture as massive investments in museums both ratify and strengthen a Western view of what constitutes cultural progress", stated Hissa Al Dhaheri, an Emirati working in the culture industry (Schwarzer et al., 2014). Given these issues, creating and sustaining strategic community alignment in cultural tourism activities are essential in conveying a more authentic experience for tourists and regional cultural heritage producers alike, to ensure they are rooted in authenticity and to the communities that give them such meaning.

2.3 Arabian Gulf Museum Development & Heritage Positioning

A so-called museum 'industry' has emerged and blossomed across the broader Gulf region in the past few decades, a direct result from the strategic re-positioning of state economies dependent on oil-based revenues choosing to pursue a tourism-based economy. In the UAE, this tourism-based economy was strategically developed by its government, from securing various hotel properties in its cities, to developing its national airlines, and, arguably most significantly, securing airline traffic routes to position tourists in its cities for overnight stays, increasingly promoting the UAE as a destination in and of itself. Often

grand, high-profile projects designed by significant architects, the calibre of the many state-sanctioned museums developed in the Arabian Gulf, and, in particular, the UAE, have generated excitement well in advance of these institutions being opened to the public. While cultural heritage presentations for tourists have existed well prior to such museum industry activity, many Gulf countries, including the UAE, are, at the governmental level, seeking to ensure that its authentic cultural heritage is effectively represented, integrated, and expressed in its cultural institutions, rather than in opposition or outshined by these high-profile state-developed museums. It is within this perception gap that this study examines the opportunity of the UAE government's cultural institutions, sites, and festivals to strategically collaborate with and empower the women of Al Dhafra to ensure the UAE's cultural heritage is authentically and relevantly expressed in cultural heritage programmes, both for the aims of retaining the country's cultural and national identity and for its tourism initiatives.

A thorough of extensive literature related to the Arabian Gulf provides specific context to museum development and heritage positioning in the region and has helped develop my thinking for my thesis in the following ways:

Schwarzer et al., (2014, pp. 215-220) emphasizes how one of the most significant perceptions about the Arabian Gulf is that each of the countries are basically very similar in their cultural heritage, which may appear to be true, yet there are certain distinctive traits which can be deciphered. Of the six Gulf nations, only a few, like the UAE, have made it a priority to commit significant financial resources for investments in cultural heritage projects, which is one aspect of this cultural tourism I examine here. The UAE's economic diversification strategies to expand its economy away from the oil sector are at the foundation of an immense investment in cultural tourism, as well as their desire to continue to acquire recognition from global cultural organizations, like UNESCO, to position themselves as a global cultural heritage tourism destination (Schwarzer et al., 2014, pp. 215-220).

Dorr et al., (2014, pp. 297-304) claim the Arabian Gulf countries all have some form of living heritage that is still being upheld in their traditional Arabic cultural practices and customs. Most of these Gulf countries also have ancient historic sites that are still standing, which have allowed them to be transformed into museums and protected heritage

sites. They also have some exclusive archaeological artefacts which have been discovered in recent years, prompting the other nations to take note and launch new digs in the hope of finding their own ancient artefacts.

Many other Gulf museums have captured their heritage in similar ways with photographs, artwork and crafts; however, they each exemplify their own distinctive culture within local architectural designs, cuisine, stories, songs, and dances. Key for each Gulf nation is their strategic direction for cultural approaches, whether it is education for the people, promotion for tourism, or just conservation of their heritage for future generations (Schwarzer et al., 2014., pp. 218-220).

Appropriate positioning of cultural heritage for these nations also includes re-educating museum professionals to adapt to the hybridization of local and international heritage strategies and launching aggressive cultural tourism marketing platforms to attract visitors to diversify away from oil sector revenues (Aubry, 2014, pp. 75-77). While some Gulf nations like the UAE and Saudi Arabia have invested millions of dollars in their cultural tourism projects, smaller and less prosperous nations like Bahrain and Oman have found innovative means of renovating cultural buildings into functional heritage sites (Dorr et al., 2014, pp. 297-304).

These authors identify the decisive theoretical frameworks on museum studies applied to this research. This thesis, however, focusses on the UAE's strategic approach for developing its museums from the cultural establishment that the oldest families in the country still maintain and have evidence of, including handicrafts, sketches, artworks, sculptures, pottery, and jewellery as examples of tangible heritage. Indeed, Emiratis retain numerous examples of intangible cultural heritage in the form of oral transmissions of ancient folklore, legends, stories, and poetry that have been told for hundreds of years throughout the generations. This research proposes that such intangible examples need to be documented and combined with tangible heritage items, images, and illustrations. Such efforts will provide more verifiable depictions of how Emirati Bedouins lived over the past several hundred years in the region, to accurately reflect both the intangible and tangible cultural heritage of the nation.

Bahrain

Fibiger (2014, pp. 390-392) argues that the Arab nation of Bahrain has been undergoing a paradoxical transformation, which provides a diverse viewpoint that diverges from the contemporary approach to heritage preservation. The Bahrain government has been determined to protect its cultural heritage and discovered that cultural transformation was possible, even as a part of their erasure procedures during modernization. Bahrain's destruction of various buildings uncovered ancient burial grounds which were then transformed into heritage sites. This phenomenon is similar to the UAE's recent architectural artefact discoveries which symbolize its tangible cultural heritage, yet set against its significant economic development projects across the region.

Capitalizing on archaeological artefacts has become one of the most valuable strategies for preserving, exhibiting, and promoting the cultural heritage of Gulf countries like Bahrain, the UAE, and others. However, the Arab region is especially fascinated in effectively capturing the intertwining relationship between the historic past as it relates to the present and the future, not only for maintaining a strong cultural link to the past, but also to support a post-oil tourism economy. For this reason, museums and other cultural institutions must be aware of their obligation to maximize the individual cultural contributions and concept of heritage that each Arab nation provides (Fibiger, 2014, pp. 390-392). With such high economic and cultural expectations developing their tourism sectors, strategic collaboration with cultural heritage producers, like the Al Dhafra women in the UAE, is essential in sustaining authentic cultural heritage production in the face of globalization and increased tourism consumption.

Alraouf (2010, pp. 50-53) examines how Bahrain's heritage preservation tactics have gone beyond fundamental protection of the people's traditions and have been extended to become a larger cultural tourism campaign for reigniting artistic reverence for the country. Ensuring sustainable development across cultural tourism projects as a part of community enhancement has also become a concern for many Arab countries, including Bahrain and the UAE. Many communities are concerned that cultural tourism may reduce the authenticity of their heritage, so strategies for preventing this include motivating visitors to attend various traditional events, ceremonies, and festivals to aid them in appreciating the customs. These approaches encourage people to get more of a sense of the

historic places in Bahrain so they can attribute the appropriate meaning to them as they relate to the country's cultural heritage (Alraouf, 2010, p. 54).

Bahrain's preservation strategies also involve the promotion of the country as a historic cultural tourism destination, with unique archaeological artefacts to bring in additional economic resources. Consideration of Bahrain's individualistic approach to cultural tourism shows that it has also chosen a more conservative method of heritage development that includes renovating ancient forts and rulers' homes into museums and galleries instead of investing millions on megaprojects like other Arabian Gulf nations (Aubry, 2014, pp. 71-72, 99).

Within the past 10 years, Bahrain has expanded its cultural institutions to include a multitude of culture centres, galleries, museums, and libraries in historic buildings and neighbourhoods. Aubry (2014) provides a useful example of Arabian Gulf hybridization in Muharraq, Bahrain, at the Bin Matar House, where past and present cultures have created a contemporary museum gallery showcase for highlighting the country's past cultural heritage. Bahrain's distinct progression toward museum creation has involved transforming many traditional buildings into valuable cultural institutions to appeal to the younger generation and global tourists (Aubry, 2014, pp. 71-72).

Bahrain's tactics have allowed for numerous intercultural dialogues and strategic relationships, establishing unique cultural horizons that museums can pursue for the future. "It's important to think outside the box in terms of the role museums can play in fostering a sense of community and cultural identity. By increasing the number and diversity of cultural venues, we hope to attract a wider audience, especially young visitors, by making culture away of life", stated Sheikha Mai Al-Khalifa (Aubry, 2014, pp. 99).

Bahrain plans on continuing their cultural legacy for posterity by developing their cultural resources and museum expertise, as well as promoting local artists, writers and poets, and their many archaeological findings. Some of their museums are creating interactive workshops for children to engage them in cultural activities, while educating them on their own cultural history. Bahrain's cultural infrastructure focusses on the development of a sustainable cultural destination where they can protect and enhance their heritage on both local and global venues (Aubry, 2014, pp. 96-97).

This literature provides an overview of some of the main issues being analysed in this thesis, related to preserving intangible and tangible cultural heritage for the future. This case study examines the ways museums have presented women's tangible and intangible cultural heritage to further their cultural tourism initiatives in the past, and how they and other cultural organizations and programmes have an opportunity to strategically collaborate with cultural heritage producers, to ensure these activities are culturally authentic and relevant to their regional communities and to the audiences consuming these programmes. The inevitable necessity of Gulf State countries needing to diversify their economies in a post-oil paradigm increases the need to create a tourism economy; however, lacking strategic collaboration with its cultural heritage producers, such as the Al Dhafra women of the UAE, can result in cultural tourism illegitimacy, creating an 'authentic fake' experience (Alraouf, 2010). In recognizing that cultural heritage production often takes place in manufactured contexts, such as festivals, strategic collaboration with cultural heritage practitioners, such as the Al Dhafra women in the UAE, will lend more meaning and authenticity to the heritage experience, which will both sustain the cultural traditions for Gulf countries in the face of globalization, while simultaneously growing their tourism economy sector.

Oman

This literature presents key points related to this thesis regarding how essential it is for heritage museums to consider collaboration and engagement with community members, to ensure heritage validity and to create authentic cultural experiences. Dorr et al., (2014) examines another Arabian Gulf country, Oman, with an analysis of its 23 castles, forts, and other cultural attractions, including a 400-year old monument restructured into a heritage museum, which required 20 strategic alliances in order to complete. Oman is similar to Bahrain in that both have limited budgets for cultural expansion projects, yet they both also have numerous cultural forts and locations which can be potentially profitable as intriguing tourist attractions. Oman has always had a significant reputation as a cultural heritage destination in the region due to its extremely conservative society where the majority of people still practice living heritage on a daily basis throughout the country (Dorr et al, 2014, pp. 297-303).

However, Oman has recently been overcoming the many challenges of establishing itself as a global cultural tourism destination with new heritage museums and cultural venue experiences. At the governmental level, Oman's goal is to create a sustainable cultural tourism strategy that allows for the conservation, documentation, research, collection, and exhibition of its heritage. Oman also seeks to find creative ways to educate and entertain both domestic and international visitors with its cultural activities and venues. Oman's collaborative approach to its cultural development is to incorporate community engagement into the enhancement of the entire visitor experience (Dorr et al., 2014, pp. 297-303). Such an approach, as asserted in this thesis, ensures subsequent cultural heritage activities are more culturally authentic and relevant to their regional communities.

Saudi Arabia

Similar to the UAE, Saudi Arabia is focussing on altering their global image into an innovative, knowledge-based society that fosters a culture of social progression through creative learning. However, one of the significant issues in their museum collections in the Arab World is that there are few cultural programmes that specifically relate to Arabic cultural heritage and it is difficult to generate more (Gokcigdem and Seaters, 2013, pp. 168-171). Museums developing these programmes have been successful in enhancing community engagement, which has been measured through repeat visitor experiences and additional contributions to the exhibitions.

This literature is vital to understanding how particular communities provide influential contributions to heritage management. Gokcigdem and Seaters (2013, pp. 163-171) describe how Saudi Arabia's museums have been concentrating on developing various arts exhibitions that take into account the sociocultural aspects of understanding social progress. The literature provides a contemporary example of the complex dual identity many Arab nations now share as their museum exhibitions attempt to provide a balance between modern society and the traditional beliefs of Arabic culture. Saudi Arabia has also been enhancing its community involvement, creating museum experiences by coordinating with community members to ensure that the identity of the people is still founded in their culture and traditional values (Gokcigdem and Seaters, 2013, pp. 163-171).

Some future suggestions which show promise include creative exhibitions that capture the knowledge and achievements of the Arab historic past, including scientific inventions and artistic contributions to art, music, poetry, and literature. In order to provide cultural connections that will translate to international meaning, this customized approach to Arab museum exhibitions hopes to avoid how "...art is being defined today...as foreign, confined, static and somewhat sterile, separated from daily life" (Gokcigdem and Seaters, 2013, pp. 171-173). In recognizing that a customized approach will yield a more meaningful and authentic cultural heritage experience for both local populations and tourists alike, employing a strategic collaboration with cultural heritage practitioners will both sustain the cultural traditions for Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia in the face of globalization, while simultaneously growing their tourism economy sector.

2.4 UNESCO Global Intangible Heritage Projects Similar to UAE

According to UNESCO, highlighting unique intangible cultural heritage from dissimilar communities contributes to intercultural dialogue and promotes increased respect and tolerance for cultural diversity, especially during globalization. UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity included global examples of traditional skills, knowledge, and craftsmanship, like the production and wearing of male headwear in Kyrgyzstan, and cultural heritage preservation strategy for traditional handicrafts related to peace building as good safeguarding practices in Columbia in 2019. Another set of good safeguarding practices included safeguarding traditional handicrafts in Austria in 2016, preserving the intangible heritage of copper craftsmanship in Azerbaijan in 2015, traditional weaving of the toquilla straw hat in Ecuador in 2012, and protecting the gingerbread craft in Croatia in 2010 (Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism, 2018).

In comparison to other countries' similar intangible cultural heritage recognized globally by UNESCO, there are only a few recent examples over the past 10 years that are listed as requiring urgent lifelong protection of the unique knowledge, craftsmanship and expertise required to ensure these specialized talents are not lost to the future. However, a critical analysis of this list reveals that four out of six directly relate to safeguarding the

knowledge and skills involved in the making of women's handicrafts such as weaving essential goods like in the UAE, which supports the argument that international female empowerment is a fundamental element related to the preservation of global intangible cultural heritage in various countries (DCTAD, 2018). This research supports this thesis' arguments on the necessity for female empowerment through cultural handicraft making to ensure the long-term preservation of cultural heritage. Notably, much of the intangible cultural heritage is focussed on male practices and traditions, and women are often overlooked by male community leaders when intangible cultural heritage is safeguarded.

2.5 UAE Society & Economy Background

The UAE society consists of seven main emirates, including the capital of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras al Khaimah, Fujairah, and Umm al Quwain. The UAE population is comprised of 6.8 million people and the workforce is 5.2 million people as of 2019 (Richardson, 2017). The population per individual Emirate reveals there are approximately 3.8 million people in Dubai, 759,000 in Sharjah, 1.6 million in Abu Dhabi, 230,000 in Ajman, 210,000 in Ras al Khaimah, 152,000 in Fujairah, and 49,000 in Umm al Quwain (Richardson, 2017).

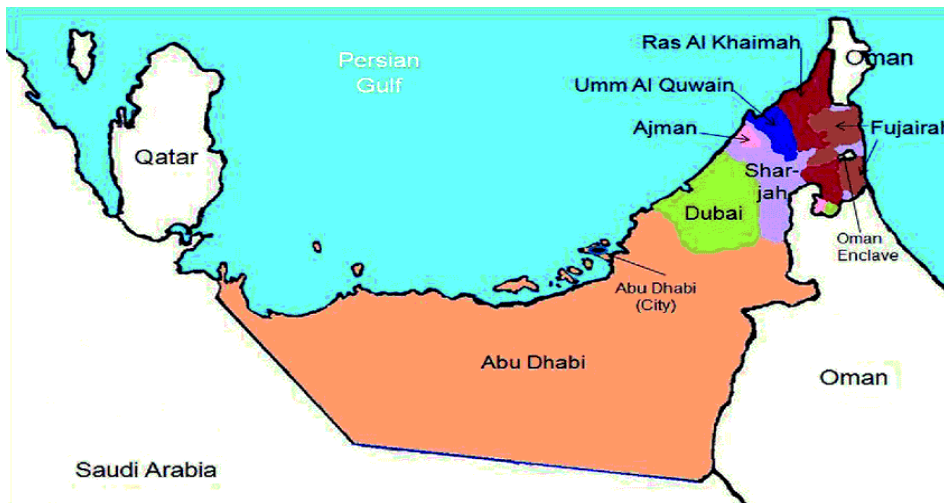


Figure 2.1: Map of UAE Showing All Seven Individual Emirates (States)

(Source: Al Dhafra Municipality, 2017)

According to Al Dhafra Municipality, the UAE government has been developing its cultural diplomacy to establish the country's international profile as a cultural, political, and social leader in the Middle East. The Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 has nine pillars for social, education, healthcare reform, and cultural heritage preservation (Ahmed, 2019). This Abu Dhabi Economic Vision framework was created to prepare the country for transforming into a global knowledge economy that provides innovative opportunities for female empowerment and gender equality, and to promote and encourage women to increase their participation in the workforce and government (Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, 2019).

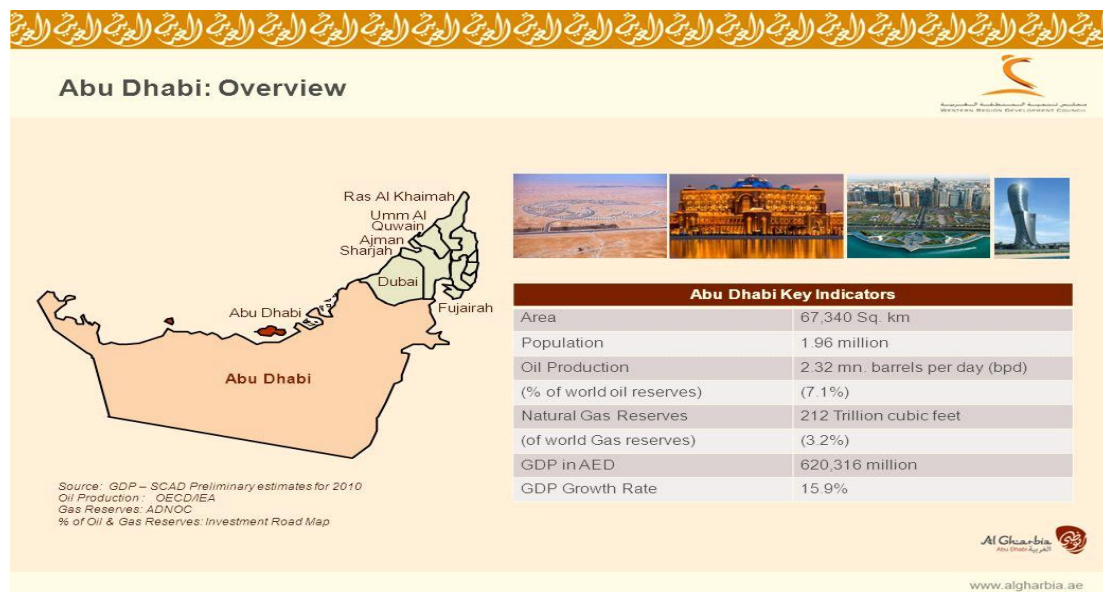
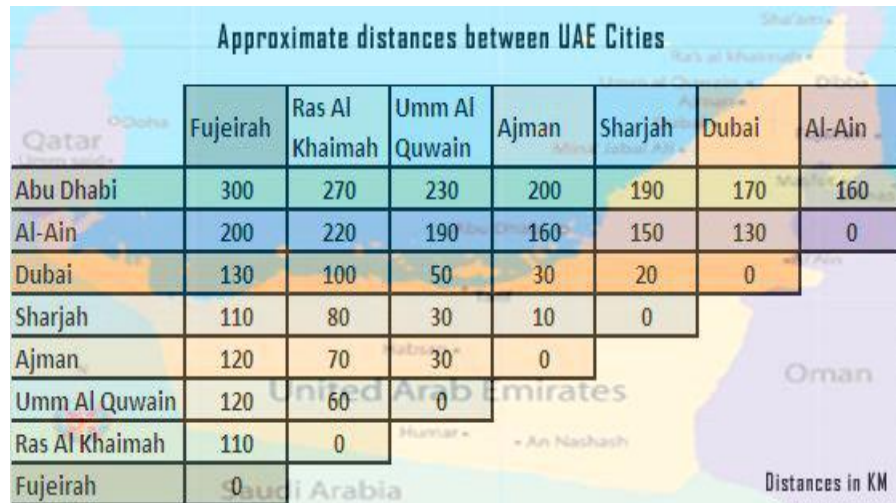


Figure 2.2: Abu Dhabi Overview

(Source: Statistical Centre, Abu Dhabi and Al Dhafra Municipality, 2017)

The chart shows Abu Dhabi key indicators in size and resources, which the Al Dhafra region is a part of, including Al Dhafra being the largest geographic region in the entire UAE with 67,340 sq. km, with a projected population of 1.96 million people in 2018. Oil production is 2.32 million barrels per day, which is 7.1% of the world's oil reserves. There are also 212 trillion cubic feet in natural gas reserves, which is 3.2% of the world's gas reserves and an economic growth rate of almost 16% (Richardson, 2017).



	Fujairah	Ras Al Khaimah	Umm Al Quwain	Ajman	Sharjah	Dubai	Al-Ain
Abu Dhabi	300	270	230	200	190	170	160
Al-Ain	200	220	190	160	150	130	0
Dubai	130	100	50	30	20	0	
Sharjah	110	80	30	10	0		
Ajman	120	70	30	0			
Umm Al Quwain	120	60	0				
Ras Al Khaimah	110	0					
Fujairah	0						

Distances in KM

Figure 2.3: Distances Between UAE Cities

(Source: National Taxi, 2017)

The above chart, created by National Taxi (2017), outlines approximate distances between UAE's cities. The farthest distance between Emirates is 300 km (3 hours' drive) from the capital of Abu Dhabi to Fujairah. Abu Dhabi includes the significant UAE Federal governmental ministries and military headquarters located there, and it is 270 km from Umm al Quwain, 200 km from Ajman, 190 km from Sharjah, 170 km from Dubai, and 160 km from Al Ain (part of Abu Dhabi). However, Dubai, as the major tourist and real estate investment hub in the UAE, is more centrally located between all of the Emirates. Dubai is only 130 km (1.5 hours) from Fujairah, 100 km from Ras al Khaimah, 50 km from Umm al Quwain, 30 km from Ajman, 20 km from Sharjah, and 130 km from Al Ain. For this reason, Dubai is often seen as the main business investment location in the UAE, which attracts more international investors. The greater region in Abu Dhabi is called Al Dhafra and is located 3 hours outside Abu Dhabi city, which is 4.5 hours from Dubai and further from all other Emirates, making it difficult for the people residing there to participate in community events, jobs, or universities in other Emirates (Peterson, 2017).

The UAE is truly a multicultural society, with 250 different nationalities from all over the world. A societal breakdown reveals 88% expatriates and only 12% Emiratis (Richardson, 2017) comprise the population. The main languages spoken in the UAE are English and Arabic (official languages), and also Hindi, Urdu, and Farsi (Persian). The majority of Emiratis comply with Arabic Muslim traditional societal values and the

expatriates enjoy the benefits of a Westernized society with the amenities of a modernized country. The UAE is one of the wealthiest countries worldwide with a GDP of \$407 billion and GDP per capita (average income per person) of \$60,120 (Richardson, 2017). Global tourism is linked to the UAE government's investment in the arts and culture sectors. The UAE's tourism industry yields approximately \$32 billion and attracts over 18 million visitors annually (Richardson, 2017).

There are projections of 25 million global tourists for the six-month-long Dubai Expo 2021, a global exhibition from October 2021 to April 2022 (Richardson, 2017). Abu Dhabi receives an estimated six million tourists yearly and will launch many cultural tourism projects in the near future to increase tourism revenues. The UAE is currently positioning itself as a significant cultural tourism destination throughout the Middle East with continuous economic diversification into various cultural heritage projects for the future (Piesko, 2018). In 2010, the UAE government launched UAE Vision 2021 and Abu Dhabi Vision 2030 frameworks to achieve sustainable economic developments throughout the country, which focus on enhancing the economy with educational and employment reforms, healthcare initiatives, and global tourism strategies to create a knowledge society (Richardson, 2017). These initiatives signal the importance the UAE has placed on diversifying its economy in a post-oil era by increasing the need to create a significant tourism economy.

2.6 UAE Tourism Industry & Economic Forecasts—2015-2030

According to the Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi (DCTAD) and the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), UAE tourism is focussed on attracting both internal and external tourists. For external tourism, Abu Dhabi's main tourism target markets the UAE government is focussing on are: USA, UK, China, India, Germany, and Saudi Arabia (Gulf News, 2017). The majority of Dubai tourists originate from Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) countries (24%), Western Europe (21%), and 17% from South Asia, while the remainder come from the MENA region (11%) and North America (6%) (Gulf News, 2017). For internal tourism, in Al Dhafra region, women are configured as producers in UAE cultural heritage tourism industry creating

unique cultural handicrafts that appeal to both Emiratis and international tourists (Sahoo, 2017).

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) 2014 World Investment Report states the UAE ranked 11th as a leading investor economy worldwide with consistent government spending on infrastructure upgrading and development. The UAE government has many infrastructure developments planned, like Emirates Rail and GCC Metro trains. A Sheikh Khalifa initiative has been launched for rural regions, including Al Dhafra, to provide upgraded transportation, educational, and healthcare facilities, which will benefit the Al Dhafra community in improving their access to cities in the UAE. This will also help Al Dhafra women and tourists increase travel opportunities related to tourism projects and community outreach engagement programmes (Carlson, 2016).

Many UAE government initiatives focus upon diversifying the development of rural regions such as Al Dhafra to become a leading international heritage tourist destination worldwide (Peterson, 2017). The UAE and Abu Dhabi government's two main strategic objectives include providing cultural enlightenment throughout the country and diversifying cultural tourism (DCTAD, 2016). Other goals involve developing highly prestigious events and activities in order to attract over 20 million international visitors to the country by 2020. In 2012, Abu Dhabi doubled the amount of global tourists to the country, reaching three million people yearly, an increase from 1.7 million (Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism, 2016). In increasing these tourism visits, the desire for culturally authentic and novel experiences also increases. As outlined here, strategic collaboration with cultural heritage producers, such as the Al Dhafra women of the UAE, will lend more meaning and authenticity to the heritage experience, sustaining cultural traditions in the face of globalization, while simultaneously growing the tourism economy sector.

Department of Culture & Tourism Abu Dhabi (DCTAD)

The purpose of the DCTAD is to promote various cultural heritage projects, traditional events, and other tourist attractions throughout the Emirates and to other countries around the world. The role of DCTAD is to promote Emirati cultural heritage

within educational institutions and affiliated community facilities. The Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) facilitates museum and heritage programmes in collaboration and guidance of DCTAD Education Department. DCTAD is the governing entity in charge of developing the cultural hub of Saadiyat Island, to develop museum institutions throughout Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, and Al Dhafra. DCTAD has been a designer of Al Dhafra expansion projects in the past, including sponsoring and helping advertise annual festivals and events there. DCTAD is now promoting heritage and tourism projects, such as art centres and libraries, which will be launched in Al Dhafra (DCTAD, 2018).

The Abu Dhabi government developed a cultural mandate that supports their policy and initiatives within a framework. They aim to preserve heritage and local traditions, and to become a centre for cultural awareness through education. They also want to attract international innovative talent to help diversify the economy and expand the country's knowledge of other customs as well. According to DCTAD, there are numerous tourism events, activities, and festivals throughout the city and the rest of the UAE that help preserve and promote the UAE's heritage. Additionally, one of the most famous tourist attractions, where the former UAE President's mausoleum resides, is the iconic Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre.

This literature supports the underlying concepts in this thesis related to how crucial those events are for promoting the intangible aspects of distinctive heritage. Some of the main cultural tourism events include those promoted by the many heritage villages and museums in every UAE city, as well as traditional Arabic music and art festivals. There are customized UAE events like the Union March, World Heritage Parade, and World Stage live shows. Al Ain Palace Museum launched the *My Heritage, My Responsibility* Emirati experiences event for celebrating the intangible heritage and diverse cultural traditions of the country. The Dar Al Zain Festival in Al Ain features a wide variety of traditional Arabic musical performances and other traditional heritage events and foods. The Al Murabba Heritage Festival in Al Ain celebrates history, located at the historic landmark fort which provided the police security for the country over 70 years ago. Its activities include several events, exhibitions, shows, and parades to celebrate the legacy of

the UAE Police. There also is a mounted police horse parade, showcase of classic and vintage police cars, K9 police dog show, and police marching parade (Nasser, 2012).

The Al Qattara Arts Centre exhibitions in Al Ain are related to promoting Emirati traditional games and artistic contributions to the local society. The *Travel Through Our Traditions* heritage tour series in Al Ain is an exploration of the historical UAE traditional customs related to riding camels throughout the desert. The Umsiyat Music Series, held in Abu Dhabi, is sponsored by the Red Crescent Society, an international humanitarian organization, to promote Arabic traditional musical events. The Al Hosn Heritage Festival has attracted many people to visit the ancient renovated fort in the middle of Abu Dhabi city. This special event provides an insightful look at customs and traditions, including Bedouin foods, music, dancing, and activities still practiced today. The Al Reef Handicrafts Training Centre in the Al Ain Sportplex teaches traditional handicrafts to people of all ages, including children five years or older, to increase educational awareness of UAE cultural heritage (Emirates News Agency, 2020).

The Sheikh Zayed Heritage Festival in Abu Dhabi was created to promote Emirati respect and pride in their heritage and to ensure the continued establishment of traditional values former president Sheikh Zayed instilled in them. The month-long activities and events in this festival express the diversity of Emirati heritage as inspiration for sharing their cultural values with the rest of the country. The Sheikh Zayed Heritage Festival offers numerous exhibitions related to UAE heritage with activities like workshops for children to motivate them to expand their handicraft skills. The Sheikh Zayed Festival gives visitors an opportunity to learn about UAE heritage by visiting some of the 1500 events and exhibitions sponsored by government and its numerous cultural institutions. Within this festival, there are a range of heritage sites, including the Emirati Heritage Village, UAE District, Memories of a Nation Exhibition, Traditional Customs Exhibition, Agricultural Oasis Exhibition, International Cooperation Exhibition, Dates Exhibition, Humanitarian Endeavours Exhibition, Horse Exhibition and Camel Exhibition. This festival also provides traditional handicrafts, displays, shows, markets, and folklore from several global cultures to better understand their heritage and increase cultural tolerance throughout the UAE's multicultural society (Zayed Festival, 2020).

There are several Al Ain museums which have various national celebrations, social events, and contests related to promoting UAE traditional customs and handicrafts. These include the Al Ain National Museum, Al Ain Palace Museum, Al Jahili Fort, Qasr Al Muwaiji, Al Ain Classic Cars Museum, Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Centre, Sheikh Zayed Palace Museum, Qaryat Al Torath Heritage Village, and Al Darmaki Fort. The Al Ain Museum was the first established cultural institution in the UAE in 1969 and it features exhibitions that display archaeological findings from the Stone Age onward. These cultural artifacts were recovered from across the UAE and date back to the fifth century BCE, providing evidence of the ancient civilizations that contributed to the region's cultural establishment (Holidify, 2020).

The UAE National Traditional Handicrafts Festival is organized by the DCTAD and held at Al Qattara Arts Centre in Al Ain. It focusses on supporting cultural artisan practitioners who make Emirati handicrafts, which have contributed to the establishment of UAE cultural and national identities and preservation of Emirati heritage. This festival emphasizes how much Emiratis cherish their ancestors' ancient traditions and customs of using their creativity to transform organic resources into household goods that satisfied their needs and improved their daily lives. The National Traditional Handicrafts Festival is where Emirati performers and artisans display their talents for creating distinctive handicrafts, and performing cultural shows and traditional dances (Visit Abu Dhabi, 2020).

The National Traditional Handicrafts Festival has artisan exhibitions with a variety of distinguished handicrafts, traditional markets and specific aromas of Arabic incense. The Arabic Coffee Competition explores the specialized flavours, textures and ingredients of how this distinctive drink is made and there are displays of popular and treasured Arabic cuisine, sweets, and dates. There are also Folk Dance Competitions (Al Youlah) and falconry (al qans or hunting) contests reflecting the most traditional UAE sport and essential cultural symbol of their Arabic heritage. The festival also has educational workshops that teach traditional handicrafts, weaving, basketry, pottery, and drawing as a way to develop the national identity in Emiratis that they pass on to their children (Visit Abu Dhabi, 2020).

As this study asserts, in recognizing that cultural heritage production often takes place in manufactured contexts, such as the myriad cultural activities mentioned

previously, strategically collaborating with cultural heritage practitioners, such as the Al Dhafra women, will lend more meaning and authenticity to the heritage experience, given their expertise and understanding of how tangible and intangible heritage of the UAE is practiced today.

2.7 UAE Cultural Authorities & Strategies

The UAE government has specific cultural authorities for each Emirate which develop strategies and provide oversight for all development projects. These regulatory officials supervise the creation of future strategic cultural objectives for the UAE. Some of the past heritage museums and the latest cultural projects which are currently being formed by the individual Emirates include museums, cultural centres, and community outreach projects which provide educational opportunities for the public. There are also many ancient forts and cultural attractions which display UAE customs, historical homes, and traditional food, vocations, jewellery, and clothing. There are historic monuments and cultural organizations which help increase cultural awareness and understanding for the public (DCTAD, 2016).

The Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation (ADCF) was founded in 1981 to collaborate across all cultural heritage programmes throughout UAE. ADCF has been the prominent government institution involved in creating and integrating different cultural programmes throughout the city. In 2005, Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) superseded ADCF in planning numerous cultural projects related to arts, archaeological sites, education, research, media, literature, heritage, natural landscape, and oral traditions in Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA) is a partner agency that was formed in 2004 to promote the development of Abu Dhabi cultural tourism. The Tourism Development Investment Company (TDIC) of Abu Dhabi was created in 2006 to promote cultural and human capital to prepare the UAE to become a global knowledge economy. TDIC also oversees the Saadiyat Cultural District. In 2012, all Abu Dhabi cultural institutions were merged, and the Department of Cultural & Tourism Abu Dhabi (DCTAD) was formed to coordinate all cultural heritage and tourism projects in Abu Dhabi and focus on investing in the preservation of the national identity of the UAE (DCTAD, 2016).

The cultural mandate of these governmental agencies relates to supporting and implementing the Abu Dhabi Vision 2030 framework, with cultural policymaking guidelines. The Abu Dhabi Cultural Heritage Management Strategy was formed in collaboration with UNESCO in order to evaluate crucial issues which require strategic solutions and policies to develop cultural tourism in UAE. For example, the Arts Workshop programme provides ceramics, photography, and calligraphy workshops to the public, to promote intellectual thought, fine arts, and to support the national identity and Muslim Arab cultural heritage. The UAE government has recently concentrated on promoting the country as an international cultural centre, to formulate diverse strategic alliances with other cultural and artistic institutions worldwide.

Each Emirate in UAE has been developing their own cultural projects with the assistance of these governmental agencies:

- Ministry of Culture & Knowledge Development (MCKD)
- The National Council of Tourism & Antiquities (NCTA)
- Department of Culture & Tourism Abu Dhabi (DCTAD)
- Dubai Culture & Arts Authority (Dubai Culture) (DCAA)
- Sharjah Department of Culture & Information (SDCI)
- Fujairah Culture & Media Authority (FCMA)

2.8 Abu Dhabi Cultural Heritage Outlook

Ancient UAE cultural heritage is bound to Arab and Islamic history, to Bedouin nomadic desert tribes, fishermen, pearl divers, and other historical traditions. The UAE currently retains much of its rich cultural heritage which include numerous cultural traditions, handicrafts, foods, clothing, sports, and architecture. The success of retaining traditions is evidenced through the many cultural achievements and awards the country has received, especially since the UAE has partnered with UNESCO. UNESCO's main purpose is to enforce their 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through international cultural heritage recognition to ensure sociocultural sustainability. This includes helping countries promote peace and preserve cultural heritage by “fostering freedom of expression and building knowledge societies” (UNESCO, 2019, p. 1).

In 1998, Sharjah, UAE was named the Cultural Capital of the Arab World by UNESCO. The UAE was elected to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 2009. In 2011, UNESCO dedicated the UAE regions of Hafit, Hilli, Bidaa Bint Saud, and Oases areas of Al Ain in Abu Dhabi as global cultural sites with historical and archaeological significance. In 2012, UNESCO World Heritage Committee awarded UAE the honour of having Outstanding Universal Value for 12 properties. In 2014, UNESCO honoured Sharjah as the Capital of Islamic Culture. In 2014, 2017, and 2018, Dubai Creek was commended for being a Traditional Merchants' Harbour. UNESCO has also recognized UAE's intangible heritage, such as the UAE majlis, a cultural and social space in the home, dedicated only for Emiratis to use, to come together to discuss important local issues and events.



Figure 2.4: Majlis Space

(Source: Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism, 2004)

Majlis' encourage people to exchange different views on current affairs, economic development, and other noteworthy areas. The UAE majlis has been added to UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity from 2015. The majlis is an important part of Emirati cultural heritage as it represents the intangible cultural heritage in the country, one of many, which Al Dhafra women are trying to preserve. There are individual majlis' for men and women in people's homes which allow them to have shared, yet private, conversations, as well as community discussions that relate to their families, social events, and the economic development of UAE (UNESCO, 2019).

Due to the prior global lack of interest in the intangible heritage, it has recently become prioritized by UNESCO to protect specific intangible heritage examples worldwide to ensure they are acknowledged and not exploited in cultural tourism projects. The UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Of Humanity for UAE from 2011-2019 focusses on providing recognition for specific heritage examples which have been determined to be unique worldwide. For 2019, UAE was identified on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity for its date palm knowledge, skills, traditions, and practices. In 2017, the UAE was put on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding for Al Azi, which is the art of performing praise, pride, and fortitude poetry (UNESCO, 2020).

In 2016, the UAE was recognized on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity for its practice of falconry, which is a living human heritage still being pursued as a pastime in the country by Emiratis. For 2015, the UAE was chosen to be on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity for its Arabic coffee, which is a symbol of generosity and hospitality for visitors to Emirati households. The UAE was also acknowledged for its majlis, which is a cultural and social space for knowledge-sharing among the Emirati people, as well as Al-Razfa, which is a traditional performing art still performed in cultural festivals (UNESCO, 2020).

In 2014, the UAE was selected to be on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity for Al-Ayyala, which is a traditional performing art that is still seen in various cultural events. For 2012, UAE was put on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity for Al-Taghrooda, which is the traditional Bedouin chanted poetry proclaiming historic reminiscences. For 2011, the UAE was selected to be on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding for Al Sadu, the traditional weaving skills utilized by Bedouin Emirati women to make handicrafts (UNESCO, 2020).

The UNESCO World Heritage tangible cultural heritage examples acknowledge traditional handicrafts, practices, performances, and places which support the historic past of a country and its people with global recognition and protection. UNESCO also has a Tentative List for future consideration of cultural significance of several other UAE sites which require safeguarding to ensure their continuity. The UAE government has several

tangible cultural heritage sites which are on the nomination tentative list awaiting approval by UNESCO, including:

- Abu Dhabi Sabkha (2018)
- Cultural Landscape–Central Region, Sharjah (2018)
- Sharjah—Gate to Trucial States (2014)
- Al Bidya Mosque (2012)
- Ed-Dur Site (2012)
- Khor Dubai (2012)
- Settlement and Cemetery–Umm an-Nar Island (2012)
- Sir Bu Nair Island (2012) (UNESCO, 2020).

