



Promoting border areas for developmental ecotourism: A case study of Al-Adaseya, Jordan

Fakhrieh Darabseh
Department of Tourism and Travel
Yarmouk University, Jordan
fdarabseh@yu.edu.jo

Khaldoun Kanaan*
Department of Tourism and Hotel Sciences
Al-Balqa Applied University
kknanaan@bau.edu.jo

Khaled Hailat
Department of Marketing, Yarmouk University
khaledhailat@yu.edu.jo

Fawziya Hussein
Pella Archaeological Site, Jordan
fawziyahabd@gmail.com

Corresponding author*

Abstract

Beyond the ecological perspective of this study, the participatory tourism planning project to spread the economic benefits in term of community-based ecotourism development in the northern border periphery of Al-Adaseya, Jordan is discussed. In such a context of peripheral developmental border areas, where wars and immigration shapes new geopolitical situations, developmental ecotourism projects can be a key to establish small scale business, and thus improve the lives of both locals and those across-borders. Such projects also, provide unique ecological systems for tourists, and maximise the cultural value among people. The study examines the potentials and limitations of tourism for domestic and cross border mergers in Al-Adaseya, and develops suggestions for the promoting of small scale tourism in such rural areas, with regard to the various cross cultural aspect of locals. The study was mainly descriptive and adopted a methodology based exclusively on-site visit observations, combined with face-to-face interviews. The research findings indicate that even though the region hosts considerable natural and cultural resources, it is faced with different obstacles that impact the development of ecotourism, related mainly to the particular security situation for its strategically tricky location when it comes to regional instability and a volatile political situation. Strategic factors were explored and priorities set out in this study in order to address the problems of the region. Rehabilitating historical houses, improving infrastructure, and tourism facilities were also included in the recommendations.

Keywords: community-based ecotourism, border periphery, natural and cultural heritage, tourism potential, small scale tourism.

Introduction

The UN announced the year 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. Afterwards, many countries focused on ecotourism as a means of creating tourism (Mowforth and Munt, 2003). Ecotourism was recently considered a mainstream tourism activity in many nations because it has minimum negative environmental impacts and attracts extremely large numbers of tourists. It is also considered one of the significant tools for socioeconomic improvement in a country, and has been emphasised as being important for economic growth and livelihood security for the people (Weaver, 2001). Given that the Kingdom of Jordan has a sustainable tourism industry, it can exemplify its rich cultural and



natural heritage resources to various types of visitors. However, a certain level of attention toward marginalised places remains absent when compared to the numerous efforts that have been focused on key natural and cultural inheritance sites in the country. Accordingly, a set of considerations should be set to ensure and monitor the sustainability of ecotourism and determine the limitations of sustainable management (Gough et al., 2008). In addition, clear information should be provided to understand the field's activities and its various of management decisions (Peng et al., 2002).

This study attempts to assess and investigate the ecotourism potential at the Al-Adaseya site in the Jordan Valley. It also seeks to elucidate on the significance of the protection of the site's cultural and natural features, as well as encourage development processes and investment in the area. Arguably, an exploration of the sites' eco-potential is necessary to endorse awareness among the locals so as to promote a better understanding of its use. In academic terms, extremely few studies in Jordan focused on the assessment and investigation of the ecotourism potential of cultural sites (Weaver, 2008). According to Weaver, the main concern and focus in cultural tourism is on cultural products. However, this aspect is less highlighted in ecotourism. Thus, ecotourism and cultural tourism create an overlapping position that has a similar objective with different priorities on various focus products. Developing the site for tourism purposes is currently limited because the area is in a military and border zone, which limits its development and accessibility. It is limited to adjacent local inhabitants with the majority being Palestinian refugees. Thus, the research questions aim to address (a) the particular potentials of the site for ecotourism, and (b) the limitations facing its development for tourism activities. Therefore, the originality of this study stems from it being among the first studies to examine the tourism potential of the Al-Adaseya site such that it can be registered on the Jordanian tourism map (as a minimum, for domestic tourists). In this regard, identification and evaluation of the site's potentials are critical for its management and future effective development.

Theoretical background

Ecotourism: benefits and challenges

The term "ecotourism" was coined in the English language during the mid-1980s (Weaver, 2008). However; ecotourism emerged as a major component of the tourism industry by the beginning of the 21st century. Researchers defined ecotourism and focused on nature-based experiences, education and sustainable management as the main dimensions of ecotourism (Buckley, 1994; Diamantis, 2004). Ecotourism was described as "*travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in the areas*" (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987, in Fennell, 2001: 404). The term ecotourism in this definition was used initially to express nature-based travel to relatively undeveloped areas with an emphasis on education.

Nevertheless, the concept was developed into a scientific approach to the planning, management and development of sustainable tourism products and activities. In this regard, the Ecotourism Society defined ecotourism as follows: "*Ecotourism is responsible travel to nature areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.... Ecotourism is about creating and satisfying a hunger for nature, about exploiting tourism's potential for conservation and development and about averting its negative impact on ecology, culture and aesthetics*" (cited in Lindberg and Hawkins, 1993, p.8). Martha Honey (1999: 25) considered it as "*travel to fragile, pristine and usually protected areas that strives to be low impact and small scale*". Seemingly, issues such as "*conservation,*" "*impacts of ecotourism,*" and "*local residents*" have been the main concerns of various definitions.



International Ecotourism Society (TIES) (2015) defines ecotourism as “*responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education*”. A strong point of this definition is that it integrates both resource protection and economic development of well-being of the local people (Backman & Munanura, 2017). Holub (2015) provides a definition that gives a primary emphasis on the natural environment with a secondary focus on cultural heritage.