The long and challenging process to attain intangible cultural heritage recognition from UNESCO often takes up to eight years after initial application for acknowledgement. However, once the validation procedure is underway, government of the applying nation must provide a detailed documentation portfolio verifying and authenticating the overall value of the intangible cultural heritage and its potential significant contribution to the global cultural community. This thesis proposes that governments prioritize continual documentation of both intangible and tangible contributions from rural community members to ensure the distinctive cultural heritage is protected and passed down to future generations.

The following chapters explain the significance of Al Dhafra community as the primary research location for this dissertation's fieldwork. Subsequent chapters describe the importance of preserving Emirati cultural heritage as a part of the collective and individual sense of cultural identity.

2.9 UAE Tangible & Intangible Cultural Heritage

Protecting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of nations is the most effective manner of ensuring genuine traditional practices are maintained for the future. The UAE's tangible cultural heritage relates to physical items that symbolize the country and Emirati people's beliefs, such as mosques, heritage village buildings, and cultural handicrafts (Elsheshtawy, 2012). The UAE's intangible cultural heritage refers to Arabic

Muslim traditional beliefs, practices, knowledge, and skills which symbolize Emirati people's values. One of the goals of this study is to call attention to and clarify that the UAE's intangible cultural heritage is in dire need of preserving due to globalization, modernization, and a large foreign population residing in the UAE, greatly influencing the country and its people. In these changing contexts, this study examines the role related to understanding how communities are preserving their cultural heritage and related government initiatives which support them.

Key to this research investigation is how the women in Al Dhafra region are considered primary caretakers of the UAE's cultural heritage as they actively practice intangible cultural heritage traditions and customs on a daily basis and have done these activities their entire lives. At present, there is a lack of academic literature exploring the significance of preserving intangible and tangible cultural heritage in developing nations like the UAE; however, such initiatives have recently been recognized and promoted in UAE government initiatives, indicating this thesis study is timely and will contribute to future research. The original contribution of this study to existing published literature is to provide valuable insight into this topic through in-depth, qualitative research.

This thesis demonstrates how Emirati intangible cultural heritage is reflected in Emirati cultural identity and can also be expressed through tangible cultural heritage such as cultural handicrafts. The UAE's intangible cultural heritage includes the talents and capabilities of Emirati people, like playing musical instruments, traditional dancing, and social or cultural discussions they have related to sharing knowledge about their heritage (Latrelle, 2019). The intangibility of the Emirati majlis as a sociocultural meeting place for exchanging ideas is one of the distinctive elements Emirati are proud of since it allows the people within their community to stay in touch and remain close throughout their entire lifetimes (Elsheshtawy, 2012). These majlis' are divided into male and female spaces to minimize potentially uncomfortable situations and to respect people's individual privacy. As an important culturally cohesive element, majlis' are considered one of the most significant ways that Emirati people retain their cultural heritage as they grow up (Latrelle, 2019).

The UAE government recognizes that one of the most important aspects of the UAE's cultural heritage preservation is in protecting traditional cultural practices that hold

intangible cultural knowledge, which is evidenced in their strategic initiatives for the future. For this reason, it is imperative that the current generation of Al Dhafra women be supported with relevant and useful community engagement programmes to help them establish cultural heritage training workshops. Al Dhafra women would benefit, and gain in their empowerment, by expanding their teaching capabilities beyond training their own children. Indeed, in leveraging Al Dhafra women's skills to train other community members, and Emiratis throughout the country, about how to make tangible cultural heritage products such as handicrafts, will ensure the UAE's cultural heritage is safeguarded for future generations and that this knowledge will endure (Koffel, 2018).

2.10 Empowered Role of Women in UAE

The empowered role of women within the UAE, particularly within the culture sector, has expanded over the past decade to promote women as those primarily responsible for increasing cultural heritage awareness nationwide. Female empowerment has become a priority of the UAE government within the past several years, honouring qualified Emirati women with executive positions and excellence awards, reflective of their skills. Emirati women's cultural role in the society, traditionally, is as individuals who educate others about the cultural traditions that they try to sustain. As a result of these empowerment initiatives, Emirati women are holding senior positions within UAE governmental cultural institutions and educational sector as strategic decision-makers.

The UAE's noteworthy progress related to female empowerment has attracted global attention and created a positive role model that other developing nations are imitating. Many Emirati women have PhD or Master's degrees, are Ministers of State, renowned businesswomen, governmental managers, and own companies (Rizwan, 2018). Women's empowerment in the UAE is earned, through their attainment of knowledge and skills and in holding inherent talents, across industries. Notably, Emirati women have achieved significant goals in the government and business worlds, in a wide variety of industries and are equal to men in almost every position (Al-Hinai, 2019). In 2004, Sheikha Lubna Al-Qassimi was the first Emirati woman appointed to the UAE Cabinet as Minister of Economy and Planning. She is now the UAE Minister of Tolerance, promoting cultural

diversity and, in 2017, was ranked 36 on the Forbes List of 100 World's Most Powerful Women (according to income, power, and career). Raja Al-Gurg is President of Dubai Business Women Council and, in 2018, she ranked 82 on the Forbes List, as well as second for the most powerful Arab women in Business (Rizwan, 2018). Other reputable Emirati women in the highest UAE governmental positions include Dr. Amal Al-Qubaisi, the first leader of a national assembly in the Middle East, Reem Al-Hashimy, a Minister of State and the Managing Director of Expo 2020, and Shamma Al-Mazrouei, who, at 22 years old, is the youngest global governmental leader as the Minister of State for Youth Affairs (Al-Hinai, 2019).

In the Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2018, the UAE was ranked 1st out of 140 countries for female literacy and earned the ranking of 11th for wage equality, 64th for women's empowerment in educational attainment, and 112th for political empowerment (ranked for gender equality and social involvement) (Al-Hinai, 2019). UAE National women also compose 70% of all university graduates in the country and 20% of female ambassadors to the United Nations (Al-Hinai, 2019). In 2015, the UAE government created the Gender Balance Council, a federal agency for enhancing female empowerment and women's role in government and business management leadership positions. Other organizations recently formed in the UAE related to female empowerment include the Dubai Women Establishment (DWE) and the UAE Women Leadership Programme for training. In 2012, the UAE Cabinet passed new laws making it mandatory for all government agencies and companies to have women on their board of directors, and for new mothers to be entitled to three-month maternity leave (Rizwan, 2018).

The UAE ranked 1st in the Arab World and 29th out of 177 nations worldwide on Gender Empowerment Measures in 2018. Former UAE President Sheikh Zayed Al-Nahyan's wife, Sheikha Fatima, is UAE President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, Supreme Chairperson of the Family Development Foundation, and President of the General Women's Union (GWU). The United Nations awarded Sheikha Fatima the Mohammad Medal, which is the highest honour they have ever distributed in the world. Sheikha Fatima was awarded this honour for her role in progressive female

empowerment advancements for Emirati women to improve their recognition as family decision-makers and cultural heritage preservationists (Koffel, 2018).

Female empowerment in the Al Dhafra region refers to more than just women's capabilities as household and family caretakers, as well as being in charge of running community affairs and events while males of these households typically work several hours away in the larger cities of the UAE. Emirati women design and create distinctive cultural handicrafts that are displayed in heritage museums and sold in shops, malls, on airplanes, and in duty free zones. While Al Dhafra women are being empowered through their many cultural achievements, safeguarding the UAE's cultural heritage, no in-depth qualitative study has been done in Al Dhafra or other rural regions of the UAE to investigate how Emirati women are empowered through the preservation of their cultural heritage: therefore, a significant purpose of this thesis is to provide this vital research. While there has recently been some UAE government policy and investment in this area, this study examines some of the cultural and family issues related to better understanding the Al Dhafra community. This thesis' research examines how women of Al Dhafra empowered themselves through the creation of their distinctive handicrafts and why their desire for more empowerment can contribute to collaborating strategically with museum professionals in order to develop successful community engagement programmes to safeguard the UAE's cultural heritage.

2.11 UAE Cultural Heritage Strategies

The UAE government has been developing innovative initiatives related to cultural policies in Abu Dhabi in order to establish a cultural infrastructure which will showcase and promote the country's cultural heritage locally, regionally, and globally. These cultural policies are geared toward protecting the UAE's cultural heritage, as globalization has led to Emiratis being a small minority population in their own country (Ahmed and Rafiuddin, 2018). With over 88% foreign expatriate workers residing in the UAE, Emiratis comprise only about 12% of the overall population. As a result, this disproportionate population distribution has made it challenging for Emiratis to maintain their cultural identity and the cultural heritage traditions their families have passed down through generations, for hundreds of years. While UAE government has been proactive in developing and pursuing

global strategies to become a world-class knowledge economy, there is also recognition that, in creating a sustainable cultural heritage strategy, for example, protecting and sustaining intangible cultural customs like the majlis, is vital to retaining Emirati cultural identity (Ahmed and Rafiuddin, 2018).

In 2018, the UAE Cultural Development Fund was launched by government to encourage all sectors of the society to participate in the cultural development of the country. This government initiative supports innovative social and cultural activities, cultural tourism events, and cultural projects that are for the cultural advancement of the UAE. The UAE's culture simultaneously represents the cultural identity of past, present, and future generations, so these diverse elements of their cultural heritage, some static and others continually changing, must be continually protected, while being expressed worldwide. Cultural tourism revenues are not only beneficial to the UAE economy, as profits can be regenerated back into the development of cultural projects for the future (Elsheshtawy, 2012).

The UAE's cultural tourism offerings are comprised of a variety of elements which include: archaeological sites, museums, heritage villages, festivals, art galleries, libraries, dance recitals, archaeological sites, religious mosques (such as the famous Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre), and various archives of cultural heritage information to appeal to both Emiratis and tourists. There is also a variety of innovative traditional sporting events, such as falcon hunting, camel races, horse races, dhow sailing, and rowing competitions which represent the UAE's cultural heritage (Redinger, 2019). By promoting cultural events and artistic and educational programmes, the UAE government is fostering a cultural environment throughout the country which supports preservation of its cultural identity (Ahmed and Rafiuddin, 2018). Creating such a rich cultural environment also supports retaining a collective memory of the UAE's intangible cultural heritage, which can assist in making Abu Dhabi into a culturally-sustainable, value-added knowledge economy. Further, supporting such a cultural environment also aids in establishing the UAE as a developer of human cultural capital, to enhance traditional cultural customs through a cultural enlightenment strategy (Elsheshtawy, 2012).

2.12 Al Dhafra Cultural Heritage Handicrafts

A key focus of this thesis is on the cultural heritage handicrafts produced in Al Dhafra region. The three main UAE cultural handicrafts Emirati women specifically practice in the Al Dhafra region include: al sadu cloth weaving, talli braiding and embroidery, and khoos (also called safeefah) palm-frond braiding, some of which are displayed within the House of Artisans as UAE cultural heritage handicrafts. The House of Artisans, located in the historic landmark, Qasr Al Hosn, in downtown Abu Dhabi, provides extensive examples of artistic cultural heritage handicrafts made by Emirati people from natural resources. Many of these unique handicrafts are created from date palm leaves grown in the desert, or from pearls and shells found in the coastal regions of the Arabian Gulf. Emirati artisans who have developed these skills to make handicrafts use such objects in their functional daily lives and trade or sell the objects to make money. These cultural handicrafts reflect the creativity within Emirati culture, as such cultural heritage traditions have been prized and passed down. As this thesis elaborates, these handicrafts symbolize the tangible cultural heritage, which reflect Emirati intangible cultural heritage knowledge and skills about their history and traditions. Such cultural handicrafts express the practical skills and shared social values related to Emirati cultural identity (Qah, 2019).

Al sadu refers to a traditional type of Emirati cloth weaving that rural region Bedouin women practice, to make decorative home furnishings, blankets, or accessories, such as tassels for horses and camels' trappings, which held Bedouins' belongings during seasonal treks. Al sadu is made from camel, goat, or sheep wool which is then spun into yarn and dyed. The main yarn colours used by Al Dhafra women include: beige, brown, white, and black, which is then made into distinctive geometric design patterns. Emirati weavers usually sit together in a majlis area in small groups so they can share family and community information, chant, or recite poetry while they work. As part of this thesis' findings, holding these majlis gatherings are the way older Bedouin Emirati women transfer their intangible cultural heritage knowledge to young girls who watch and learn from them throughout their childhood. As their daughters grow older, they are given different duties to help support and maintain these important cultural heritage traditions. These groups of Emirati women are the last survivors of the older generation of cultural

heritage preservationists, in charge of safeguarding the UAE's intangible cultural identity of knowledge and talents (UNESCO, 2018).

These handicrafts integrate geometrical patterns which reflect the social and cultural identity of Emirati Bedouin people and their surrounding environment. Such intricate weaving can also be seen in the making of cloths for ancient UAE Bedouin tents, called bait al-shaar. Many diverse al sadu patterns decorate the insides of these tents to express Emirati culture. Camel accessories, called ataad, are also made with colourful al sadu woven designs in blankets and other adornments to decorate straps and saddles. In 2011, to increase awareness of this distinctive type of UAE cultural handicraft, UNESCO added al sadu to their List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (Qah, 2019).

Another cultural handicraft displayed at Qasr Al Hosn is talli braiding and embroidery, which features a traditional decorative style using silk thread or cotton. Talli is an intricate braiding and embroidery textile handicraft often used for adorning Emirati women's clothing. Talli is can also be intertwined with silver and gold threads to provide intricate decoration for Emirate women's traditional clothing, like gelibeas. This delicate material is made by braiding and twisting several different thread strands together to create narrow textile strips with elaborate and colourful patterns. The diverse braiding shapes can be combined and woven together in order to create specific patterns. Hems, sleeves, and collars of Emirati clothing, called thawb or kandoora, are often embroidered with talli, featuring vibrant colours and detailed artistic designs. Making unique talli embroidery has traditionally been a complex and time-consuming process where Emirati women may work for days or weeks to complete one piece. Only accomplished, professional Emirati seamstresses are able to achieve great detail in talli embroidery, as the process requires focussed concentration and patience. Many Emirati women continue to feature talli in their fashion creations today (Qah, 2019).



Figure 2.5: Emirati Woman Khoos Braiding

(Source: Department of Cultural and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2019)

Khoos is another Bedouin Emirati cultural handicraft which involves weaving palm leaves, taking palm-fronds into braids and basket weaving. In khoos palm-frond braiding and basket weaving. Emirati women create detailed designs using dried date palm tree fronds that are woven together. This kind of cultural handicraft is often used to make baskets, purses, tapestries, and rugs (UNESCO, 2018). Date palm leaves have been said to be the cultural foundation of numerous Emirati handicrafts. Both date palm tree leaves and branches are used as part of the khoos traditional weaving technique. Emirati women and men use khoos to braid and weave date palm fronds together for cultural handicrafts and for household items like baskets, straps, and belts, reflecting Emiratis' individual artistry in their designs. The intricate design techniques of khoos can express Bedouin culture: for example, *surood*, which are circular woven mats that are used to place food. Another form of khoos, hand fans, called *mahafah*, were used to cool people in the hot humid desert or to get fires started. Additional khoos cultural handicrafts are made for specific functions, such as *jefeer*, which are baskets for carrying dates and *makabah*, used to cover and protect food from insects and the sun (Qah, 2019).

Sea craft netting has been practiced for thousands of years by Emirati people to create intricate, useful nets for fishing and pearling. Emiratis not only benefited from the usefulness of these nets for catching fish and finding oysters with pearls, but also for trading or selling sea craft nets as cultural handicraft artistry objects in and of themselves. As

Emiratis developed the UAE's boat-building industry, their regional trade partnerships began to grow throughout the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. These boats required specific types of fishing and pearling nets to catch enough each day in order to develop the local economy. The UAE's coastal communities had a thriving fishing industry where they created useful traps and nets from local materials. Sea craft nets greatly improved Emirati people's capabilities for catching a wide variety of diverse types of fish and oysters for eating, trading, and selling (Qah, 2019).

There are several UAE cultural heritage preservation projects supporting cultural handicraft production based in Abu Dhabi Region, including Sougha and Al Ghadeer UAE Crafts. Sougha is an organization focussed on empowering Emirati women by teaching them how to make fashion products which are valued and distinguished for their individualized craftsmanship. Such unique, exquisite items reflect Emirati cultural heritage, as artisans use local raw materials to express the country's cultural identity. Sougha offers specialized training programmes and consultation sessions to assist Emirati women in improving their craftsmanship skills and successfully marketing their products. Sougha assists Emirati women in fostering a positive attitude to encourage entrepreneurship while entering the local workforce and gaining a sense of individuality in order to create value-added items. This programme provides Emirati women with a sustainable income source that helps preserve local UAE cultural identity and handicrafts (UNESCO, 2018).

Al Ghadeer is an organization that empowers Emirati craftswomen to create cultural handicrafts through vocational training workshops. Emirati women learn how to make unique traditional Emirati products such as: woven carpets, braided fabrics, date baskets, perfumery sets, and decorative chocolate trays. These products reflect Emirati cultural identity as each are distinctive and unique, handmade in an ancient, Bedouin way. Emirati women learn how to design their products, and how to use raw materials in order to make these products at home and later deliver them to be sold nationwide at Al Ghadeer UAE Crafts outlets. Sales revenues from these cultural handicrafts go back to the Emirati craftswomen who made them, get regenerated supplies for future workshops, and also go to supporting people in need through Emirates Red Crescent Society (UNESCO, 2018). All of these community programmes and UAE cultural handicrafts produced by them are

important to this thesis because they reflect the focus of the findings from primary research interviews and focus groups with Al Dhafra women.

2.13 UAE Tangible Cultural Heritage Projects

This section reflects the argument this thesis defends regarding how ancient heritage can be incorporated into present-day life to promote its significance throughout the society. There are several large-scale tourist projects which will contribute to the future growth of the UAE. In Abu Dhabi, these significant, tangible cultural heritage tourism projects include the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, such as Al Ain Oases Cultural Sites, featuring archaeological discoveries chosen by the World Heritage Committee (WHC) in 2011. These include the Sitting Stones Tomb, Bidaa Bint Saud Tomb near Hili, and other tombs and ancient forts created thousands of years ago. There are also various examples of innovative ancient desert agriculture, construction, and water management throughout UAE's history. These examples include the 500 dome-shaped Hafeet tombs, as well as lush oases near Jebel Hafeet Mountain, Hili Archaeological Park, restored forts, and the distinctive falaj watering system from the Iron Age to irrigate agricultural farms. Each of these sites provide extensive cultural heritage value for the UAE and have raised its international profile as a global cultural heritage tourism destination worldwide (UNESCO, 2016).

Additional sites include Al Jahili Fort and Qasr Al Muwaiji, each a restored historic site and museum, Al Ain Museum, Al Ain Palace Museum, and the recently opened Beit Mohammed bin Khalifa House, a historic home and museum. Across each of these projects, DCTAD conducted a strategic review of each site, followed by an implementation plan for improvement (via internal and outsourced solutions), to ensure each conveys the culture, history, and heritage of the country through unique visitor experiences. Notably, one of the challenges DCTAD faces in working with outsourced cultural engagement firms eager to do business in wealthier countries like the UAE, is to ensure that the cultural authenticity and relevance of each site is successfully conveyed. Indeed, the number of cultural engagement businesses which have established branches of their firms in the UAE, particularly since the high-profile Saadiyat Cultural District museums were first announced, circa 2008 to the present, have been significant. While

such firms undoubtedly bring unique expertise to the Gulf region, they also bring a more Westernized perspective to cultural presentations and contexts, and, as such, may lack the cultural sensitivity required to successfully present tangible and intangible cultural heritage, for example. By more closely and strategically aligning with cultural heritage practitioners, such as the community of Al Dhafra women outlined in this thesis, a more refined cultural authenticity may be reached at each site, alongside the creation of a local community already positively engaged with each institution (prior to opening to the public), which positively builds the organization's audience and relevance.

Qasr Al Hosn Heritage Site, which includes the historic Palace Fort, is the oldest and most significant ancient, historic landmark building in the UAE's capital city of Abu Dhabi. This national monument was built in 1761 and includes a watchtower, which was the first permanent structure built in the city. The watchtower was the command post which overlooked the Gulf coastal sea trade routes and provided protection to the city. The watchtower also served the function of defending the only well with freshwater in the city. By 1793, the watchtower was eventually developed into a fortress by UAE ruler Sheikh Shakhbut bin Dhiyab Al-Nahyan. The fort remained the ancestral home of the Al-Nahyan ruling royal family and later became part of ADCF, featuring a heritage museum for the public (Qah, 2019) (Heard-Bey, 2004).

Qasr Al Hosn fort has two main components: The Inner Fort and the Outer Palace. In 2018, the fort became a cultural heritage museum which displays archival materials and artefacts, some of which date back to 6000 BC. The annual Al Hosn Festival held over 11 days, features dance performances and live music of traditional songs and customs of the UAE. Admission to the Al Hosn Festival's House of Artisans is free to the public and school groups; however, numerous Al Hosn Festival special events, performances, demonstrations, and workshops for making cultural handicrafts charge a small fee (Fahad, 2019). Leading Emirati historic experts hold annual discussions at the Muntada forum every March to reflect and explain what Qasr Al Hosn means to Emirati people; "It is through presenting enriching and locally relevant topics in events and forums that Muntada aims to inform and empower the local community. Muntada Qasr Al Hosn will offer participants and visitors the opportunity to learn about the rich history of Qasr Al Hosn and its relevance to Abu Dhabi", stated Muntada curator Giorgio Ungania, Shaikha Salama

Bint Hamdan Al-Nahyan Foundation (Javed, 2013). Historically, Qasr Al Hosn became the main majlis for UAE rulers to conduct business. Black-and-white photographs displayed throughout the inner fort museum visually convey these gatherings. Numerous governmental and political meetings with rulers, leaders from other countries, and oil companies have been held at Qasr Al Hosn.

A recent programming development at Qasr Al Hosn is the April 2021 launch of a permanent House of Artisans, which features traditional handicraft artisans creating cultural heritage traditions including al sadu, khoos, talli, sea craft, and related online activities for remote audiences. The House of Artisans concept came from Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism's (DCTAD) prime directive to safeguard and shine a spotlight on the rich history and heritage of Abu Dhabi and the wider region (Buckeridge, 2021). The museum-like displays and crafts performed at House of Artisans reflect the materials used from locally available natural resources, which also reflect the diverse landscapes of the UAE: from the desert, to the oases, the coast and the sea. As elaborated in this thesis, staged heritage presentations at House of Artisans sustain longstanding cultural heritage practices, and reflect the shared social values associated with Emirati identity, however, in any state-sanctioned, top-down view of heritage, there is an opportunity to more positively impact traditional cultural handicraft-making communities like those of Al Dhafra, in empowering them to become cultural co-producers in the strategic design and presentation of cultural heritage statecraft, and thereby increasing its authentic value and cultural relevance with both urban and rural communities. Another element of the permanent House of Artisans initiative by DCTAD includes the creation of an official Abu Dhabi Register of Artisans; with such a development, perhaps a more thorough and sustained collaboration with artisans, like the women in the Al Dhafra community, can be successfully carried forward (Buckeridge, 2021).

2.14 Al Dhafra Development Projects

According to Arabian Business Magazine (2017), the UAE government's entity Musanada, who provides real estate property management, civil contracting for building and infrastructure projects, has already finished the early launch of the Al Manayef project

in Al Dhafra to meet their 2018 deadline. A significant city project, Al Manayef is an integrated city with almost 6,400 residential units and numerous facilities, including waterfronts, beaches, retail outlets, sports centres, hotels, community centre, police, schools, hospitals, libraries, parks, and other facilities, which are expected to host approximately 27,000 residents in the region (Kumar, 2013).



Figure 2.6: Al Dhafra Tourist Project

(Source: Al Dhafra Affairs Committee, 2017)

A UAE government entity, Al Dhafra Affairs Committee (ADAC), has executed many public service and infrastructure projects, including new commercial centres, shopping malls, educational and healthcare facilities, and low-cost houses. ADAC has also overseen projects worth over \$450 million in building the Ghayathi-Liwa Road, which included: irrigation, electricity, water wells, public gardens, markets, low-cost housing, and a camel race track. In Al Dhafra, the UAE government additionally invested \$100 million for Agriculture Section projects, \$20 million in Forestry Section projects, and \$200 million for Engineering Section projects.

Previously, in 2003, the UAE government allocated \$1.5 billion in major development projects in Al Dhafra in order to begin developing infrastructure and services throughout the area. For Emiratis living in Dalma and Liwa, over \$205 million was apportioned to low-cost housing, hospitals, schools, clinics, mosques, and government offices. There were additional transportation projects and other construction projects built

in the region, including the Tarif-Liwa-Madinat Zayed Highway and land reclamation projects valued at over \$250 million (Ibrahim, 2003).



Figure 2.7: Al Dhafra Cultural Heritage Luxury Hotel Resort

(Source: Al Dhafra Municipality, 2017)

There are plans for building additional luxury hotel resorts to capitalize upon the scenic desert vistas and sea coastlines throughout Al Dhafra. To support education in the region, there is also a plan to create and establish universities to accommodate Emiratis living there to lessen barriers for them in studying and obtaining college degrees. Commercial land plots were allocated to Emiratis in the region to promote entrepreneurial investments and trade for new business activities. This strategy was to enhance the economic status of UAE Nationals living in Al Dhafra (Ibrahim, 2003).

The UAE government's Plan Al Dhafra 2030 is the region's overarching development strategy outlining major expansion projects in the region over the next 15 years. Plan Al Dhafra 2030 involves a long-term infrastructure development plan to preserve the UAE's national and cultural identity. The expansion strategy focusses on developing future cultural heritage opportunities with the Saadiyat Cultural District museum community engagement programmes as proposed in this thesis and additional cultural heritage facilities aligned with Plan Al Dhafra 2030. The infrastructure development in the region, directed by the UAE government, is anticipated to generate over \$150 billion back into the economy by 2030. Currently there are numerous projects in progress, to be finished within the next several years, such as the Madinat Zayed

residential area with 100 offices, retail shops, and apartments. The new Ruwais Refinery expansion will increase the facilities' production to over 832,000 barrels of oil daily and will be completed within five years, to greatly increase revenues in the country (Suresh, 2017).

According to Al Dhafra Development Forum Chairman of Middle East Economic Digest (MEED) Events, Edmund O'Sullivan, Al Dhafra has profuse natural resources that have untapped profit potential for the future. Many future-oriented developments currently being planned in Al Dhafra include the first nuclear power plant in the Middle East and the largest solar power plant worldwide. The Al Dhafra region has the largest oil refinery and largest petro-chemicals facility worldwide, with the majority of UAE gas fields located there. To increase tourism to the region, there is 350 km of undeveloped sea coastline for luxury hotel resort development. Over \$16 billion is being invested by the UAE government in power generation to develop the electricity capacity in the region. Another \$14 billion is being invested in the region's transportation and infrastructure and a further \$1 billion will be invested in local tourism to promote Al Dhafra's cultural events and activities.

According to Al Dhafra Municipality (2015), some significant Al Dhafra development projects currently underway to achieve the vision and strategic objectives of Plan Al Gharbia 2030, which will bring new jobs to the surrounding Al Dhafra region of Abu Dhabi, include:

- Barakah nuclear power plant—Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC) facilitated the \$25 billion nuclear facility's construction in 2012; four nuclear reactors will be operating by 2020; they will provide 25% of UAE's electricity by 2030, saving 12 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually
- Shams 1 solar power facility—designed to be the largest solar energy plant worldwide, is 100-megawatt, grid-connected power plant which can generate enough alternative clean energy to power over 20,000 UAE homes
- Etihad Rail—a 628 km railway train project, in phase 2 of development, will connect to all major UAE industrial zones and ports. One railway line will link Ruwais to Ghweifat near the Saudi Arabia border. The Tarif line will link to Dubai and Al Ain at the Omani border and the Musaffah port line will link Khalifa

Industrial Zone Abu Dhabi (KIZAD) to the new Khalifa port and Jebel Ali port in Dubai

- Madinat Zayed projects — these include: Al Dhafra Ranches—\$27 billion investment; Masdar Solar Energy Plant—\$6 billion investment, and Main Court Residential—\$6 million investment
- Liwa projects — these include: Qasr Al Sarab Cultural Heritage Tourism Resort Hotel—\$200 million investment; an Arabian Oryx Reintroduction programme; Police station—\$25 million investment, and Shah Sour Gas—\$1.2 billion investment

According to Civitas Urban Design and Master Planning (2016), the workforce data breakdown by industry within Al Dhafra reveals that Madinat Zayed-based projects have 8,600 employees, with the majority in tourism, construction, and agriculture. Liwa-based projects have 22,900 employees, mainly in the agriculture, public services, and tourism sectors.

2.15 Al Dhafra Regional Breakdown—Plan Al Dhafra 2030

Al Dhafra consists of seven small cities with diverse business opportunities that can be capitalized upon with strategic governmental initiatives and global investment partnerships. Each city has its own unique characteristics that provide a range of possibilities for new business ventures. The UAE government is focussed on creating sustainable economic development projects for the region's future, to enhance Al Dhafra and to promote the cultural heritage of the country. Assessing the projected demographic profiles for Al Dhafra's cities will help identify the strengths and weaknesses of strategic expansion initiatives and how they relate to community needs. According to the Urban Planning Council (UPC) and Plan Al Gharbia 2030, seven cities in Al Dhafra are forecasted to expand their population and city services with following features by 2030:

- **Madinat Zayed** — 40,000 people
 - Government and civil defence projects, solar power facility, and residential development
- **Liwa** — 65,000 people
 - Tourism and community projects

- **Ghayathi** — 15,000 people
 - Housing projects, government services, community amenities, and facilities
- **Mirfa** — 75,000 people
 - Sports centres, maritime centres, sheep farmyards and slaughterhouses, and mosques
 - Corniche facilities, educational facilities, Police department, and central souk
 - ADNOC nitrogen plant, Mirfa hotel expansion, and food distribution centre
- **Ruwais** — 130,000 people
 - Numerous gas and oil expansions and new projects
 - Airport expansion
 - Multiple industrial projects
- **Sila'a** – 7,900 people
 - Recreational facilities, municipal services, and a bus station
 - Educational facilities and schools, fire station, and health facilities
 - Housing and tourism projects
- **Delma Island** — 10,000 people
 - Water taxis; TAMM (which means “done” in Arabic) public services building, and Delma hospital
 - Residential housing and government services

The scope and ambition of these UAE government, Al Dhafra-based projects and initiatives will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the communities residing in the Al Dhafra region. How these projects and initiatives positively or negatively shape the cultural heritage of the region remain to be seen, however, and as outlined in this study, by employing a strategic collaboration with cultural heritage practitioners, like the women of Al Dhafra, will encourage such activities are grounded in cultural cohesion, as the Al Dhafra women will be empowered to retain the cultural and national identity by sustaining authentic and relevant cultural heritage for generations of Emiratis. While similar cultural and economic initiatives in other rural regions worldwide may not reflect the same scope and ambition as that of Al Dhafra in the UAE, such a strategic collaboration with cultural

heritage artisans in such regions would undoubtedly also encourage the positive benefits outlined in this study.

2.16 Zayed National Museum

Zayed National Museum is being positioned by Abu Dhabi Department of Culture & Tourism (DCTAD) as the premier museum for the UAE, a public and civic building, a centre of learning and discussion, and a model of energy efficient design (Buckeridge, 2021). Conceived by Pritzker Prize winning architect Lord Norman Foster of architectural firm Foster + Partners as a monument and memorial to the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (1918-2004), following an international competition that involved 12 architectural firms, Zayed National Museum celebrates the life and achievements of the founding father of the nation, providing an overview of the history, culture and geography of the UAE, and examines its place in, and connections with, the Middle East and the world.

Zayed National Museum will exhibit both ancient and contemporary works of historic, cultural, and sociological interest from around the world to foster dialogue between the East and the West. This museum provides a discovery of art history and archaeology through different periods and civilizations to explore connections between civilizations and cultures. Building on the essence of the Founding Father's personality and vision, knowledge transfer is the main objective for the museum to help improve cultural awareness in the UAE and throughout the Middle Eastern region. The Zayed National Museum will focus on displaying various works of Middle Eastern contemporary art and will feature educational programmes tailored to the region. The Zayed National Museum was created to honour former UAE President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, and has an additional function of statecraft in that it will house a presidential Sheikh Zayed Library commemorating his love of books and learning. The museum also represents the unification of the Emirates, the UAE's cultural relations, and its history throughout the region and the world. Zayed National Museum is considered the most significant showpiece institution in the Saadiyat Cultural District, as it signifies the UAE's economic and social transformation across history. The architectural concept of this museum

combines a distinctive contemporary design with traditional Arabian cultural influences. There is a significant focus in the building's design and overall programme to reflect the warm hospitality of Emirati culture in creating a welcoming, culturally-sustainable institution.

Zayed National Museum is located in Saadiyat Island Cultural District and reflects a rich variety of creative and cultural events, programmes, and activities. This national museum, and many other cultural institutions, will exhibit cultural heritage artefacts and art. These cultural institutions will offer extensive educational and artistic events and assist the UAE in becoming one of the most renowned artistic and cultural countries worldwide (Nivine, 2015). They will also provide an extensive schedule of intellectual cultural exhibitions, discussions, workshops, and performances (DCTAD, 2016). These artistic programmes and functions will highlight the UAE and global cultural heritage in an engaging, interactive manner (Shaffer, 2011). Throughout the country there are also cultural heritage programmes, performances, workshops, and exhibitions, all of which will enhance creativity and cultural appreciation for the UAE's historical customs and traditions. Across such activities, in employing a strategic collaboration with cultural heritage practitioners, like the women of Al Dhafra, encourages Zayed National Museum exhibitions, programmes, and activities reflect the cultural and national identity by offering authentic and relevant cultural heritage experiences for local residents and tourists alike.



Figure 2.8: Zayed National Museum

(Source: Zayed National Museum, 2015)

Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi spans 500 meters of mixed-use, leisure, residential, and commercial development projects. Saadiyat Island is being cultivated to become the cultural centre of Abu Dhabi. The most prestigious cultural institutions in Saadiyat Cultural District include the Zayed National Museum, the Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum (DCTAD, 2016). In its ambition and scale, Saadiyat Cultural District will dramatically transform the perception of international museums, architecture, and art in the UAE. With world-class museums being launched within a few years and in such a limited property, Saadiyat Cultural District is considered the most ambitious cultural agenda ever attempted worldwide. The UAE government has been continuously expanding its cultural tourism capabilities over the past several years to become one of the most prestigious cultural centres worldwide (Nivine, 2015).

There are several cultural projects currently underway on Saadiyat Island which are anticipated be completed over the next ten years. These cultural institutions and their innovative artistic events and activities are forecasted to attract millions of additional annual visitors to Abu Dhabi (Al Remeithi, 2015). “The aim of Saadiyat Island must be to create a cultural asset for the world. A gateway and beacon for cultural experience and exchange. Culture crosses all boundaries and therefore Saadiyat will belong to the people of UAE, the greater Middle East, and the world at large”, stated Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi (Thomas, 2009). Relating to this thesis’ research findings, such national museums can investigate what is required to make appropriate recommendations about how the UAE government and other cultural organizations can facilitate the development of collaboratively-designed museum community engagement programmes in Al Dhafra.

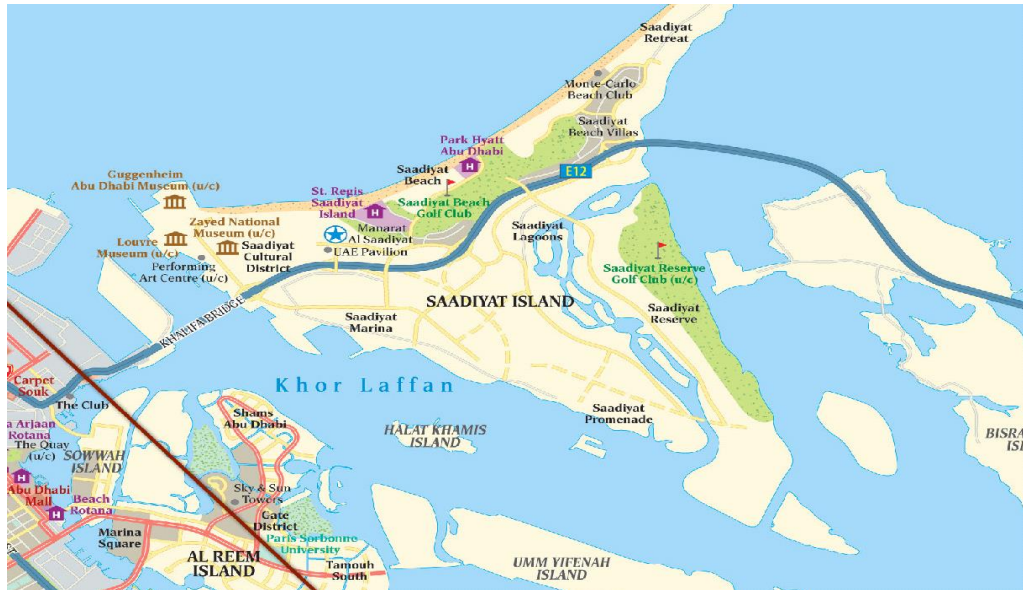


Figure 2.9: Map of Saadiyat Island

(Source: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2015)

The main purpose of these community engagement programmes is to preserve and sustain the UAE's intangible and tangible cultural heritage with community festivals, events, programmes, and unique outreach initiatives, such as mobile museums, which would bring museum exhibitions to communities across the country. Protecting Al Dhafra women's intangible cultural heritage knowledge and skills in creating cultural handicrafts, so they can be passed down to future generations, while ensuring the tangible handicraft products they themselves produce promote cultural cohesion is the main priority of UAE government strategic initiatives (Nivine, 2015).

2.17 Summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive, sociocultural perspective of UAE economy and society. This thesis relays this economic and societal assessment as it relates to cultural heritage handicraft production and preservation and community support initiatives in the Al Dhafra region. The context of this study relates to key UAE government initiatives related to cultural heritage, tourism, and women's empowerment, in order to further support the preservation of Emirati cultural traditions and customs. This study seeks to illuminate the inherent value Al Dhafra cultural handicrafts hold for the country and

Emirati citizens, as they are important examples of the tangible cultural heritage of the UAE. The UAE's government initiatives have been fairly successful in the past; however, developing innovative museum community engagement programmes for the future is the focus of this study, in order to successfully sustain and protect UAE's cultural heritage for future generations.

Another significant element of this study is the importance and value of women's empowerment in UAE government initiatives. This study asserts that UAE museums, in co-developing community engagement programmes in Al Dhafra, can further empower Al Dhafra women as safeguarders of UAE cultural heritage. At present, UAE museums are still developing vibrant community engagement programmes; however, there is a desire, as directed by UAE government, to develop more cultural tourism attractions and programmes. Responding to this demand, this thesis aims to develop recommendations for national museums, based on the results of in-depth fieldwork with communities in Al Dhafra region.