Ecotourism has been promoted widely as an economic tool for environmental conservation and community development in recent decades (Brandon, 1996; Campbell, 1999; Cobbinah, 2015). Thus, it has been popularly promoted as a means of integration between wildlife conservation and economic development, particularly in developing countries (Campbell, 1999). Thus, ecotourism has the potential to increase the value of tourism to the local economy. It also provides a constructive power to support the preservation of resources and local communities, educate travellers, offer funds for conservation, benefit economic growth and political empowerment of local communities directly, promote esteem for diverse cultures and human rights and enhance the experience of visitors (Beeton, 1998; Rogerson, 2017).

Identifying tourist resources is undeniably the primary step in dealing with the planning and development of tourism in any given area (Punia, 1994). However, identifying, enlisting and mapping the various natural and socio-cultural aspects that can attract tourists to an area is also important. Determining the degree of attractiveness of the resource, in terms of its appeal to a large number of peoples, is vital because it indicates an area's potential to be a tourist attraction (Benur & Bramwell, 2015). However, the potentiality of tourism development in any area is dependent mainly on the availability of recreational resources and products in addition to other factors, such as climate, accessibility, local community and its positive attitude toward tourists and the existence of infrastructure, services and facilities (Cetin, & Sevik, 2016).

Availability of Services and Products

Currently, tourism is one of the world's leading industries that contribute significantly to the GDP of several countries. For example, Macau, Maldives and the British Virgin Islands are reliant on tourism for 43.9%, 41.5% and 30.3%, respectively, of their GDPs. Furthermore, tourism is extensively regarded as a means of attaining growth. In particular, the need to promote tourism and ecotourism in embryonic economies remains a hot issue. Regrettably, much has been said but extremely little has been achieved in endorsing in this regard.

Presumably, considerable obstacles and challenges, such as the lack of participation of host communities and other stakeholders in development and management, face the performance of ecotourism in developing countries. As previously mentioned by several authors, such as Wishitemi (2008) and Kieti (2007), these challenges and obstacles are the result of the lack of coordinated efforts by concerned parties.

The major challenges in relation to tourism in developing economies are presented by poverty and the incapability of the governments to implement any policy (Richter, 1983; Rogerson, 2018), or their unwillingness or both. Governments in developing countries often lack the power to execute rules and regulations in relation to tourism-related issues. Furthermore, the current struggle against terrorism has impeded tourists from developed nations in visiting certain countries. Recently, war has had several impacts, such as civil conflicts and unstable environments, in the tourism industry in many nations (Rogerson, 2018), such as Syria Yemen and Iraq.



Currently, policy decision makers face challenges on handling cultural conflicts in tourism despite the growing hostility. Over the last decade, the criticism of tourism has shifted from financial to cultural costs incurred by societies' implementation of mass international tourism (Throsby, 2016). The argument reveals the mix of local communities and travellers can often be a recipe for disaster and "differences in cultural conduct can be great that common sympathetic is replaced by antipathy" (Archer and Copper, 1994: 73–91). In addition, the lack of supervision and adequate maintenance of tourism sites, such as those of ecotourism potential can represent a major challenge to the tourism sector in developing counties (Zhang, Zhou, Wu, Skitmore & Deng, 2015).

Ecotourism in Jordan

Ecotourism in Jordan has been popular especially over the recent years and is deemed to be capable of maintaining growth in the future (Abuamoud et al., 2015). Jordan is one of the very few countries in the Middle East with ecotourism opportunities. Together with other cultural attractions, such as the key site of Petra, the tourism industry is one of the most important pillars that structure and contribute efficiently to the Jordanian economy. Thus ecotourism is one of the effective methods to create jobs and enhance sustainable lifestyles, as well as boosting livelihoods by reducing rural poverty and this is widely agreed by a range of stakeholders (Chatelard, 2001; Fairer-Wessels, 2017).

Ecotourism in Jordan has grown remarkably due to environmental pressures and high demand for jobs by the locals (El-Harami, 2014). A consideration for natural resource preservation and protection in Jordan was initiated by the foundation of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) in 1966 to be responsible for the management of nature reserves in Jordan under a mandate from the government of Jordan. Upon its establishment, the RSCN has been working toward the establishment of a network of protected areas. Its first initiative was the founding of Jordan's first nature reserve, namely, Shaumari Wildlife Reserve, in 1975. Its primary purpose was to create the means to encourage endangered species to breed, exclusively, the Arabian Oryx, gazelles, Ostriches and Persian Onagers in their natural environment (Clarke, 1977; Ochoa et al., 2016). This initiative indicated that the main purpose of establishing the reserve was for protection and conservation of wildlife and not for ecotourism activities.

Infrastructure is vital to sustainable tourism. It includes several services necessary to fulfill the needs and expectations of tourists during their stays at their intended destinations. The importance of tourism infrastructure is linked to the fact that it can contribute strongly to the efficiency and competency of production, and also the distribution and supply of tourism services (Lee & Fernando, 2015; Hall, 2016). Ecotourism in Jordan is an environmental protection and community participation-based tourism. Ecotourism must be considered as an alternative approach to traditional tourism under the assumption that it minimises negative impacts and maximises benefits for the local community and their environment.

The first study on protected areas in Jordan was conducted by Dr John Clarke and is known as the Clarke Report (Clarke, 1979). This report represented the national framework for the in-site conservation of biological diversity in Jordan. The report proposed twelve sites and was reviewed by the RSCN in cooperation with Ministry of Environment (MoEnv) in 2008–2009 to include sixteen sites. The country is composed of established protected areas with a total surface area of 1,443.5 km². Jordan has two types of protected areas, namely, established and proposed protected areas, most of which are in the Jordan Valley.

When the International Year of Ecotourism was declared in 2002, Jordan was among the first countries that responded in an effort to improve the development of its ecotourism



industry. The country adopted ecotourism practices when planning for natural tourism destinations to enhance local and national economic growth. In 2004, the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) in cooperation with the RSCN and the Jordan Royal Ecological Diving Society (JREDS) created an ecotourism marketing booklet that includes and identifies all ecotourism sites in Jordan with a brief description of each site.

In general, ecotourism practices in Jordan are limited to nature reserves, which exclude many potential rural ecotourism destinations. In addition, a number of these practices are performed individually or as unorganized activities. For instance, several locals, such as those in Wadi Rum, coincidentally arrange practices that protect their cultural heritage. Presumably, the development and management of the ecotourism industry in Jordan is a recent activity and requires tremendous effort and endeavor to be improved (Al-Mughrabi, 2007).

Data and methods

In view of the overall aim of this study, an interpretive paradigm was adopted for the research. The rationale was to determine reality, based on the experiences of the participants in their social setting (Sobh & Perry, 2006). Merriam (2014) stated that interpretivist research is more reliable in capturing the peoples perceptions and experiences and also in a more comprehensive method. This aligns with the aim of this research which is concerned with capturing the perceptions of the participants and their experiences in a coherent way.

The focus group technique is a qualitative data collection method of interviewing, which involves more than one interviewee; it consists of at least four interviewees (Bryman, 2015). This technique was adopted by this study as it was selected over group interviews. "Focus group typically emphasizes a specific theme that is explored in-depth" (Bryman, 2012 p.501). Focus group interviews were conducted with representative members from public and private sectors, and randomly selected respondents from the local community (ten members from two families who still inhabit their historical houses). The interviews were designed to allow interviewees to describe the aspects of on-site experience in their own words. To this end, focus group questions were structured as open-ended and worded to aid comprehension. The conversation was self-leading based on the interviewees' answers, elderly parents enjoyed telling detail stories about the place and life in the past where the place was inhabited by the *Baha'i* group (a group from Iranian origins) who lived in Al-Adaseya in the Jordan Valley in 1902 where they rehabilitated a large scale of territories using modern agricultural machines. They planted new crops in the area such as Banana trees, Citrus and Eggplants which are still called Al Ajami as they termed it. In the 1960s they lost a lot of their lands when the government put its hands on their agricultural properties in the area after opening a canal for irrigation (Al Shama'a, 2016).

An in-depth research was conducted, hence adopting inductive qualitative methods. The data was developed from social interaction of participants within the focus group. It also allowed the researchers to listen, observe conversations between knowledgeable informants with different views (Boateng, 2012; Remenyi, 2011). There are drawbacks to the use of a focus group technique, these include the fact that it is an intensive process, social desirability, group think and lack of anonymity. The researchers ensured that conformity to the opinion of others by other respondents was not encouraged to reduce these weaknesses. Thus, as it is recognized that there is no universal frame of reference for this research, there is no adequate foundation to yield empirical evidence and this evidence must, therefore, be elucidated through peoples' perceptions and rich descriptions.



The focus group interviews intended to address the lack of residents in the area and lack of willingness to participate in the study. It was conducted by researchers in Arabic and translated into English verbatim. Underpinning the study, were observations during a site visit that was conducted by the researchers in spring 2016 when climatic conditions and the natural beauty of the site were optimal. Detailed notes that focused on the development and investment at the site, notably its infrastructure, visitor signage and its effectiveness, tourist facilities (such as accommodation) and ease of movement within the area were taken by the researchers. The collected data from the different approaches were noted, categorized and interpreted for critical analysis.

Al-Adaseya is a small town in north Shoneh in the Jordan Valley. Not far from the Amman - Jerusalem junction south of the Sea of Tiberias, north to the Dead Sea, and in front of Jericho city in the Jordan Valley. It is a great place to stay and to experience the life of locals like it was in times gone by. The Valley itself is considered as one of the main tourist destinations in Jordan that is rich in natural and cultural features in addition to its hot springs. These features attract tourists from both inside and outside the country. The name Al-Adaseya came from a lentil plant (*Adas*, which means lentil in Arabic) and refers to where lentil crops used to be grown and continue to be grown in the region. According to the locals, the name may also refer to a type of sand called "Aladaseya Sand" which can be found in the area.

The study faced certain difficulties in collecting data because of the lack of information and resources about the site, in addition to the fact that entrance to the site is limited to the house owners and landowners. As such, a security agent requires personal identification to be shown prior to access being granted. For security purposes, only one of the authors was allowed easy access to the site because of her residency in Al-Adaseya.

Results

Al-Adaseya has a wealthy endowment of natural and cultural heritage resources, which can be exploited for tourism activities. The site has a mixture of heritage resources, namely, unique historical houses, geographic setting and landscape and the living heritage of the local community. The area is characterized by various features and reliefs such as mountains, flatlands, valleys and rivers. In addition to marvelous views of Palestinian territories, it forms the longest boundary with the West Bank. This area is also famous for its diverse vegetable, fruit and citrus farms that form a considerable attraction in the region. The Jordan Valley is a low-lying strip located in the western part of the country. It is part of the Great Rift Valley, which extends down southward into East Africa. The northern part of it is a Ghor, which features the Jordan River. A Ghor has warm weather compared with the rest of the country. Its year-round agricultural climate, fertile soil, and water supply have made the *Ghor* the main source of vegetables and fruits for the country. The area can be considered a year-round tourist attraction because of its special climate.