This chapter explains the importance of the tourism industry to UAE today and in the future. The chapter describes how the country has the resources to successfully develop this strategy, with the potential to become a global cultural heritage model for other countries. Part of the chapter provided an overview of UAE government cultural heritage strategies centred on supporting cultural handicrafts in festivals and events. Another significant aspect of this chapter was to describe the different types of unique UAE cultural handicrafts that are the main focus of this study, to understand the materials and skills involved, and the difficulties in creating them by hand.

This thesis details why cultural heritage preservation and protection is essential to a country's cultural cohesion, and how encouraging female empowerment can advance developing community engagement programmes in the Al Dhafra rural region, to protect intangible and tangible cultural heritage for future generations. This study, supported by the UAE government in sponsoring this thesis, contributes original knowledge to existing museum studies literature in asserting recommendations for co-developing community engagement programmes to meet the needs of rural regions such as Al Dhafra. This study provides a comprehensive overview of the UAE's governmental policy directives for cultural heritage preservation and protection and the role of female empowerment as they

relate to the impacts of cultural tourism projects on the country's individual and shared identity. This study also outlines significant cultural tourism investments planned in the Al Dhafra region which demonstrate the potential for empowering women in community engagement programmes to give power and independence to women in Al Dhafra region while also preserving and sustaining the cultural heritage and cultural identity of the UAE.

This chapter also provides for an in-depth comparison of the diverse approaches various Arabian Gulf countries have pursued in order to make certain that their authentic voices and original visions are incorporated into museum exhibitions, to diversify their nations' cultural heritage contributions to the world. It underpins the sundry challenges which museums in the Arab World face as they seek to present culturally-relevant exhibitions that not only appeal to local citizens, but also to international visitors. It explores the many diverse issues involved in heritage management and museum studies related to international cooperation and the ability of cultural institutions to be sustainable. It also examines the economic and sociocultural affect traditional artistry and craftsmanship hold within the context of museum exhibitions, and the impact other cultural tourism projects can have on local communities.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW—HERITAGE, CULTURAL IDENTITY, & EMPOWERMENT

3.1 Introduction

This literature review details how the existing literature helped develop my ideas and analysis, which is further explored in my conclusion. One of the aims of this study is to better understand the practice of cultural handicraft making in the Al Dhafra region, particularly in relation to the context of the burgeoning museum industry developing in the UAE. The first part of this chapter explores how intangible and tangible cultural heritage is linked to cultural identity and national identity, particularly in rural regions. As the previous chapter has outlined, cultural handicrafts are an expression of UAE regional traditions and cultural identity. In order to better understand and further theorize the links between cultural heritage and cultural identity, in the example of the Al Dhafra region, this chapter reviews literature and research in these areas.

Defining cultural heritage, particularly tangible and intangible cultural heritage, is important to better understand and place into context the practices of handicraft making and the handicrafts themselves in the Al Dhafra region. This study also outlines how critical female empowerment is in providing women with community opportunities for independence, entrepreneurship through small businesses, and power (Fuller, 1992). The following literature critically examines some of the key literature which is crucial to supporting the arguments in this research.

3.2 Research Aims

The thesis' research aim is to enhance the existing museum studies academic literature while relating to and progressively advancing the UAE's museum sector, in order to situate how Al Dhafra women's unique intangible cultural heritage can be the foundation of their female empowerment in co-developed community engagement programmes. In the UAE, Al Dhafra women are, in their unique role, arguably the most empowered people in the community, as they hold a significant position and responsibility in preserving the country's intangible cultural heritage and cultural identity, expressed through the making of tangible cultural handicrafts.

In Al Dhafra, such female empowerment is attained through sustaining their hold as cultural safekeepers promoting intangible and tangible cultural heritage and by encouraging women's participation and input in co-developing community engagement programmes with museums and other significant cultural institutions. This study's research and assessments following an analysis of relevant museum studies' literature can benefit museums in providing valuable insight on how to co-develop relevant community engagement programmes in remote regions in order to help preserve and sustain a country's cultural heritage. Within the museum setting, this study's research confirms the assertion that exhibitions linked to cultural heritage are especially suited for families and children, creating cultural cohesion and reaffirming their cultural identity, attributes which encourage further engagement with the institution. This study seeks to expand the limited museum studies research in the Middle East and surrounding geographic regions which have similar cultural traditions and practices, many of which may be under threat.

3.3 Defining Community & Cultural Heritage

For this thesis, community refers to people who live in the same region who share similar societal values and beliefs within the same culture that provides them with a sense of belonging. The concept of place is also a key element of this thesis since it links to community identity and how it influences the people who live there and their identity formation, especially related to heritage (Grahn and Wilson, 2018, pp. 266). Smith, Morgan, and Van der Meer (2010) claim there should be more emphasis on research associated with communities to provide valuable insight into heritage management. Communities refer to people living together practicing similar norms and rituals (Jamieson, 2017). "The concept (of community) has been criticized and problematized, and today a variety of understandings and uses of the concept of community exist in relationship to heritage" (Grahn and Wilson, 2018, pp. 266). In the museum studies field, the "essential defining factor of a community is the sense of belonging that comes to those who are part of it through association with communities, individuals conceptualize cultural identity which are relational and depend on a sense not only of self but also of others" (Watson, 2007, pp. 21-22).

The academic literature conveys that place is extremely important in identity formation, especially to the people who live in marginalized rural communities who may lack empowerment due to their socioeconomic situation. From my participant observations and interviews, the Al Dhafra women stated they believe that if globalization continues to change the region then they may lose their cultural identity and the country may lose its heritage. The primary elements of community theory identified in this thesis relate to how community programme organizers need to understand the relevance of sense of place as it relates to cultural identity.

3.4 Community Identity Formation

This thesis' research asserts that place, identity, and gender are critical aspects to community identity formation. This thesis study also focusses on how gender itself is important in framing and defining some community identities, which is what research in the Al Dhafra region revealed. In the UAE, place, identity and gender are greatly influenced by the Arab cultural heritage is with oral history being transposed from one generation to the next through storytelling, poems and songs (Hurriez, 2002, pp. 31-34). Prager (2014) has critically examined the role that images of 'Bedouinity' play in museum exhibitions and heritage performances, with 'local' identity formation are reconfigured through performances for tourists, allowing performers with no historical links to specific identities to represent them during shows staged for tourists.

One issue related to cultural heritage is that it can be "inflected by the power and authority of those whose versions of history matter. The passage of time, the shift of circumstances, the reversals of history reveal those assumptions as time- and context-bound, historically specific, and thus open to contestation, and revision" (Howard, 2008, p. 287). The impacts of cultural heritage projects do not always create value for local communities, mainly since governments often try to stimulate economic growth in rural regions requiring development without properly consulting the people living there (Bowitz and Ibenholt, 2008). These authors clarify that while cultural tourism has become a major economic strategy for marginalized communities, the community members' needs are often neglected during the planning process. Such cautions found in the review of cultural

heritage literature are important to consider in the current study and its planned recommendations.

3.5 Defining Intangible & Tangible Cultural Heritage

From evidence in the UAE case study (Chapter 2), and results and analysis sections of this study (Chapter 5 and 6), it is asserted that tangible cultural heritage is also intangible cultural heritage, since it requires intangible cultural heritage knowledge and skills in order to create a tangible cultural heritage item, thereby implying that without the intangible cultural heritage knowledge, skills, and traditions, there would be no tangible cultural heritage object as an outcome. The most accurate definition of intangible cultural heritage is provided by UNESCO's International Convention on Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage:

“The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, instruments, artefacts, and cultural spaces that communities, groups and individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity”. UNESCO (2020)

Smith (2015, pp. 140-141) repeatedly emphasizes an extremely critical argument which considers: “all (cultural) heritage is intangible (cultural heritage)”. Such a concept is foundational for this thesis' subject and research. Smith, Morgan and Van der Meer (2003, p. 65) state that the nature of intangible heritage and its related experiences must be broken down and enhanced in relation to tangible heritage for them to be interpreted correctly, especially by outsiders. This reflects the specific challenge that many heritage managers face involving community members only in token ways, which detracts from their essential contribution as the actual practitioners who are still living the heritage.

3.6 Heritage As A Social Process

The connections between intangible cultural heritage and shared community identity are at the heart of the research enquiry of this thesis. These concepts of intangible cultural heritage, in the case of the Al Dhafra region, beyond the (tangible) cultural heritage

handicrafts that Al Dhafra women make, are taken into account in this study. Preserving the intangible cultural heritage is essential to preserving the cultural heritage because it involves ensuring the continuance of the knowledge and capabilities of the local community to keep producing their specialized artistic creations and cultural handicrafts made by the people within that specific culture (Skounti, 2010). While certain aspects of intangible cultural heritage practices change over time in different regions and countries for a host of reasons, such as Westernization and the adoption of new technologies, this study specifically addresses how rural regions are most consistent in preserving cultural heritage traditions due to their strong cultural identities.

3.7 Cultural Heritage Awareness & Preservation

A small field of research has looked at women's handicrafts as cultural heritage and considered issues of preservation. Research conducted in Turkey on the YağlıGüreş cultural traditions within the rural region of Kırkpınar, for example, provided valuable insight into the successful preserving and promoting of Kışpet handicrafts (Basaran and Guurcum, 2011). Such handicrafts are exceptional examples of the diverse types of cultural heritage artefacts, which can effectively empower marginalized societies of women. Further research on cultural heritage handicrafts in countries similar to the UAE would be highly beneficial to further comprehending this thesis and providing a strong basis for comparison of gender equality through cultural heritage preservation. Opportunities that this thesis study identified, within the findings in Chapters 5 and 6, is to encourage Al Dhafra women to document and promote cultural heritage awareness and preservation and to share their process of designing and creating their cultural handicrafts with others, as a creative way of documenting their intangible cultural heritage process and to ensure the next generation carries on these traditions. The literature reviewed in this section provides the key concepts for this study and highlights some of the challenges associated with preserving intangible cultural heritage.

3.8 Challenges In Heritage Studies

There are several challenges in heritage studies that have made it difficult to protect certain aspects of intangible and tangible heritage, which have been overlooked by many museum and heritage professionals when making policies and undertaking projects. In the

UAE, some of the most noteworthy challenges include the lack of documentation of intangible heritage like ancient traditional stories, poems, and songs. The most critical element of heritage that has been difficult to manage in the UAE is the documenting of the intangible heritage process involved in designing and creating the cultural handicrafts according to Emirati customs. The UAE historical manner of making crafts is not simply about drawing or devising the designs, but ensuring that every colour and symbol on the craft represents a specific meaning passed down to them from their great ancestors.

Other challenges involved in heritage studies include a general lack of cultural awareness amongst foreigners working in UAE museums, despite extensive funding being invested in renovating and protecting tangible archaeological discoveries and artefacts. Further, heritage authorities lack a collaborative network to prioritize such sites or preserve UAE intangible heritage. In the UAE there are few enforced laws about protecting intangible heritage practices.

According to Mejcher-Atassi and Schwartz (2012, pp. 2-3), there are several significant challenges many museums deal with related to gathering historic data within the Arabian nations. Western perspectives are often applied to the methodologies being used in these countries and so the objectives are tainted by their perception of what the Arabic cultural traditions actually signify. Assuming that many Arab regions have identical historical pasts has been proven to be erroneous and this has caused some countries to lose their individuality among others with similar backgrounds (Mejcher-Atassi and Schwartz, 2012, pp. 2-3). This thesis supports that intangible heritage can be passed on and replicated to produce tangible heritage, however, it must be inclusive of the community that creates it, and, as the process of creating Emirati handicrafts symbolizes UAE intangible cultural heritage, it requires government-supported policies and protection measures.

3.9 Museums Promoting National Identity

Museums promote the national identity of a country and its people by documenting, protecting, and promoting cultural heritage represented in tangible artefacts. Indeed, the UAE's national identity is founded in its strong cultural heritage practices and customs, which Al Dhafra women help promote with their handicrafts based on the cultural understanding of the ancient Emiratis. According to Dayaratne (2012, pp. 309-311),

constructing national identity within Arab nations involves not only ensuring the safeguarding of cultural heritage, but also promoting the modernized liberal policies which attract foreigners to the countries. Modern architectural landscapes and the archaeological artefacts discovered in the Arab World provide a contradictory portrayal of their national identity as their rulers attempt to achieve many objectives; the Arab countries' architecture is an expression of their nationalism and collective identity because it reveals their heritage and the perception of the people who contribute to the development of the culture (Dayaratne, 2012, pp. 309-311). Indeed, even the representation of a singular topic, such as pearling heritage in the UAE, varies depending on which emirate is authoring the national narrative, resulting in a less uniform message, with local identities, narratives, and idiosyncrasies in play (Penziner-Hightower, 2014) (Exell and Rico, 2016).

Throughout the Arabian Peninsula, there have been many countries establishing state-sanctioned national museums as a means of promoting their national identity. Many cultural institutions in the Gulf have also been using heritage museums to increase social cohesion among the people by reflecting their culture and historical backgrounds. This has resulted in a wide variety of meanings for the producers of the heritage, as well as the visitors (Erskine-Loftus, Al-Mulla and Penziner-Hightower, 2016).

This thesis expresses how preserving the Gulf countries' national identity and heritage should be an evolving process that integrates the heritage makers into the process of heritage positioning. Cultural museums should ensure that there is more accuracy in the representation of the heritage as it portrayed by those who practice it to protect the national identity of the Arab Gulf nations.

Museum officials should bridge the gap between the Al Dhafra community and the national narratives asserted by state-sanctioned cultural institutions, sites, and festivals, by allowing the women there to participate in the creation of community engagement programmes that focus on passing on cultural traditions to the next generation of Emiratis. Such an approach requires museum staffs of all cultural backgrounds to learn how to adjust their cultural preconceptions of what the UAE government wants to promote in their local museums, and can be achieved through training, in better understanding cultural nuances particular to the region. This study aspires to promote how there should also be cautionary policies within museums to curb Western assumptions and objectives so that they do not

interfere with the legitimacy of presenting and practicing cultural heritage, especially as it pertains to local cultural identity and the national identity of the community.

3.10 Globalization of Museums

The globalization of museums has presented challenges for heritage managers when considering the impact of international cultural influence in the context of presenting and interpreting local heritage. Sakr (2005, pp. 94-95) states that globalization of museums often results in cultural influences from other nations bestowed upon certain cultural projects in countries attempting to develop their collections and exhibits. While the UK has had an extensive influence on the museum practices within the Gulf region due to many of its expatriates working in the field, there has been little effect from the Arabs living in England on the British society. The cultural alignment among these two regions has mainly been British management using their expertise for helping establish many museum programmes which have impacted Arab communities (Sakr, 2005, pp. 94-95).

This reflects how there is a need for more cultural exchange between the Gulf region and other nations that should include both tangible and intangible cultural artefacts and intercultural dialogues in order for the British people to better understand the Arab culture. This emphasizes how museum cooperation between the two regions could be extremely beneficial for sharing ideas and exchanging cultural best practices that will improve the artistic offerings in both countries. Transnational processes are required for fostering the concepts of culture and place and their relationship to museum exhibits for all audiences to properly interpret the heritage of different nations. Bouchenaki and Kreps (2016, pp. xviii-xix) argues that global museum curatorial policies and practices provide a necessary set of structured venues for countries to display their cultural heritage artefacts and accomplishments. However, the main purpose of contemporary museums is to provide channels for communities to express their ancient cultural customs to the public. Museological research illustrates how countries all over the world have been displaying their cultural heritage artefacts and other valued traditions as a reflection of their ancient history. However, modern research has been investigating controversial discourse related to the need to conduct more in-depth museum practices that will ensure exhibits are less

superficial and more authentic in their portrayal of countries' cultural heritage (Bouchenaki and Kreps, 2016, pp. xviii-xix).

For cultural authenticity, museums must value cultural beliefs, customs, and traditions related to artefacts and exhibitions, to ensure they are properly represented. Many of the cultural pastimes in UAE have undergone revival throughout the past few years due to renewed popularity and include ancient seafaring, camel racing, falcon hunting and poetry readings. "These traditional cultural events are shaped by the now familiar themes of Arabization, protection from the cultural threat of globalization, and the construction of a national identity that attempts to conceal internal social cleavages and conflicts" (Exell, 2016, pp. 209-211).

This imperative literature connects the prevailing concepts correlated to governing and maintaining the heritage of nations as a requisite for protecting the national identity of the people who practice the cultural traditions. This literature also associates the Emirati cultural pastimes with the development of the national identity. Both of these theories can be linked as key concepts to this thesis. This literature highlights the underlying themes of globalization causing changes in a country's cultural heritage in the Gulf region. It also addresses how museums must creatively-diversify their offerings to attract audiences seeking something different. This thesis adopts these concepts as part of the challenges that Al Dhafra women face in trying to preserve UAE cultural heritage for the future.

Exell (2016, pp. 209-211) states there are various methods of heritage production within the Gulf region, including specific initiatives, private heritage auctions and state-sanctioned projects that not all may have the same agendas. Some of the private heritage collection owners were not enthusiastic about sharing their artworks and traditional artefacts with government. Many examples of the symbolic Emirati cultural heritage have become part of cultural festivals and events and are very popular with both UAE Nationals and tourists (Exell, 2016, pp. 209-211).

The critical analysis within this literature indicates that the political agendas of different organizations could have detrimental effects on heritage programmes in the UAE, which is an underlying theme of this thesis. While the UAE government is supportive of heritage preservation, the country's museums have not effectively engaged Emirati artisans and, as a result, Al Dhafra women have felt left out of cultural programme development.

This thesis signifies the ongoing conflict currently present in the UAE cultural arena which must be addressed and resolved in order to improve cultural heritage preservation and accurate museum interpretation of heritage in UAE.

Exell (2016, pp. 16-17) argues the Saadiyat Island Cultural District museums have tried to establish themselves among other global cultural institutions since they are strongly influenced by Western cultural institutions. “Signifying an attempt at shifting global cultural centers, not just within the Arab world but in relation to the West, and demonstrating a fluent understanding of Western cultural values, these projects all share a number of characteristics: spectacular architecture; world-class collections; utilization of universal approaches to art and history; a top-down approach to cultural management; and intense international speculation around their significance, relevance and sustainability—they are the focus of the West’s envious and critical gaze” (Exell (2016, pp. 16-17). This academic literature reflects how essential it is for museums to ensure the authenticity of heritage during globalization to protect the country’s cultural and national identity as it pertains to their heritage practices and customs. Since globalization can be detrimental to many heritage programmes, museum officials need to be careful not to project their own ideals onto heritage projects and instead incorporate the underlying values of the local community to preserve the cultural heritage. The literature analysed in these sections provide the elementary factors involved in this thesis related to museum studies and the heritage management that is involved in cultural heritage perpetuation and endorsement.

3.11 Women’s Role In Cultural Heritage Preservation For Future Generations

Women living in rural regions are considered essential to the preservation of cultural heritage, particularly due to their role in families and communities where they are directly involved in maintaining traditional values and customs for future generations. Ensuring the continuation of a country’s intangible cultural heritage should be mandatory for maintaining community identity and national identity since it impacts the people living there (Harrison, 2011). Also, there is an alignment between social empowerment and economic and cultural opportunities related to protecting a country’s cultural heritage (Al-Dajani, 2013). Recognizing the benefits of supporting rural communities in celebrating cultural heritage can assist in achieving female and community empowerment outcomes.

In research conducted in Africa and South America, related to the sustainable development of global heritage management, it is proposed that empowerment of key community figures can help maintain and ensure the preservation of cultural heritage (Navas-Carrillo, 2019). Such research relates to how Al Dhafra women feel regional activities planned for the foreseeable future must be considered in relation to their role as cultural heritage preservation guardians, in order to be able to properly represent the past and ensure such valuable traditions are not lost to the forces of modernization.

3.12 Cultural Heritage Expressed In Cultural Identity & National Identity

For the women of Al Dhafra, increasing their balance of power in society relates to their desire to enhance their capabilities for contributing to the surrounding community, in protecting intangible and tangible cultural heritage, to ensure cultural cohesion amidst modernizing development projects taking place in the region. This type of self-driven initiative is how “groups actively using various forms of representation to imagine themselves and their relationships not only with other groups of people, but also with the nation-state” (Grabow, 2016, p. 33), allow for empowerment to be accomplished in a variety of ways.

National identity refers to having a united view of a country’s distinctive cultural traditions and feeling a part of the national community. A strong national identity helps people realize what their country does makes them proud of living there and why they believe in their government (Lustig and Koester, 2013). A consideration of heritage suggests it is not the same as national identity since it is the compilation of a nation’s legacy of intangible and tangible achievements (Dickey, El Azhar, and Lewis, 2013). Cultural heritage refers to both the intangible heritage knowledge and talents of the people, and the tangible archaeological findings and artefacts of the society which have been inherited from generations throughout the past (Blau, 2003).

The most effective method of preserving cultural heritage is to share it with other people so they better understand the foundation of a people’s cultural identity (Koc, 2006). In the context of this study, Al Dhafra women have gained acknowledgement, influence, and power for their cultural heritage guardianship throughout the community, which they have sought to sustain alongside significant development projects in the region. Preserving

cultural identity requires an understanding of “the notion of respect for this heritage and its artists / practitioners seems to me the most significant since it instils in the mind of artists and practitioners a sense of pride which is the most powerful driving force in fostering self-motivation for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage” (Aikawa, 2004, p. 221). This concept explains how cultural heritage preservation remains a complicated circumstance that communities must take into account during execution of cultural heritage conservation (Cominelli, 2012). This is relevant because the Al Dhafra region has development projects which could potentially alter their communities’ social and cultural heritage perspectives. The UAE government and museums should work with the Al Dhafra women in co-developing community engagement programmes decision-making to protect the cultural identity of the region, as well as the UAE national identity.

3.13 Female Empowerment In Community Engagement Programmes

Women are a significant group in preserving cultural heritage in many countries worldwide and, in particular, in the UAE; therefore, sustaining the country’s culture would benefit from their empowerment. Empowerment refers to giving power to those who are disadvantaged within the struggle of power relations and how their situation determines their well-being, opportunities, and decisions (Al-Hinai, 2019). Within the academic literature there appear to be two dominant concepts of empowerment, one focussing on economics and the other on knowledge. Empowerment in the context of this thesis draws from the literature and informs the findings in Chapter 6, on female empowerment through cultural heritage preservation.

The link between gender and heritage explains how communities need to engage and empower women in the maintaining of the local culture in order to develop activities that interest the people of that society (Grahm and Wilson, 2018). This reflects the UAE’s development of their cultural heritage preservation, given the Al Dhafra women’s already-held role as established safekeepers of UAE’s cultural heritage. In Middle Eastern-based research on societal norms and traditions, female empowerment can be developed into a conceptual framework based on empirical evidence and theoretical concepts that exemplify the relationship between socio-political empowerment and gender within a cultural tourism and community engagement context (Al-Dajani, 2013). This supposition is expanded from

previous research which focussed on gendered attributions which can be evolved into cultural tourism opportunities to empower women (Al-Dajani and Carter, 2010). Such a contextualized sense of communities challenges conventional practice or ideas of female empowerment as well as conceptualized theory related to how it can be attained in communities. Another critical Middle Eastern-based study noted that the key trends and debates in heritage literature surrounding women's crafts signify that empowering women can be accomplished by acknowledging their contributions to intangible cultural heritage preservation as it is embodied within the creation of the traditional handicrafts, which can be the foundation of a female empowerment conceptual framework (Abu-Lughod, 2009). These studies are crucial to the assertions in this thesis and conceptual framework on female empowerment through cultural heritage preservation in the Al Dhafra community.

Such steps toward empowerment link to this thesis' findings in Chapter 5 and 6, in how women negotiate change and their active modern role as mothers alongside their roles as guardians of traditional cultural heritage, as well as the broader critique of putting women on 'show' in cultural heritage demonstrations, a disappointingly one-directional view of their role and the role of cultural heritage preservation. Given this, it is essential that governments provide women with the empowerment required to hold the role of heritage safeguarders. Although the review of these studies establish the challenges involved in addressing and resolving the problems of empowering women, in the Al Dhafra region, the primary issue is to ensure their participation and collaboration in developing community engagement programmes to create their cultural heritage handicrafts.

3.14 Globalization In Rural Regions Challenging Cultural Heritage Preservation

The UAE is a rapidly changing country, as was described in Chapter 2; profound economic, social, and cultural shifts have an impact on how rural areas, like Al Dhafra, engage in cultural heritage preservation. Forces of globalization can introduce people with diverse cultures to regions which may conflict with local cultural norms and traditions. In one study on the cultural identity crisis in Turkey, globalization was shown to greatly impact the cultural heritage preservation in remote rural regions (Koc, 2006). Such societies have less interaction with Westernization and modernization elements in their

daily lives, so any development projects which introduce outsiders may influence the local populace.

Another study demonstrated that, as many countries expand their societies to develop rural regions where cultural heritage customs and practices are still followed, it has become extremely difficult to maintain the traditional way of life for the people living there (Jamieson, 2017). For this reason, female empowerment in these areas has become a significant factor in cultural heritage preservation, as explained in research by Malt (2007). Globalization often changes individual cultures and creates a universal culture where most nations share many of the same common cultural traits (Featherstone, 2004).

As the literature review has demonstrated, across many societies and in particular in the UAE, women play a key role in heritage safeguarding and passing along such traditions to children. Emirati women teach their cultural heritage handicrafts to children to ensure cultural customs and belief systems will endure throughout time. Findings from Chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis suggest that the UAE government can support its museums in overcoming challenges involved in developing relevant community engagement programmes in rural regions like Al Dhafra.

3.15 Summary

This thesis seeks to contribute and enhance the knowledge of the essential role of women in the development of community cultural heritage projects. Revealing the capabilities and interests of empowered women in rural regions, like Al Dhafra, in the UAE will help to ensure the preservation of the society's cultural heritage and cultural identity. Community engagement programmes both support Al Dhafra women in preserving UAE cultural heritage and sustain cultural identity that can be passed on, in their intangible cultural knowledge and tangible cultural handicrafts to future generations.

There are significant issues and challenges related to cultural heritage preservation amongst rural region communities and how women need to be empowered through community engagement programmes. While the cultural and national identities within the UAE are strong, due to Emiratis retaining their cultural heritage, the following chapters of this thesis provide recommendations for how future community engagement programmes

can promote female empowerment in the preservation of cultural heritage and cultural identity in rural regions of UAE, particularly through strategic collaboration.

This chapter also studies various heritage literature to compare findings regarding the need for more collaboration between Gulf museums and communities to protect cultural heritage. Various female empowerment concepts from the heritage studies literature explain how social and political power can be gained for women to allow them more community involvement in heritage management projects. These studies detail how the key to social transformation for women in marginalized communities is female empowerment. Heritage studies provide a unique interpretation of how women who are heritage practitioners lacking power can become recognized for their achievements and obtain power in heritage management, which has greatly contributed to this research.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the chosen research methodology used for this thesis, why these methods were chosen, the particular strengths and weaknesses of using such approaches, and includes primary research methods and how they contributed to the understanding of the research topic. This chapter also explains how different research methodologies used in this study were applied to the research process. The chapter details the primary research data collected from research interviews and focus groups in the Al Dhafra region of Abu Dhabi, UAE, and provides an overview of how the research results were analysed. These research findings assist in explaining how the data can aid resolving issues related to developing community engagement programmes in the Al Dhafra region to promote UAE cultural heritage through the ongoing empowerment of women living there.

4.2 Research Methodology For This Project

This part of the chapter explains the thesis' research methodology used for obtaining primary data. The overall research aim is to use the Al Dhafra region in Abu Dhabi, UAE, as a case study for gaining knowledge into the research topic and applying research outcomes from this thesis to improve future programmes. While the UAE is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, its remote Al Dhafra community is a more marginalized society, presenting a paradoxical situation indeed. While the Al Dhafra community is not poor, they are geographically segregated in that the region is far away from larger cities. Al Dhafra residents do not speak English or visit the major cities often and have little access to modernized technologies and organizations. Yet, the region has a supportive government willing to develop and sponsor community engagement programmes to satisfy their needs, which is unique for rural regions. Such factors provide context to the why this study is significant in adding value to the topic. The research methodology, methods, and process involved in this study are elaborated in the following sub-sections:

- **Research Methods**

It is necessary to position ourselves as observers, relative to our subject, thereby creating the framework that will ultimately determine the impact that the research can have on the world. This definition of qualitative research (Creswell and Poth p. 8) refers to an active, participatory exchange that accepts the structure necessary for rigorous data gathering while allowing the outcome to be transformative. While formulating the methods of research for this study it was necessary to take into account the unique situation of the subjects. This unique set of circumstances necessitated the development of very particular primary methods that would elicit the responses essential to the work. As the knowledge contained within these remote communities is held within relatively small groups of individuals the use of interviews was primarily chosen (Driscoll, 2011 pp. 162 - 163). The research methods used for this thesis ultimately included both primary and secondary research methods. Primary research involves personal interviews with semi-structured questions, which are common techniques that allow interviewees to be more interactive and participatory in the entire interview process (Kvale, 1996). The primary research method also included sketches that are presented in Chapter 6. Secondary research methods relate to a review of published government documents, a review of other sources about the UAE, and the Al Dhafra regional profile that is presented in Chapter 2, and analysis based on observations of cultural festival sites attended. This thesis' research process involved a qualitative research method which included interviews and focus groups (total altogether 33) with women in the Al Dhafra region.

Interview questions, and all interviews and focus groups with the Al Dhafra women, were conducted in Arabic as the women did not speak English. Their replies were translated to English for the results and analysis section. The Al Dhafra women were already aware of specific terminology such as: cultural heritage preservation, cultural identity, national identity, cultural heritage safeguarders, and female empowerment because of media coverage of new government initiatives for women, Emirati tv channel called Baynounah, as well as their past participation in cultural events, festivals, and community programmes. To further elucidate the data, I undertook participant

observations, created sketches of cultural heritage handicraft-making, and visited cultural heritage festivals as an embedded participant-observer in order to more fully understand the cultural context(s).

Justification for conducting focus groups alongside interviews was due to the Al Dhafra women wanting to talk to me in groups, which both exemplified how connected these women are to one another and provided them with a sense of community. Since many women felt shy to be interviewed alone, focus groups were a useful way for them to feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions freely. Additionally, as there were so many women involved in this thesis study, paired with time and geographic constraints, interviews amongst the sample group were with those that have extensive intangible and tangible cultural heritage handicraft knowledge experience. Such adjustments to the data collection may not be typical in non-western nations, however, were deliberately chosen in this UAE-based study in order to more effectively gain access to the study's participants and gather the study's data.

Originally, questions posed to the Al Dhafra women related to proposing art programmes for children as a part of museum community engagement programmes. This original enquiry of the thesis was later adapted and strengthened as research progressed, as the Al Dhafra women were determined to explain their opinions about cultural handicrafts as being a way to empower them throughout the community and in community engagement programmes. This altered the thesis' focus to addressing needs and challenges to the Al Dhafra women becoming empowered as a part of developing community engagement programmes to preserve UAE intangible and intangible cultural heritage, given their role as safeguarders for UAE cultural heritage.

The Al Dhafra women emphasized how they felt protecting and passing on to their children the knowledge and capabilities involved in producing cultural handicrafts is as important as actually making them. This intriguing revelation altered the direction of the thesis' research, given its potential to provide valuable insight into the literature. Focus groups generated such detailed data that they were reformatted to include brainstorming sessions to capture recommendations for future museum community engagement programmes in the region.

In order to accommodate these changes and not breach ethical guidelines, these ideas were discussed with the Al Dhafra women and each were asked if they would provide informed consent to participate in this revised study. While the Al Dhafra women were aware that any of them could drop out of the study at any time, all the women participating demonstrated excitement to be involved and, as such, had no problems with expanding the study's topic. As the focus on museum community engagement programmes remained central to the original thesis research, as described in the ethics, the fundamental enquiry and research methods were unchanged.

From the original interview and focus group questions, the Al Dhafra women provided extensive data on their perspective of the importance empowering themselves to hold the role of cultural heritage preservationists. Such data helped identify and better understand the participants' cultural heritage expertise and suggestions for improvements, which could be integrated into future community engagement programmes. This new knowledge produced useful outcomes related to developing innovative cultural heritage and female empowerment strategies.

The shift from the thesis' original focus on integrating art education community programmes into the Al Dhafra rural region from the original interview questions to addressing the women's perspective of empowering themselves as cultural heritage caretakers was made while analysing research data. This strategic shift was made upon the realization that Al Dhafra women have specialized capabilities of preserving the intangible cultural heritage (values, beliefs, traditions, and process of making handicrafts) which few other Emiratis hold. Resulting data reveals that the interviewees in this project all had common objectives of working together to develop useful new approaches for community engagement programmes. Interview outcomes are included in the recommendations section of this thesis as they are suggestions for future improvement.

Following from this, thesis research proceeded through an interpretive, inductive analysis of the data. In order to derive the most benefit from this approach we allowed "informed theory building" (Gioia, 2013) to guide the development of the research questions and methodologies providing a flexible yet rigorous framework for data gathering. For qualitative analysis, the purpose is to examine a certain situation in a detailed way that allows for the researcher to gain a more in-depth perspective of the people and

processes involved, as in this study (Adu, 2015). As it is essential that the researcher develop a bond of trust between them and the subjects being researched for useful data to be gathered, for this research project, the research design was deliberately chosen to be flexible and evolved into discussions about the significance of preserving UAE cultural heritage and empowering Emirati women in community projects.

This project's approach is inductive because it generated a specific theory over time, related to how rural regions like Al Dhafra could benefit from community engagement programmes. The thesis' original concern with art programmes for children is returned to again in the recommendations and conclusions section, linking to priority museum initiatives with data collected to reflect on how such initiatives would engage Al Dhafra communities. Induction is a useful research tool, as the researcher can collect primary data with effective methods such as focus groups and interviews, providing more in-depth data than surveys (Kvale, 1996). This study provided a unique interpretation of the thesis' findings from sample interviewees and focus groups based upon their collective identity. This distinction was determined as interviewees continually answered questions in agreement with each other and had few disagreements on the topics.

The primary research was used to identify key patterns and trends from the data to identify emerging trends in the discussions. I chose primary research methodologies with interviews and focus groups, applying qualitative analysis rather than quantitative approaches, as surveys using quantitative analysis would not have provided the detailed data necessary for better understanding this sample group and the rural region.

Predictions are then formed and observations are made to test these predictions. In this thesis, this induction research was a strength in its approach, as it enabled me to answer my research questions and consolidate other avenues of research, letting themes emerge from the data themselves and being guided by the participants. This thesis study applied this proven framework, used by many other researchers, to formulate the research problem into research questions and objectives instead of forming a hypothesis. This process helped prepare research data in order to achieve the study's research objectives, by concentrating on a specific topic that allows the researcher to draw appropriate conclusions (Williams, 2010). For this study, this research process was used as a guideline in order to identify emerging themes and incorporate them into evolving questions during the interview

process, to obtain in-depth answers that helped me better understand the remote Al Dhafra community.

Using these research methods provided the most in-depth viewpoints from participants on the challenges they have endured with limited art and cultural education in their communities and those they seek to overcome. The primary research involved using the UAE as a case study, preparing a community engagement programme as part of a cultural education business model. The research design and data collection process for this thesis was based upon the personal interview process, as it has been proven to be acceptable and a more effective method of gathering in-depth data from community members.

An overall analysis was prepared to explain the research findings from interviews so they can be applied to the theoretical frameworks from the literature review. Evaluation of the interviews provides a useful perspective as to why many UAE museums neglect to include the remote rural UAE regions in their programmes and how this can be changed. This evaluation helps prepare the research for conclusions and recommendations to UAE museums, to provide insight into how successful museum community engagement programmes can potentially be in the UAE. The methodology chosen for this thesis was based on ideas and theories outlined below and adapted according to the needs of the research project itself.

Mason (2002, p. 62) argues that qualitative research is “the interactional exchange of dialogue” where interviews are performed in person individually or in focus groups utilizing an informal style and format. Qualitative research involves the researcher having the perception that “knowledge is situated and contextual”. This literature reflects that while knowledge does provide facts about a specific topic, it can be reconstructed within interview settings since it is interpreted through the interaction between the interviewees and interviewer. Knowledge is also considered to be the construction and reconstruction of information that is co-produced between the two parties (Mason, 2002, p. 62).

Saldana (2011, p. 31-32, 75-76) states that qualitative research should be gathered as a means to document what humanity has been undergoing throughout time to identify various meanings and patterns within its achievements. This type of qualitative research should be collected systematically to provide evidence of the journey humans have been through and the complexity of their existence from past history. Examining qualitative

research that includes more than one research method (such as participant observation and interviews) enables researchers to gain a much wider perspective of what the society they are studying is like and how their traditional pastimes and customs have influenced their heritage (Saldana, 2011, p. 31-32).

Winslow, Honein, and Elzubeir (2002, p. 566) argue that focus groups have become a useful qualitative research method of gathering data within global research projects due to their capacity to get groups of people to share their opinions and feedback on a wide range of subjects. Because gaining input from people can result in valuable information being uncovered, the concept of the group dynamic has been widely accepted among numerous researchers. Focus groups allow researchers to obtain data in an efficient and cost-effective manner from people who may be difficult to interview individually, especially since they may not be in accessible regions and may not want to share their feelings in personal interviews (Winslow, Honein, and Elzubeir, 2002, p. 566).

Saldana (2011, p. 75-76) argues the invaluable artefacts, documents, and handicrafts within the broad spectrum of cultural materials collected by researchers during the qualitative research and analysis process and the personal observations they witness comprise the foundation of a community's cultural heritage practices. Qualitative research interviews have been proven to be the most vital type of data collection due to giving the researcher the capacity to obtain the critical perspective of those communities being studied. Ethnographic fieldwork is also useful because the researcher is able to observe community members within their own natural environment in order to document their social activities (Saldana (2011, p. 75-76).

Some of the research methods which were also used to gain more understanding of the difficult production involved in making UAE cultural handicrafts included visual observation of Al Dhafra women braiding palm leaves to make baskets, rugs and other items and aural observation of their conversations, singing of songs and traditional UAE lullabies, and other oral history sources. I also created sketches capturing the handicraft creation process based upon these personal observations. There were several reasons for this. For an Emirati female, especially those that reside in remote areas such as Al Ain and Al Dhafra, having photographs taken is considered an invasion of privacy, and would be disrespectful for visitors to do in a private setting such as the majlis. In the absence of other

means of visual documentation I resorted to sketching to both capture the process, and to act as a visual guide for the oral research that was being undertaken. The sketches ended up being a reference as well. In order to overcome the barriers created by the cultural hesitations of the interview subjects I used my skill of sketching instead to document the process of making the cultural handicrafts.

This visual and aural ethnography allows for innovative new methods of learning about UAE intangible culture as it has been expressed in tangible form for centuries. Further, such unique data collection methodology revealed an unexpected outcome, in that the making of cultural heritage handicrafts, the process is as integral to the practice as is the outcome (Ravetz, A., Kettle, A., and Felcey, H., 2013).

- **Sampling Methods**

The primary research sampling methods for data collection in this thesis study required applying a Simple Random Sampling (SRS) to the target population of the Al Dhafra region in Abu Dhabi, UAE. To avoid researcher bias, I chose the random sample group for the interviews and focus groups from volunteers who wanted to participate, and who represented the chosen cultural heritage experts in the region. A random sample group was chosen, comprised of Emirati married women with children between the ages of 30-40 years old, living in the region. The UAE Statistical Centre Abu Dhabi (SCAD) used a computer programme to randomly choose the 60-person sample group for interviews and focus groups using their computer database of 100 Emirati women who fit the criteria of region, nationality, age, and gender. The main reason for choosing this sample group and method of research is because in this region of UAE there are limited art and cultural education venues for Emirati families.