The village was inhabited by the Al Baha'ein, who came from Iran for religious reasons. They made social and economic changes in the region, although they isolated themselves from the aboriginal inhabitants. Al Baha'ein stayed at Al-Adaseya from 1902 to 1962. Their houses were richer than those of locals and distinguished them from the local people, of which the majority lived in modest houses and tents at a distance from the Al Baha'ein settlements. The latter had a school and clinic, which are still in good condition, although owned by a local family known as Al-waked (Personal Communication, 2017). The population of this area comprised of shepherds and farmers in more or less equal numbers. Their numbers however gradually increased due to Palestinian immigration. Furthermore, the place is in general inhabited in summer by the Arab tribe "Sukhur el-



Ghor". The people of Al-Adaseya are rural folk and work in the public and agricultural sectors. Although the area is filled with tourism potential, plenty of people have a negative image of tourism. In fact, the researchers asked randomly selected locals about their opinion on accepting tourists to their area. Some (mainly young and middle-aged) welcomed the idea and were aware of the positive effects of tourism, whereas others considered tourism as potentially harmful. In general, the involvement of the local community in the tourism process is an important demand. However, the community's lack of involvement can be attributed to several reasons, such as residents' preference to work in agricultural activities rather than in tourism, poverty, lack of financial resources and investment associated with tourism activities, and, reasons related to customs and tradition, which consider tourism an unacceptable, shameful activity, or even forbidden (*haram*).

The area holds great potential for both natural and cultural tourism: it is close to important archaeological sites, such as Pella of the Decapolis, Tell-Al Shouneh and Tell AlSakhneh (Melhem,2009), which provides the area with an opportunity to be listed within a tourist trail in the Jordan Valley. The existence of popular hot springs, such as the Al Shouneh baths (5 km south of Al-Adaseya) and Abu Dablah spring (the oldest traditional bath in Jordan; Smawi, 2008) may add an extra important tourism potential. In addition to the religious places (shrines of companions), the area hosts other attractions, such as Abu Obadiah, Mu'ath bin Jabal, which can usher in domestic and regional religious tourists.

The area has a rich diversity of wild fauna and flora and offers a wide variety of species of animal and birds, as well as a unique flora that consists of a remarkable diversity of wildflowers and plants. In addition, the area comprises cold water springs and artesian wells that are used for irrigation. The area is rich in lime and basalt stones that were used in building the historical houses in the area, which lends it a distinctive architectural character. Furthermore, winter tourism can be highly encouraging for those looking for places to relax due to the warm weather of the area. In terms of the potential of curative tourism, this destination is rich in fascinating hot and mineral springs, such as the AlShounehbaths, Al-Manshyyah well and Waqas well, located near Al-Adaseya (Harahsheh, 2002).

Potential for Ecotourism

As observed by the researchers during visits, the site is a place of varied and vast landscapes with abundant natural resources in addition to the unique historical buildings. It offers a distinct experience for tourists who are looking for a nature-based and distinguished cultural destination experience. It is a secure location linking the west bank and areas east of Jordan and provides limited access to local residents and owners who are partially allowed to the site, and can visit for serene weekends and holidays.

The tourism potential at Al-Adaseya could be assessed based on SWOT analysis as follows. Al- Adaseya has much tourism potential, based on aspects such as its strategic location, that is, near the Yarmouk River and overlooking the west bank and it has low variation in temperature. These strengths make the area a reasonable all-year-round destination. In addition, political stability and a variety of resources, such as cultural and natural heritage exist in Jordan.

On the one hand, Al-Adaseya has certain weaknesses, such as poor services and infrastructure, it is militarily-controlled and has limited access, there is insufficient attention from the tourism department, hot weather in summer, a lack of public awareness toward ecotourism, unfamiliarity among locals, lack of awareness among locals and lack of financial resources to make it atruly great destination.



On the other hand, it has many potential opportunities, such as cooperation between the public and private sectors, it is a close destination to many tourist areas and has the potential for winter tourism. In addition it has investment opportunities, the creation of job vacancies, poverty reduction among locals and improvement in infrastructure and surrounding areas.

Finally, threats that can reduce the potential attraction of Al-Adaseya are as follows: seasonal tourism due to high temperatures, especially in summer, political instability in neighboring countries and challenges associated with difficulties in site accessibility; as there is less typical problems on gravel roads networks and limited support available, in addition fewer services that we normally take for granted to rural road networks with little asphalt and concrete production.

Based on the above-mentioned factors, the site has the remarkable potential to be a preferred destination for ecotourism and nature-based tourism if exploited properly, despite the general ignorance in the area, poor services and infrastructure and limited access. These concerns will be addressed in the subsequent sections, which will outline a suggested development plan for the site, that is, as a tourist attraction that encourages domestic tourism. Here, researchers focused on domestic tourism for the short term due to security barriers. Currently, the area is designated as a border area and military zone. However, this area, like many others, is facing challenges to improve infrastructure for tourism development and municipal service delivery.

To ensure an increase in access to services for Al-Adaseya as an ecotourism attraction, public infrastructure programs should be implemented. Roads are a critical element of the infrastructure for tourism. Hence, improved roads, signage and traffic signs (inclusive of a substantial upgrade to those already in places) are necessary to develop the site for tourism. The roads to be improved are not only those that lead to the site, but also those that connect it to neighboring attractions, such as the Abu Dalbah Spring, natural areas and religious places, such that travel can be easily integrated between these sites.

To render the site further accessible for tourism activities, priority should be given to equipping it with various forms of tourism services in anticipation of increasing tourist demand. Such services may include comfortable and reasonable accommodation, restaurants and spas and well provisioned medical clinics. These services may be designed with respect to the specific significance of the site and created to be environmentally friendly, thus providing a standard quality with reasonable prices for all potential visitors. The site hosts magnificent historical houses, a few of which are still inhabited by locals, whereas others have been abandoned. The latter should ideally be conserved and rehabilitated for tourism purposes.

The surrounding natural landscape of the site makes it a preferred destination for those looking for relaxing areas, with fresh-air and opportunities to experience various attractions. Cultural and recreational activities can also be held within and near the site, which could include a visitor centre, site museum, art exhibition, music and festival activities, pilgrimage excursions to the Islamic shrines within the Jordan Valley, an ecotourism excursion to Al-Adaseya and Jordan River and mapping tourist trails to originate from Umm Qais to Alhammah, Al-Adaseya, North Ashouneh, Pella, and Abu Dablah.

In general, ecotourism in Jordan, especially in the Jordan Valley, still has the smallest share of care and interest from the government and locals. Presumably, rare, if not, specific maps or brochures show the ecotourism in the Jordan Valley. Establishing the area on the Jordanian tourism map can play an important role in marketing the area, and help to increase awareness among the locals and even outsiders toward ecotourism and



issues of sustainability.

The main role of the government is to formulate laws, policies and legislation in relation to tourism development and heritage protection. In addition, it has a significant role in the creation of a balance between the protection requirements of natural attractions and those of investment and use. An additional role is establishing and implementing a marketing plan to encourage tourism in this destination while monitoring and evaluating the tourism procedures. Finally, its role consists of facilitating investments to provide funding or encourage investment to develop tourism activities in Jordan Valley. The role of the private sector is undeniable because it plays a considerable role in the training and employment of the local community in the tourism sector, for example: Ajloun Natural Reserve where two concepts of concession are supported by the USAID and operated by the local community, the Biscuit house and the Royal Academy restaurant; another example is the Baraka house from Umm Qais initiated by 'Baraka Destination' (a company of local and international professionals interested in sustainable tourism development to partner with the local community in minor tourism destinations, based in Amman). Also, Fenan Ecolodge which is funded by the RSCN and directed or operated by Eco Hotel company.

Based on the faith of local authorities, tourism is a vital sector that contributes to the achievement of substantial and sustainable growth rates and generation of job opportunities. The focus of local government is on the small business of the private sector in the economic development of the country. Furthermore, many international organizations like UNESCO and USAID focus on rural tourism and highlight the solutions for various challenges, with a strong emphasis on identifying cooperation among various private and public entities. As a step to solve these challenges by attracting tourists and developing the Jordanian tourism with respect to best practices (Weissman, 2018).

Discussion

This section brings together the findings from both secondary and primary data, attempting to investigate the ecotourism potential at the Al-Adaseya in the Jordan Valley. To achieve this aim, four site visits and two focus group discussions with the residents of historical buildings were conducted. Significant facts are highlighted with respect to the potentiality of the site for ecotourism despite the existing obstacles that are mainly represented by the realities of security issues in relation to the Jordan Valley. According to Mansfeld and Pizam (2006); and Sharpley and Craven (2001) security and safety are always a crucial condition for tourism and travelling. Unfortunately, access to the site is extremely limited due to its location on the border between the west and east bank of Jordan. As a result, it is only open to those who own properties or businesses, official visitors, or those with specific legal permission to visit. One participant mentioned that *"nobody is allowed to get to the area without a permit because of the strategically importance of the area, as a military zone because it's very close to Israeli borders, even us the local residents get a yearly permission and we are not allowed to get in unless we show our permission ..."*.

Wu (2007) stated that insufficient funds in efforts to boost the tourism attractiveness may impact customer satisfaction. As ecotourism is the least of the Jordanian government's priorities, ecotourism projects and planning are insufficiently funded. This situation can result in the interruption of the execution of projects and activities for ecotourism and affect the potential improvement of economic development of the locals. This notion was also clearly implied by the focus group, where one head of the household mentioned that *"...the government is not paying enough attention to the area and even when we have heavy rain and some of these historical buildings are affected the government offers no help in fixing these sides..."*. Additionally, only a few houses were clearly well preserved



based on the researchers' observation and site visit mainly because their owners (our focus group members) are accommodating them and aware of their cultural and historical significance.

According to Tapper (2001) the local economy of the tourist area could be impacted based on the nation economy. The overall economic situation of the country and lack of adequate infrastructure and services delay the effectiveness and efficiency of ecotourism plans and limit visitations to the tourism sites or render them inaccessible. One of the focus groups mentioned that "... *it would be difficult for domestic tourism because of the slow economy in the country due to many factors such as the war in Syria and its negative impacts on the Jordanian economy*". Furthermore, numerous rural, natural and cultural sites lack accommodation and tourism services, which discourage tourists from visiting these sites, despite the border areas are likely to yield greater security benefits as well protected areas. The lack of ecotourism information, management and organisation, information access and efficient path sharing of information between suppliers and tourists produce obstacles. In addition, the lack of required ecotourism knowledge, experience and skills among institutions and employees can typically lead to unproductive projects. With a lack of ecotourism training in the educational system, this result emphasised that the researchers encountered difficulty in gathering information regarding the site.