A breakdown of the primary research process entails: of the 60 Al Dhafra women who were in the sample group, 33 were interviewees for the individual interviews and combinations of those interviewees, and other Al Dhafra women (who did not want to do individual interviews) participated in the focus groups. This breakdown is included in the Appendix with a table detailing how many respondents were in each group, where and when the interviews took place. A critical reflection on the ethical constraints of this thesis revealed only a few issues related to gaining access to participants due to their remote

geographical location that pertained to the context of doing research in the UAE on traditional cultural heritage activities with the artisans who produce the artefacts.

I chose to use the research methods of interviews and focus groups and sample groups of Emirati women from a particular town and age range because of the primary research conducted on UAE handicraft production demonstrated that Al Dhafra women within these ages were part of the main producers of these heritage items. This choice contributed to my aims because it was necessary to interview the specific people who have been creating the handicrafts, since they are who the research is focussing on. There is always misconception that the producers of the handicraft are only elderly women, in fact in Al Dhafra younger females are engaged with the production as well and this was necessary to present in this research. A critical reflection of the interviews and the focus groups shows that if men or women of different age ranges were questioned then I might have gained a different set of viewpoints. However, due to wanting to investigate the cultural heritage producers of female UAE handicrafts, it was necessary to use these sample groups and methods to achieve my research objectives.

The Al Dhafra women's status in UAE society finds them within a small and distinct remote rural community that is only well-known to other Emiratis who are either related to them or who have contacted them in the past related to UAE festivals, to obtain their help with handicraft production and display. They are not considered elite or wealthiest members of UAE society, but instead live quiet traditional lives in the desert region. Nonetheless, they are key community figures there because of their expertise in making cultural handicrafts.

Some of the issues surrounding access to these participants and the heritage exhibiting areas include that the participants live three hours away in the desert, only speak a specific dialect of Arabic unique to their region, and primarily communicate with other women, they do not have much contact with foreign people, and do not go into the major cities often. It was obvious that it would be very difficult for an outsider to gather this data as I was only able to through affiliation and our shared language and culture, additionally the necessity of communicating in their dialect, which is not a written language therefore presents a formidable obstacle to the interview process. Clearly the benefit incurred by my own upbringing within female Emirati communities allowed a much deeper connection

through the research process to be formed, creating a rapport that made data gathering much easier. I found these individuals to interview by the support of a UAE statistical centre random selection recommendations, according to the necessary criteria given to avoid bias in the sample group selection. There were only a few challenges in taking such an approach, as there are currently no other ways to identify and contact these handicraft producers.

There were only a few ethical challenges I faced that were specific to the cultural context in Al Dhafra, which were easily addressed by identifying as an Emirati female speaking Arabic and wanting to promote women's cultural accomplishments, and agreeing to anonymity for the interviews and focus groups. Some of the challenges of taking of photographs due to the participants' desire for anonymity and working in gendered spaces for women only included having to first ask permission from the participants to ensure that every step was acceptable for them.

These research methods of personal interviews and focus groups allowed me to use participant observation as a means of gaining valuable insight which might otherwise may not have been possible, gaining access to a private element of UAE cultural heritage that most people never even know or see. I also used participant observation at certain cultural venues like the Sheikh Zayed Heritage Festival and Qasr Al Hosn Festival where Emirati women were making handicrafts for the public to watch and to buy. This allowed me to better evaluate the cultural atmosphere, learning possibilities for visitors, and the cultural impact related to Emirati women and their handicraft production process within cultural events for the public.

The paradoxical situation related to this research is that while Al Dhafra women are proud of their cultural role and achievements within UAE society, they are also unwilling to be exploited in ways that would diminish their capabilities, to be seen as being outdated or useless to the UAE knowledge economy. Other contextual and background data that I used to further the understanding of this research subject and situation included a review of the promotional literature of cultural activities from UAE government entities such as Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, as well as their vision and mission statements, policy documents, and museum websites promoting cultural events.

- **Researcher Positionality**

This thesis is important to me as a UAE National, as I believe that those living and practicing intangible and tangible cultural heritage traditions in the rural regions of the country are key to preserving cultural heritage and national identity for the entire country. As an Emirati female conducting this research project, I was able to obtain the trust and willingness of the Al Dhafra people being studied. This rural region has a more traditional Bedouin population of Emiratis, where they follow strict religious, traditional, and cultural values, customs, and practices. Upon obtaining the random sample group of the Al Dhafra women, I built trust through initial phone conversations. Since I have relatives who lived in the Al Dhafra region in the past, the Al Dhafra women knew my family name: last names are important in Emirati culture and signify shared common meaning throughout UAE. Given this, even though I live in the city of Abu Dhabi, the Al Dhafra women trusted me to be respectful of their privacy and cultural traditions.

As the Al Dhafra women trusted that I would never disrespect UAE cultural traditions, and that I follow the same cultural customs and behavioural norms, I was granted permission to conduct the interviews and focus groups. Such shared trust helped with ethical concerns related to this thesis and provided Al Dhafra women with the confidence that their opinions would not be misused in the research. Such trust also allowed access to a rich variety of information and knowledge of Al Dhafra family life and routines, which few other researchers have had access to in the past. Such access helped to fill the gap in research on the topic of community engagement programmes in rural regions, since this study provides invaluable insight into why festivals, workshops, and events are important in this context and how, if properly managed, these community activities can benefit the people living there.

Researcher positionality was significant in this case, as it allowed for gaining essential data that would not be shared with foreigners. Such unprecedented access also extends beyond the research project to the recommendations of this thesis, since building trust within research studies is mandatory for making relevant recommendations for community engagement programmes in rural regions, where communities are not usually engaged with people from other countries who do not speak their language, nor follow their religion or customs. One of the most significant outcomes from this thesis was that the

research conducted was only possible because of my ability to understand and relate to the common cultural values of the Al Dhafra community. Such a cultural connection brought about specific reflections, such as the consideration of language knowledge and translation differences which presented some challenges. I addressed these issues, however, by complying with all ethical guidelines and ensuring that I asked the Al Dhafra women about any of their replies in which I was unsure how to explain. The women welcomed me as someone interested in the research process, which helped me gain the respect of the sample group. Being Emirati and female, I was privileged in being able to fill the gap that previous research studies could not, as I was permitted to gain access and interview Al Dhafra women in their own homes.

- **Interview Questions**

The interview questions relate to interviewing participants about what types of cultural events they have in the region. There are questions related to inquiring if families in the region would be interested in community engagement projects, museum outreach programmes, and cultural education government initiatives to enhance learning for their children. The interviews included questions about museum community engagement programmes and how they could positively impact the lives of families living in the Al Dhafra region of Abu Dhabi. The interviews involved pre-formed questions, which were open-ended and semi-structured in format, given in advance to the sample group in order to better prepare their answers and choose whether they wanted to participate. Data collection involved visiting Emirati women participants to discuss the significance of art education and cultural awareness programmes.

Some questions relate to interviewing participants about what types of cultural events and festivals they have in the region and how they were involved in them. There were also questions related to inquiring if families in the region would be interested in community engagement projects, museum outreach programmes, and art and cultural education government initiatives to enhance learning for their children. Other questions inquired about if they felt there is a lack of art educational and cultural programmes in the region and if they felt children would want to attend workshops for learning about art museum exhibitions. There are questions about how Al Dhafra women feel about the lack

of cultural community programmes within UAE society and if they believe the society could benefit from more cultural heritage preservation projects. As mentioned in the previous section, these questions were a starting point that evolved in further conversations about their handicraft cultural heritage practices. Interviews were audio recorded with detailed notes to ensure unbiased integrity and accuracy of the information, to provide objective answers for the research.

- **Data Collection—Al Dhafra Women**

The data collection process for the primary research methods involved me conducting interviews and focus group discussions with the sample group of Al Dhafra women asking questions related to the topic. Interviews were conducted in Arabic, using participant observation methods and took place in participants' homes for privacy. Questions were kept simple in order to elicit more detailed information from respondents, as they had given preliminary verbal information to me to explain their perspective on the topic. These basic questions helped interviewees prepare their interviews. Questions were shared to sample group participants so they could prepare their answers and be ready for personal interviews.

A breakdown of the data collection reveals 33 one-hour or more semi-structured in-depth personal interviews and focus groups of the randomly-selected sample group were conducted. Face-to-face personal interviews and focus groups were chosen as preferred methods to gather data, as the Al Dhafra women felt respected and were therefore more likely to provide honest and detailed answers, which were recorded with notes during the process. I held interviews and discussions with different members of the 60-woman sample group on different days, between November 2017 to April 2018. The breakdown of the sample group information and dates is detailed in the Appendix, however, a brief overview involved:

- Interviews—33 personal, one-hour face-to-face interviews with 33 Al Dhafra women related to this topic (Interviewees 1-33 excluding 16 – 18)
- Focus groups—12 focus group discussions with five women in each group for a total of 60 Al Dhafra women participating in the overall sample group; all of

the Interviewees 1-33 (excluding 16-18) and other women participated in these; feedback was gathered from all 60 of these women

I also conducted three other interviews (Interviewees 16-18) with Abu Dhabi cultural officials to gain perspective on how community engagement programmes can be developed to increase art educational awareness and events in Al Dhafra, the results of which were used for Chapter 7 Recommendations. The numbering of interviews was chronological. The purpose and conduct of these interviews is described in more detail in the following section related to sample group.

Allowing interviewees to prepare their responses before the actual interview will provide much more thought-out replies with detailed answers to the questions (Jablin, 2004). Indeed, interviewees stated they wanted to reply more fully during personal face-to-face interviews, so they were permitted to prepare detailed notes and explain specific issues they may have faced in the past. Giving interviewees time to suggest practical approaches to improving performance is useful for creating and improving intended programmes (Kvale, 1996). An in-person, informal information and consent process, in which I asked the interviewees if they wanted to participate in the project, occurred two weeks before the interviews and interviewees consented in writing with signed consent forms.

- **Data Collection—Cultural Institution Officials**

For the three Abu Dhabi cultural officials' interviews, questions were chosen according to information gathered in the preliminary research for the thesis proposal, literature review, and the UAE case study. These questions were answered in detail by the interview participants to specifically address the issues related to developing community engagement programmes. These three interviewees were chosen because of their relevant work within the UAE, their roles as cultural heritage experts, and because I had access and approval for them to participate in the study.

As part of the data collection process, interviews were audio recorded with detailed notes to assist with transcription. Data was analysed by evaluating the interviewees'

answers, to obtain relevant information needed to better understand the issues related to community engagement programmes. Qualitative analysis from my perspective, with many years of cultural institution expertise, was then used to obtain useful insight into upgrading strategic objectives related to relevant community engagement programmes. Researcher positionality is outlined further in this thesis study.

The research process for this project also included asking participants how to develop appropriate strategies for improvement and different approaches for integrating new programmes, policies, and procedures for the future. Qualitative research is considered a legitimate field of research inquiry where all types of methodology allow for suitable data collection (Bryman, 1996). The qualitative research method allows for critical sensibility and positivist human experiences to be evaluated in a suitable setting. Qualitative approaches emphasize interpretive and inductive research methods that can be easily applied to common everyday situations, like the workplace, which are socially developed and subjective to interpretation (Jablin, 2004). Relying on qualitative methods involves gathering data from knowledgeable participants with detailed explanations about the subject being studied.

This project's data collection utilized a primary research method to determine how museum outreach programmes, and community engagement strategies can enhance learning for both Al Dhafra mothers and their children. The evaluation of their interview responses provided useful perspective as to why many museums neglect to include remote rural UAE regions in their programmes and how this can be changed. This data helped prepare the research for conclusions and recommendations to UAE museums, to provide valuable insight into how museum outreach programmes in the UAE context can be successful. Reflecting upon conducting this study, I realize that, due to this small sample group, and the fact that it was difficult to access these cultural professionals, such factors could be limitations to the thesis' research. However, such a perceived limitation is partly compensated by my own knowledge of UAE cultural heritage, my position in the culture sector, and recognizing the significance of female empowerment, being a woman myself. Cultural heritage festivals presented an opportunity to utilize the observational approach, sparking discussion and allowing for strengthening my analytical method in relation to

their responses. I believe the positive outcomes from this research for future studies far outweigh any possible limitations or challenges.

The outcome of qualitative research is usually found through investigative or exploratory research since the results are not always conclusive but instead require some further analysis from the researcher's perspective (Walton, 2015). The research findings provide the basis for overall conclusions and recommendations for cultural organizations' managerial decision-making for the future. Such results may also offer a greater comprehension of some issues that require more data for the foundation of future research studies (Othman, 2010).

4.3 Ethical Issues

This study involved minimal research risk; ethical issues pertinent to this study involved protecting the privacy of the participants in the research and the data collection to ensure confidentiality. Research studies must address various ethical issues, such as ensuring the participants are truthful, have a right to privacy and be informed, and have their identities protected. Researchers must be unbiased so there is no misrepresentation of the research results (Boshoff, 2014). While there is no such thing as total objectivity in research, as every person has their own personal biases, even if subconscious or based upon their experiences, all ethical concerns were suitably addressed to ensure that results were as unbiased as possible. The research was approved through the University of Leicester Ethics Research Committee. I ensured the total confidentiality of all respondents and ensured there were no faulty conclusions in the research.

Since this research involves determining if governmental community engagement programmes can be developed in the Al Dhafra region, it was essential to ensure confidentiality and security of the data obtained. Proper research practices must be integrated into government offices globally to ensure confidentiality and privacy of files and the participants in research studies are protected (Hunter, 2015). One of the duties involved in this research was protecting the ethical obligations of the study; all ethical considerations were considered, related to the privacy and confidentiality of all files and related participants in the study. All interviewees agreed to not have their names in this research and instead be anonymous to protect their identities and confidentiality of their

personal opinions. These research findings helped provide strategic recommendations for new policies and best practices in collaboratively developing and presenting museum community engagement programmes which, should they be implemented as intended, to be monitored, reviewed, and measured to ensure ongoing progress over time.

4.4 Bias & Challenges in Research Projects

There are many challenges to conducting a study, such as participants being too busy or not being interested in participating in the process (Jenkins, 2015). These factors were possible limitations to the research for this project since certain people were unable to make time to participate in the interviews, despite them wanting to, while still others did not want to participate. The process of determining which participants would be involved included speaking with community members to explain the study and ensuring they had time to participate alongside keeping to their other obligations.

There were certain challenges that were overcome by choosing the best candidates with expertise on this subject. The participants were interested in finding solutions to the many issues to be resolved. Bias could potentially present problems with research studies if researchers have a personal interest in the topic related to their workplace (Jenkins, 2015). However, any potential bias in this research process was managed and minimized by ensuring that Al Dhafra women were able to express their opinions fully, which are reported in Chapter 5 and 6. The research is situated within an academic field and the recommendations are in a standalone chapter. I also worked diligently to be as unbiased as possible while managing the researching and writing for this independent research thesis.

The interviews with Al Dhafra women were conducted over a long period of time, which helped to provide more knowledge into issues that can be resolved by working together as a group and those that required more research. Fortunately, there were minimal challenges to overcome with this research, as interviewees had no concerns over this research project. As this thesis received UAE government sponsorship, I sought to achieve the goals and objectives of the sponsor throughout the study, while maintaining the integrity required for PhD-level research. Since this research was a learning experience for both the interviewees and I, who each gained knowledge on how to advance excellence in

the culture sector, I sought to maintain strong ethical standards through each aspect of this PhD thesis.

4.5 Analysis Process

For this research project, qualitative analysis and thematic analysis processes were used to evaluate the data from the primary research. Thematic analysis relates to assessing and recording data patterns that are seen as emerging themes within the research. These themes show the common trends or patterns that are seen repeatedly throughout the research results, which specify the most important information related to the topic. This allowed for exploratory research from the structured methodologies involving small research samples. This process helped to comprehend cultural heritage practices in the Al Dhafra region and what will be needed to prepare more effective and reliable community engagement programmes for the future.

I reviewed the research results from the interviews and focus groups and applied the underlying concepts to the theoretical frameworks, models, and theories from the academic literature review. This procedure was useful for determining credibility and dependability criteria for research projects (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). The findings and outcomes from the interviews were then used to formulate an analysis of the information as it relates to the literature review. This data was then evaluated as to how it can be applied to real-world situations, using strategies and new technologies for improving future approaches. The analysis of these in-depth interviews and focus groups allowed for a comprehensive overview of the main issues presented in the data, which was evaluated to find creative strategies for future improvement. It also required me to assess and adopt certain global practices within the field in order to develop a more appropriate strategic approach best suited for the context.

4.6 Thematic Analysis Coding

The data gathering process involves thematic analysis as a part of the qualitative research analysis determining specific elements, concepts, and ideas from brainstorming, to identify which ones are most relevant to the study. As a result, these research concepts then seem apparent and are given specific codes to extract them from the data. Once more

data is gathered, it is reviewed continuously and the codes are grouped into specific concepts and then reclassified into certain critical categories which become the foundation of a new theoretical framework. At the start of this project's primary research, all significant words were coded to identify the significant issues and what approaches were currently being used to resolve them. These notes were conceptualized by each line and coding was placed within the fieldwork note margins. As data was coded, new concepts emerged which were modified and renamed into transformed concepts, which I did, using terms like: 'museum outreach programme', 'community engagement', 'art education', 'cultural heritage', 'cultural identity', 'national identity', and 'female empowerment'. I continued to compare new data and altered it to develop the new theory while pursuing the schedule phases. The data was placed back together after coding through related connections between the different categories, in order to show new underlying themes which evolved from the research results.

Special coding was used to evaluate the qualitative data since many research projects allow other criteria for interviews, with key words like 'museum outreach' being coded with 3, 'community engagement' coded with 2, and 'art education' coded with 1 point, to see how many times interviewees mentioned them during the interviews and what relevance these words had on the overall study. The interview data was processed and analysed using codes as part of the chosen inductive qualitative research method and analysis.

Inductive content analysis can be efficient in determining patterns within data (Gibbs, 2007). Inductive content analysis was used in this research project within the qualitative research method to assist in developing theories and identifying certain crucial themes by studying documents, recordings, and other printed and verbal material. Thematic coding is a method of qualitative analysis that records images or texts associated with common themes which can be indexed into various categories (Saldana, 2009). Thematic analysis is an effective technique for qualitative data analysis that focusses on pattern identification across different datasets (Creswell and Creswell, 2005). This study also applied the reflexivity process to document personal reflections of possible findings that could have important implications for the overall research outcomes. These reflexivity

notes are analytic memos that are useful for expressing emergent concepts, themes, or patterns which are ongoing throughout the study (Saldana, 2009).

I detailed the coding process throughout the primary research phase to ensure detailed records would be kept of the themes which developed from the research. The final notes assisted me in understanding why certain decisions and choices were made in the coding process, which related to choosing specific research methods, theoretical frameworks, and models that would most accurately represent this research project (Saldana, 2009). The main emerging themes from this study were identified and categorized into a thematic analysis chart. This chart lists the most common themes and related sub-themes from the research results from the study's interviews and focus groups with Emirati women residents in the Al Dhafra region of Abu Dhabi, UAE. These themes have been classified and broken down to identify their sub-themes through the thematic analysis coding process. Each theme has been explained under its heading to portray their similarities and differences as they were described in the interviews and focus groups.

This study originally focussed on several central themes related to museums and community programmes being launched in rural regions in the UAE. However, after extensive research into the Al Dhafra region and the community of people living there, diverse, emerging themes altered the strategic direction of the research project. Several main emerging themes were apparent after conducting the study, especially cultural heritage as it relates to cultural identity, and national identity, through both intangible and tangible cultural heritage elements. I followed a manual coding system as it presented more beneficial results from the data.

4.7 Outline of Chapter 5 & 6 Themes & Sub-Themes

The research methodology thematic analysis process results of the interviews and focus groups are presented in two separate chapters, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, to clarify the emerging themes and sub-themes which were discovered during the thematic analysis process. Each main chapter has an overview and summary which is broken down for clarification and displayed in the chart below:

Thematic Analysis—Research Themes Chart

Al Dhafra Community	
Chapter 5	
Thematic Analysis—Interviews & Focus Group Results	
Themes	Sub-Themes (Codes)
Cultural Heritage & Cultural Identity of Al Dhafra Women	Al Dhafra Women’s Cultural Identity: Safeguarders of UAE Cultural Heritage
	Passing on Cultural Heritage & Cultural Identity To Future Generations
	Cultural Heritage as the Foundation of National Identity
	Women Vital to Preventing Globalization From Destroying UAE Cultural Heritage
Chapter 6	
Thematic Analysis—Interviews & Focus Group Results	
Themes	Sub-Themes (Codes)
Female Empowerment	Female empowerment for Al Dhafra Women
	Participation And Input In Community Engagement Programmes
	Women’s Role In Cultural Heritage Preservation For Future Generations
Cultural Handicrafts	Empowering Al Dhafra Women With Cultural Handicrafts

4.8 Summary

This research methodology chapter detailed the main, primary research method and analysis for this study, including interviewing and focus groups. It explains how the initial, main discussion questions focused on identifying and discussing the available community cultural education programmes within the region, and how the research evolved, following topics that emerged in semi-structured interviews, and how these were then analysed using indicative thematic analysis to allow new ideas to be theorized and discussed in the thesis. The chapter also described the entire research process, and data collection procedures used for this study that revealed emerging themes to be analysed, to see how effective this was in providing validity and reliability to the research subject.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS & ANALYSIS: AL DHAFRA CULTURAL HERITAGE

Theme 1: Cultural Heritage & Cultural Identity of Al Dhafra Women

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of personal interviews and focus groups with women in the Al Dhafra region. The chapter argues that Al Dhafra women have a key role as cultural heritage perpetuators for the UAE. In order to do so, first and foremost the chapter establishes an understanding of this rural region, the cultural heritage, and its inhabitants (women especially) as interpreted from the data. This chapter also discusses how women are crucial to ensuring the forces of globalization does not destroy the UAE's cultural heritage. This chapter explains how the Al Dhafra women's cultural identity and national identity are not only reflected by their cultural heritage handicrafts, but also by their customary routines. This chapter discusses how Al Dhafra women feel it is their duty to pass on UAE cultural identity and UAE cultural heritage to future generations. This chapter also discusses some of Al Dhafra women's aspirations related to future community engagement programmes. The potential role for museums in supporting cultural heritage practices in the region is further described in a following chapter.

This chapter includes research from heritage studies' authors which provide a contextualized academic literature discourse supporting my thesis arguments on female empowerment through cultural heritage programmes (Smith, 2015) (Howard, 2008) (Golding, 2009) (Bunning, 2018) (Schwarzer et al., 2014) (Scott, Cayleff, Donadey, and Lara, 2016). An overview of this chapter's themes includes the cultural heritage and cultural identity of Al Dhafra women and an analysis on how cultural identity theory outlines I explore the theme of cultural heritage to highlight how Al Dhafra women are the foundation of cultural heritage preservation throughout the UAE.

There are interlinking concepts between comprehending the distinctive and deep-seated cultural heritage of Al Dhafra women. Such concepts relate to understanding their cultural and national identities and are essential to the future success of any community engagement programmes, which make these significant areas to examine. The main argument this chapter asserts is to highlight the ways in which notions of cultural heritage, cultural identity, and national identity in the UAE are formed by adhering to traditional

beliefs and passing them on to future generations. The cultural identity theory and other related concepts are key to this thesis' arguments. The conclusion elaborates how future community engagement programmes focus on creating regular events for enhancing cultural heritage and supporting the cultural identity and national identity of the people in this region.

5.2 Al Dhafra Women's Cultural Identity: Safeguarders of UAE Cultural Heritage

Well-known as one of the last ancient Bedouin societies in the UAE, Al Dhafra women see their heritage as their duty, to establish their role as guardians of cultural heritage preservation. In terms of Al Dhafra women's cultural identity as cultural heritage custodians they hold a dual role: as safekeepers of cultural heritage for the region and to keep cultural heritage practices alive for the country and its future generations. Cultural identity is a "system of practices and beliefs that constitutes the essence of a particular group of human beings which explains human behaviour on an individual and collective level" (Storey, 2017). In the context of the UAE, cultural heritage preservation is linked to a society's cultural identity because it protects the cultural beliefs and traditions of the people (Aubry, 2014, pp. 99). Clearly revealed in the thesis' interview data is that Al Dhafra women's cultural identity is strongly linked to their role as cultural handicraft-makers, and that they consider themselves having a key role to play in the continuance of UAE cultural heritage for the future, as noted in the following excerpts: "We take a lot of pride in representing the UAE in our role as guardians of the cultural heritage", stated Interviewee 2. "We believe that we have an important role to play in preserving the cultural heritage for all Emiratis and we take this job very seriously", claimed Interviewee 6.

Al Dhafra women make sense of their cultural identity through protecting their unique knowledge and talents that are a significant part of the UAE's intangible cultural heritage. As such, the process of making these tangible cultural heritage handicrafts is directly linked to the Al Dhafra's women's sense of identity. Unique Emirati cultural handicrafts made daily by Al Dhafra women include hand-woven camel and goat hair woven into blankets, clothing, and purses, and date palm fronds braided into baskets for carrying dates and mats for sitting on the floor (as detailed in Chapter 2). Results from

thesis' interview data demonstrated that cultural handicrafts are a significant part of the UAE cultural identity in Al Dhafra, as it is their way of continuing to practice their traditional customs. "The role of women in Al Dhafra is very clear to us. We feel that it is our chosen responsibility to ensure that the distinctive cultural identity of the Emirati people is kept alive, no matter how many changes occur in the region", argued Interviewee 13. Another interviewee explain it thus: "Our well-known identity is the only thing that matters to us. We believe that without it, we will be just like every other society in the world", stated Interviewee 12.

Cultural heritage refers to belonging to a specific society and culture which shares the same language, ethnicity, historical background, and nationality (Domsic, 2013). In the same way, Al Dhafra women believe cultural heritage is not only about growing up in the same place, it is also about sharing the same cultural values. "We value how embedded our cultural values are within our cultural identity since they express how much we cherish our UAE cultural heritage", states Interviewee 32. In this way, cultural heritage is a concept greater than heritage materials or historic buildings, rather it is about shared cultural values. As one respondent put it, "we believe it is an important role of Al Dhafra women to be in charge of maintaining the values we share in our society as part of preserving our cultural heritage", stated Interviewee 8. Through their role as handicraft-makers, Al Dhafra women consider themselves preservationists of the UAE's cultural identity, which is linked to their cultural heritage and traditional customs. "Creating the cultural heritage handicrafts is the most important aspect of Al Dhafra women's cultural identity because it symbolizes our love for our country's culture", claimed Interviewee 14. "We believe it is our destiny to be the nation's cultural heritage protectors since it is the core of our cultural identity", stated Interviewee 12.

Al Dhafra women believe their roles as custodians of heritage allow them to share their extensive cultural knowledge about the UAE's historic past in two specific ways: through both tangible (cultural handicrafts) and intangible (understanding cultural beliefs and traditions) elements. Cultural heritage creates and transfers cultural knowledge about a society's ancient past through tangible and intangible elements, to develop the members' cultural identity (Turner, 1990). To preserve the tangible cultural items within a community, it is essential to safeguard the intangible knowledge and skills of the people

who make them. This argument is supported by the literature in Chapter 3, as many authors support the protection of intangible cultural heritage in order to preserve tangible cultural heritage.

Both tangible cultural handicrafts and intangible elements of a cultural heritage must be protected for the cultural identity to be passed down to future generations (Schwarzer et al., 2014, pp. 218-220; Golding, 2009, pp. 224-240). Women in Al Dhafra also felt strongly that they had a role to play in preserving heritage practice so that it could be passed on to future generations: “In order for our cultural identity to remain intact we need to protect the process of making our unique handicrafts as well as the actual handicrafts”, stated Interviewee 2; “Without the knowledge we have learned over the years of how to make our special handicrafts, we would not be able to make them for the future”, stated Interviewee 13.

In order for a community to properly maintain their cultural identity, they must ensure that the capabilities are preserved for the future (Boussaa, 2014). The Al Dhafra women spoke of how they are the only people who currently possess the traditional handicraft skills, which further reinforces their sense of themselves as custodians of heritage on behalf of the nation. Al Dhafra women’s cultural heritage traditions are the foundation of their preservation role, which promotes both intangible and tangible elements of their cultural values and belief systems. Being an Emirati privileged my access to better understand the Al Dhafra women’s intangible cultural customs and culturally-coded information, an access and understanding most foreigners would not enjoy. For example, while some younger Emirati women have adopted to modern ways, Al Dhafra women choose to cover their hair, protecting their greatest asset or “crowning glory”, so only their family and spouse can see it, which continues out of reverence to their ancestors. “We have such huge respect for our cultural heritage, past historic traditions, and customs, and we want to make sure they are preserved for the rest of time”, proclaimed Interviewee 10. As such, the Al Dhafra women’s identity as of custodians of heritage extends from their role in preserving handicrafts skills to the embodied manners in which they also preserve traditions and customs.

Preserving tradition from the country’s past generations can be found in other recognizable tangible items in Al Dhafra. As Emiratis are famous for their distinctive ude

and bakhour, types of incense handmade from wood oils, when I first walked into Al Dhafra women's homes for the interviews it reminded me of my youth. Such an example demonstrates changes that have affected other Emirates more than Al Dhafra as a society, given the increased presence of foreign businesses and expatriates in major UAE cities, which can impact the culture. Skounti (2010) emphasizes how cultural heritage symbolizes the identification and recognition of cultural elements as examples of a society's culture. The UAE's cultural heritage is represented in its cultural customs, traditional practices, and cultural goods they produce, as well as the cultural skills and knowledge of the people related to their historic ancestry. Across the Al Dhafra community, traditional customs and materials are deeply embedded in their day to day lives, which in turn strengthens their sense of selves as protectors of these customs in a wider sense, as one interviewee clearly articulated: "Without our cultural practices and traditions that we use every day, we would not have such a strong identity and be as good as we are at protecting UAE cultural heritage", stated Interviewee 9.

It is the daily traditions based on their cultural heritage that a community continuously practices that make up their cultural identity (Muhammad, 2013). For Al Dhafra women this includes their preference to live in the peace and quiet of a calm desert region rather than a busy city, where they make their own clothing from natural resources and pass on their intangible knowledge and skills to their children. Members of the Al Dhafra community drink fresh camel milk and Arabic coffee, and eat dates every day, just as their ancestors did, to make themselves feel healthy and strong: "We believe in what we have learned from our mothers and grandmothers and we still practice these traditions daily", states Interviewee 3. These daily activities shape the women's sense of identity in a way that goes beyond their daily lives, connecting to their wider sense of selves as cultural custodians on behalf of the nation; "We feel that in continuing on in these cultural rituals, we are ensuring UAE cultural identity will remain founded on the heritage forever", stated Interviewee 6.

Cultural heritage can be viewed as the "selective use of the past as a resource for the present and future" (Howard, 2008, p. 40). This same study also states that memory can be communal and empowering to women, since it relates to important experiences and events which have happened within communities and are linked to their societal reflections

(Howard, 2008). Female empowerment can be gained through the sharing of societal memories that explain common narratives about past occurrences which may also be linked to the cultural memories (Howard, 2008). Such assertions support this thesis in that they reflect how people's memory on local and national levels can be associated with empowering women and preserving the country's cultural heritage process. Further, such thinking aligns with the argument throughout this research, that the role of women is key in preserving cultural heritage and cultural identity; cultural heritage perpetuation and the maintaining of a society's cultural identity is highly promoted by the women throughout the Arab World (Schwarzer et al., 2014, pp. 218-220; Golding, 2009, pp. 224-240). This argument is also reflected in this thesis' research: "While the men are often required to conform to more modern activities due to their work in major cities, it is the women who remain in the traditional home and continue to practice the cultural heritage customs", stated Interviewee 7. "This is why the women are often seen as the main supporters of the cultural heritage by practicing handicraft", explained Interviewee 15.

Another important argument that emerges from the data analysis focussed on how this sense of cultural identity was further linked to Al Dhafra women's role as educators of future generations. This role was reflected in a number of interviews: "We use storytelling to young children about the ancient days of our country to explain cultural traditions that make up our cultural identity", declared Interview 14. "We like activities that allow us to teach our children the songs and dances of our cultural heritage", stated Interviewee 11. "Part of who we are is helping our daughters learn about the traditional customs, handicrafts, cooking, songs, style of clothing, and respect for innovatively-designed gold jewellery that symbolizes the Emirati culture", stated Interviewee 7. UAE cultural celebrations give Emirati girls the chance to dress in traditional multi-coloured jewelled gelibeas and gold jewellery, while they perform customary songs or dances. "We feel incorporating the traditional activities like teaching the next generation how to raise camels, goats, sheep, and other animals keeps them reminded of how lucky they are to live in a country where there is no shortage of food", affirms Interviewee 12. This tradition is reflected when the fathers, brothers, and uncles help teach the children about getting fresh milk from the camels and preparing the sheep for barbecuing. From this research I realized that many Al Dhafra families deliberately live a traditional life connected to farming, eating

their food fresh from their farms, taking pride in these customs, and passing on these traditions to their children.

Al Dhafra women hold in their role of educating children the importance of preserving UAE cultural values and traditions. “Another custom we follow is for the women of all ages to gather together in one large room after cooking for discussing daily activities and taking care of the children”, explained Interviewee 6. A significant cultural heritage tradition in the UAE that can influence female and male identities are the family gatherings held in majlis gathering areas. Women are typically segregated from men in different areas where large groups gather, including extended family members. As one interviewee explained, “The women are in one area of the house, while the men sit either outside by the fire at night or in a majlis living room area to discuss politics, the economy, or other issues related to the country”, stated Interviewee 5. Although each group have their own individual interests and topics to discuss, their cultural identity is tied to how they carry out these traditional customs and promote them to future generations. Such cultural activities reflect ancient ways of life still practiced in the UAE.

One study states that culture is a philosophy of life and an inexhaustible reservoir of responses to the world’s challenges (Marrie, 2009). From intimate conversations with Al Dhafra women, I learned that UAE cultural heritage is based upon family traditions and principles that comprise the internal spirit of the people. These women feel it is vital that their children retain their cultural identity from the UAE’s cultural history, customs, and traditions so they develop a positive sense of belonging. Another theme which arose from the thesis data is that it is women that pass along significant aspects of cultural identity to both male and female children, as they are with their children throughout the day, while adult men typically work away from the home, and are often only at home on weekends. There is a strong correlation between gender and identity that is often neglected within heritage studies that restricts the understanding of women’s key role as heritage protectors (Smith, 2015). An analysis of the thesis data gathered from interviews reveals that the cultural identity of the Al Dhafra region reflects a strong cultural link within the community that helps to bond different families together. There is also an established family relationship between mother and children since they spend so much time together.

Culture refers to the “intellectual excellence” of shared behavioural habits and customs which are commonly shown within a society by its members that link culture to identity formation (Bauer, 2012). “We feel our cultural identity must remain strong to protect our culture and ensure the next generation will also keep up our values”, stated Interviewee 14. “We learned how to make huge meals for our Holy Month of Ramadan and the Eid holiday to celebrate these special occasions that we are proud to be a part of with all of our extended families who come from all over the country. We spend many days making homemade breads, sweets, and cook a sheep or even a baby camel for special occasions to celebrate how much we care about our family and how happy we are to live in this country”, explained Interviewee 12. As the women told how they felt about their cultural heritage, I understood this refers not only to their society’s cultural norms and their lifestyle within the community, but how they interacted with their families and friends. Such a distinction reveals how strongly Al Dhafra women feel about their culture and how it is integrated into every aspect of their lives, including how they view their own identities.



Figure 5.1: Emirati Girls in Traditional Dress Singing at an Event

(Source: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2016)

Culture and heritage permeate all aspects of Al Dhafra women’s lives and are at the centre of their sense of identity. The strong UAE cultural identity that is linked to Al Dhafra

women's cultural heritage is an important concept and distinction that must be taken into consideration by any organizations attempting to attract and engage its members to community programmes. I learned that the core of Al Dhafra women's intangible cultural identity was held in transferring their knowledge and capabilities about their cultural heritage to their children, to ensure the future of UAE culture. "We believe it is an important role of Al Dhafra mothers to be in charge of maintaining the values we share in our society as part of preserving our cultural heritage", stated Interviewee 8. Some of this data is supported by the findings from the literature review, since scholars have previously highlighted the role of women as custodians of cultural heritage, particularly in the UAE. However, I have identified that Al Dhafra women are living these cultural traditions and practices on a daily basis and, as such, are empowering themselves to take on the role of safeguarders of UAE cultural heritage, in inspiring the continuation of UAE cultural identity across generations. This conclusion, an outcome of this thesis study, is a unique contribution to existing knowledge and literature since many women in rural regions worldwide have not been able to empower themselves in this way, which is discussed further in Chapter 6.

5.3 Passing on Cultural Heritage & Cultural Identity To Future Generations Through Community Programmes

Storey (2017) argues that culture passing down cultural traditions as a part of heritage can be the foundation of identity for the next generations. The research from this study confirms that Al Dhafra women want community engagement projects which suit their family and societal needs. Programmes that show how the Emirati cultural identity promotes being a good person, is one of Al Dhafra women's most coveted values. "We want our children to know that they can learn the most from us who they are surrounded with, which is what builds a local community to develop their cultural identity", said Interviewee 22. Although I asked them about museum programmes, the Al Dhafra women also wanted to discuss the need for projects with more significant objectives. This inquiry reflects their living sense of cultural heritage and how deeply it is part of their everyday lives.



Figure 5.2: UAE Children in Traditional Dress

(Source: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, 2016)

This photograph reflects a younger generation practicing what they have learned about UAE cultural identity, its traditions and customs, from their elders. Interviews from the research affirm this cultural knowledge transfer: “We instil the Arab Muslim values of wearing traditional clothing because we are proud of our children as a reflection of our own cultural identities. We want them to grow up living some of the same ways we did so they do not forget that our cultural identities are the basis of our value system”, proclaimed Interviewee 9. “We believe in retaining our cultural icons, such as the falcon, camel, desert and palm trees. These are important symbols of who we are, even today”, affirmed Interviewee 7.

Listening to the Al Dhafra women revealed how passionate they were about their religious and cultural beliefs, and values. This concept relates to how Al Dhafra women felt they were obligated to share their cultural heritage principles and long-established viewpoints with younger generations. These findings support the literature in that globally most cultures do pass down their cultural beliefs to their children, yet in Al Dhafra, they practice ancient Bedouin ways of living, despite modernization developing around them.

Since they, as a society, firmly believe that it is their responsibility to preserve UAE cultural identity, they refuse to give in to globalization's effects of modernizing traditional ways of life, a theme explored in more detail in the following section.

5.4 Cultural Heritage as the Foundation of National Identity

There are specific gender approaches that support how women can be empowered to help establish national identity and nationalism, through heritage projects that reflect the traditional practices and memories of the people (Walby, 2005). Another academic study states that communities often have a sense of cultural identity and collective awareness that is based on their shared historical experiences (Howard, 2008). A central argument to this study is that the cultural heritage of Al Dhafra women is the foundation of their national identity because it affects how they view the UAE and their place in the country. Cultural heritage and national identity contribute an essential perspective of a country's past history due to reflecting intangible evidence of human behaviour and values, which in turn shapes a sense of national identity (Domsic, 2013). In their interviews, Al Dhafra women connected their everyday traditions with a wider sense of their national identity: "While our cultural traditions are deeply-ingrained in our daily lives, thoughts, and beliefs, our national identity is always the underlying foundation displaying our loyalty to our great nation", asserted Interviewee 10.

There is a current interest in cultural heritage where it is more focused on the "interpretation of the past through an artefactual history" (Miształ, 2003, p. 9). This concept relates to this research in that it puts emphasis on how different people interpret cultural heritage throughout time, which often changes according to diverse agendas. Heritage organizations are now realizing the critical need for involving communities, stakeholders, and target audiences in their establishment of cultural heritage programmes since it is imperative to protecting their cultural identities (Bunning, 2018). Collaborating on cultural engagement projects that allows for sharing decision-making, authority, and management with community members allows for participatory approaches to reduce social injustice and increase the rights of marginalized members (Bunning, 2018). Such discourse specifically supports this thesis' arguments and positions it within current academic literature on heritage studies.

An argument can be made that the Al Dhafra women's sense of cultural identity is also closely related to their sense of national identity, since they view their role as cultural heritage caretakers: "Our cultural identity and traditions have helped to shape our national identity throughout history, as our leaders have developed the country but still protected our cultural heritage", stated Interviewee 12. "We have a very positive sense of cultural identity because we strongly believe in UAE and its rulers since they have the people's best interest at heart", claimed Interviewee 15. Beyond their homemaker role focused on raising their children, Al Dhafra women view it as their job to make sure the entire society remembers what the UAE was like in the days before the discovery of oil and the subsequent wealth it provided: "Our government has provided many opportunities for our children to get college educations, which is why we have such strong national pride", stated Interviewee 15. "We want to make sure the children also have a strong UAE national identity that they can then pass on to our grandchildren", explained Interviewee 3.

In this thesis' research results, the dominant cultural identity of the people in rural regions like Al Dhafra is enforced by their strong cultural heritage belief system. However, in the case of the UAE, their instilled cultural identity is shared by the rest of the country, even those who are experiencing much more Westernized living in other Emirates (Cooke, 2014, pp. 171-172). Burhaima (2014, pp. 548-552) conducted a study on the Arabian Peninsula with similar arguments to this research, which examined how women in rural regions support a more matriarchal role in some societies, which is not studied by many other authors. Their research helped me to develop this original contribution to existing literature, as the foundation of the Al Dhafra community is based on the specific role of women as caretakers protecting the cultural heritage for the entire country and future generations.

Cultural identity is the intangible manifestation of the cultural heritage capabilities and knowledge shared among a community throughout generations (Fares, 2014). An important argument this study asserts is that passing on cultural heritage and cultural identity to future generations is essential to preserving the people's traditional values and everyday life: "Our cultural heritage is what our cultural identity is based upon since we feel we would have no identity without our culture", stated Interviewee 5. The Al Dhafra women's cultural heritage preservation also relates to how they safeguard ancient traditions

and customs, in order to protect them from becoming extinct as the country modernizes: “We respect our culture and it shows who we are and what we believe in. This is what makes up the foundation of our cultural identity. We believe it is essential that we keep our cultural heritage alive, despite any globalization or tourism changes to the surrounding regions”, detailed Interviewee 15. “We feel we are so blessed that our children do not have to go through the difficult harsh times what we went through in the olden days, and they are so proud of their cultural identity”, explained Interviewee 11.

5.5 Women Vital to Preventing Globalization From Destroying UAE Cultural Heritage

One of the core arguments in this thesis, rarely discussed in the literature, is that women are vital to protecting cultural heritage during times of change due to regional expansion or globalization within countries. Globalization and tourism may have a negative impact on a country’s cultural heritage, so strategies must be in place for preservation (Boussaa, 2014). Recently, the UAE government proposed cultural tourism projects with heritage museums and community engagement programmes for the Al Dhafra region, which will necessitate more transportation and infrastructure building. Al Dhafra women realize that, despite the region being over three hours’ drive from the next major city, Abu Dhabi, these tourist projects being planned in the near future could potentially jeopardize their cultural identity: “We want to be a part of developing interesting new cultural programmes for the future, for our community, to show how much we care about our cultural heritage”, stated Interviewee 12.

Another significant concept this thesis presents is that Al Dhafra women are also negotiating change in the UAE by enriching cultural traditions with unique cultural handicrafts, despite the rapid modernization and growth of tourism surrounding them. The accurate interpretation of history through objects from the past created by the society members is mandatory for sustainable cultural heritage preservation (Boussaa, 2014). Research interviews provided interesting insight into how Al Dhafra women feel that preventing globalization from destroying UAE cultural heritage is their most important objective in their role as cultural heritage preservationists.

As discussed in Chapter 3, there is significant literature on how globalization requires new strategies for countries to protect their cultural heritage. However, while the majority of the literature on globalization impacting cultural heritage provides information on how damaging it can be for jeopardizing a community's cultural identity, the research from this thesis' indicates that the Al Dhafra women's strong cultural identity refuses them to allow this to happen: "We try to resist global influences that may be different from our own cultural beliefs and traditions", expressed Interviewee 1. "While we accept and adapt to some changes occurring in the region, we refuse to give in to those which will jeopardize our cultural heritage", argued Interviewee 13. "Some of the most important factors relating to globalization which impact the Al Dhafra region are future cultural tourism projects which may bring in thousands of global foreigners into the community yearly. This is a bit scary for our community", explained Interviewee 33. "We do not mind cultural tourism festivals and events in Al Dhafra; however, we just want to keep our homes away from the major tourist attractions", stated Interviewee 32.

Al Dhafra women agreed that they do not want to be tourist attractions themselves in their own backyards for foreigners to watch, rather, they support community projects and activities that they can enjoy with their families. An important concept asserted here is that, as Al Dhafra women adapt to the changes around them, this is reflected in how they construct their cultural identities as UAE cultural heritage caretakers. Some societies are challenged by the transformation of modernization in their socio-demographics, which have resulted in societies having a culturally-diverse set of multiple cultural identities (Boussaa, 2014). Such challenges can be found in the large city of Dubai, UAE, as globalization and Westernization influence some Emiratis to adopt modernized customs. However, in the Al Dhafra community, which currently absorbs less global cultural influences, their traditional cultural identity remains strong.

Rather than view change as unwelcome or as a threat, Al Dhafra women make sense of this change by seeking to thrive in their role as safeguarders of the cultural heritage: "While some countries are happy for globalization and they want to become more Westernized, the people here in Al Dhafra are content to continue on with the cultural heritage that has shaped the values of the community", stated Interviewee 3. "We feel that it is our role to make sure that any tourist projects in the region will not cause problems for

our families in continuing on in the cultural traditions which are the foundation of our cultural identity”, implored Interviewee 1. A society’s cultural heritage is often displayed in their national identity, as the foundation of their reactions to problems the people face in the country, so they have the strength to overcome them together as a community (Storey, 2017). Such a concept helps explain how communities like Al Dhafra overcome challenges of a changing society due to globalization, through culturally cohesive initiatives like cultural heritage preservation: “Our cultural and national identities are very important to us because we are very proud of our culture, country and its leaders”, claimed Interviewee 13. “It is our national identity that keeps all of our people united together under our cultural heritage, to keep our customs alive throughout the country”, emphasized Interviewee 9.

5.6 Summary

This chapter provides research results and investigative evidence related to how cultural heritage is directly linked people’s cultural identities, particularly for communities in rural regions like Al Dhafra. This research shows how Al Dhafra women’s cultural identity is based upon their role as safeguarders of UAE cultural heritage. Their community role also includes passing on cultural heritage and cultural identity to future generations, to ensure traditions and customs endure, despite regional expansion and globalization. This chapter also explores how cultural heritage is the foundation of the UAE’s national identity. The chapter also explores how Al Dhafra women are vital to preventing globalization from destroying UAE cultural heritage. These findings provided valuable original contributions to existing academic literature due to the insightful input from Al Dhafra women in how community tourism projects and engagement programmes accurately reflect their cultural heritage.

This chapter provides, in the words of the Al Dhafra women themselves, how they feel their intangible and tangible cultural heritage contributions can be expanded in the local society as related to the current understanding of cultural heritage practices in the UAE. The chapter also allows for a better understanding of the present literature on women’s societal role in the UAE, in relation to cultural heritage issues faced by other

regions worldwide. These research results also provide an updated comprehension of the process of nation building through cultural heritage in the UAE. Wider implications from these research findings include how cultural heritage studies, in examining the role of women in rural regions, hold within their role the foundation of both cultural and national identities.

CHAPTER 6: FEMALE EMPOWERMENT THROUGH HANDICRAFTS

Theme 1: Female Empowerment in Al Dhafra

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the various elements related to Al Dhafra women becoming empowered through community engagement programmes which feature their cultural heritage handicrafts. The previous chapter established the importance of the Al Dhafra women's role as producers of handicrafts, as examples of tangible cultural heritage preservation. The chapter also detailed how Al Dhafra women are the primary cultural heritage caretakers in the country, empowered with intangible heritage knowledge and capabilities for teaching the cultural handicrafts process to future generations throughout the UAE. This chapter considers the need for empowering Al Dhafra women in their creation of the handicrafts, with detailed descriptions on how these are made, and the significance of protecting this intangible quality only a few people possess in the nation, as a way of preserving historically authentic Emirati cultural identity.

This research examines how Al Dhafra women seek to be empowered to collaborate with cultural professionals in co-management of community engagement programmes to protect UAE cultural heritage and meet the needs of the local society. This chapter develops the concept of empowerment, aligning this to past experiences and future aspirations that the Al Dhafra women have conveyed to me. This chapter details how cultural handicraft-making is part of Al Dhafra women's ambitions for empowerment and independence within a changing UAE society. This chapter also details how essential it is for Al Dhafra women to be empowered through collaborating on the design and delivery of community engagement programmes, in order to pass on their cultural handicraft skills to younger generations, to ensure the longevity of UAE cultural heritage for posterity.

A priority of highlighting Al Dhafra female empowerment is in increasing their opportunities for showcasing how their cultural handicrafts promote UAE cultural heritage through community engagement programmes. The research shows that Al Dhafra women want to promote the cultural identity of their community through community programmes. Al Dhafra women also desire to learn what types of opportunities are available to them, related to showcasing their cultural handicrafts, while raising cultural awareness of such

historically important traditions. The research establishes a sense of what Al Dhafra women want to be engaged with, what will support them to develop and thrive, and what their expectations are for future empowerment opportunities related to community programmes and displaying their handicrafts. In thoroughly analysing the research results from this study, one emerging theme that was not a central theme in the initial chapters of this thesis is the strength of the Al Dhafra women's collective female empowerment and how much more empowered they seek to be in future community programmes, a type of communal empowerment for social change.

In this chapter, research findings are outlined, related to an upgraded model of the female empowerment conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1. This model for empowering Al Dhafra women through cultural heritage preservation will help promote their cultural identity through specific means of empowerment, including individual, collective, and communal empowerment. This enhanced empowerment model emerged from the findings in Chapter 5 and 6, as well as theoretical frameworks of empowerment from Chapter 1 and Chapter 3. This chapter tests these findings as they support the empowerment theories, allowing for a more accurate female empowerment model for Al Dhafra women to promote their intangible cultural heritage through their tangible cultural handicrafts.

6.2 Women's Perspectives on Community Engagement Activities

Chapter 5 relayed how Al Dhafra women desire to showcase and display their creativity and unique skills in making cultural heritage handicrafts for community programmes, as they believe it is the foundation of their cultural identity. This chapter provides findings supporting how Al Dhafra women seek more involvement, as strategic collaborators, in the management of community cultural projects. Al Dhafra women explain why empowering them in these programmes is important to preserving their cultural identity: "We want to have the power to choose what kinds of community programmes will be available to our families", stated Interviewee 20. "We know we have a lot of creative ideas to contribute to new programmes if we are just given the chance to be a part of them", claimed Interviewee 32. "We have a lot of skills to display and we know we have important contributions which can benefit UAE society", added Interview 22.

Collaborating on community programmes allow women to have the capacity to go beyond their conventional roles and become driving forces for female empowerment within the Middle East (Malt, 2007). Attesting to this concept, Al Dhafra women desire challenges that will help them find success in cultural achievements: “We feel if we have the power to prove ourselves then we can develop the programmes into something we can really be proud of”, stated Interviewee 32. “We just need the opportunity to design programmes which will allow us to take control of the way UAE cultural heritage is preserved for the future”, implored Interviewee 30. Such input reflects the Al Dhafra women’s desire to be empowered in community programmes, to demonstrate to their families and community they can be successful businesswomen and promote national pride in their country.

It is important that museum and other cultural tourism professionals empower community members by allowing them to participate in their strategies, since cultural heritage preservation can only be properly managed by those in the local society who practice those customs (Muhammad, 2013). One of the most critical concepts this chapter develops is that female empowerment in community projects means incorporating them into the management and development of tourism and recreational activities to best highlight the talents of local women. Community engagement programmes in rural regions like Al Dhafra can promote female empowerment by encouraging women to participate and collaborate in decision-making and to help manage programmes to ensure they are relevant and link to their cultural heritage. This concept was supported by a study in other rural regions of Africa and Nepal that examined women being empowered through cultural projects (Hillman and Radel, 2018, pp. 82-93).

Female empowerment in rural regions refers to providing education or employment opportunities that allow women to gain skills or utilize their capabilities (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, Muhamad, 2001). Empowering women through community projects can be a beneficial way for organizers to capitalize upon cultural talents and strengths related to cultural tourism (Malt, 2007). The empowerment of women, through participation in the development and sharing of knowledge for teaching others, allows for another type of empowerment, cultural identity empowerment. This concept reflects the views of the Al Dhafra women as to how they seek to negotiate their empowerment. Those Al Dhafra women who teach, training their children and others in

community engagement programmes, such as cultural handicraft workshops, will become empowered in holding new positions within their society, thereby earning respect and admiration. By extension, those who will learn from these workshops, such as Al Dhafra children, will become empowered by gaining the beneficial cultural experience and skills related to helping preserve their cultural heritage. These interconnected concepts express the mutually-advantageous relationship between empowerment of those engaged in the process.

There is a conscious balance between sharing power between people, which is “embedded in the contexts and relations of power” (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, Muhamad, 2001, p. 22). This refers to how women can be empowered through the strategic sharing and balance of power between museum and other cultural professionals and those in the community who actually create the cultural heritage items. This concept for empowering Al Dhafra women through strategic collaboration was also expressed by themselves: “We want to help others learn how to make the handicrafts, especially the children in the region to make sure they have the knowledge and skills to maintain the cultural heritage”, explained Interviewee 19. “There is a lot of skill involved in making the crafts, so we need to be a part of the teaching to make sure that it is done right”, added Interviewee 21. “We hope that any community programmes will allow us to be part of the decision-making so that we can help manage how to train others to make the crafts, and what types of materials are needed to ensure that they are true to the Emirati cultural heritage”, said Interviewee 23.

Al Dhafra women can become further empowered through their involvement working in the community, if they are supported through governmental programmes and private institutions: “We deserve to be empowered since we are some of the few Emiratis left who still have the knowledge and expertise to create these cultural handicrafts and continue the cultural heritage values throughout the country”, stated Interviewee 7. “We believe that we have to part of the strategies for any projects, since that way we will have input in how they impact our society”, emphasized Interviewee 24.

If community programmes are not directly linked to the members’ expectations, then there are usually problems with the outcomes (Malt, 2007). Al Dhafra women stated that previous community outreach programmes in Al Dhafra had some success due to the

distinctive cultural handicrafts, yet they were short-term; “We have had a few programmes which had some success for a short while in the past, however, we were not part of any of the decisions, which made us feel they did not respect what we have to contribute to the process”, stated Interviewee 26. The findings from this study support some of the literature discussed in Chapter 3, which demonstrated that women attempting to gain power in their communities must learn how to mediate with men in power, as well as governments and organizations which may influence decision-making. In navigating strategic roles in developing community programmes and in a broader context, “power and positionality means negotiating status within and across cultures. It is an international journey of lifelong education across cultural boundaries” (Meriam, 2001, p. 26).

Women can be empowered as educators and communicators, for future generations to ensure the transfer of knowledge to children for posterity (Giaccardi, 2006). Similar studies show that to suitably empower women and ensure their intangible heritage is passed down to future generations, community programmes can allow them to become decision-makers of cultural tourism projects (Kabeer, 2005). Empowering Al Dhafra women to teach and protect the intangible quality of making cultural heritage handicrafts means sharing their cultural knowledge and teaching others, which also promotes cultural identity empowerment. This concept relates to the findings in Chapter 5, in which Al Dhafra women relay that barriers they face, not having ways to teach future generations the knowledge and skills for making cultural handicrafts.

Providing female empowerment in the Al Dhafra region aides both older women in their cultural heritage handicraft activities, and younger generations in learning how to adopt these unique skills. “The Al Dhafra women feel that our cultural heritage is mainly centred on the continuous creation of cultural items that can be taught to our children”, stated Interviewee 26. “These crafts are the some of the last and most important of the major cultural traditions that are being passed down to the younger people to ensure the continuance of UAE cultural heritage”, insisted Interviewee 22. “We must be able to play a key role in developing the best cultural programmes possible to appeal to Emiratis and to also attract people from different countries interested in learning about UAE cultural heritage”, added Interviewee 22. “We must be given the opportunity to take on our responsibility to handle the task of making sure the Emirati heritage continues on for the

future through the cultural handicrafts”, stressed Interviewee 23. Such statements reflect how vital Al Dhafra women feel their input is to developing community programmes that properly express UAE cultural heritage. Empowering Al Dhafra women to be strategic collaborators in the decision-making of community programmes, given their extensive cultural knowledge, will increase the relevance of such cultural programmes and events, for all families to enjoy.

6.3 Acknowledging Al Dhafra Women’s Balance of Power in Society

Al Dhafra women’s balance of power in society relates to their desire to enhance their empowerment in their multi-faceted roles within the community. Specifically, this involves the Al Dhafra women’s desire to be acknowledged and empowered in their individual role as homemakers caring for their families, in their collective role as group members sharing their intangible knowledge and skills in the creation of the tangible cultural handicrafts, and their communal role as the producers of handicrafts which symbolize UAE cultural heritage in cultural tourism projects for community engagement programmes. The power dynamics and balance of power in the context of community cultural heritage can be critically analysed related to how cultural institutions conceptualize community initiatives (Harrison, 2011). Such a concept is essential to highlight here, because how community engagement programmes are developed in the Al Dhafra community reflect their consideration (or lack of) for the needs and ambitions of the women living there.

A significant argument the research findings support relate to how Al Dhafra women residing in a rural region can be both homemakers and empowered to be caretakers of the country’s cultural heritage. In past generations, women have fulfilled traditional functions in society related to homecare and child-rearing, however, they have also been contributing members to society for their individual achievements, such as handicrafts and other culturally-relevant items which have both sociocultural and economic value (Malt, 2007). Nevertheless, women have not always been empowered through their accomplishments, despite the societal reliance on women’s continued participation in sociocultural decisions and family development. “As the centre of our families, we as mothers feel permitted within our homes”, stated Interviewee 26. “However, we believe

that we also deserve the right to become empowered within our community to prove our worth to everyone else”, declares Interviewee 27. “We feel that we deserve the right to prove what we can make to the public so they can see what we can achieve with our skills”, added Interviewee 14. These statements reflect how Al Dhafra women are interested in claiming a wider societal role, seeking empowerment in proving themselves as collaborators in the strategic development of various community programmes and cultural projects. This significant point contributes to the literature, as this desire reveals a different context than other discourses of female empowerment, where economic gain and entrepreneurship are typically the focus. In the context of Al Dhafra, women convey that they care more about their participation in devising relevant community programmes, to train their children and others how to appreciate and make cultural heritage handicrafts.

The Al Dhafra women’s balance of power in their society is a key component studied in this thesis, as their involvement as collaborators in the strategic development of community engagement programmes can further enhance their position in the community. Al Dhafra women feel they deserve to be acknowledged by museum and other cultural professionals that design and propose community engagement programmes in regions such as theirs. By empowering Al Dhafra women, as collaborators in the design and management of community programmes, they will share their valuable cultural knowledge and expertise, thereby supporting expatriates who typically manage these projects, often with limited cultural heritage knowledge. In research on UNESCO’s contribution to social and cultural empowerment for women in Africa, one study argues this is more important than just developing new cultural heritage programmes since it links to ways in which women want to position themselves in society more broadly (Thorpe, 2018). This relates to the model of empowerment developed in Chapter 1, which links the UAE government, community programmes, and Al Dhafra women to intangible and tangible cultural heritage preservation. However, this empowerment model can be expanded to include different dimensions of empowerment, and activities including entrepreneurship for UAE women. This empowerment concept is also supported in other Arab regions, where new community programmes are being started to give power to women (Burhaima, 2014, pp. 548-552).

In a study evaluating UNESCO’s Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, linked to the empowerment of women as the protectors of this crucial form of

heritage, found that while documenting specific intangible cultural heritage practices would allow for the capturing of those traditions, it may also allow others to imitate them and possibly lessen their importance for the community (Moghadam and Bagheritari, 2007). One of the examples elaborated upon in that study is women telling culturally-significant stories passed down through generations, which are a part of the Al Dhafra women's cultural heritage customs as well. Due to storytelling being considered in academic literature as a female intangible cultural heritage practice, it has become marginalized in many regions, which subsequently has decreased the opportunities for female empowerment (Debarbieux, 2019). As a remedy for this, increasing the international educational awareness of these critical ancient customs could encourage increased financial assistance and other useful support which would empower the marginalized community women as practitioners who still perform this tradition (Moghadam and Bagheritari, 2007). This literature supports this study's research and recommendations, as it emphasizes that empowerment of marginalized women in rural regions can aid in protecting these vital intangible heritage customs for future generations.

This study's research results demonstrated that although Al Dhafra women want to preserve their cultural traditions, they also know that to do this, they must empower themselves to adapt to some of the changes happening in local society for the best interest of their children and families. This finding relates to Chapter 5 on globalization and the Al Dhafra regional expansion projects discussed in Chapter 2, which may pose threats for preserving cultural heritage traditions. Al Dhafra women, in encouraging their children's success, want their children to go to college. As well, Al Dhafra women want their children to participate in community programmes to carry on cultural heritage traditions.

As Al Dhafra women have felt empowered in helping their children to have more opportunities, they can also be empowered to collaborate in strategic management of community engagement programmes: "As mothers we want our children to have more knowledge and self-confidence to prepare them for the future by being involved in community engagement programmes", stated Interviewee 2. "We prefer community programmes that will increase the cultural awareness of UAE cultural heritage and allow us to display our handicraft skills to others", added Interviewee 5.

Al Dhafra women have already empowered themselves as guardians of UAE cultural heritage to ensure that it is preserved. An important part of this thesis' assertion is that, as revealed in the research data, Al Dhafra women are confident they can accomplish even more for the country, if further empowered: "We want to make the most original cultural handicrafts for local events and festivals if we are just given the opportunity to succeed", stated Interviewee 28. "We want to be supported by the organizations and people who have the power and resources to launch new community programmes", stated Interviewee 25. "However, we feel we must be leaders in the community in order to run these projects the way we want them managed", added Interviewee 28. In empowering Al Dhafra women to collaborate in the strategic development and management of community engagement programmes, they will attain further empowerment in gaining recognition and respect from museum and other cultural professionals.

6.4 Defining Empowerment in Al Dhafra

Female empowerment in Al Dhafra refers the process of giving women living in the community more opportunities to develop their knowledge and capabilities, in order to expand their overall skills. Female empowerment also relates to providing more resources for Al Dhafra women so they have opportunities to be creative in their cultural offerings, such as making variations to traditional cultural handicraft designs. Empowerment in Al Dhafra relates to women's current social standing in the rural region, how they are positioned and empowered as homemakers within the society, in charge of managing their homes, and, as cultural safeguarders, ensuring their children continue to practice UAE cultural heritage traditions and customs. Al Dhafra women also have the role of being some of the only cultural handicraft producers in the entire country. Empowerment, as represented in development studies, needs to incorporate all aspects of power, freedom, rights, and accountability to provide equality based on the wide variety of academic literature frameworks available (Cornwall and Anyidoho, 2010). These authors stress how some of the most useful studies focus on re-articulating marginalized rural regions that require empowerment but may meet with resistance from both the community programme organizers and possibly the community members as well. This thesis applies the lessons learned from the literature on the engagement politics of empowerment, which require the

most powerful authority figures to be responsible for providing power for those with the least amount of power, especially in how this relates to women in rural regions who are the safeguarders of their country's cultural heritage.

Deduced from the research findings is that the Al Dhafra women felt self-worth can be attained through the process of developing their feeling of importance to those around them, in conveying how strongly their identities are linked to UAE cultural heritage. As revealed in this study's research, there is substance in the argument that Al Dhafra women believe they can earn respect and admiration through unselfish deeds like helping preserve UAE cultural heritage for the community: "We want all of the Emirati women of all ages to know how to believe in themselves and how to respect their individual talents and abilities. We want them to be individuals with their own personal views and stand up for what they believe according to their upbringing, cultural role, and societal standards since it is the foundation of their cultural identity", explained Interviewee 26. The research revealed this gain in respect and admiration includes giving Al Dhafra women opportunities to increase their education and knowledge, so they can enhance their skills and experience by working with other individuals.

In global heritage studies, the theoretical position of articulating female empowerment as the cultural value in a specific cultural belief system, is elicited and identified within a society to be worthwhile for future preservation (Navas-Carrillo, 2019). The dynamics of power that cultural heritage policies create can be conceptualized within the context of the interest of the practitioners who practice them and how they encourage empowerment. In the UAE context, empowering Al Dhafra women in the rural region allows them numerous opportunities for cultural advancement and recognition in community engagement programmes.

The UAE government launched several recent initiatives for cultural community programmes throughout the country to promote UAE cultural heritage awareness; many of these projects involve local Emirati women from rural regions like Al Dhafra, which, in turn, enhances their female empowerment. An essential message that Al Dhafra women expressed in this study is that their involvement in past community programmes did not engage them enough, and, their involvement was limited to simply making cultural heritage handicrafts. This restricted involvement also, notably, restricted the empowerment of Al

Dhafra women and propelled their emphatic desire to hold a significant role in future community engagement programmes:.. “We want to be in charge of the cultural handicraft programmes and we will not allow external [organizers] to take over how our designs are displayed”, emphasized Interviewee 29. Such input reflects how strongly Al Dhafra women feel about being involved in community engagement programmes to ensure that UAE cultural heritage is conveyed in a culturally relevant way, and protected in all cultural tourism projects.

A study highlighted the fact that safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is often a political process, due to governments being the determining bodies deciding which practices will be protected and financed, paired with the fact that intangible cultural heritage relies on gender-specific customs and practices, and how encouragement and acknowledgment of these practitioners can contribute to female empowerment (Smeets and Sano, 2003). There are several important elements which can be critically evaluated, related to gender equality and female empowerment, including how identifying the importance of women as the safeguarders of intangible heritage could have both positive and negative effects on them as practitioners (Grabow, 2016). An additional study agrees with UNESCO’s contributions to female empowerment in a global sense, yet also argues that the limitations of that framework could result in women being confined to their traditional societal positions and not allowed or supported to change or evolve their contributions to the community (Navas-Carrillo, 2019). Another study argues that the UNESCO framework may lead to ‘staging heritage’, which is the displaying of cultural heritage for the sake of exhibiting it or exploiting it for profit, instead of respecting and protecting the heritage for future generations (Debarbieux, 2019).

In their interview responses, the Al Dhafra women made it evident they wanted to be more independent and earn an income in order to contribute to their households: “Making money is not our first concern, however, we would appreciate the additional income for our handicrafts since it can go toward whatever we need to make the next set of crafts”, observed Interviewee 13. “We feel that the money will help us to afford to buy more materials needed to produce larger quantities of crafts for festivals”, stated Interviewee 19. “We recognize that earning money for our crafts gives us more self-

confidence and higher self-esteem because we feel proud that we are able to earn money for our skills”, added Interviewee 33.

Al Dhafra women also had their own individual goals for the community’s development and its long-term sustainability, which related to them being empowered as managers, staff trainers, volunteers, and workshop facilitators. While it is clear that the Al Dhafra women want to be involved in the collaborative management of community programmes, they feel it is also necessary that they are a part of training other people who work there, so all staff fully understand the significance of preserving UAE cultural heritage intangible and tangible aspects as a part of making handicrafts, to ensure they maintain Emirati cultural heritage standards. Collective empowerment in cultural community programmes is the foundation of the members’ cultural identity, so they feel they must work together on projects to make sure they are carried out properly (Jones, Smith, and Wills, 2012). This concept moves away from an individual form of empowerment to an explicitly communal one, with shared collective perspectives and ambition. This element of female empowerment emphasizes this thesis’ research findings, in that innovative ways of thinking about empowerment can contribute to broader academic thinking and literature on this topic.

This thesis’ research findings helped contribute to the development of a new female empowerment model for the Al Dhafra region as described in Chapter 1. However, the research insights gained from Chapter 6 findings also provide a future focus on community engagement programme collaborative decision-making, children’s cultural education and training, and intergenerational involvement supporting community orientation for the Al Dhafra region. Research results reveal how the data aligns female empowerment to the Al Dhafra women’s interaction: such feedback includes an intergenerational dimension of how Al Dhafra women want to work together to create female networks of support throughout the country.

Applying Theoretical Perspectives to Al Dhafra Empowerment

Another significant component in these research findings, which contributes to the literature on the subject, emphasizes how generations of Al Dhafra women are focussed on working as a team to preserve UAE cultural heritage through the intangible creation of

handicrafts as part of retaining their community cultural identity. “We want to find inventive ways to improve the quality of life for the entire Al Dhafra community”, claimed Interviewee 30. “We especially hope to make new opportunities for the women here who require the capabilities to become more independent in their handicrafts”, added Interviewee 29. “We want to become a major part of any new community programme, so we can positively influence the younger generation on how to maintain UAE cultural heritage handicrafts as a way to strengthen our cultural identity”, stated Interviewee 33. These statements provide a clear perspective that Al Dhafra women recognize what their most important priorities are, related to themselves, their families and community.

This study’s findings reflected that empowering the women of Al Dhafra also includes and refers to the ongoing process of offering encouragement and resources for them. As such, the Al Dhafra women’s empowerment includes the training and tools they require, from supplies needed to advance training sessions, to the materials needed to start their own entrepreneurial handicraft business ventures. Recently, a few Emirati entrepreneurs are capitalizing upon the uniqueness of UAE cultural handicrafts by creating businesses that incorporate them into household items. These items include purses, baskets, and furniture which are made from the cultural handicrafts or colourfully decorated with them using traditional UAE cultural heritage techniques. Aside from the marketplace, community engagement programmes must focus on achieving their social responsibilities to the people who live there, to avoid misappropriation of culture. People who create community programmes must consider the cultural identities of the surrounding community so their offerings will be aligned with events that they want to attend (Howard, 2008). This can be manifested through the inclusion of the community members within the demonstration process (Al Bawaba, 2012).

One example of a UAE government cultural heritage initiative is the Al Ghadeer cultural handicraft programme. “The Al Ghadeer project aspires to make Emirati women powerful through the training of local arts and crafts”, explained Nauma Al-Mansoori, Al Ghadeer Project Manager, in charge of a project with Red Crescent Society. “Under this programme, these Emirati women will make traditional Emirati items like Arabic coffee and chocolate, and date baskets using both genuine indigenous and reprocessed materials. These items will be offered at the Etihad Guest loyalty plan Reward Shop, inside the duty

free shopping booklet. The profits from selling these goods will provide the Emirati women their own income” (Al Bawaba, 2012, p. 5), added Al-Mansoori.

Empowering the Al Dhafra women through the promotion of their cultural handicrafts can provide them with various opportunities to convey and display their expertise, as a way to preserve UAE cultural heritage. An important concept resulting from this thesis’ research relates to how female empowerment can be promoted through cultural handicrafts as a means of reflecting the distinctive talents within a community. Al Dhafra women want to create hands-on workshops for all audiences to learn how to make their cultural handicrafts, and to show children the significance of preserving their cultural identity. “We believe that other people may like to see how we create these cultural handicrafts and we feel they may even like to learn how to do it themselves. We are happy to show people how we work and to allow them to see how time-consuming and difficult it is to make each piece”, explained Interviewee 19.

A research study observed that communities that evolve from individual empowerment to collective empowerment can better accomplish their strategic objectives due to gaining power in numbers (Jones, Smith, and Wills, 2012). As a part of their individual and collective empowerment, Al Dhafra women also feel that their female empowerment can be combined with community empowerment, to enable the local community to be more in tune to their needs and goals. This concept is another contribution of this study’s research results to the literature, where community empowerment can be part of a wider role that women worldwide can support, as they expand beyond their function as cultural caretakers. Through female empowerment initiatives, Al Dhafra women seek to increase the control they have over their lives, and work together with those who share their common interests and concerns. As this research study interviews and focus groups progressed, I found an increased self-confidence in the Al Dhafra women, in their belief that they could succeed at anything they wanted to do. Simply in discussing what they wanted for themselves and their community, Al Dhafra women felt more empowered in what they knew they were capable of accomplishing, if they had the resources and support they need. “We have a very close relationship to the local community that can help us gain strength as we obtain higher social status for our cultural achievements”, insisted Interviewee 25. “We know that we can achieve even more than in

the past if the organizations launching the community programmes just believe in us and our skills”, confirmed Interviewee 21. “It is in the programme director’s best interest to give us the power to make an amazing handicraft event that will empower the entire Al Dhafra community”, added Interviewee 27.

The process of conducting this research study allowed me to observe a fearlessness in Al Dhafra women, a characteristic which they themselves may not have realized they had before. Such an attitude is essential for the Al Dhafra women to navigate their empowerment within a patriarchal society. Empowered women, in holding a privileged position in society, can serve their community by becoming positive role models and strategic leaders, amongst other roles. Empowerment for Al Dhafra women conveys their significance to the local community and leverages these means to convey that value to others: “We want to be acknowledged for our extensive cultural knowledge and skills and display our handicrafts publicly”, insisted Interviewee 11.

One finding of this study reveals the strong feelings of the Al Dhafra women regarding their role and empowerment in this community. “We have many creative ideas on how to expand our product lines to make even more interesting cultural handicrafts. Each one of us has not only similar skills, but also unique personal talents which can be seen in our individual works”, stated Interviewee 23. Since the UAE government supports the role of local art galleries, museums, libraries, and archives being in charge of collecting and documenting all contemporary cultural heritage tangible items for future generations, Al Dhafra women should, logically, participate in this process. “In all works of preservation there should always be precise documentation in the form of illustrated drawings and photographs” (Muhammad, 2013, p. 62) and other relevant cultural items. Al Dhafra women want to be empowered to preserve these records as they are placed in the archives of public institutions and made available to the public. They want to be involved in helping protect the tangible handicrafts and intangible traditions, customs, and stories so they are published, and so others will become aware of the significance of UAE cultural heritage. “We are making our own history for the future generations of the country. We want them to be able to appreciate all the amazing cultural customs we grew up with and be aware of why they are important to who we are as Emiratis”, asserted Interviewee 22.

This feedback supports the findings in Chapter 5, related to national identity being linked to cultural identity in the UAE.

For women to be empowered, they must first be able to show others that they can handle it and that they have the knowledge and capabilities to be in control (*Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals*, 2005, pp. 50-54). Nakamura (2007) claims that the people living within rural communities should be a part of any programmes related to the management of the cultural promotion of their cultural identities. This concept refers to members of a society needing to participate in decision-making in community engagement programmes, to ensure that they conform to their cultural heritage beliefs and traditions. By inviting relevant community members to be collaborative managers, strategically developing community programmes, these valued participants will infuse aspects of their cultural identity and heritage into the programmes that others may not have thought to put in, thereby increasing their relevancy.

Al Dhafra community members have experienced cultural perspectives which they want to share with museum and other cultural professionals that design and propose programmes, to increase government, private sector, and community coordination of cultural tourism projects. A Canadian research study revealed that the various politics between those involved in developing community programmes, such as governments, private organizations, and museums, often conflict with the intentions of the community members and their desires for cultural tourism projects that respect their cultural traditions and values (Onciul, 2013). As the research for this study progressed, some principles related to female empowerment in the Al Dhafra region and ways to overcome interrelated politics became more perceptible. This research suggests creating training programmes and venues for Al Dhafra women to make and sell their cultural handicrafts and, arguably most importantly, allow Al Dhafra women to fully collaborate in the strategic development of community engagement programmes, to gain new knowledge and skills.

Research data reveals that Al Dhafra women have strong beliefs that their self-esteem was established by obtaining respect and consideration for their accomplishments related to their cultural heritage handicrafts. The results I obtained support the idea that the Al Dhafra women's self-confidence and self-esteem were grounded in the success of their handicrafts. It is proposed that the Al Dhafra women felt this practice made them feel good

about themselves and, if they believed they were good people with strong morals, ethics, and cultural standards, then others would also hold them in high regard. I interpreted that the women feel they need to be involved in any cultural heritage programmes so they can develop their talents and maintain their high standards of cultural identity.

6.5 Cultural Handicraft Empowerment

This chapter provides an in-depth investigation of the women in the Al Dhafra region's cultural handicraft expertise and how they hope to gain empowerment by becoming part of community engagement programmes. The chapter offers a contribution to female empowerment, gender equality, and community engagement by emphasizing that the community members' experienced cultural perspectives may allow for more involvement in cultural community engagement programmes.

Empowering Rural Region Communities

Having power within small communities can often mean being able to have authority and be respected (Cole, 2018 p.3). The research data implies that many older mothers had been to several diverse cultural programmes in their life and wanted to ensure that there would always be innovative events that would promote UAE cultural identity. I inferred from these women that they take pride in their cultural achievements and they want to show them to other people who will recognize their hard work; Emirati traditional cultural handicrafts are available to be seen in various festivals to showcase their personal reflection of UAE cultural heritage (Ajami, 2016). I identified a key point Al Dhafra women wanted to stress, which was that community engagement programmes should focus on preserving the cultural identity of the UAE to enhance cultural learning. I discovered Al Dhafra women want the community to become more engaged in these cultural heritage activities as they were in past years, as they really enjoyed sharing their cultural experiences with others.

Al Dhafra women want to gain power through holding a collaborative role in the strategic development and design of community engagement programmes so they have input on the outcomes symbolizing UAE cultural heritage. "The people in this community are such good friends and our families are so close that we would be proud to be a part of

organizing new events that promote our cultural identity”, added Interviewee 28. I determined that the Al Dhafra women want to make sure they participate in the community engagement programmes and their considerable skills are displayed in the handicrafts they are famous for, as they represent their respect for their cultural identity.

Empowerment for women in society often relates to them being able to influence community programmes (Hillman and Radel, 2018, pp. 82-93). Cultural handicrafts exemplify the cultural identity of the people by providing people with the chance to gain some inside perspective on what cultural traditions are most important to them (Haseeb, 2011). The concepts these researchers assert helped provide insight into what was gained and learned from this study’s research, which is that if Al Dhafra women gained more empowerment, they would be in a better position to protect UAE cultural heritage. Al Dhafra women want hands-on workshops for mothers and children to take art classes together, and work on projects that promote UAE cultural heritage. As described in the previous chapter, the research reveals that Al Dhafra women are worried there could be a loss of cultural identity for Emiratis, where their traditions, customs, and beliefs are lost within an increasingly multicultural society living in the UAE. For this reason, Al Dhafra women want to protect the Emirati culture that Emiratis have been taught throughout their lives.