As stated by Pollard and Rodriguez (1993), general sanitation and cleanness on the foreshore implies that a superficial understanding of environmental care and implementations of regulations. The lack of general attentiveness about the environment and significance of its security may lead to irresponsible and unmanaged visits to the sensitive environment. In addition, this lack of awareness may hinder the government's efforts to carry out conservation projects because the locals are unwilling to be involved in such projects in certain cases. A lack of coordination exists between the different stakeholders, which results in poor ecotourism management. Frequently, the lack of documentation, such as certifications and brand name of local handicrafts, confuses tourists, which makes the differentiation between authentic and copied products difficult and in turn decreases their potential economic benefit. According to Sleight (1993), building marketing strategies that can create new opportunities are attractive, and profitable. Additionally, a relatively poor marketing strategy is in place and presentation of the ecotourism industry to the international market is limited. The lack of guiding principles for businesses in developing ecotourism plans has created a situation, where each enterprise is responsible for developing their individual policies. As such, marketing and promotions for new small ecotourism businesses are less available. This finding also created poor involvement in global trade fairs for ecotourism with the latest developments.

In conclusion, the Jordanian government, who has acknowledged the major role in overcoming the main economic and social challenges that are faced by the country, has been increasingly involved in tourism since the early 1980s in collaboration with different partners. However, many essential factors and impacts combine to create obstacles and limitations in the field of tourism. National and regional factors, such as political instability in the region and lack of resources, impact the management of heritage resources. Nonetheless, Jordan's extensive network of nature reserves offers several of the ecotourism destinations in the Middle East.

Conclusion

Jordan has a limited natural wealth; the kingdom is a land of biodiversity that has land, mountains, desert and sea. It is importantly reliant on its tourism industry to build up its economy. However, the area is rich in ecotourism potential that, if exploited, promoted and managed properly, may help to reduce the impact of gathering tourism, provide sustainable tourism for the country and bring Jordan to an international level of



ecotourism.

Al-Adaseya offers a huge potential for tourism, especially ecotourism. Its landscape, nature and historically magnificent houses are of high cultural substance that should be protected, properly presented to locals and visitors. Currently, the site is a securely protected zone, such that only residents and their relatives, from other cities in the country, can enter the village. The villagers are universally like those in other villages. That is, they rely on agricultural activities and/or civil employment for their living. However, encouraging tourism activities will serve to attract tourism investments, and create new job opportunities that will serve to improve the standard quality of living to area.

The discussion on tourism activities in a secured area is debatable. Therefore, this study suggests that visitors at the national level should be oriented with such activities to encourage domestic tourism. Prior procedures can be taken by the government of Jordan in accordance with security agencies to allow tourism activities in designated parts of the area. Other sensitive and restricted parts can be assigned as forbidden zones.

The study also recommends promoting the Al-Adaseya site so as to enhance public awareness toward protecting similar areas and situations, from deliberate and accidental destruction by providing various necessary tourism services and facilities, with reasonable prices to suit different social segments of potential visitors. The site has remarkable cultural and natural attributes. Therefore, we recommended that the homogeneity and integrity of all elements be taken into consideration when setting conservation and management plans for the area and all stakeholders need to be involved in the process.

References

- Abuamoud, I., Alrousan, R. M., & Bader, M. A. (2015). Impacts of Ecotourism in Jordan: Wadi Rum. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 50(1), 119-129.
- Aldebi, H., & Aljboory, N. (2018). The Impact of the Tourism Promotion-Mix Elements on the Foreign Tourists' Mental Images of the Jordanian Tourist Destinations (A Field Study). *International Business Research*, 11(1), 74-86.
- Al-Mughrabi, A., (2007) Ecotourism: A Sustainable Approach of Tourism in Jordan. Published master thesis: The University of Arizona.
- Al Shama's , S., (2016)' More than a wonderful report on the Baha'is in Jordan and social activities and charitable initiatives', ABN News, 26 November. Available at: <https://abnnews.net/archives/5701> . Accessed: 20 March s2017
- Archer, B. & Cooper, C. (1994). The positive and negative impacts of tourism. In W. Theobald (ed.) *Global Tourism: The Next Decade*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 73-91.
- Holub, M., (2015) Ecotourism Certification Programs: Standards and Benefits. *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies* Vol. 1, 67-74
- Backman, K. & Munanura, I.E. eds., (2017). *Ecotourism in Sub-Saharan Africa: Thirty Years of Practice*. Taylor & Francis.
- Beeton, S. (1998). *Ecotourism: A Practical guide for rural communities*. LandLink Press.
- Belsky, J. (1999). Misrepresenting Communities: The Politics of Community-based Rural Ecotourism in Gales Point Manatee, Belize. *Rural Sociology*, 64, 641–666.