It is challenging to feel empowered in society (Malt, 2007); people living in rural regions often need determination to make their empowerment happen if they feel they have an important purpose which must be addressed. Given the opportunity, many individuals in cultures extend their capabilities in order to advance their skills to create distinguished handicrafts that can be sold on the market (Skounti, 2010). Al Dhafra women’s reaction to proposed community engagement programmes in this study was that they wanted their children to be inspired to care about their country and cultural heritage, to develop their own cultural identity. This thesis’ research revealed Al Dhafra women want to collaborate with museum and other cultural professionals to create community engagement programmes that would promote the cultural identity of the UAE, improving them by adding diverse activities where family members can be a part of the experience. “We feel both parents should be involved and that the children can be broken down into different

age groups to create programmes and workshops that would benefit their diverse needs”, explained Interviewee 22.

Examining Al Dhafra Cultural Programmes

Some younger Emirati mothers who were involved in this thesis study decide the future of their children’s cultural education. They have attended many different cultural programmes throughout the Al Dhafra region, including Al Dhafra Festival, the most famous regional event. They love cultural heritage activities that allow their youngest children to learn about the history of the UAE and the changes which have occurred throughout time. “We have some of the most fascinating cultural programmes for our families that are very exciting”, stated Interviewee 23. “Some of the cultural festivals and programmes include many different Emirati cultural experiences where we can interact with other community members and neighbours, which we love to do”, claimed Interviewee 26. “We love to go to cultural events where we can spend time with our extended families and neighbours so our children can play and see their older relatives and learn from their cultural knowledge”, asserted Interviewee 29.

Artistic self-expression is one of the main reflections of a country’s cultural heritage (Storey, 2017). The UAE’s cultural heritage is preserved through Al Dhafra women’s cultural heritage handicrafts, which maintain the country’s traditional customs and historic achievements for future generations. “Our cultural handicrafts show how much pride we have in our culture and how we are still upholding our cultural heritage traditions”, stated Interviewee 26.; “We wish to express our feelings in our handiwork so that others will understand what our culture is all about”, reflected Interviewee 30.

Cultural expressions and practices are often under threat, as communities adopt to the vicissitudes of trends and change, from fashion to technology to music, thereby changing people’s attitudes. Younger generations are particularly vulnerable to influence, especially from the Internet or television. To address this issue, communities must form collective bonds to interrelate their cultural values to their daily attitudes and behaviours (Skounti, 2010). One described her concern in this way: “We must protect how we perceive our society and culture by teaching our children the importance of respecting their background and traditions. Sometimes when we see our children spending a lot of time on

the computer or in front of the television, we have to stop them and make time to spend with them doing cultural activities. If we can develop community programmes that incorporate cultural projects, then we could have more opportunities to enforce our cultural heritage preservation throughout the society”, declared Interviewee 29.



Figure 6.1: Emirati Women Making Handicrafts that Symbolize UAE Cultural Heritage

(Source: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi (DCTAD), 2018)

Al Dhafra women display their unique methods of palm weaving using dried palm leaves from date palm trees. I realized through this study, observing the Al Dhafra women in their homes, that this handicraft practice is one of the most distinctive examples of UAE cultural heritage. These handicrafts have been a part of the country’s culture and ancestry throughout history (Ajami, 2016). As one of the most distinguished forms of cultural knowledge shared throughout the Al Dhafra region, these cultural handicrafts are a special form of cultural expression: these cultural handicrafts often are examples of UAE cultural heritage, yet interpreted in innovative ways by the Emirati women who created them.

For the women in Al Dhafra, their main intentions in creating these crafts are focussed on extending the desired message that UAE cultural heritage is still a major part of the society and Emirati people are extremely proud of it. Cultural heritage is aligned to

individual and community pride, and this is exemplified in Al Dhafra women (Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge, 2000). Al Dhafra women believe that every cultural handicraft they make must symbolize their strong cultural identity and love for their cultural heritage: “We realize that not everyone understands why we still sit for hours on end and work for many days and weeks on a specific project, however, once they see how detailed the handicrafts are and watch us make them, they begin to recognize that we are putting a little bit of ourselves in every piece”, exclaimed Interviewee 32.

One of the most valuable cultural insights about the UAE, gained from this thesis research, is that the cultural handicrafts made by Al Dhafra women are an expression of love for their cultural heritage and historical background. Their cultural heritage handicrafts represent the extraordinary cultural manifestation of the Al Dhafra women’s resourceful techniques of making handmade artistic creations. For this reason, these women are the caretakers of UAE cultural heritage, as they take this responsibility seriously and reflect Emirati cultural identity in each cultural heritage handicraft produced. This insight links to findings in Chapter 5 on how Al Dhafra women value their role as cultural heritage caretakers, taking great care in making innovative designs that express their individual and collective cultural knowledge and expertise.

6.6 Al Dhafra Collective Empowerment For Achieving Community Ambitions

The academic literature describes collective empowerment as the unification of women working together, united with strong bonds based upon their common cultural values and beliefs, that cohesively collaborates their ideas related to their community (Al-Dajani, 2013). This concept is similar to communal empowerment; communal empowerment is where the families within a specific community are empowered through their collective participation in local decision-making (Cornwall and Anyidoho, 2010). The Al Dhafra women’s collective empowerment, in sharing responsibility of their community ambitions with each other rather than pursuing individual goals, lends comfort in sharing decision-making with each other. Such a relationship is beneficial for the co-development of community engagement programmes with museum and other cultural professionals, as they are more powerful together than on their own.

Female empowerment gives power or authority to women, to help them become more self-confident and stronger, so they can gain more control over their lives (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, Muhamad, 2001); such a concept includes helping women fight for what they believe in and for their rights. For Al Dhafra women, research results provide insight into how they feel empowered helping others within their community to have successful business ventures: “We feel we have already achieved family success and now we want to invest our time in having a sense of responsibility in all aspects of life”, stated Interviewee 21. “We believe that if we can start some small businesses selling our handicrafts we will earn more respect from the local community”, claimed Interviewee 30. “We want to show our talents to the world and we feel they will really appreciate our cultural handicrafts”, Interviewee 29 added.

Collective empowerment exemplifies a strong sense of community and can strengthen cultural identity (Smeets and Sano, 2003). The Al Dhafra women share a sense of community in their interest in developing businesses together, rather than as individual pursuits, signalling collective empowerment. This thesis’ research indicates that Al Dhafra women, given their collective empowerment, may establish community self-representation, which could assist in compelling museum or other cultural professionals to collaborate with them in a relevant way. Capitalizing upon female empowerment opportunities may increase women’s feelings of importance and ability to become more influential (Onciul, 2013). The Al Dhafra women feel they can gain more respect as positive role models, if their cultural heritage knowledge and skills are acknowledged in community engagement programmes. Further, earning income from teaching about their handicrafts in these programmes may encourage more people to see their cultural heritage accomplishments first-hand, so they can appreciate UAE cultural heritage and keep it alive for posterity.

Within women’s experiences “power is something to not only be aware of, but to negotiate” (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, Muhamad, 2001, p. 14), and empowerment relates to women attaining equal relationships that allow them to benefit from more interactive communication and experiences. Research findings in this study reveal this is true amongst Al Dhafra women, as they hope to increase their community experiences to prove their contributions to community officials and the local society. “We

care about our community image since we respect the other members of our society”, stated Interviewee 27. “It is important what you hear people say about you”, stated Interviewee 28. “We want to have more power and to be involved in community projects and show what kinds of handicrafts we can make for festivals and other events”, added Interviewee 25.

6.7 Politics in Heritage

Some research considers the role of UNESCO in non-Western nations and the processes at play to be dominating authoritative influences over some countries’ heritage positioning, which can cause problems with staging heritage and exploitation of local communities. Harrison (2004) suggests that governmentality is an approach to evaluating power related to the governance of societies using positive reinforcement instead of negative discipline to gain the following of the public.

This rationale relates to how government does not just refer to politics, but also to the numerous methods of control administrations use to influence people’s attitudes and conduct to follow their guidance. History can be influenced through the documentation of cultural beliefs, by reinterpreting heritage and ancient historical events when shaped according to certain political agendas. For this reason, it is necessary for museums and cultural institutions to ensure that the authenticity of heritage is strictly monitored during collection and exhibition (Harrison, 2004).

Bennett (1990) stresses how museums can have political agendas that include rationalizing their desires for certain heritage collections, even if they are not what the local community would want. These politics and power issues can be detrimental to the establishment of museum collections since they could cause poor rapport between museums and community members who practice related cultural traditions. Museum directors who do not want to share their authority and decision-making may not be using their power to act for the collective benefit of the country. This demonstrates that it may be required for museums to undergo political reforms to adjust their policies and resources to be more aligned to community needs (Bennett, 1990).

Modest and Basu (2014) argue that there is a correlation between heritage, museums, and global establishment that relates to opposing government-sanctioned

perception of cultural heritage to instead focus on the many social advantages involved in exhibiting traditional practices. This relates to this thesis by suggesting that museums have a particular role in heritage venues, to preserve and protect the cultural findings for the local people (Modest and Basu, 2014).

The theoretical concerns raised about the ways in which museums often reflect the political and cultural concerns of the elite serves to remind us how important it is for museums to ensure the protection of Al Dhafra women as the living embodiment of UAE cultural heritage, and monitor their contributions so they are properly acknowledged for their achievements. The Al Dhafra women's sense of touch should be intertwined within community engagement programmes since they depend upon sensory perception as a means of facilitating the production of the cultural handicrafts.

Smith (2006, pp. 307-308) states that all heritage should be considered intangible since it is based on the knowledge of those who practice it, and it is a social and also a cultural process of experiences. This recall is based upon remembering and negotiating social and cultural change to express the community's values, related to how they have recreated the underlying meanings of what is important to them and that becomes the foundation of their identity. A reflection of this literature shows how the future of heritage studies needs to include more extensive investigation related to breaking down the major aspects of heritage as part of a community's identity for empowering women as heritage producers (Smith, 2006, pp. 307-308).

6.8 Visual Methods & Anthropology

This section explains the use of visual methods and anthropology as a way to observe, learn about, and present heritage, as suggested by the academic literature. There are numerous ways to understand and access the unique cultural heritage practices within the UAE, such as visiting heritage museums, festivals and other cultural tourism events. There are also handicraft workshops being established throughout the region that both nationals and tourists can visit to observe how these are made by the artisans. The possibility of teaching others in these workshops is also underway, as they are mainly taught to a younger generation of Emirati women. However, since there has been interest

by many foreigners, such workshops may eventually be open to the public to learn on how to create UAE cultural handicrafts.

Rose (2014, p. 27) claims visual research methods allow researchers to try different materials to develop their data gathering and improve understanding of the processes being performed. Researchers can better learn about a community and its culture based on “the relation between visual research methods and contemporary visual culture. It interrogates the relation between a particular contemporary culture in which visual images are central to many symbolic and communicative activities and a specific set of social science research practices that also use visual images to make social scientific meaning” (Rose, 2014, p. 27).

Partington and Sandino (2013) state that many relationships among communities contributing to cultural practice methods are due to the sharing and collaborating of concepts and ideas. Interviewing community residents provides insight into their creative practice as it pertains to history, cultural heritage, and their identity, since it allows for authenticity of the artisans’ voices to provide evidence of their creations.

Pink (2006, pp. xi-xii) argues that visual ethnography allows researchers to capture unusual types of portrayals of the research, obtained through personal observation. Some of the most common visual ethnography techniques applied to social science research projects include: multimedia, video, photography, and sketches. These forms of visual ethnography allow for a more interactive, spontaneous approach to practical and theoretical applications of observing interview subjects. Pink (2006, pp. xi-xii) emphasizes how visual ethnography, like media, graphics, and images provide sensory representation of cultural heritage in research. This methodological approach to research helped me improve the methods for experiencing sensory perception of what is integral to the community being studied. For this thesis, visual ethnographic observation methods were applied to the Al Dhafra women’s creation of handicrafts, through the development of artistic sketches.

Gray and Malins (2004, pp. 17-18) state that evaluating different types of research methods helps researchers determine which ones will be most suitable for specific studies and which ones may have limitations that could hinder the outcomes. Qualitative methods provide an appropriate way for researchers to map the transformative process of assessing the information provided by interviewees.

Visual documentation from my six months of fieldwork in UAE provides an overview of the Emirati cultural handicraft production process. My sketches of the cultural handicraft creation process in the next section will display the intricate detailed work, performed by hand, by experienced Emirati women in the Al Dhafra region as part of their exclusive role as caretakers of UAE cultural heritage.

6.9 Researcher Sketches of UAE Cultural Handicrafts

The Al Dhafra women became a positive role model for all Emirati people, due to their role as cultural heritage preservationists for the UAE. All of these women share the same unique cultural characteristics of feeling empowered individually through their cultural expertise in making UAE handicrafts. All of these women strongly believe that their group handicrafts are symbolic of their pride in their country, which is the basis of their national identity and collective empowerment. All of these women are part of the same Al Dhafra community that follow traditional cultural practices in daily life within the UAE, despite its globalization and modernization.

This unique aspect of my participant observation process was the foundation of this thesis' conceptual framework, underlying the significance of Al Dhafra women's individual empowerment, collective empowerment and community empowerment. This thesis' investigation into the amalgamation of female empowerment in this rural region of the UAE provides an exceptionally-distinctive contribution to academic literature.

Safeefah Handicrafts—Illustration Process

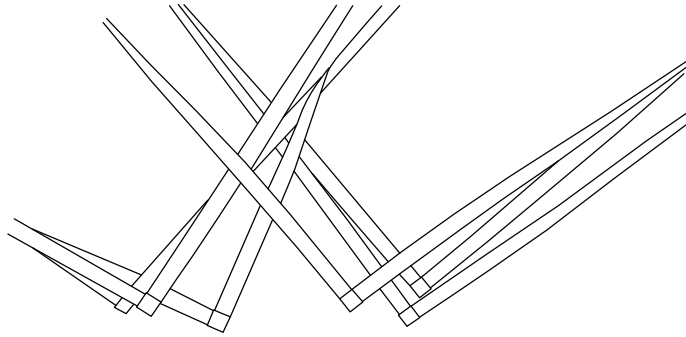


Figure 6.2: Al Dhafra Woman Arranging Date Palm Leaves to Prepare Safeefah

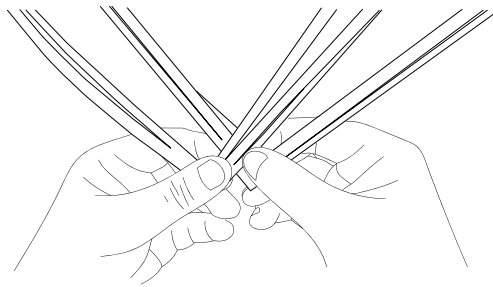


Figure 6.3: Al Dhafra Woman Splitting Date Palm Leaves to Prepare Safeefah

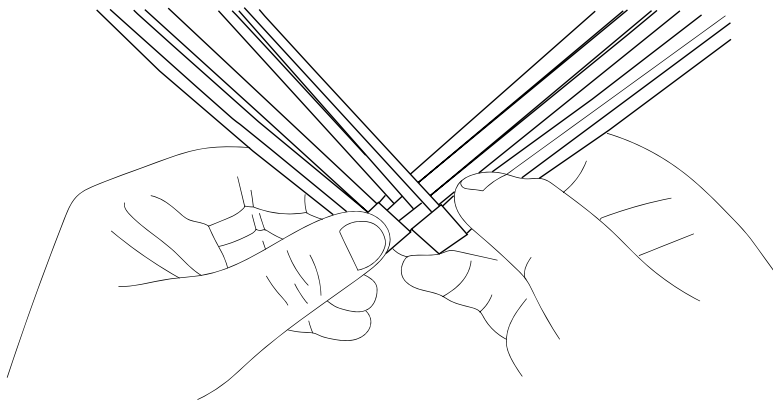


Figure 6.4: Al Dhafra Woman Starting to Weave Safeefah

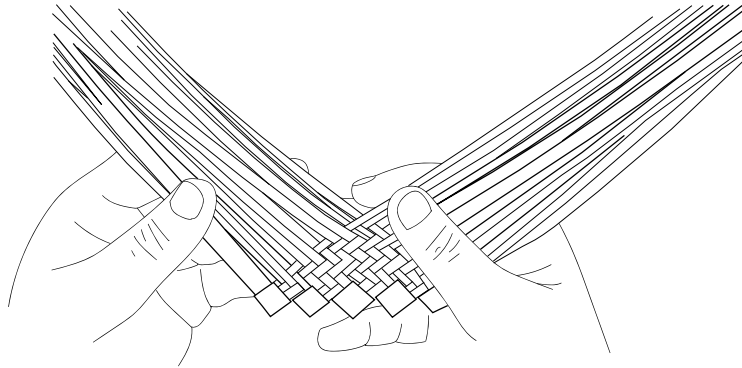


Figure 6.5: Al Dhafra Woman Braiding after 30 Minutes

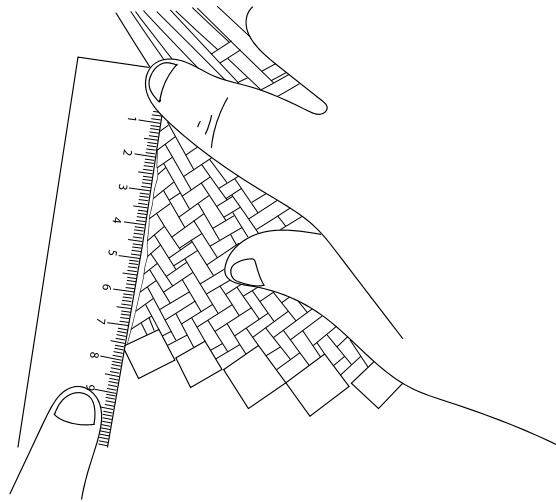


Figure 6.6: Al Dhafra Woman Measuring Her Work to Ensure Spacing Is Consistent

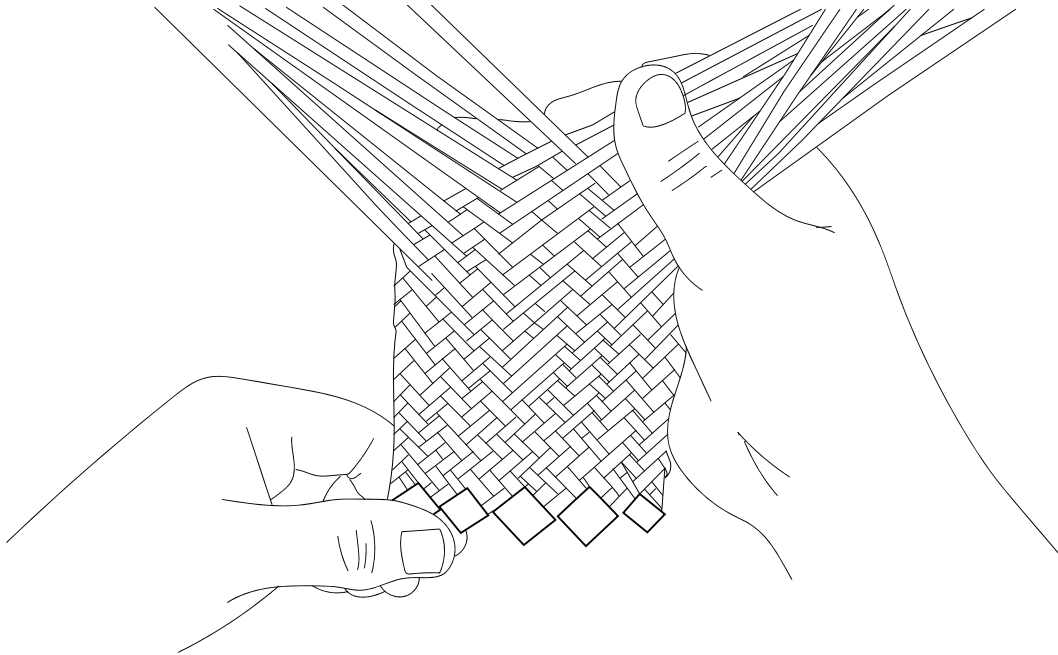


Figure 6.7: Al Dhafra Woman Proudly Presenting her Safeefah

One Al Dhafra woman explained her safeefah handicraft process and how important it is to spray the strands with water to ensure they bend as she is weaving. She explained that the tighter the weave is, the better the overall outcome will be when completed. She worked fast and efficiently, combining different strands of colours, hardly looking at them, as her expertise was revealed in the speed of her practice.

Other artisans within different rural regions in the UAE, like in the Northern Emirates, see the Al Dhafra women's safeefah handicrafts and admire their weaving designs for their idiosyncratic artistry. During the process of creating this handicraft, Interviewee 33 was focused and immersed in her weaving. She recited UAE traditional poetry from when her grandmother and mother taught her. She claimed this particular poem was one of her grandfather's poems which he recited to his grandchildren about the Abu Dhabi rural region of Liwa and its calm and peaceful desert nights. Those reciting poems sounded like lullabies as they collectively were weaving.

Interviewee 33 stated that this poem reminded her of the ancient times in the UAE when she was young, learning how to become an artisan and how proud she was that she had the capability to become one of the best handicraft-makers.

Sadu Handicrafts—Illustration Process

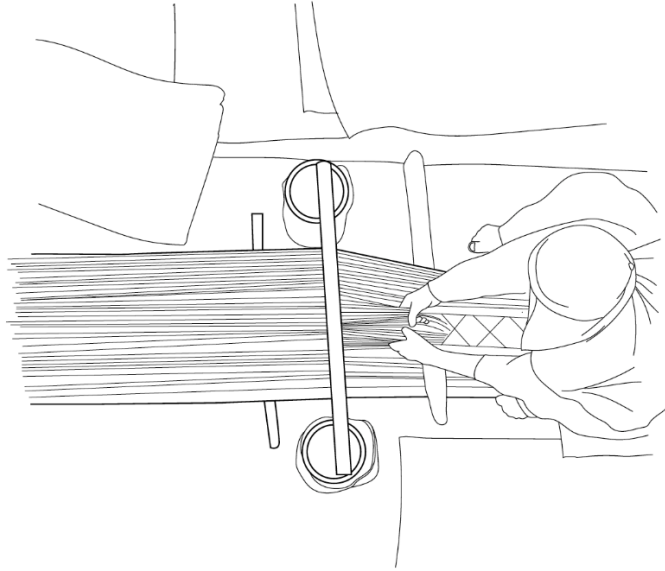


Figure 6.8: Al Dhafra Woman on Floor Weaving

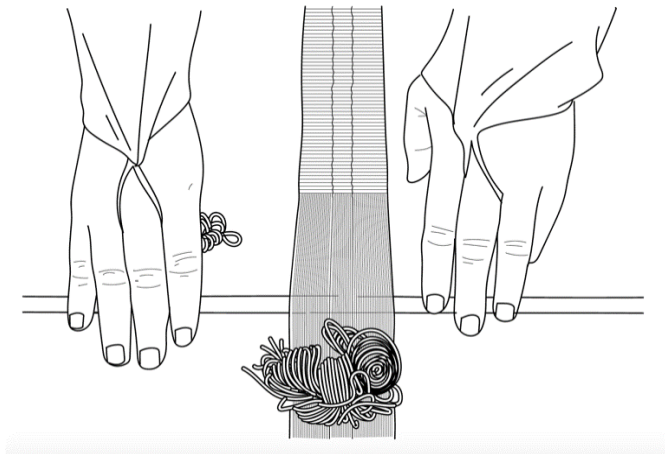


Figure 6.9: Al Dhafra Woman Aligning String to Keep Weaving Neat



Figure 6.10: Safeefah Basket Decorated with Date Palm Pits



Figure 6.11: Combination of Both Sadu & Safeefah Purses

The Al Dhafra women explained how the first steps of sadu weaving involve deciding upon the colour palate of the weave. Interviewee 1 mentioned the majority of the colours for weaving in were usually either white, beige, or black, since they never had any colours. Those additional colours are a contemporary option that the Emirati women have adopted to provide more choice.

Interviewee 10 also explained colour setting and deciding how the dominant colour is important so, for example, if they want black to appear dominant, then they need to arrange the threads in a specific way to ensure that will be the outcome. She also explained

the colour sorting on the panel and how this is linked to the pattern design. For this reason, artisans need to determine their weaving pattern beforehand, in order to decide how to arrange the colour sorting on the panel. She further explained that this stage is a difficult and time-consuming process which could take an entire day before the actual weaving can begin.

Interviewee 25 explained that a weaver needs to be comfortable and relaxed while weaving, which is why weaving in public is sometimes difficult. However, she realizes the necessity to present the practice in a public venue like in a festival or cultural centre.

While observing, I realized how much hand and eye coordination is required to produce such intricately-detailed handicrafts. It was apparent that significant expertise and natural talent is needed to develop this skill. Attaining this type of skill and knowledge is the result of repetition and practice from making hundreds of these handicrafts, according to the Al Dhafra women.

Making these handicrafts while I observed, the interviewee hummed as she worked. When I asked what tune she was humming, the interviewee explained it was a rhythm that helped her remember that specific pattern and how to weave it according to the specific outcome she wanted. She also explained that all the women had different methods to help them remember their own design patterns when weaving, to help them know when to overlap the different coloured threads.

Palm Braiding Handicrafts—Illustration Process

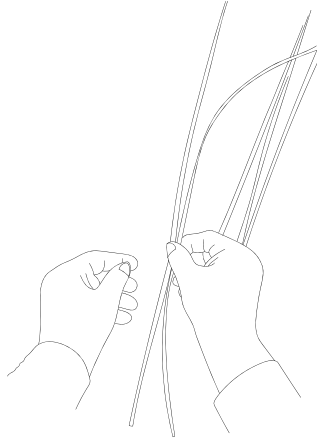


Figure 6.12: Al Dhafra Woman Ensuring Each Strand is Cut Equally

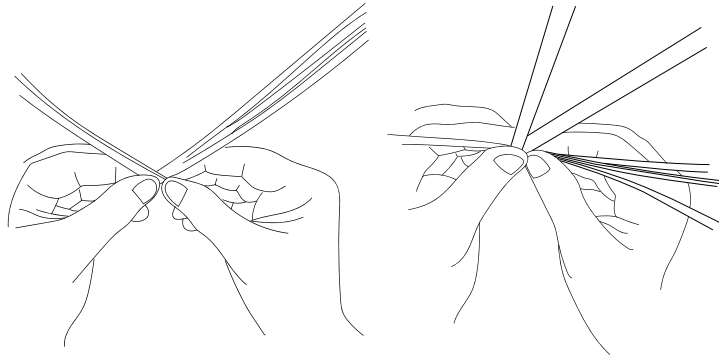


Figure 6.13: Al Dhafra Woman Explaining How to Start the Weaving by Creating Pairs To Overlap

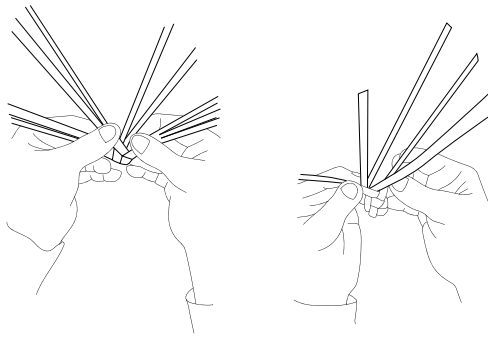


Figure 6.14: Al Dhafra Woman Begins To Weave Step-By-Step

As interviewee 30 explained the step by step process of how to weave to me, she stated that it was similar to the process of braiding hair. The tighter the weave is within the braid, the neater the design will appear when it is completed. If the weaving is loose, it will

gradually become undone and appear unprofessional. She further explained that when the Al Dhafra women compete with each other during the weaving process, everyone's individual designs must be seamless, so no one can tell the difference between them.

The Al Dhafra women pride themselves in their crafting capabilities and are dedicated to ensuring that they work together to create one uniform handicraft. They each conform to the high standards of cultural handicraft that Emirati women are taught to adhere to as part of their cultural heritage. In a seamless woven piece, it should be impossible to tell when one section by one practitioner begins and another part by another practitioner ends, so that the group projects are completely coordinated. Not being able to identify what each woman's contribution is reveals both the individual and group collective talent.

Talli Handicrafts—Illustration Process

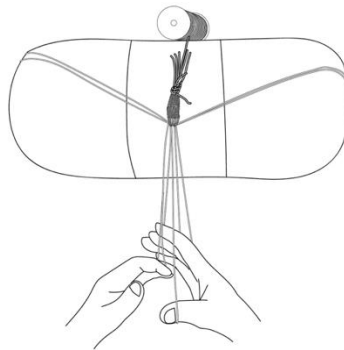


Figure 6.15: Al Dhafra Woman Preparing Talli Kajoojah Stitch

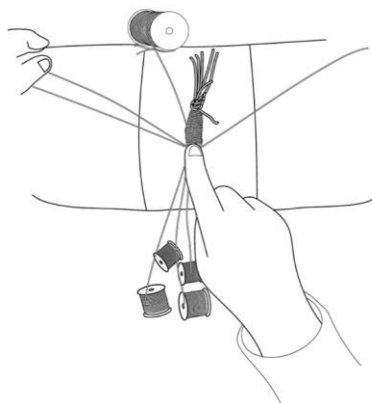


Figure 6.16: Al Dhafra Woman Displaying Talli Kajoojah with Six Strings Stitch

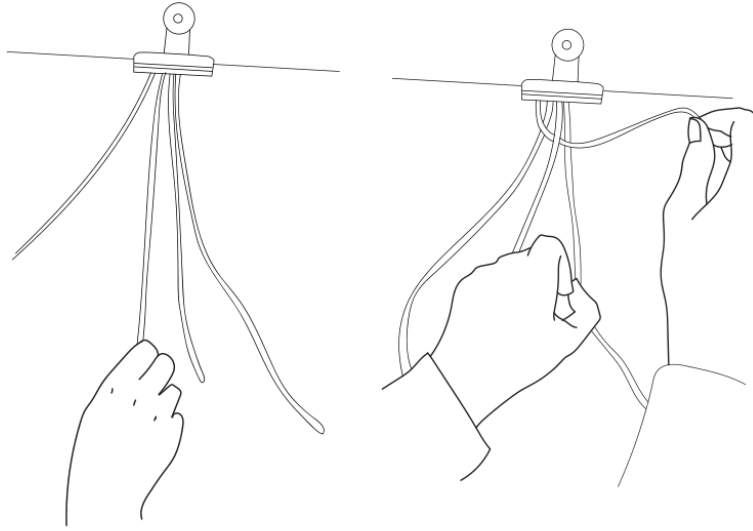


Figure 6.17: Al Dhafra Woman Performing Talli Sayer Yay Stitch

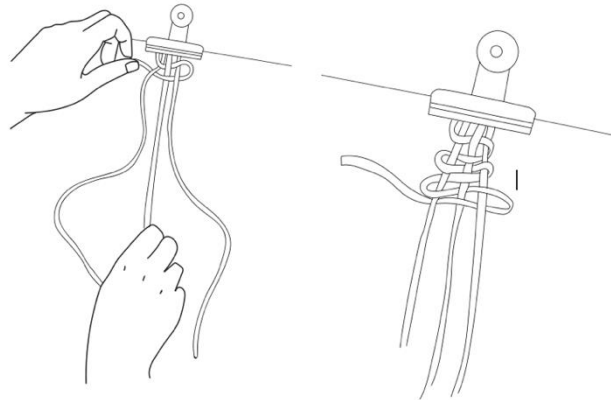


Figure 6.18: Al Dhafra Woman Displaying Talli Sayer Yay Stitch

Interviewee 14 stated that the talli sayer yay handicraft process is the simplest talli stitch to perform and is the first step in teaching people how to learn other more complex talli stitches. The term sayer yay literally translates to ‘back and forth’, since it refers to the talli stitch procedure of moving the thread from one side to another. Interviewee 26 claimed that the reasoning behind calling the stitch this name is that it is related to the action of weaving and how the artisan’s hand moves back and forth across the design.

Throughout the UAE, Bedouin resourcefulness is revealed cultural handicrafts like sadu, which is a traditional practice for weaving sheep and goat wool and camel hair. This material is used for decorative tassels on camel saddles, tents, pillows, carpets, and blankets. Sadu is one of the most essential forms of tangible heritage especially revered throughout the UAE, as it is renowned for its crucial function in Bedouin life. The practice of sadu reveals its inventiveness and flexibility in cultural designs and signifies how Emirati women contribute precious cultural handicrafts to their community. Sadu plays a key function, as a means for Emirati women to collaborate in making their crafts, while enjoying social and cultural knowledge sharing in their majlis' (DCTAD, 2018).

Due to the importance of sadu to the Emirati people, UNESCO acknowledged this traditional Bedouin craft in 2011 as one of the most vital intangible cultural heritage practices that necessitates protection. The process of creating sadu handicrafts in the UAE starts with cutting off camel hair, goat and sheep wool to be sorted by length and colour. The wool is then cleaned, shaken, and blown out to eliminate any sand or thorns so it can be combed. The wool is again cleaned several times using detergent, soap, ash, or clay so it can then be ready for processing (DCTAD, 2018).

A drop spindle is used to spin the wool into yarn and then it is dyed in bright colours using various organic materials like spices, berries, and plants. The most common Emirati materials for dyeing wool include indigo, cactus, saffron, turmeric, and henna. The most traditional colours used for sadu weaving are usually red, beige, brown, white and black. The process then involves weaving yarn using a floor loom created from jujube or palm tree wood. If a lot of sadu material is being made, for example, to make a large wedding tent, then several different looms are used. Emirati artisans gather in one of the women's majlis' and begin spinning and weaving, while they exchange the latest news and events related to their families and their community. Many o Emirati women also recite poetry, like Al-Taghrooda, while they work, which is a reminder of ancient times when their elderly family members produced these items in a similar manner (DCTAD, 2018).

Some of the most common Emirati motifs and designs used in sadu are symbolic of the different the UAE desert regions reflecting their significance to the Bedouin people and their traditional lifestyles. The most recurring sadu designs include: geometric patterns that emulate the desert sand dunes and grasslands, with many flowers and date palm trees,

or animal images like falcons, sheep, or camels intricately incorporated into the overall motif. These decorations may also have inscriptions with various shapes and symbols that may include tribal names, mosques, or verses from the Quran. Some of these motifs represent particular Bedouin ideals such as rings that overlap with a chain attached, to signify the cohesion of the people within a specific Bedouin tribe. The most common sadu motifs include: Asnan Al Khail (Horse Teeth), Spotted Leather Skin Design, Al Ain Al Ghadeer pattern, Scissors Design, the Masters' Design, Al Owerayan Pattern, Ammunition Passer Design, the Tree Design, and the Grain Design (DCTAD, 2018).

Creating sadu handicrafts is one of the most respected traditional Bedouin customs still practiced within the UAE, because it represents the cultural heritage that is the foundation of the people's national identity. Sadu weaving is practiced throughout other Arabian Gulf nations as well, due to similarities in their heritage customs. Sadu is an ancient heritage craft that is based on fulfilling the fundamental needs of the Bedouin people, to provide them with clothing, housewares, furniture, blankets, floormats, and baskets for carrying items (Qah, 2016).

Most of the main materials that sadu weaving depends on come from local animals and natural desert items, such as palm branches, date pits, berries, goat hair, sheep, and camel wool. Emirati Bedouin women have been using these organic materials for centuries to transform simple desert items into exquisite Sadu handicrafts that are useful for daily life and also symbolic of UAE cultural heritage. The sadu handicraft process involves five precise phases:

- 1st phase—cut goat hair, clip sheep wool or camel hair, gather materials together
- 2nd phase—sort and clean hair and wool, fluff to get rid of dust, thorns, and plants, rinse using water, comb through wool using fluffer or kardash
- 3rd phase—use loom to spin wool and make it into solid yarn
- 4th phase—separate white yarn from yarn that will be dyed into other colours
- 5th phase—place four pieces of yarn across a rectangular piece of wood so extendable threads can suspend the sadu material to keep it positioned correctly, then use loom or spindles to knit or weave yarn into bright colourful patterns (Qah, 2016)

The sadu creation process provides evidence of the patience and technical expertise required by Emirati women to produce UAE handicrafts. Sadu necessitates incredibly meticulous creative detailing to develop its geometric patterns and innovative designs. UAE and other Gulf Bedouin women believe these designs are representative of their particular cultural heritage values and belief systems. The cultural tradition of making these artistic and intricate sadu handicrafts depict various natural elements of the desert lifestyle that the Bedouin people believe in, such as domes and crescents symbolizing sand dunes, palm trees, flowers, and animals signifying their survival (Qah, 2016).

Safeefah Handicrafts



Figure 6.19: Contemporary Design for Safeefah Basket

Sadu Handicrafts



Figure 6.20: Contemporary Design for Sadu Weaving

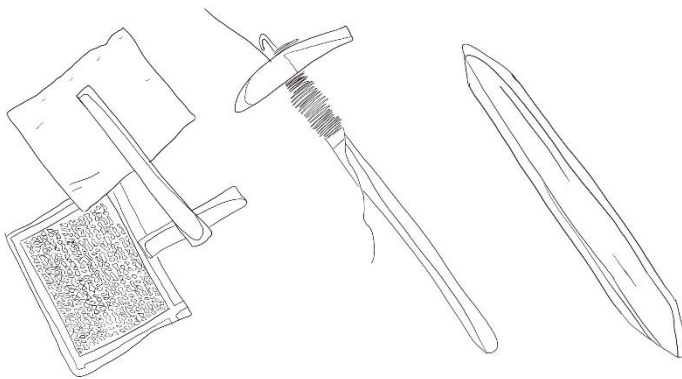


Figure 6.21: Traditional Tools used to Make Sadu (Al Minfashih, Al Magzal, Al Hof)

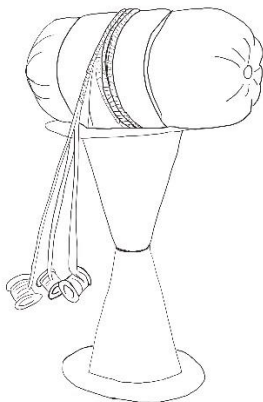


Figure 6.22: Kajooja stand with pillow and Dahary

6.10 Visual Elements—Researcher Participant Observation of Emirati Women’s Majlis Spaces

I was privileged to be able to visit many different types of majlis’ in the Al Dhafra region during the primary research process; however, I found each space had its own unique style and individual taste in me. When I walked into the first majlis at the end of the corridor of an Emirati woman’s house, I noticed that the seating area was assembled against the walls of the rectangular room where many women were seated. A small table placed in the middle of the room included a tray of Arabic coffee, dates, tea, cups, and saucers all stacked over each other.