- Benur, A.M. & Bramwell, B. (2015). Tourism product development and product diversification in destinations. *Tourism Management*, 50, 213-224.
- Brandon, K. (1996) *Ecotourism and Conservation: A Review of Key Issues*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2015). *Business Research Methods*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Bryman, A., (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press: USA.
- Blamey, R.K. (2001) Principles of ecotourism. In D.B. Weaver (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Ecotourism*. New York, NY: CABI Publishing, pp. 5–22.
- Boateng, W. (2012). Evaluating the efficacy of focus group discussion (FGD) in qualitative social research. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(7) 54-57.
- Bottrill, C. & Pearce, D. (1995). Ecotourism: Towards a key elements approach to operationalising the concept. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 3(1), 45—54.
- Buckley, R. (1994) A framework for ecotourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 21 (3), 661–665.
- Campbell, L. (1999). Ecotourism in rural developing countries. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26, 534–553.
- Ceballos-Lascurain H., (1996). *Tourism, ecotourism, and protected areas: the state of nature-based tourism around the world and guidelines for its development*, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN
- Cetin, M. and Sevik, H., (2016). Evaluating the recreation potential of Ilgaz Mountain National Park in Turkey. *Environmental monitoring and assessment*, 188(1), p.52.
- Clarke, J., (1977). Reserve for Arabian oryx. *Oryx*, 14(1), 31-35
- Clarke, J.E. (1979) A proposal for wild reserves in Jordan. IUCN Project no. 1591. Unpublished manuscript. Amman: Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature.
- Cobbinah, P. B. (2015). Contextualising the meaning of ecotourism. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 16, 179-189.
- Colvin, J. (1996). Indigenous Ecotourism: The Capirona Programme in Napo Province, Ecuador. *Unasylva*, 187(47), 32–37.
- Chatelard, G. (2005). Tourism and representations: of social change and power relations in Wadi Ramm, Southern Jordan. *Images Aux Frontières. Représentations et Constructions Sociales et Politiques. Palestine, Jordanie 1948-2000*, 194--251.
- Diamantis, D. (2004). Ecotourism management: An overview. In D.Diamantis (ed.) *Ecotourism: Management and Assessment*. (pp. 3–26). London: Thomson.
- Eagles, P. F., McCool, S. F., Haynes, C. D. & Phillips, A. (2002). *Sustainable tourism in protected areas: Guidelines for Planning and Management (Vol. 8)*. Gland: IUCN.
- El-Harami, J. (2014). The Diversity of ecology and nature Reserves as an ecotourism



Attraction in Jordan. In SHS Web of Conferences (Vol. 12, p. 01056). EDP Sciences.

Fairer-Wessels, F. A. (2017). Determining the impact of information on rural livelihoods and sustainable tourism development near protected areas in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(1), 10-25.

Fennel, D. (1999). *Ecotourism: An Introduction*: Routledge, London.

Fennel, D. (2001) A content analysis of ecotourism definitions. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 4, 403-421.

Fennel, D. (2003) *Ecotourism: An Introduction*, (2nd ed). Routledge, London.

Fennel, D. (2015) *Ecotourism: An Introduction*, (4th ed). Routledge, London.

Gale, T. (2016). Thinking Globally about Ecotourism Impact: The Contribution of Ecological Footprint Analysis. In *Ecotourism and Environmental Sustainability* (pp. 49-66). Routledge : London.

Goodwin, H. (1996). In pursuit of ecotourism. *Biodiversity & Conservation*, 5(3), 277-291.

Gough, A. D., Innes, J. L. & Allen, S. D. (2008). Development of common indicators of sustainable forest management. *Ecological indicators*, 8(5), 425-430.

Harahsheh, S. (2002). Curative Tourism in Jordan and its potential Development. Unpublished Master thesis, Bournemouth University, United Kingdom.

Hall, C.M. (2016). Intervening in academic interventions: framing social marketing's potential for successful sustainable tourism behavioural change. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 24(3), 350-375.

Hall, C.M. & Page, S. (Eds.) (2000). *Tourism in South and South-East Asia: Issues and Cases*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Holden, A. & Sparrowhawk, J. (2002). Understanding the Motivations of Ecotourists: The case of trekkers in Annapurna, Nepal. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 4, 435–446.

Holt, D.B., 1995. How consumers consume: A typology of consumption practices. *Journal of consumer research*, 22(1), pp.1-16.

Honey, M. (1999). *Ecotourism and sustainable development: Who owns paradise?* Island Press.

Ke, L. (2012). The weakness and Innovation of China Eco-tourism. *Physis Procedia*, 25, 953-957.

Khan, M. (1997). Tourism Development and Dependency Theory: Mass vs. Ecotourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24, 988–991.

Kieti, D. M. (2007). The perceived potential of tourism as a tool for poverty reduction. A case study of the Samburu- Laikipia Region in Kenya. Eldoret: Kenya: D. phil. Thesis, Moi University.

Laarman, J.G. & P.B. Durst (1987). "Nature Travel in the Tropics. *Journal of Forestry*, 85



(5), 43-46.

Lai, P-S. & Nepal, S. (2006). Local perspectives of ecotourism development in Tawushan Nature Reserve, *Taiwan Tourism Management*, 27(6),1117-1129.

Lee, H. K.. & Fernando, Y. (2015). The antecedents and outcomes of the medical tourism supply chain. *Tourism Management*, 46, 148-157.

LiewTsonis, J. (2007). Ecotourism and its economic linkages to community development. In Conference Proceedings,8, 298-304.

Lindberg, K. & Hawkins, D.E. (1993). Ecotourism: a guide for planners and managers, Bennington, Vermont, The Ecotourism Society.

Loon, R. & D. Polakow (2001). Ecotourism Ventures: Rags or Riches? *Annals of Tourism Research*. 28, 892–907.

Mackoy, R.D. & Osland, G.E. (2004). Lodge selection and Satisfaction: Attributes valued by Ecotourists. *The Journal of Tourism Studies*, 15 (2), 13–25.

Melhim, I. (2009). Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (ADAJ), 53, DOA, Amman: Jordan.

Mansfeld, Y. & Pizam, A. (Eds.). (2006). Tourism, security and safety. Routledge:London.

Merriam, S. B. (2014). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. John Wiley & Sons.

Mowforth, M. & Munt, I. (2003). Tourism and Sustainability: New Tourism in the Third World, Routledge.

Peng, C., Liu, J., Dang, Q., Zhou, X. & Apps, M. (2002). Developing carbon-based ecological indicators to monitor sustainability of Ontario's forests. *Ecological Indicators*, 1(4), 235-246.

Pizam, A., & Mansfeld, Y. (2006). Toward a theory of tourism security. Tourism, security and safety: From theory to practice, 1-28.

Pollard, J. & Rodriguez, R. D. (1993). Tourism and Torremolinos: recession or reaction to environment?. *Tourism Management*, 14(4), 247-258.

Pretes, M., (1995). Postmodern tourism: the Santa Claus industry. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22(1),1-15.

Punia, B.K., (1994). Tourism management: Problems and prospects. APH Publishing.

Rainforest Alliance (2000) Mohonk Agreement A framework and principles for the certification of sustainable and ecotourism (available at: <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/business/tourism/documents/mohonk.pdf> Accessed 04/07/18).

Remenyi, D., (2012), July. Field Methods for Academic Research: Interviews. Academic Conferences Limited.

Richter, L. (1983). Tourism politics and political science a case of not benign neglect. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 10 (3), 313-335.



Rodríguez, G. R. (2010). Ecoturismo Mexicano: la promesa, la realidad y el futuro. Un análisis situacional mediante estudios de caso. *El Periplo Sustentable*, (18), 37-67.

Rogweson, C. M., (2017). Tourism- a new Economic Driver for South Africa. In, *Geography and Economy in South Africa and its Neighbours* (pp: 95-110). Routledge.

Rogerson, C. M. (2018). Towards pro-poor local economic development: the case for sectoral targeting in South Africa. In *Local Economic Development in the Changing World* (pp. 75-100). Routledge.

Ross, S. & Wall, G. (1999). Ecotourism: Towards Congruence between Theory and Practice. *Tourism Management*, 20, 123-132.

Rymer, T. M. (1992). Growth of US. Ecotourism and Its Future in the 1990s. *FIU Hospitality Review*, 10, 1-10.

Samawi, H. (2008). *Tourism in Jordan*, Ministry of Culture, Amman: Jordan

Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the Empowerment of Local Communities. *Tourism Management*. 20, 245–249.

Sharpley, R. (2006). Ecotourism: A consumption perspective. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 5(1-2), 7-22.

Sheng-Hsiung, T., Lin, Y-C. & Lin, J-H. (2006). "Evaluating Ecotourism Sustainability from the Integrated Perspective of Resource, Community and Tourism," *Tourism Management*, 27(4), 640-653.

Sleight, P. (1993). *Targeting Customers: How to Use Geodemographics and Lifestyle Data in Your Business*, NTC Publications, Henley on Thames.

Sobh, R. & Perry, C. (2006). Research design and data analysis in realism research. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(11/12), 1194-1209.

Tilbury, D. & Stevenson, R.B. (Ed.). (2002). *Education and Sustainability: responding to the global challenge*. IUCN.

The International Ecotourism Society (2015). (Available at <https://www.ecotourism.org/news/ties-announces-ecotourism-principles-revision>. Accessed: 27/01/2017).

Tsaur, S. H., Lin, Y. C., & Lin, J. H. (2006). Evaluating ecotourism sustainability from the integrated perspective of resource, community and tourism. *Tourism management*, 27(4), 640-653.

Throsby, D. (2016). Tourism, heritage and cultural sustainability: three 'golden rules'. In *Cultural tourism and sustainable local development* (pp. 31-48). Routledge.

UNEP / WTO (2002) The Quebec Declaration (available at: <https://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/quebec-declaration.pdf> ; Accessed 04/07/18)

Wallace, G. N., and Pierce, S. M. (1996). An evaluation of ecotourism in Amazonas, Brazil. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(4), 843—873



Wallace, G. N. & Pierce, S. M. (1996). An evaluation of ecotourism in Amazonas, Brazil. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(4), 843—873

Weaver, D. B., (2001). *The Encyclopedia of Ecotourism*. Wallingford, CABI Publishing.

Weaver, D.B. (2008). *Ecotourism*. Wiley and Sons, Australia.

Weaver, D.B. and Lawton, L.J. (2002) Overnight ecotourist market segmentation in the Gold Coast Hinterland of Australia. *Journal of Travel Research*. 40, 270–280.

Weissmann, A., (2018), 'King talks tourism to "Travel Weekly" Travel Weekly, Amman, 05, March. Available at: <https://kingabdullah.jo/en/news/king-talks-tourism-%E2%80%9Ctravel-weekly%E2%80%9D>.

Wishitemi, B. E. (2008). *Sustainable Community Based Conservation and Tourism Development Adjacent to Protected Areas in Kenya*. Eldoret: Kenya: Moi University press.

Tapper, R. (2001). Tourism and socio economic development: UK tour operators' business approaches in the context of the new international agenda. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 3(5), 351-366.

Wu, C. H. J. (2007). The impact of customer-to-customer interaction and customer homogeneity on customer satisfaction in tourism service—the service encounter prospective. *Tourism Management*, 28(6), 1518-1528.

Zambrano, A. M., Broadbent, E.N., and Durham, W.H. (2010) Social and environmental effects of ecotourism in the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica: the Lapa Rios case. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 9, 62-83.

Zeppel, H. (2006). *Indigenous ecotourism: Sustainable development and management (Vol. 3)*. Wallingford, CABI publishing.

Zhang, X., Zhou, L., Wu, Y., Skitmore, M., & Deng, Z. (2015). Resolving the Conflicts of Sustainable World Heritage Landscapes in Cities: Fully open or limited access for visitors?. *Habitat International*, 46, 91-100.