The majlis meals are prepared for a number of people to gather and sit on the floor and eat the food arranged in the middle of the room on a large plastic covering to protect the rug. After the initial introductions and customary Arabic greetings among the Bedouin women, I was then escorted to the couch to discuss a few details the interviews. After a while, servants carried in several large dishes full of a variety of entrees, including a roasted baby lamb in the centre of a larger plate of cooked rice combined with various vegetables and other items like potatoes, carrots, cashew nuts, and raisins mixed together. The women went to wash their hands and returned to prepare to eat. I was directed to join the women sitting down on the floor in a circle in the centre of the room around the food trays to enjoy the meal. Once the women all finished eating, they again washed their hands and faces and prepared for the interviews and to demonstrate their handicraft-making processes for me. Servants quickly cleaned up all of the food trays and began to bring in materials for making the crafts.

The servants brought in the weaving loom, spindles, long palm fronds, date pits, coloured yarn, and other important items, as well as some finished handicrafts for me to see the end results. I was shown the outcome of the women’s dedication and hard work first and then the organic materials that made the handicrafts. I then spent several hours conducting interviews, managing focus groups and also observing the women undertaking the various phases of craft production.

Through participant observation research methods, I was able to gain valuable insight into the time-consuming process involved in producing traditional UAE cultural handicrafts. While scrutinizing the procedures, I was also able to ask questions of the

Emirati women as they worked, sang songs, chanted poetry and provided details about what they were making and why it was so important to the Emirati people. This personalized majlis participation enabled me to partake in the craft-making process and even attempt to assist in creating some of the pieces.

The entire experience was insightful for me, as I was raised in the major cities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and unaware of how painstakingly these women performed their cultural responsibilities. Unfortunately, this type of majlis experience would be very difficult to replicate in any type of public forum like festivals or other cultural events since it involves such private and personal cultural traditions that are not shared with foreigners.

My participant observation of a different Bedouin majlis on another occasion found a room was situated in the heart of the house. As soon as people entered the foyer, they were shuffled to wide room with a high ceiling and rich aroma of Arabic perfume which reminded me of being in my grandmother's bedroom on a Friday morning when she prepared for prayers. The chairs in this majlis were more modern than in many of the other houses. A Western seating area had been added to this Majlis (possibly showing some of the influence of globalization and modernization from the Internet, television, magazines or other media formats). There were sofas assembled facing each other and a separate media entertainment centre was in one corner of the room. Instead of the traditional Bedouin floor seating, the dining room was a in separate area with a modern dining table and chairs.

I noted that this home displayed some of the more updated changes that some members of the community had adopted as they became more influenced by Western home décor. While the dining table was not yet filled with traditional Emirati cuisine, the smell of delicious traditional foods was in the air as the cooking was being completed and trays began to be carried in. The process of the meal, interviews, and focus groups was all carried out in a similar fashion at this majlis; however, there were also some modern desserts and chocolates which were offered afterward with the coffee and tea alongside the traditional Arabic sweets.

While all of the majlis experiences shared many commonalities that I was familiar with from my own family home as an Emirati woman, each Al Dhafra woman made a special effort to decorate their individual homes with special touches of cultural artefacts,

paintings, and sculptures. I was able to discern that the older women had more traditional majlis' with Bedouin decor, while some of the younger women often displayed modern furnishings found in the local shopping malls throughout the UAE.

This distinction was only possible to note because of the unusual situation of my being an Emirati, so I was allowed to be invited to the majlis during handicraft-making. The differences between the various majlis' enabled me to differentiate between the diverse generations of Emirati women within the Al Dhafra region to identify how globalization was influencing their decision-making and consumer purchases.

6.11 Researcher Participant Observation & Analysis of Cultural Events

Zayed Heritage Festival—Researcher Analysis

I went to visit the Zayed Heritage Festival to gain a deeper understanding of the role of artisans. Enlivened with music and folklore performances from different cultures across the globe, I tried to navigate where the traditional artisans were located. I found a room overlooking stage where the traditional folklore performances took place. The space consisted of three windows overlooking the stage with a traditional wooden door in the centre of the rectangular space.

I found three female artisans seated on the floor weaving talli, sadu, and safeefah handicrafts. Seeing the different demonstrations of artisan crafts in the UAE in the context of this confined space felt like looking at a checklist, to ensure equal representation of all three handicrafts. There was no deeper understanding provided as to why these handicraft practices coexisted in the same space. While I noted how these three women represented the three handicrafts that they each practice and the importance of having all three is essential to the authenticity of the festivals. However such a presentation lacks the necessary underlying engagement with each individual craft and therefore lacks the context of their overall importance to the UAE national identity.

Additionally, the manner in which these women were making the handicrafts is not a true depiction of how those crafts are made. The festival portrayed these handicrafts in a more static way and the women's voices were muted due to the public venue. As I sat on the ground with the female Emirati artisans, I could not help but notice how visitors would

walk in, or look over the space from the door or small window opening while admiring the handicrafts. However, there was minimal conversation or engagement with the artisans, possibly due to the visitors not knowing if they spoke English or if they wanted to discuss what they were making.

A more thoughtfully-designed exhibit could facilitate more interaction between the artisans and the visitors which would perpetuate dialogue about UAE cultural heritage, handicrafts, and the women's expertise in making them. Currently, there is a disconnection between how artisans work in their homes versus craft-making in public venues that lacks the enthusiasm and voices of these female Emirati artisans while they weave. In this context, the experience felt rather mandatory, which lacked the passion typical in their process of making. I left the craft area and looked for children's workshops or spaces that would possibly encourage further engagement with artisans. However, all the children's workshops were simply arts and crafts, not related to any traditional handicrafts and had no connection to the traditional way grandmothers and mothers teach their children how to make these precious artifacts.

Qasr Al Hosn Festival—Researcher Analysis

Attending the fourth annual Qasr Al Hosn Festival in Abu Dhabi, I found this event split into key zones: Abu Dhabi island, marine area, oasis, desert, festival stage, Qasr al Hosn, Qasr al Hosn exhibition, and the cultural foundation. In this lively festival, I noticed the women having more active role in their artisan craft production and their representation was clearly to encourage a deeper understanding of UAE cultural heritage and handicrafts. In the dedicated space for the exhibit of sadu handicrafts, the Emirati female artisans enacted the five phases of production to more accurately represent the work involved in making these items. It is essential to note how this craft has been split into these specific phases to ensure those individual processes are properly understood and seen by the public.

However, I questioned whether this depiction truly captures the essence of how sadu is normally made in women's homes, or of the immense time and effort spent on creating each handicraft. I hoped that dividing up the different phases of craft production would clarify the expertise required and portray the lengthy and time-consuming process of creating these handicrafts, so the public would give more respect and credit to these

talented artisans. These women deserved to be acknowledged for the value in their cultural efforts so they can continue to teach these handicrafts to generations of Emirati children.

6.12 Practices and Materials

My sketches allowed for a more visually descriptive perspective of what was learned while studying Al Dhafra women in the UAE while creating cultural handicrafts. There were numerous cultural practices being performed during these processes of craft-making with a sundry of weaving, thread, and related materials. A reflection on how these tools and materials are used currently reveals that most modern Emirati families purchase their clothing and household goods in stores or have them tailormade.

However, in the Al Dhafra region, women are still making clothing, housewares, baskets, purses, and other useful items by hand. The processes for handicraft production are primarily the same as they have been for the past 100 years: however, there are a few notable changes which have occurred over the last few decades. One such modification relates to the women not having to make their own dyes from seeds and berries to colour the threads. Nevertheless, they still do the handiwork while sitting in their shared majlis', working together on cultural projects for festivals and other events.

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (2005, p. 1) claims heritage allows communities to recreate the past by adding value and updating past cultural items. Heritage has the capacity to expand museological collection, interpretation, and documentation methods and beliefs. Heritage artisans should be considered cultural assets that can benefit communities due to them becoming the intangible heritage themselves through their process of creating heritage. This results in the ethnology of museum collections and the creation of knowledge of heritage aligning with the anthropology of cultural practices to the community who they represent (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2005, p. 1-2).

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (2005, pp. 1-2) argues that the role of museums is to ensure the continuance of cultural heritage for communities, especially during globalization whose impact could be counterintuitive to its future. The function of museums is to provide an authentic venue for people to interpret their intangible heritage during meta-cultural

production. This contributes to how museums help people understand their heritage and in turn, their own lives and society (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2005, p. 1-2).

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (2005, pp. 1-2) states that the duration of heritage practices throughout different generations is often progressed through museum collections that safeguard the promotion of cultural customs and traditional practices as they transgress into different stages of change and sustainability. This links to the collaborative crafts literature on heritage memories being sustained through diverse perspectives in coordinated community activities that involve both museums and practitioners, so they can adapt to uncertain changes due to globalization (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2005, pp. 1-2).

6.13 Glossary of Terms

- Al Hof—long rectangular piece of pointed wood for tightening and separating yarn like weaving rod combs
- Al Magzal—T-shaped tool made of wood that has metal hook for twisting and winding wool to create a yarn ball, like a loom
- Al Minfashih—two wood pieces that have metal bristles for combing wool before weaving it
- Beraism—Talli thread raveled from a silk fabric
- Bu Qulaim—traditional GCC region fabric with a distinctive linear pattern
- Bu Taira—traditional GCC region Taira fabric with flowers and leaves designed to appear like bird wings
- Dahary—bobbins that create the Talli handicrafts
- Jefeer—traditional Emirati basket made from Safeefah date palm leaf weaving process for carrying dates
- Kajooja—metal stand for placing pillow to braid Talli handicrafts
- Khoos—traditional Emirati Safeefah weaving process that utilizes dried date palm leaf fronds
- Mahafah—circular or triangular handheld cooling fan created from Safeefah date palm leaf weaving
- Makabah—cone-shape cover created from Safeefah date palm leaf weaving whose purpose is to keep off dust and flies to protect food

- Safeefah—traditional Emirati Khoos weaving process made using date palm leaf fronds
- Sayr Yay—Emirati Talli stitching technique where thread motion creates simple patterns
- Surood—round mats created from Safeefah date palm weaving placed on floor to put food upon
- Talli Ghawali—Talli pattern similar to a snakeskin pattern, made with silver and black thread
- Talli Nather—Talli vertical zigzag triangular pattern
- Talli—Emirati traditional textile for making handicraft embroidery using colourful threads for decorating clothing garments

6.14 Developing a Model For Empowering Al Dhafra Women

The female empowerment conceptual model identifies how Al Dhafra women have access to necessary resources required for their cultural heritage handicrafts and the events to display them. However, they have not been empowered due to the broader structural hierarchy of those in power facilitating community engagement programmes. This has prevented Al Dhafra women from being able to effectively exploit their collective agency since they lack the decision-making power to design and develop the cultural handicraft promotion in regional tourism projects, which is founded on collective empowerment research provided by Jones, Smith, and Wills (2012).

The Al Dhafra women's collective empowerment can be measured through their communal involvement in programmes that maximize their skill sets and where the cultural indicators express their capacity and willingness to be influential members of the local community. From a theoretical perspective, measuring female empowerment is a challenging process that must entail systematically assessing all contexts over long periods of time to gain valuable insight into the multidimensional variances which impact their overall success in cultural community engagement programmes (Malhotra, Schuler, and Boender, 2002). A similar study by Ruggles and Silverman (2009) claims accurate evaluation of these factors can allow for a female empowerment conceptual framework to reliably measure social equity and gender equality throughout the local society.

In order to develop a model for empowering Al Dhafra women, it is necessary to identify the key points that it would focus on as they are expanded on from the conceptual framework I created in Chapter 1. This framework expressed the need to empower Al Dhafra women by aligning UAE government and museums to collaborate in establishing community engagement programmes. It also displayed how both intangible and tangible cultural heritage must be protected in all community programmes. It reflected the added value of Al Dhafra women being empowered to preserve their intangible cultural heritage, that includes their cultural identity and the knowledge and skills needed to produce their cultural handicrafts. It also involved empowering Al Dhafra women to create examples of their tangible cultural heritage with unique cultural handicrafts that reflect their distinctive cultural capabilities. This model focuses on integrating a ‘bottom-up’ approach to female empowerment instead of the usual top-down hierarchy of managerial power over community members, as specified in research by Debarbieux (2019).

Al-Dajani (2013) argues the conceptualization of a women’s empowerment model requires a framework that emphasizes a dynamic process where women are able to acquire and utilize resources that enable them to develop their own vision with the capability of articulating their preferences and achieving their strategic aspirations. Abu-Lughod (2009) argues this involves an ongoing adaptation process of promoting their individual and collective skill development as a part of communal empowerment. In similar research, Cornwall and Anyidoho (2010) claim it also relates to the women being able to capitalize upon their social resources, like participation in various organizations, to enhance their collective agency so their perspectives and voices are apparent during the process.

Harrison (2011) theorizes that one of the major challenges within heritage studies and management is determining who will be in charge of defining it as the cultural heritage experts and who should manage heritage in cultural programmes. Empowering women as ‘agents’ of intangible cultural heritage offers an alternative cultural heritage narrative that, while challenging dominant ‘state’ sanctioned heritage practices through ‘bottom-up’ cultural practices and activities, also creates greater cultural cohesion between cultural heritage producers and the various communities they engage with, both local (rural and urban) and tourists, with the aim of creating authentic and relevant experiences for all. Some of these theories help cultural heritage preservation of Al Dhafra handicrafts since

they are part of frameworks that could provide more empowerment to the women there in community engagement projects. The protection of cultural heritage involves numerous social, economic, and political aspects (Thorpe, 2018). This study emphasizes how the academic literature discusses empowerment and the shift of connecting power and society, and highlights the importance of trusting one community to be in control of maintaining the practice of cultural heritage. This has led to some changing shifts in certain theories ensuring there is a change in the cultural mentality of institutions to provide more trust and control to women as cultural heritage practitioners, empowering them to take the lead on cultural projects (Al-Dajani and Carter, 2010).

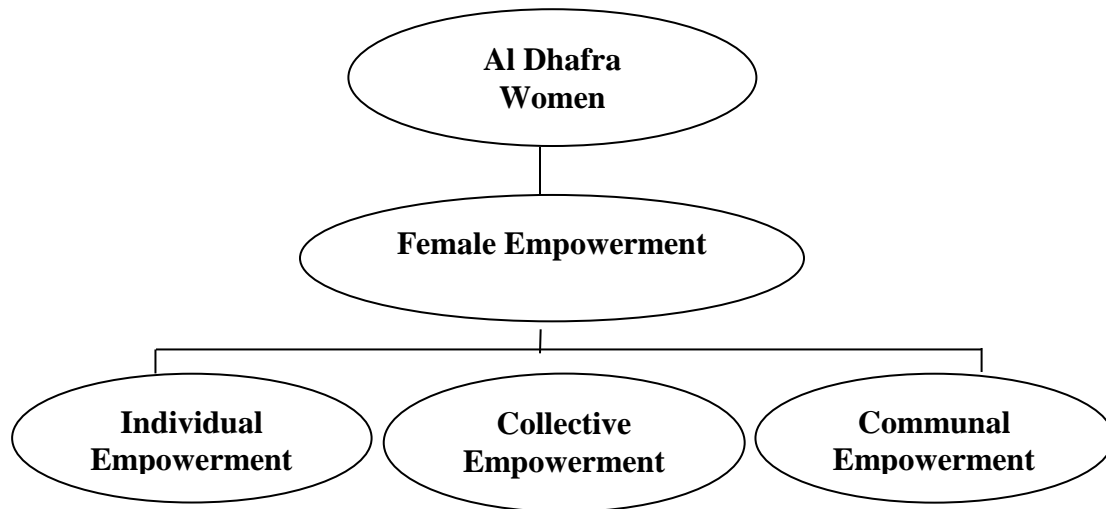
In academic literature, female empowerment has usually been applied worldwide from a business entrepreneurship perspective, which is often limiting to the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage process, since it focusses more on product outcome (Grabow, 2016). This is directly linked to this thesis' research findings and how women in Al Dhafra are frustrated with lack of attention to the process of making cultural handicrafts and the vital intangibility of the cultural knowledge it requires.

This thesis' research findings present a solution for developing opportunities for female empowerment in the Al Dhafra region and relate to expanding its conceptual empowerment framework. Some of the elements of this female empowerment model include focussing on Al Dhafra women being more involved in community engagement programme design and decision-making, children's education, intergenerational collaboration, and community-focused cultural events. This chapter expands this model to show that the next stage of women's empowerment in the Al Dhafra region is empowering them to be able to teach their children and others learn how to make cultural handicrafts in community workshops. This reflects the Al Dhafra women's desire to be more involved in educating children and others in the intangible process of making the tangible cultural heritage items. As explained in Chapter 2, cultural handicrafts are a significant component of UAE cultural heritage, which Al Dhafra women protect. I also described in Chapter 5 how this handicraft making process is linked to intangible cultural identity and tangible cultural outcomes.

These elements of this thesis study's female empowerment model can then be implemented by promoting how these cultural heritage handicrafts could be displayed in

museums, exhibitions, festivals, art galleries, and other cultural venues to reflect UAE cultural heritage on a regular basis. Another aspect of this empowerment is to provide income for Al Dhafra women, thereby demonstrating the UAE government's appreciation for their dedication as guardians protecting UAE cultural heritage. This summarizes the expansion of this study's conceptual framework and its dimensions as a way of generalizing to theory, which this chapter focuses on detailing from the Al Dhafra women's perspective as it links to the literature. The updated empowerment model below defines the various types of female empowerment that Al Dhafra women value and desire from community engagement programmes. This model evolved from the academic literature in Chapter 3, and Chapter 5 and 6 findings were applied to the conceptual framework in Chapter 1.

My Female Empowerment Model for Al Dhafra Women



This female empowerment model represents Al Dhafra women's diverse types of empowerment within their society that can be enhanced through community engagement programmes to preserve UAE cultural heritage. There are three pillars of empowerment that Al Dhafra women want to be recognized for:

- Individual Empowerment—for transferring knowledge of cultural heritage to future generations (children)
- Collective Empowerment—for sharing cultural handicraft knowledge and skills as a group

- Communal Empowerment—for promoting cultural handicraft expertise to safeguard cultural heritage in community engagement programmes and cultural tourism projects

This female empowerment model can be applied to empower women in other cultural programmes in the UAE, as well as throughout the Middle East and other nations with similar rural region cultural heritage projects. However, there are subtle differences to be considered when applying this model to other marginalized regions worldwide, such as how UAE rural region communities do not require an economic focus, given they are not in a similar socioeconomic status as poorer nations. The UAE also has the support of many government-led cultural tourism initiatives which promote the country's cultural heritage, which other countries may lack.

There is also the difference in how UNESCO frameworks are not necessarily needed for UAE projects to be successful, since its government provides sponsorship and funding, whereas other nations may require financial assistance for rural region empowerment programmes. Some countries may have similar challenges that Al Dhafra region faced, such as that in the past some of the cultural initiatives did not include local women in the decision-making process, which could greatly empower them in developing relevant community engagement programmes. Another challenge the Al Dhafra women faced was not always receiving the acknowledgement they deserved by museum and other cultural professionals in how essential their intangible and tangible knowledge and expertise is to ensuring the continuation and preservation of the country's cultural heritage. These challenges can be overcome through the application of this thesis' female empowerment model, for women to become more empowered through cultural tourism projects, which can be applied worldwide.

6.15 Summary

This section explains how Al Dhafra women have experienced many limits and challenges where further work needs to be done to fully empower them in community engagement programmes. Through shared decision-making, focussing on families, and supporting children in learning cultural handicrafts, this research demonstrates how these

programmes can be successful, by empowering Al Dhafra women to contribute to them. The research findings also demonstrate how Al Dhafra women, in seeking to be empowered, want to protect their intangible cultural heritage and the process of making the tangible cultural handicrafts, since they are so important to the region in sustaining its cultural identity.

This chapter provided insight into how restrictions of empowerment that involved Al Dhafra women, impacted them, as they were not previously permitted to design community engagement programme strategies, nor permitted to decide when programmes would be presented, nor asked where the programme outcomes were displayed, nor asked how long these programmes should last. Al Dhafra women were not able to sustain these community engagement programmes nor able to suggest changes, as museum or other cultural professionals, at that time, did not provide a way to listen to their ideas. According to the Al Dhafra women, in being empowered to collaborate on community engagement programmes, they can demonstrate the most effective and relevant manner of preserving UAE cultural heritage with cultural handicrafts that express the past challenges that the society has overcome.

The findings from this research provide a comprehensive perspective of how Al Dhafra women are determined to empower themselves through their cultural handicrafts. They purposefully utilize their role as cultural heritage guardians as a way to gain empowerment within the local community. In the previous chapter, the research results revealed that Al Dhafra women have appointed themselves as cultural caretakers of UAE heritage. This chapter has described how Al Dhafra women believe that they have the appropriate cultural knowledge and expertise to collaborate in the management of community projects related to their cultural heritage handicrafts. The findings show that the Al Dhafra women know precisely what they want from future community engagement programmes and cultural tourism activities and events. While they will try to be open and supportive of regional cultural tourism initiatives strategies in Al Dhafra region, the research from this study strongly indicates, Al Dhafra women want to be a collaborative part of the strategic design and delivery of community engagement programmes, to ensure the cultural heritage is preserved and respected.

Further, Al Dhafra women also indicate they should be consulted on certain aspects of community projects, such as any cultural heritage preservation programmes related to their handicrafts, and to make sure tourist attractions are not near their residential areas to lessen any impacts to their communities. Their need for more empowerment relates to protecting the uniqueness of Emirati cultural handicrafts, which they could achieve in the form of an advisory council to collaborate in the strategic development of community engagement programmes and cultural tourism projects in the region. The research findings made it evident that Al Dhafra women have the talents and capabilities to succeed in achieving their individual and group objectives through collaborating on the design of community engagement programmes that will allow them to highlight their cultural handicrafts.

This chapter also proposed an updated model for female empowerment based on this thesis' findings and as applied to the academic literature and relevant theories. This model contributes to the existing literature by providing the three pillars of female empowerment in the Al Dhafra community: individual, collective, and communal. This model can be applied to other rural regions in different countries, to encourage initiatives which will empower marginalized communities worldwide. The observations from the researcher's engagements at UAE cultural heritage sites and the staged cultural heritage practices described in detail in Chapter 6 helped to provide a more in-depth cultural perspective on heritage positioning within the country that museums can benefit from, not only in the UAE, but worldwide.

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS—EMPOWERING AL DHAFRA WOMEN IN CULTURAL TOURISM EVENTS

7.1 Introduction

After reviewing the conclusions from this thesis and analysing the overall research results from Chapter 5 and 6, based upon the Al Dhafra women's interviews and focus groups, there are several recommendations related to adding more cultural tourism events and activities that will involve and empower community members. While there have been some past community engagement programmes in the Al Dhafra region, these were short-term and did not involve the community members in any management or decision-making process. While there have been many festivals which have successfully displayed the women's cultural handicrafts and provided a source of community participation in the past; however, they were often only held a few times a year and coordinators handled all arrangements, without the Al Dhafra women's input or feedback.

Recommendations for empowering Al Dhafra women in cultural tourism projects include suggesting to museum or cultural professionals that they can implement the updated model of female empowerment created in Chapter 6, based upon this thesis' findings and applied to the academic literature. This model can provide guidance as to the many ways Al Dhafra women can be empowered on the individual level to educate and teach their children the cultural handicrafts in community engagement programmes, to make sure future generations carry on cultural traditions and customs of UAE cultural heritage. This model also suggests empowering the women through collective methods, where they work together in groups on designing and producing cultural handicrafts for community projects.

The model can also be the foundation for recommendations to UAE cultural institutions, such as Zayed National Museum and Qasr Al Hosn, to sponsor and organize regular monthly cultural heritage tourism projects like festivals, heritage events, and other community activities, as well as displaying cultural handicrafts in museums, to educate visitors on the UAE's historical past, cultural traditions, customs, beliefs, and values of the Emirati people, while ensuring their long-term preservation for the future. The model can be useful for recommending to museum professionals how they can effectively coordinate

with Al Dhafra community members to empower them by involving them as collaborators in the management, development, and decision-making of community engagement programmes and cultural tourism projects, to ensure their relevancy and authenticity.

The findings from this research relate to helping provide strategic recommendations on ways to improve the community engagement programmes for the Al Dhafra rural region. They also explain various ways to empower Al Dhafra women to help them ensure the preservation of UAE cultural heritage and cultural identity. Al Dhafra women were forthright in their input from this study that they wanted to hold a significant role in any Al Dhafra community engagement programmes. The Al Dhafra women felt they represented the most crucial UAE cultural values, and that they were the responsible for making sure future generations know about the history of the country and its leaders. These recommendations also provide an overall analysis of the findings from the cultural institution officials' interviews, which were also invaluable in providing their interpretation of the gap between their perspectives and the Al Dhafra women's views of what is necessary for the development of future community engagement programmes and what priorities they should focus upon.

This chapter is written reflecting on my role as an educator within UAE cultural institution. It uses the findings from the research to apply them in a practical sense for community engagement programme development. The final chapter (Conclusion) draws together the research to present this study's academic contribution and wider implications for the field of heritage studies.

7.2 Collaborative Crafts & Women's Empowerment

Some of the academic literature on craft and collaboration demonstrates that heritage is stored in the memory of the community who values it in both intangible and tangible forms. Stalp (2012) argues that quilting is one art form that signifies a gendered type of cultural heritage that has earned global recognition for its inventive designs. Quilting has transformed many women's lives worldwide as a recreational pastime that expresses anthropological and sociological heritage production. Quilting also provides

insight into the broader issues of cultural identity as they pertain to the creation of symbolic expressions of cultural heritage.

Millar (2013) argues that creative collaboration provides the means for different parties to work together on cultural designs to develop innovative new methods for cultural practice. New cultural models are needed to encourage communities to share their ideas to properly interpret the unpredictable, uncertain, and unusual changes within cultures which emerge due to various factors. Creative collaborative associations allow for the pursuit of diverse directions and unforeseen transformations which can help to fulfil unrealized potential.

Golding and Modest (2013) argue that contemporary literature lacks enough academic research related to the need for coordination between community members and museums. This thesis aspires to provide a foundation for future research that examines artisans' perspectives within the heritage staging process, to help them be more aligned with museum cultural programmes. The main purpose of museums is to educate and serve the public, and to facilitate this there should be more communication that allows for interaction and engagement of the people living in that society.

Within the UAE, its government and museums are attempting to allow more participation from local community artisans who produce handicrafts to ensure authenticity in the cultural staging during festivals and other cultural events. This encourages more collaboration with the community whose heritage is being exhibited to help make sure the cultural programmes suit their needs as well, not just the needs of the museums or government. In museum programme development and exhibitions, museums need to ensure multiple perceptions that do not cater too much to major institutions which have the most power so heritage is not exploited (Golding and Modest, 2013). The UAE government is currently prioritizing strategies that encourage involving community artisans within cultural programmes and projects as a means of authenticating intangible and tangible cultural heritage practices.

7.3 Overall Analysis of Recommendations

The findings from this thesis, and my reflections, support the concept that Al Dhafra women believe in themselves and their role as cultural heritage safekeepers, and feel they

will do the best job collaborating on the strategic management of community engagement programmes, if empowered to do so. The results from the data emphasize that Al Dhafra women can develop useful relationships with governmental and private institutions that can help them become empowered. This will aid them in their progress so they can formulate sustained community engagement programmes in the future. Al Dhafra women have the most UAE cultural heritage experience to capitalize upon, so it is essential that they become empowered as preservationists protecting it. Al Dhafra women feel it is critical that they become empowered so they can help educate their children with community engagement programmes and projects outside of the school systems. They believe in the notion that empowering themselves also empowers their children since they are the main caretakers spending the majority of their time with them.

My main role, which this thesis demonstrates and helps develop, is focussing on safeguarding UAE cultural heritage and promoting cultural education for future generations. The research findings showed that only focussing on production and income for women may reduce the overall value of future community engagement programmes for the country. The results identified a key point of this thesis, which is that while Al Dhafra women would not mind having compensation for their cultural handicraft work, their priority is to be recognized and appreciated by the wider society for their significant cultural role as preservationists of UAE cultural heritage. My cultural expertise related to the Al Dhafra rural region recommends a focus on safeguarding UAE intangible cultural heritage and cultural identity to retain their unique knowledge and skills, and to display tangible cultural handicrafts in festivals, events, museums, and shops where all people can appreciate them.

7.4 Al Dhafra Women's Recommendations For Community Programmes

Al Dhafra women desire to collaborate on community engagement programmes that benefit different members of the society, such as special needs children, so they can also interact with other children in order to increase educational cultural awareness and tolerance.

The Al Dhafra women's reflections on community engagement programmes include:

- Al Dhafra women can be empowered both individually and collectively if they have a dedicated cultural handicraft training space for workshops within the community; they previously used a school as a venue during summer to promote crafts training to the younger children; the cultural handicrafts can then be produced for display in community events, which will provide women with communal empowerment
- Al Dhafra women want respect for their cultural heritage traditions and customs
- Al Dhafra women would like programmes aligned to their intangible cultural values and build a strong link to their community
- Al Dhafra women would like a dedicated space and regularly organized community workshops where they can store their resources and operate from, so they can work with their children to learn heritage crafts
- Cultural heritage projects are important to their community and Al Dhafra women would like to be part of strategically collaborating on future museum community engagement programmes in the region
- Al Dhafra women want to know new ways to teach younger generations their cultural crafts
- Al Dhafra women want people to recognize their existing cultural heritage talents, skills, and knowledge, how the older generation transfers them on to future generations, and the significance of preserving this tradition
- Younger generations do not know how to create these cultural heritage handicrafts and Al Dhafra women want to keep transferring this knowledge to younger generations
- Al Dhafra women want children to use their hands rather than technology in order to develop their hand-eye coordination skills; they feel their young hands do not practice as much
- Community engagement programmes should include painting and cultural handicrafts; acknowledging some children are not interested in heritage as much, there has to be a link from their skills to a community training centre
- The annual Al Dhafra Festival is the main cultural event in this region; it needs more cultural activities to involve teenagers and young adults in cultural heritage preservation; Al Dhafra women believe they would be more enthusiastic about their

cultural heritage practices and traditions if they were showcasing their own cultural heritage handicrafts they created themselves

- Children need to participate more in Al Dhafra Festivals, learning Emirati cultural heritage handicrafts, to change how children understand the importance of their cultural heritage and national identity as they link artistry with culture
- Al Dhafra women want to develop their collective cultural heritage handicraft skills further through knowledge exchange programmes, sharing expertise with the other rural region Emirati artisans in the community, from other Emirates and across UAE

7.5 Analysis of Cultural Institution Interviews—Community Programmes

Recommendations

These cultural institution respondents are related to museums and cultural institutions in that they either work in them, or with their management, to coordinate cultural heritage programmes in the UAE. The research results from interviews with cultural institution officials emphasize how they are willing to coordinate the museums' strategies with the interests of engaging the Al Dhafra community to ensure the continuance of cultural heritage programmes in the region. These cultural institution officials were chosen to signify how empowerment can be provided by both public and private museums, art galleries, and cultural heritage programme facilities. This distinction is important, so the study's findings represent a wider sense of the cultural scene and related industries, to demonstrate how this thesis' research can be applied to both museum studies and heritage studies. This will help to provide a foundation for future research to be conducted on this topic, to further advance the findings on female empowerment related to cultural heritage worldwide.

Cultural institutions are just one segment of the many UAE cultural heritage tourism agencies which can be involved in these community engagement programme strategies, however, for this research they are the main focus. Part of these strategies will involve engaging the Al Dhafra community in becoming more involved in cultural heritage projects. The Ghadeer and Sougha initiatives are some of the main projects that the rural regions in UAE have been involved in (see Chapter 2). However, Al Dhafra women were

not completely satisfied, as they felt they were limited in their financial incentive, and, as well, not focused on developing culturally relevant community engagement programmes (see Chapter 5 and 6). Other initiatives Al Dhafra women were part of include heritage festivals in Al Dhafra and Al Ain. The cultural officials being interviewed in this study are interested in developing more sustainable community engagement programmes for the Al Dhafra community.

The results from interviewing the three cultural officials explained how they are in charge of coordinating cultural projects in remote regions for the Abu Dhabi government. These cultural institutions currently account for supporting these kinds of cultural heritage projects along with tourism agencies, since most of them are owned or sponsored by the Abu Dhabi government. “Our projects are geared toward supporting Emirati women and their families in their advancement in remote regions. We have several projects which we are planning for the future to align them with UAE cultural heritage preservation”, emphasized Interviewee 17. “As UAE cultural directors, we believe it is our responsibility to develop programmes that are engaging to the communities”, stated Interviewee 16.

The cultural officials interviewed represent different cultural heritage entities, however all believe it is extremely important to increase educational awareness of art, music, and drama in the UAE. They are proud to offer Emiratis a wide variety of events which involve diverse cultural programmes to help local communities. They support the UAE government’s Abu Dhabi 2030 Vision to increase cultural educational programmes within the city. Cultural officials explained their live performances, film screenings, puppetry tours, storytelling, creative writing workshops, scientific projects, and craft venues are presented to integrate cultural experiences into tourism in various areas. As well, they are helping Emirati entrepreneurs, writers, and artists to develop their skills and interests. The main objective of these organizations is to honour Abu Dhabi’s cultural scene, by providing unique cultural experiences to enrich the community for all members and tourists. One of the senior cultural institution officials explained to me how the organization is undergoing many changes to develop artistic programmes that could focus on appealing to children and enhancing their learning process. They want to find topics that will help them create exhibitions that will interest in the Al Dhafra communities.

One of this thesis' research aims is to develop suitable recommendations for an innovative community engagement strategy in order to expand and define the role of cultural institutions in Abu Dhabi. The objective is to establish strong community engagement in marginalized rural regions of the UAE, especially in Al Dhafra. The questions asked of Abu Dhabi cultural institution officials related to community engagement programmes, how they are conceived, and what were some cultural heritage projects in the past. They were also asked if they could identify some of the possible outcomes of these projects, and any difficulties and challenges they faced in the past.

The cultural institution officials' answers helped to build a strategy for developing community engagement programmes in the UAE. The findings from these interviews enabled the contextualizing of community engagement programmes and the role these cultural institutions will play. However, an analysis of the findings from this thesis reveals there is a gap between the perceptions of cultural institution officials and the Al Dhafra women, related to community engagement programmes. This identified gap is cultural institution officials not considering the perspective of Al Dhafra women on what is considered most important in community engagement programmes and cultural events. While some of the cultural institutions focus on prioritizing UAE cultural heritage through festivals and events, Al Dhafra women feel strongly that these community engagement programmes need to empower them as the safeguarders of the culture. This gap signifies the foundation of the challenges which many past community engagement programmes have faced.

This gap has also resulted in controversies and issues between cultural institution officials and Al Dhafra women in the past, since they have not been involved on the strategies and development process of community engagement programmes. Such conflict has led to cultural institution officials leaving Al Dhafra women out of the decision-making process, neglecting their wishes related to protecting UAE cultural heritage and cultural identity in events. This gap between the cultural institution officials and the women's perspectives was discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 with Al Dhafra women emphasizing that they refused to be ignored anymore in the development of community engagement programmes planned for Al Dhafra communities.

Based upon this thesis' research findings, critical recommendations can be provided to determine the gaps in past community engagement programmes in the Al Dhafra rural region. Cultural institution officials should recognize they have consistently incorporated a 'top down' approach to creating community engagement programmes, based on their conception of what was important to remote communities, not accounting the perceptions of local community members. One recommendation for community engagement programmes are to utilize bottom up empowerment strategies beneficial to Al Dhafra women and to community needs and preferences. Community engagement programmes should be developed with a professional educator to break down components of cultural heritage handicrafts into a tangible learning outcome that is measurable.

Cultural institution officials were also told about this thesis' research findings, related to the Al Dhafra community having great pride in the significant developments that Sheikh Zayed, the former UAE ruler, realised for the country. They learned that some of the older, more traditional Al Dhafra women liked the Al Dhafra Festival, the Liwa Festival, and other cultural events as they are, and they want to be a part of future activities similar to them. One recommendation is to have a training for cultural institution employees to better understand Al Dhafra community, to get to know them, and, in turn, gain acceptance to their ideas. There is a lack of cultural awareness of the norms and traditions of the Al Dhafra community in terms of their identity and how they hold onto traditional values, and such values are not necessarily in the attention of cultural institutions or their professional staff.

7.6 Museum Responsibility to Ensure Authenticity of Heritage

Langham and Barker (2014, pp. 85-87) stated heritage cannot be easily interpreted with any specific business model because it is always evolving due to the changing dynamics within societies. Heritage practice involves understanding cultural heritage by coordinating with community members, engaging in dialogues with them and learning about what underlying symbolic meanings are related to their traditional customs and practices. Due to these considerations, over the past decade many Arab Gulf nations have been collaborating with museum and heritage officials to address the developments which

have occurred related to preserving their heritage. This has resulted in a variety of heritage models being created to try to protect many of the cultural heritage practices within the Gulf region (Langham and Barker, 2014, pp. 85-87).

The UAE's contemporary attitudes and cultural heritage are evolving to include differing ideals regarding the past due to new global museum policies and standards. The result of these complex concepts combined with government's political influences on cultural heritage preservation have led to a continuously-changing national identity for many Emiratis (Wakefield (2020, pp. 20, 152-153). Langham and Barker (2014, pp. 86-89) explain that there are diverse methods for cultural heritage to be protected and appreciated in the UAE than the usual ways they are exhibited within Western nations. The UAE government requires venues for launching a new cultural "programme of activities and performance, facilitating intergenerational experiences and creating exhibits that forge emotional connections via human stories" (Langham and Barker, 2014, pp. 88).

Wakefield (2020, p. 153) argues "neither autochthonous nor global heritage operate in a vacuum. Instead, both operate within a hybridised system where the power knowledge-networks are activated continuously. Instead, there are a series of emergent heritage processes that are developing alongside the planned institutions on Saadiyat Island, and it is essential to understand how both autochthonous and franchised heritage work together as a hybrid process" (Wakefield, 2020, p. 153).

Langham and Barker (2014, pp. 86-89) emphasized that the UAE has a wide variety of political complicated influences which have shaped its cultural heritage events and experiences. While some of the museum officials in the UAE prefer more traditional approaches to preserving the heritage, there could be conflicting political agendas which may make the usual cultural narrative difficult to display. "Contemporary expressions of the past show how heritage can be living, dynamic, and evolutionary, and integrated into everyday lives rather than merely visited and consumed in a passive way, or as a monument fixed in time and space" (Langham and Barker, 2014, pp. 96).

Research from Wakefield (2020, pp. 152-153) describes how due to the many ongoing changes happening within the field of heritage studies and its development into a useful means of academic contributions on international cultures, heritage can help explain the formation of national identities in different countries. Autochthonous heritage

represents how cultural heritage that is created within its current position is indigenous to the nation it is in. However, this type of heritage can be used to unite the country's transnational identity that includes some Emiratis having mixed parentage (2020, pp. 25, 152-153).

Langham and Barker (2014, pp. 85-87) claim that in Abu Dhabi, UAE heritage is still embedded within the daily lives of many of the Emirati people. The government has been launching many new cultural initiatives to protect both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the region. The main problem within the UAE related to preserving their cultural heritage is due to the immense oil wealth the country obtained since the 1960s. This led to continuous rapid economic development and expansion of modernization throughout the major cities of Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Langham and Barker (2014, pp. 86-88) argues many of the Emirati families gained new wealth and adopted various Westernized habits due to the new influence of global media, the Internet, and the many expatriates working in the country. However, the UAE government has been gradually integrating cultural heritage venues to develop their national identity and to create a national narrative. They have also been attempting to position the nation among other international cultural heritage leaders, to increase their cultural opportunities as part of expanding their regional cultural tourism.

Langham and Barker (2014, pp. 86-89) stress that how heritage is constructed and influenced in numerous ways allow it to then be interpreted by the public. UAE Nationals prefer heritage activities that focus on their cultural customs, like their traditional clothing, dancing, and falconry, instead of simply visiting museums to view the exhibitions and artifacts. Western museum approaches may not be as successful in countries like the UAE so directors have to be more innovative in integrating local cultural heritage into the museum experience (Langham and Barker, 2014, pp. 86-89).

One of the main roles of museums is to ensure the authenticity of heritage in all aspects, including the collection, documentation, protection, preservation, and exhibition to the public. Cultural organizations should be aware of their obligation to engage local communities in the preservation and representation of their own cultural heritage to avoid the appearance of it being staged, and to ensure that it remains authentically exhibited.

A major function of UAE cultural institutions like Qasr Al Hosn and Zayed National Museum, in relation to promoting the country's national identity, involves developing a national cultural agenda that will focus on interacting with the local communities to ensure that all heritage is correctly representative of Emirati cultural beliefs and values. As such, these sites should be considered precious places that symbolize Emirati national heritage and national identity, conveyed through extensive cultural activities like festivals and events that meet the needs of the local people.

A critical analysis of the Sheikh Zayed Heritage Festival and Qasr Al Hosn Festival demonstrates that they symbolize the UAE intangible cultural heritage reflected in the process of Emirati women creating these cultural handicrafts. Evaluating this process allowed me to better assess the cultural atmosphere, learning possibilities for visitors, and the cultural impact related to Emirati women and their handicraft production process within cultural events for the public.

My observations from visiting these sites and seeing the cultural heritage practices being staged helped explain the importance of preserving these intangible cultural practices by strategically coordinating with the Emiratis who actually still practice them. The paradoxical situation related to this research is that while Al Dhafra women are proud of their cultural role and achievements within UAE society, they are also unwilling to be exploited in ways that would diminish their capabilities, to be seen as being outdated to the UAE knowledge economy. Other contextual and background data that I used to further the understanding of this research subject and situation included a review of the promotional literature of cultural activities from various UAE government entities, as well as their vision and mission statements, policy documents, and museum websites promoting cultural events.

In the context of conveying relevant cultural heritage experiences and content, museums need to include Emirati community members like the Al Dhafra women into their strategy of programme development, to ensure they present such cultural heritage in an authentic manner in cultural activities. The Al Dhafra women have continually stated that they are more than willing and able to become a part of the museums' future strategic direction. "We are hoping to become more involved in the early stages of cultural activities

in the future so that we can make sure UAE cultural heritage is properly exhibited and sustainable for the next generations”, stated Interviewee 33.

7.7 Summary

This chapter explains the recommendations related to the Al Dhafra women becoming more empowered in local community engagement programmes to ensure their sustainability and protection of UAE cultural heritage. These women recommend that cultural institution officials empower them as collaborators in devising strategies for cultural events and community engagement programmes that support UAE cultural identity. Al Dhafra women want to be involved, particularly at the design stage, so they can advise on future programmes and cultural events relevant to their communities.

The evaluation of this research data has strengthened the argument that, by engaging Al Dhafra women to collaborate in the development of community engagement programmes, this process will empower them to contribute valuable insight into how programmes, events, and festivals could better satisfy the needs of people living in the region. Research findings from cultural institution officials revealed that part of their function is to preserve tangible UAE cultural heritage of cultural heritage handicrafts. However, these objects are crucial to protecting intangible cultural heritage of cultural identity, which Al Dhafra women want to participate in and safeguard. “We want to concentrate some of our community programmes on Al Dhafra region and other areas to help protect the cultural heritage and also to gain the interest in museum projects for the families there”, stated Interviewee 18.

Many government and private sector entities develop community engagement programmes using a ‘top-down’ approach, with cultural institution officials’ perspectives and preferences given priority over community members as the target audience. This gap can be filled with a ‘bottom-up’ approach, that, in the case of Al Dhafra, considers those communities, and especially women, as producers of tangible cultural heritage handicrafts as the key to collaborating with in order to design relevant, successful programmes. Cultural institution officials, particularly at state-sanctioned museums, should consider community needs and preferences are taken into account, and prioritize their ideas as the most important aspects when designing relevant community engagement programmes.

Governmental agencies should empower Al Dhafra women in community engagement programmes and work together with them as collaborators to develop regular and seasonal programmes, and evaluate their ongoing progress. Al Dhafra women should be considered as a vital constituent in all strategy and development for events and community engagement programmes. Cultural entities designing community engagement programmes as cultural heritage events are encouraged to use the components of intangible and tangible heritage to create designs that involve artisans and other cultural designers in these activities.

Festivals that feature handicrafts are often focussed on staging cultural heritage as an element of the Bedouin lifestyle; however, this cultural positioning is not necessarily sustainable from the perspective of enhancing the craft or for encouraging future generations to adopt the practice. This method is not necessarily the best approach for the Al Dhafra community, as it limits how to safeguard the intangible aspect of cultural handicrafts that focusses on the knowledge, skills, and expertise of Al Dhafra women. When designing cultural heritage handicraft workshops for children, employing innovative technology may make such processes more interactive and fun. Focus groups can be useful for developing community engagement programmes to discover and better understand their interests and needs, as was the case in Al Dhafra region. Many cultural entities have a vested interest in creating community engagement programmes; however, rather than imposing their own knowledge and opinions of how such programmes should be designed, adopting a collaborative approach with community stakeholders ensures the relevancy and authenticity of such programmes.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the overall conclusions made as a result of reviewing the analysis of the data from the primary research method. It details the final outcomes which were apparent from the research conducted. It also provides valuable insight into how the information obtained and learned is significant to the future of UAE government initiatives and policies, particularly in developing relevant community engagement programmes on behalf of state-sanctioned museums in rural regions like Al Dhafra. This chapter details how these programmes can empower Al Dhafra women through engaging them as strategic collaborators in programme design, training sessions, and entrepreneurial ventures, all in the shared effort to preserve UAE intangible and tangible cultural heritage and cultural identity for future generations.

8.2 Conclusion—Addressing My Research Questions & Objectives

My research questions and how these were answered are as follows:

- What are the cultural heritage practices of women in Al Dhafra region and how do they link to ideas of cultural identity and national identity? The main practices are cultural handicrafts, which were detailed in Chapter 2 in the UAE Case Study and critically evaluated in Chapter 6, in the Cultural Handicraft Empowerment section. I provided a detailed critical analysis of how these cultural heritage practices link to cultural identity and national identity as the foundation of the Al Dhafra community's cultural heritage in Chapter 5; the findings showed that Al Dhafra women have empowered themselves to be protectors of UAE cultural heritage for the entire country; Al Dhafra women view their role as cultural heritage safeguarders as the foundation of their cultural identity, cultural traditions, and beliefs
- How have Al Dhafra women experienced previous cultural initiatives in I addressed these questions in Chapter 5 and 6, in sections related to community engagement programmes which the UAE government and other organizations have previously launched and are interested in starting again in the Al Dhafra region

- How can museums in the UAE better understand Al Dhafra women and their interests in cultural handicrafts to develop community engagement programmes with them? I explained in detail the significance of UAE cultural handicrafts in Chapter 2, 5, and 6. I focussed on addressing the museums' interest in Al Dhafra community engagement programmes in Chapter 7, Recommendations in two sections on Recommendations, as this relates to future cultural projects launched in Al Dhafra
- How can community engagement programmes support female empowerment to preserve UAE cultural heritage? I highlighted responses to UAE cultural heritage preservation concepts in Chapter 5 and developed these arguments in Chapter 6, the Defining Empowerment in Al Dhafra section

Other key arguments which were conceptualized throughout this thesis, in Chapter 5 and 6, that were discussed to address my thesis study aims and objectives include:

- To determine how rural communities in Al Dhafra preserve their intangible cultural heritage and cultural identities through community engagement programmes—by empowering women through decision-making in cultural projects
- To investigate how community engagement programmes can create workshops to empower women to teach tangible cultural handicrafts to children in the Al Dhafra region, and to be in charge of designing and managing training workshops to ensure future generations benefit from this knowledge

8.3 Aligning Cultural Heritage with Female Empowerment & National Identity

In order to align UAE cultural heritage with female empowerment and national identity, the future role of museums is to focus on the important role of the Al Dhafra women as valued heritage experts within the region. This thesis offers a model of best practices for museums related to providing female empowerment that supports UAE national identity which can be adapted and used worldwide. There is an overall indication that providing new opportunities for the rural region Emiratīs to participate in cultural

activities and events could be beneficial for the entire country in encouraging sustainable cultural heritage preservation.

Museums have the capacity to provide a range of venues to increase the knowledge and understanding of UAE cultural heritage. This thesis investigates how the examination of Al Dhafra women's unique cultural contributions can benefit heritage management and museum studies for the future. Female empowerment in heritage venues is shown to be directly aligned with the institutionalization of heritage when women have the opportunity to overcome the barriers provided by power-knowledge networks. There are numerous competing scales of heritage and dominant voices which must be taken into account when developing new cultural events in order to properly address the multitude of stakeholder needs and demands.

This thesis explores the intricate and complex links between these main concepts and theoretical frameworks:

- Gender and female empowerment
- Sense of place and community
- National identity and empowerment
- Place, gender, and identity formation

This study, as viewed through the unique and important window of cultural heritage production in the rural region of Al Dhafra, in the UAE, describes the varied and challenging role cultural organizations hold in the preservation and representation of UAE heritage, and a model of good practice that can be adapted and used elsewhere. Protecting and sustaining UAE cultural heritage is supported by various institutions, such as Qasr Al Hosn and the Zayed National Museum, since their role is to promote and strengthen UAE's national identity through their cultural exhibitions and community activities. The function of these organizations is to create a learning environment, providing evidence of the UAE national heritage as a means of establishing and clarifying the national identity.

Gender and female empowerment are important in framing and defining some community identities as in the case of the UAE within the Al Dhafra region since the women are the primary safeguarders of the Emirati cultural heritage. The sense of place and community is the foundation of UAE national identity and empowerment for Al Dhafra

people since they feel they are some of the remaining cultural icons within the country due to continuing to practice the intangible and tangible heritage of following the traditional customs and making the cultural handicrafts. Place, gender, and identity formation are all aligned to the Al Dhafra community, since their place of residence is the rural region that they feel provides them with their underlying sense of security and self, while their gender allows them to be empowered as safeguarders of UAE cultural heritage since they create the cultural handicrafts. The Al Dhafra women's identity formation is founded in their strong loyalty and pride for their country, which formulated their stable national identity throughout history and time.

An analysis of UAE cultural festivals and heritage sites reveals that there has been a range of unique cultural activities that Emirati people can engage in to help them foster their national identity throughout their lifetimes. The anthropological observations from my personal engagements at these cultural sites and the cultural heritage practices staged there explains how the country is still establishing itself and its national identity to avoid exploiting its indigenous people. This research emphasizes the importance of cultural organizations considering the voices and opinions of Al Dhafra women in community programmes and regional cultural tourism projects to ensure that subsequent events do not appear as staged, but rather as authentic cultural examples of the country's proud heritage.

Burhaima (2014) argues that showing visitors museum objects helps them establish an emotional connection to UAE culture and heritage, which results in them becoming more engaged in cultural activities and events. This influenced my thinking as a researcher by supporting the theory that increasing educational awareness in audiences can provide them with the power to become involved and participate in the cultural development of the country. These ideas from empowerment and heritage studies helped frame my study since the research provided evidence that, when given the opportunity, many members of the local community are empowered to contribute to societal activities. This research also investigated how female empowerment is the key to social transformation for women in marginalized communities because it allows them to gain power through cultural handicraft production.

8.4 My Research's Original Contribution to Existing Literature

The significant themes of this thesis are reflected in the two main results chapters: Heritage and Identity (Chapter 5), and Empowerment through Handicrafts (Chapter 6). Within these discussions, some key ideas for this thesis developed, including theorizing the idea of empowerment in the context of heritage management. These findings speak to a wider academic scholarship of concepts and theoretical frameworks from both heritage studies and museum studies by authors like (Smith, 2015) (Howard, 2008) (Golding, 2009) (Bunning, 2018) (Schwarzer et al., 2014) (Scott, Cayleff, Donadey, and Lara, 2016). This thesis adds to several key discourses within museum studies, heritage management and development by positioning its contribution in relation to debates about UNESCO, participatory heritage, gender, and empowerment. The literature in heritage studies also explores how empowerment can be a powerful resource associated with cultural heritage preservation, as it relates to the politics of recognition, and how certain groups are acknowledged for their achievements and contributions to society. This relates on a wider scale to how female empowerment in marginalized regions is often neglected, due to the wealthiest, and most powerful people typically not ceding power to poorer, less influential people, despite these regions often taking on the role of cultural heritage preservation due to those continuing to practice the cultural traditions.

This research contributes an extensively-detailed amount of specialized data related to cultural handicrafts in the Middle East as they pertain to women being empowered by governments and organizations in cultural tourism projects. This thesis focusses on providing extensive research findings that are unique and original contributions to existing academic knowledge related to marginalized women being empowered through cultural heritage preservation community engagement programmes in rural regions. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) stated that innovative museum community engagement programmes targeting marginalized regions allow children, who are deprived of artistic educational opportunities, to experience creative learning opportunities. Watson (2007) claims these types of learning-oriented museum strategies for developing relationships between younger audiences and museums are helping to change the values within art museums, to rethink how lifelong learning can become a part of more people's lives. Golding (2012) argues museums must be creative to synthesize diverse cultural experiences which enhance

people's interpretation and perspective of the world around them. By specifying the key themes which were addressed in the research questions and objectives above, and throughout the Chapter 8 Conclusion, I have developed a conceptual framework for female empowerment that supports cultural heritage preservation and cultural identity of rural regions like Al Dhafra, UAE.

Shaffer (2011) argues there are numerous challenges in empowering community members which may be encountered by museums and cultural organizations as they implement collaboratively-designed community engagement programmes. However, by addressing these problems and researching the underlying reasons why some communities may resist cultural programmes, museums and cultural organizations can develop suitable solutions as to how they can be properly resolved and empower those individuals that increase programme relevance for their communities, as seen in the example of the Al Dhafra women.

Hooper-Greenhill (2007) stresses how today's museums are placing a strong emphasis on coordinating with schools and communities to improve social inclusion and allow for children to enhance their learning opportunities and experiences within cultural community programmes for families. In the formal education setting, educators appreciate how inventive museum exhibitions can inspire children toward curiosity and knowledge acquisition, especially cultural education. The UAE government has prioritized future cultural learning initiatives, which include cultural tourism initiatives for marginalized communities like those in the Al Dhafra region. Past UAE government strategies have had difficulties connecting the Saadiyat Cultural District museums' efforts to preserve the country's cultural heritage in promoting it to distant towns, like the Al Dhafra region. However, in creating community engagement programmes which empower Al Dhafra women, allowing them to collaborate in the design, management, and decision-making, can lead to beneficial outcomes.

8.5 Breakdown Of Themes

This study examines how museums in the UAE and cultural organizations can better understand Al Dhafra women and their interests in cultural heritage handicrafts by directly communicating with them and involving them as collaborators, empowered

through their involvement in the development of community engagement programmes. This study also explores how community engagement programmes support female empowerment in Al Dhafra with workshops for children to preserve UAE cultural heritage and pass it on to future generations. This thesis researches how women have experienced previous cultural initiatives in the Al Dhafra region and how limitations of these programmes are linked to the Al Dhafra women not being involved as collaborators in the management, design, and decision-making of them.

A breakdown of significant themes and arguments within this study provides a comprehensive critical analysis of the importance of the topic to existing academic literature and related debates. This thesis investigates intangible cultural heritage practices of women in the rural region of Al Dhafra and how they empowered themselves to become guardians in protecting UAE cultural heritage. It also researches the link to the Al Dhafra women's cultural heritage practices and their strong cultural identity and national identity; it would be useful in future studies to understand the significance of the differences between UAE cultural identity and national identity. This research explores the links between UAE intangible cultural heritage, cultural handicrafts, and women's cultural identity in the region as they pertain to gaining empowerment. It focusses on how the women's cultural identity and national identity are founded in their role as cultural heritage preservationists, which can be the basis of finding empowerment in community engagement programmes. This is similar to research on negotiating the politics and potential of community-driven heritage engagement to empower women (Perkin, 2010).

This thesis also details the function of Al Dhafra women in preserving and transferring Emirati cultural heritage for the nation and to future generations. These research findings are associated with other literature studies related to protecting cultural heritage, such as Prager's (2015) study. The UAE has established many national heritage museums, cultural festivals and heritage villages to reflect the country's national identity. Several museum exhibitions use cultural narratives to symbolize the history and national identity of the people. However, Prager (2015) argues that there is a difference between the living museum and the static representation of cultural heritage. This thesis discusses that these cultural institutions promote an expression of the Emirati people's national identity. Museums portray the UAE heritage production and they should allow for more

community engagement to ensure the national identity is presented during heritage positioning. This thesis supports that these national and cultural identities and cultural heritage practices are defined in the ways in which Al Dhafra women adapt to a rapidly changing cultural context in the UAE. This research also highlights the importance of recognizing the role of festivals and community engagement programmes support the process of Al Dhafra women in developing their community identity. These findings are supported by research on how empowerment can also be useful for strengthening family identity through cultural projects (Piscitelli, 1997).

These emerging themes provided crucial insight about Al Dhafra community and the women who are the cultural preservationists for the UAE. One significant finding of this study highlights how Al Dhafra women empowered themselves to take on the role of being preservationists of UAE cultural heritage, which can be beneficial to the field of museum and cultural heritage studies. This supports the literature findings that rural regions often have communities where the culture is protected by women. This concept is expanded in this thesis to contribute to debates and academic discussions as a synthesis of my literature review in Chapter 3 where I identified key arguments associated within heritage management relating to community participation and how gender roles in society reflect the values of its members. Onciul (2013), Allagui and Alnajjar (2018), and (Cole, 2018) all provided valuable insights into this thesis' arguments on how empowerment can relate to enhancing how heritage can be the foundation of a community's identity. Bunning (2018) concur that protecting cultural heritage relates to preserving the memory of past experiences of communities, and, if there is a lack of educational awareness and resources, there could be challenges in developing sustainable community-based tourism.

Heritage and Identity (Chapter 5)

One of the goals of this thesis was to bring together the literature on intangible and tangible cultural heritage preservation, museum studies, community engagement, and female empowerment in order to frame the research in the Al Dhafra community. This thesis explains some of the most significant methods for preserving intangible cultural heritage of the UAE through cultural heritage community engagement programmes. It also examines how to best satisfy the collective and communal needs of Al Dhafra women with

the UAE government and museum and cultural professionals empowering them to safeguard the country's cultural heritage and cultural and national identities.

Many cultural tourism projects involve local Emirati women from rural regions like Al Dhafra, seeking to enhance their female empowerment as a way to protect their cultural identities and cultural heritage, like in other empowerment research by White (2010). A crucial argument developed in this thesis is that the Al Dhafra women's intangible cultural heritage knowledge and skills and tangible cultural artefacts must be taught by women to children, to ensure the continuance of UAE cultural heritage practices. Such empowerment ensures that posterity will benefit from the Al Dhafra women's intangible cultural heritage traditions, customs, and practices like storytelling, poems, and handicrafts making. This supports the literature where intangible cultural heritage is passed down from empowered mothers to children as a way to continue the culture (Nas, 2002). The implication from this data is that Al Dhafra women have a strong cultural identity and shared cultural norms that deserve consideration, to empower them as collaborators in implementing community engagement programmes. This aligns with the literature in that in many rural regions the women are empowered to help promote and protect the cultural identity (Shindler, 2014).

Intangible cultural heritage from past generations is a critical factor in empowering women and developing a community's cultural identity (Boussaa, 2014). This concept is useful in interpreting this thesis' findings from the research, as it emphasizes the importance of creating a sustainable cultural heritage through supporting a continuous cultural identity in any community projects or programmes. This also refers to how the many intangible components of the Al Dhafra women's cultural identity express their essence of existence and relation to the community in which they live. The Al Dhafra community's cultural heritage traditions, customs, and values comprise their shared cultural identity, and, as such, they want to be empowered to promote this in community events like festivals, as seen in research on developing nations (Taylor, 2017).

These intangible aspects of UAE cultural heritage include the conveyance of knowledge and skills related to how the Al Dhafra women teach their children to make their cultural handicrafts, supported by studies from Ruggles and Silverman (2009). I learned from this study's research that the unique UAE cultural heritage is revealed as the outstanding legacy of their intangible attributes which can be empowering for Al Dhafra

women. Al Dhafra women have been to many past cultural events and have felt their families grow closer from these cultural activities, as they both reinforce their cultural identities and empower them in cultural heritage preservation. Al Dhafra women have expressed that they could use the cultural practices and values they learned in their childhoods to empower themselves today, in order to develop unique cultural offerings to present at these festivals. The women's replies to this line of enquiry demonstrate that they would be excited to be empowered to collaborate in the strategic design of community engagement programmes, and they want to make traditional cultural heritage items which are unique to the region, for international festivals. It is in activities such as these, in the Al Dhafra women's desire to showcase Emirati handiwork skills to international tourists that empowers them in their community and country.

Al Dhafra Cultural Heritage Linked to Identity

This research focuses on examining how rural communities like Al Dhafra, UAE can preserve their cultural heritage and enhance their cultural identities through cultural tourism festivals, programmes, and activities for their communities. It investigates how museums and other cultural organizations in the UAE can better understand Al Dhafra women, their knowledge, and skills in cultural heritage handicrafts, in order to empower them to collaborate in the development of community engagement programmes for their communities. This research also explores how community engagement programmes can better support female empowerment to preserve UAE cultural heritage. This thesis supports the research findings that it is essential to preserve intangible and tangible cultural heritage through community engagement programmes. It addresses the notion of how the needs of the Al Dhafra rural region women can be better met by the UAE government, museums, and other cultural organizations, to enable them to have relevant community engagement programmes which will empower them to safeguard the country's cultural heritage.

Al Dhafra women have taken it upon themselves to become empowered through their distinctive, daily practice of cultural handicraft making and in local cultural events, like festivals. Al Dhafra women are empowered within their community because they have developed, at their own self-direction, communal collective empowerment that takes them beyond individual female empowerment. This type of female empowerment has allowed

Al Dhafra women to rise above any potential restrictions to their resources or capabilities to appoint themselves preservationists of UAE cultural heritage and identity. As an Emirati female researcher in a UAE, this was a valuable research experience; being able to interview these distinguished women allowed me to recognize the positive UAE cultural heritage role models that Al Dhafra women have become, for their communities, and for all Emiratis.

Al Dhafra Cultural Identity Empowering Women

This research examines the interrelated links between cultural heritage, cultural identity, and national identity within the rural region of Al Dhafra community. The primary research data, as collected by me, expresses the personal reflections on cultural and national identity of the Al Dhafra women and the ways in which they view themselves as preservationists of UAE cultural heritage. It examines how cultural identity links to preserving cultural heritage and national identity development, as seen in research by Evangelista (2003). The most vital aspect of this study is that it interprets how the rural women in Al Dhafra support the perspectives of their community. It shows the critical link between the women in rural regions as heritage safeguarders to the development of community engagement programmes as a way for them to be successful.

The literature shows that intangible heritage is best preserved by those who still practice it, as supported by research from Ruggles and Silverman (2009). Indeed, non-Emirati would be challenged to make handicrafts as intricately as Emirati women, perhaps as they would lack the historical knowledge why certain fabrics, colours, or designs are chosen. For this reason I understand why Al Dhafra women feel so strongly that they must be involved in community engagement programmes, to carry on these traditions themselves and ensure they are practiced in relation to their historic cultural past. The literature promotes that cultural heritage is expressed better by those living in rural regions, due to their continuous following of the customs, which Yúdice (2003) stated in their research.

Empowerment through Handicrafts (Chapter 6)

UAE Museum Community Programmes in Al Dhafra

Some of the most significant research objectives in this study included examining how cultural sites and museums in the UAE, specifically, can better interact with Al Dhafra women, their community, and their collective cultural heritage handicrafts skills, to develop community engagement programmes with them rather than for them. By involving Al Dhafra women and empowering them to strategically collaborate on community engagement programme design, museums and other cultural institutions will gain a more intuitive viewpoint on what the Al Dhafra women expect from such initiatives and how to serve their community in the most relevant and authentic way. This examination involved evaluating how community engagement programmes in the Al Dhafra rural region can benefit from the appraisal of previous programmes, specifically through the perspectives of Al Dhafra women, and use this valuable insight into the development of future programmes, festivals, and events. Other objectives included investigating how community engagement programmes can create opportunities to empower women to use their intangible cultural heritage knowledge and skills to teach tangible outcomes of cultural handicrafts to children in the Al Dhafra rural region.

The Saadiyat Cultural District museums' project can become an international business model itself for artistic creativity and cultural heritage innovation within a city, which Thompson (2008) explains, can be beneficial in rural regions. The more remote Emirate regions where UAE cultural traditions are still a significant part of people's daily lives must be protected against Westernization destroying their heritage, which Mosedale (2005) expressed as being seen in many rural regions. Future development throughout Al Dhafra holds a threat to maintaining the unique intangible cultural values of the Emirati people who live there. Community engagement programmes should coordinate creative events, activities, and projects that will provide enhanced, hands-on learning and training to younger children and teenagers, which DCTAD (2016) stated is essential to ensuring future generations preserve the country's cultural identity and heritage. The community programmes need to be relevant in order to engage audiences and include venues for children's programmes strategically linked to museum exhibitions.

The field of museum and cultural heritage studies can benefit from learning about the valuable insights related to recognizing the unique links between cultural heritage preservation and a community's cultural identity and national identity in the context of the UAE, which is currently under-researched in rural regions (Cooke, 2014). This study presents wider implications on how people should perceive these relationships and therefore how academics should research them; it also examines how policies and programmes need to be framed to account for this, as supported in the study by Mydland and Grahn (2012).

The analysis of the perceptions from the Al Dhafra women provide useful insight as to how UAE museum and other cultural officials can properly address and resolve challenges involved in community engagement programmes. However, one of the main differences between some studies and this research is that the findings often state there is a contradiction of the main purpose of museums. Their results lay the foundation for the argument that UAE government promotes, that Emiratis are continuously changing and declaring their own cultural identities. While this study's results show agreement with that concept, I argue that, as Emiratis are constantly adapting their cultural identities to the changes in society, the purpose of museums remains the same. It is clear that the museums' main function related to communities is to educate and preserve objects, and therefore to support the preservation of UAE cultural heritage. In order to achieve this authentically, empowering women in rural regions who are the caretakers of both the intangible and tangible elements of cultural heritage is essential. Some of these points are also seen in literature on other cultures who share similar family and community values.

Community Engagement Programmes Empowering Al Dhafra Women

This research evaluates how community engagement programmes in the Al Dhafra rural region can support female empowerment in a variety of ways, related to management of cultural tourism events to preserve UAE intangible cultural identity, through the protection and display of cultural heritage handicrafts. It investigates how community engagement programmes can create unique cultural training opportunities to empower women to use their intangible heritage capabilities to help others become proficient in a structured environment. This study's contribution to knowledge and academic discourse is

in the unique research findings from Al Dhafra women in the rural region of the UAE, which were previously not represented in the literature.

This research was conducted to provide useful information for the UAE government's museums and cultural organizations, as the main supporters of community engagement programmes and other related initiatives in Al Dhafra. The issues these organization face in launching relevant community engagement programmes is that there is little published knowledge on Middle Eastern rural regions like Al Dhafra, communities which want to preserve their cultural heritage. This thesis provides these interested parties with necessary background information to strategically plan community engagement programmes that will better satisfy the community needs of the Al Dhafra region and the collective interests of the women living there who hold such valuable cultural heritage knowledge. It would be helpful to develop monthly community activities that allow people to promote these ideals, and integrate these into cultural community engagement programmes, such as seen in research by Skounti (2010). Al Dhafra women feel compelled to take on whatever roles and functions are required in order to protect their cultural heritage, which Yang (2018) expressed as being seen in various rural regions worldwide. The Al Dhafra women realise theirs is an important role and they are ready to take on this challenge since they feel they are the best people with the most cultural knowledge to do it. The concept of intangible heritage being preserved across generations is prevalent in the literature in Chapter 3.

The contribution to knowledge that this study provides is an examination of how the Al Dhafra women negotiate empowerment in regard to their social-cultural contexts and societal norms, by promoting their extensive knowledge and skills of UAE cultural heritage in everything they do. Koffel (2018) researched how Arab women have been recognized for their handicraft skills in festivals and events. However, this thesis study explores the underlying meaning related to the importance of what the Al Dhafra women do as it corresponds to preserving UAE cultural heritage. This research asserts the concept that Al Dhafra women do not only produce cultural handicrafts as tangible cultural heritage items, they instil their cultural identity into every word they speak and every task they undertake. Some of the assumptions this research attempts to prove relate to the reaction

of people who meet Al Dhafra women and how they are taken aback by their love for their country.

The academic literature debate related to gender and community is especially essential to understanding the Al Dhafra rural region and its cultural values and customs related to women being cultural safeguarders. It is relevant to this academic literature discourse since it expressly explores the complimentary relationship between the indigenous, marginalized region of Al Dhafra and the capital city of Abu Dhabi. Al Dhafra is marginalized because the community has previously been denied involvement in the social and cultural community engagement programmes and activities in their region. This thesis investigates how neglecting to strategically collaborate with the marginalized Al Dhafra community in cultural tourism projects could have far-reaching effects that impact the entire UAE society, given the Al Dhafra women's role as cultural heritage caretakers.

Globalization Impacting Al Dhafra Community

The UAE has extensive cultural expansion and development plans which focus on economic sustainability in all Emirates, especially remote areas like Al Dhafra, which require increased investment to boost their economy. The UAE government's strategies and visions for becoming an innovative business model for economic, environmental, and cultural heritage sustainability are implemented yearly, according to UAE Vision 2021 and Abu Dhabi Vision 2030. However, ensuring a sustainable business model to preserve cultural heritage is one of the UAE government's most critical priorities.

The Al Dhafra region has been targeted by the UAE government as having profitable future potential for global business investments related to construction, healthcare, education, tourism, and alternative energy projects, as explained in Chapter 2. During this time of economic growth and development in Al Dhafra, the UAE government created the Al Dhafra 2030 Programme to promote cultural heritage preservation of the country. Al Dhafra has been chosen to become a cultural heritage tourist destination for the UAE, to ensure the protection of the culture, traditions, beliefs, values, and customs which are the underlying foundation of the country and its people.

From the perspective of the Al Dhafra people, excessive effects of globalization could bring the end of UAE cultural heritage for the entire country. The Al Dhafra women

feel that properly managing the region will help prevent globalization from taking over their community and culture. Al Dhafra women stated they believe that if they are held back from being able to create their cultural heritage handicrafts, the entire UAE cultural heritage could suffer, which is a concept similar to research by Wilson (1999). This point relates to how Al Dhafra women are adapting to globalization and the changes which are occurring in the UAE, and how they may relate to their future, which was discussed in a study by Thompson (2008). There is tension and uncertainty surrounding this topic between older and younger generations, especially for the Al Dhafra women who have spent their entire lives preserving UAE cultural heritage. This tension is often seen in the literature as challenges between generations during globalization, which was detailed in Smith (2004).

The central issue the Al Dhafra women debated relates to the younger generation of women in the region pursuing college degrees when there is a cultural expectation for them to be the future caretakers of cultural heritage. The Al Dhafra women acknowledged there will be some women who will choose to become homemakers and caretakers of cultural heritage, while others will choose to pursue a path to university. Nevertheless, Al Dhafra women hope to pass on intangible cultural heritage to their children to ensure it will be maintained, which is key to preserving their culture and supported by researchers like Smith (2015). This is where community engagement programmes could be beneficial, as they will provide workshops which allow Al Dhafra mothers to teach cultural heritage handicraft making and other traditions.

My Updated Female Empowerment Conceptual Framework

This research allowed me to develop a conceptual framework to fill the gap in existing literature in two significant ways: contextually, by exploring how museums and other cultural institutions can develop community engagement programmes linking cultural heritage to community learning and recreational tourism activities like festivals, where female empowerment is prioritized, and theoretically, by examining the frameworks aligning cultural heritage preservation to strategies for female empowerment that promote tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Al Dhafra women epitomize this female empowerment model, as they fulfil each pillar of empowerment: individual, collective, and communal empowerment. Their female empowerment is promoted in how they each believe they should protect their cultural heritage by passing it on for future generations. They believe they need to work together in groups to collectively create cultural heritage handicrafts. They also want to preserve the country's cultural heritage by supporting their community cultural tourism projects through communal empowerment. The Al Dhafra women support each other adapting to change, with some working outside the home to make cultural heritage handicrafts, to earn their own income to contribute to the household. This is a similar value in various Middle Eastern countries supported in the literature, such as research by Skounti (2009). The Al Dhafra women stated they are always there for each other, sharing ideas, and helping each other during times of need. They feel this collective empowerment is a significant part of their cultural identity and important to who they are.

Challenges For Museums Developing Community Programmes in Al Dhafra Region

After assessing the challenges museums and other cultural institutions face in developing community engagement programmes in the Al Dhafra region, I identified two gaps within the gap analysis related to this research. These gaps are crucial to future research on empowering women through cultural community engagement programmes, as in research from Nakamura (2007). This thesis identified the gap in the literature which highlights that museum and other cultural professionals need to address these issues before launching new initiatives, to better understand the Al Dhafra community:

- The first gap is between museum and Emirati mothers, since members of this community have never been to any kind of a museum before and, as such, they do not know what they do, what their purpose is, or how they can benefit from their community engagement programmes
- The second gap is between Emirati mothers and their children, as this generation may be disinclined to want to learn cultural heritage handicrafts from their mothers; closing this gap requires innovative, motivational incentives for Emirati children to learn how to adopt these unique skills that their mothers could pass on to them in community engagement programmes

8.6 My Reflections On Research

In the early stages, my original ambitions for the research were focussed on providing insight into how the Al Dhafra cultural heritage handicrafts are made and their significance to preserving UAE cultural heritage. However, these themes evolved through the research process, to examining the link between gender and identity, the role of women in heritage, participatory empowerment, and the pillars of empowerment advantageous for enhancing community engagement programmes. This research will contribute extensive insights into various methods of empowering women worldwide through community engagement programmes. This research can be further implemented by examining innovative avenues of heritage management and museum studies to coordinate the UNESCO framework for cultural heritage preservation and this research study's model for female empowerment.

Other reflections on this research include my belief that, since the Al Dhafra women are amongst the few Emiratis regularly practicing daily cultural traditions in the UAE, they can greatly influence the success of community engagement programmes with their specialized knowledge and expertise. I support the Al Dhafra women in wanting to collaborate in order to strategically create community engagement programmes to benefit sustaining the cultural heritage for the entire society. One of the key points the Al Dhafra women emphasized is their interest in a continuous community engagement programme where they can teach their children, as well as others, their cultural traditions and customs.

Al Dhafra women shared with me that their cultural community meant the world to them and those who want to create any community engagement programmes should honour their input as active collaborators in decision-making. This assertion supports the concept that proposes community members must be included in the decisions that will impact their society, since they are the ones who will ultimately benefit or suffer from them: "Visitors are no longer regarded as passive recipients, but are now acknowledged as co-creators of knowledge" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 23). Al Dhafra women are undoubtedly integral in their community; by extending their influence in existing community projects and programmes that can engage them in their children's lives, they can oversee what they are

learning and participate in their children's cultural growth, which will reap cultural benefits across the culture and society of the UAE.

This research offers a reflection of the essential role of the Al Dhafra women and their specialized intangible heritage talents. It also provides a unique contribution to existing literature because it explains the specific cultural heritage perspective of the UAE as a model of global best practices which could be adapted and used in other nations. A reflection of the Emirati women's distinctive perception of the UAE cultural heritage represents my understanding in the subject area in this critically-significant and timely study.

Finally, this idea of importing culture to develop a tourism economy when the culture is clearly already there - it requires a close contact with the local cultural producers in order to harmonize grand state-sanctioned actions like the museums on Saadiyat in order to better situate the content to the region and make it culturally relevant and remarkable. The largesse of the UAE has brought the finest of western culture to the UAE's doorstep, however it is in aligning with the longstanding cultural heritage producers in Al Dhafra that the exhibitions, festivals and workshops become the most culturally relevant, linking the creative impulse seen in such urban museums and tourist attractions to the decades-long traditions that have held the UAE peoples together and united as a culture.

APPENDIX A: Interview & Focus Group Questions—Al Dhafra Women

- What are the cultural programmes they have attended?
- What programmes did they find interesting for their family?
- What did they like about the programmes? How do they think those cultural programmes can be improved?
- What would they like us to consider in our future programmes?
- What do you think about your children's community education programmes?
- What do you think about educational and cultural programmes offered in Al Dhafra?
- What do you like best about the educational and cultural programmes?
- How would you improve the programmes?
- Discuss what do you think of possible museum programmes and which ones do you believe are related to art, heritage, or cultural traditions?

Some of the questions that evolved from the interviews include:

- What are the main aspects of your cultural heritage?
- What are the foundation / influences of your cultural identity and national identity?
- How can Al Dhafra women contribute to preserving UAE cultural heritage in museum community engagement programmes?
- What cultural traditions make Al Dhafra women feel empowered?
- How can community outreach programmes help empower Al Dhafra women?

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions—Cultural Institution Officials

- What are some of the main cultural museum community engagement programmes the museums have launched and plan to develop for the future?
- How can Al Dhafra women contribute to preserving UAE cultural heritage in museum community engagement programmes?
- What cultural traditions make Al Dhafra women feel empowered?
- How are museum outreach programmes developed?
- What are some of the difficulties these programmes have faced in the past?
- How can cultural institutions help create strategies for developing museum community outreach programmes in the UAE for the future?
- What are the main roles and priorities that cultural institutions will play in future community programmes?

APPENDIX C: Interview & Focus Group Schedule—Al Dhafra Women

Interview & Focus Group Dates	Individual Interviews	Focus Groups	Location
15/11/17	2	1 (5 participants)	Madinat Zayed
22/11/17	3	1 (5 participants)	Madinat Zayed
13/12/17	3	1 (5 participants)	Madinat Zayed
17/01/18	3	1 (5 participants)	Madinat Zayed
07/02/18	2	1 (5 participants)	Madinat Zayed
14/02/18	3	1 (5 participants)	Liwa
21/02/18	3	1 (5 participants)	Liwa
07/03/18	2	1 (5 participants)	Liwa
14/03/18	3	1 (5 participants)	Madinat Zayed
04/04/18	3	1 (5 participants)	Madinat Zayed
11/04/18	3	1 (5 participants)	Madinat Zayed
18/04/18	3	1 (5 participants)	Liwa
Total	33 individual Al Dhafra women interviewees in 33 individual interviews	60 total Al Dhafra women were participants in 12 focus group discussions	These towns comprise the Al Dhafra region

APPENDIX D: Interview Schedule—Cultural Institution Officials

Interview Dates	Individuals	Location
26/11/2017	Outreach and Community Engagement Manager	Abu Dhabi – Office
21/12/2017	Culture Director	Abu Dhabi – Office
7/02/2017	Education & Outreach Manager	Abu Dhabi – Office

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