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Host Perceptions of Tourism Development: The Case of Petra¹

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ABSTRACT

The nature of tourism sector requires “consumer” to move to where the service is provided. Consumer’s movement to a different place leads to a direct encounter not only with service providers but also with those who live where the service is provided. This encounter results in a set of changes in the host community’s life. By using a self-completion questionnaire, this paper examined the residents’ perceptions of tourism development in Jordan’s main tourist destination, Petra. The findings suggested that the host community in Petra had positive attitudes toward tourism development in their city. The results showed that social and cultural impacts of tourism were most favored by surveyed sample. Host community is also assumed to favor tourism development for its role in bringing about better local services. The results are discussed thoroughly and directions for future research are suggested.

Keywords: Host Perceptions; Impacts of Tourism; Tourism Development; Petra; Jordan

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Introduction²

Unlike goods, services are characterized by inseparability, which basically requires consumer to move to where the service is provided (Calantone & Mazanec, 1991). In tourism context, consumer's movement to a different place leads to a direct encounter not only with service providers but also with those who live where the service is provided. This encounter results in a set of changes in the host community's life. While tourism development may result in positive economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts such as creating jobs, improving life conditions and preserving natural environment, evidence of several negative impacts cannot be overlooked (e.g. traffic congestion and increased price).

Jordan is a young tourist destination in the Middle East where tourism plays a pivotal role in the national economy. Although located in a tumultuous region, Jordan appears to enjoy a satisfactory level of growth in its tourism competitiveness in the Middle East market. Tourism receipts in Jordan increased from about 1461 million JD in 2006 (MoTA, 2007a according to Central Bank of Jordan) to 2923 million JD in 2013 (MoTA, 2013a according to Central Bank of Jordan). Job opportunities created directly in the sector increased from about 31 thousands (MoTA 2007b) to more than 48 thousand Jobs (MoTA 2013b) over the same period. The growing importance of tourism sector in Jordan makes it necessary to understand the attitudes of local communities toward the tourism development. In order for tourism to flourish, it is imperative that local communities have positive attitudes towards tourism development and that they appreciate tourist flux. Yet, previous research shows that the reaction of residents may range from active resistance to a complete adoption of the changes brought by tourism development (Doğan, 1989). Therefore, identifying the attitudes of the local communities is important in order to provide tourism destination organizations' managers and marketers with insights to help them in the planning and policy making process.

With these thoughts in mind, this paper aims at examining the impacts of tourism development as perceived by the local community of Jordan's main tourist destination, Petra.

Literature review

Host perceptions of tourism development has been the focus of several studies in different geographical contexts (Pizam, 1978; Rothman, 1978; Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Shoup, 1985; King, Pizam & Milman, 1993; Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002; Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Sharma & Dyer, 2009; Tsundoda & Mendlinger, 2009; Vareiro, Remoaldo, & Ribeiro, 2013; Zaidan, 2016; Tsai, Wall, Wu., & Linliu, 2016; Rasoolimanesh, Ringle, Jaafar, & Ramayah, 2017). Earlier research tended to highlight the economic benefits brought about by tourism (Pizam, 1978). Yet, the

negative impacts brought about by mass tourism shifted the attention to both positive and negative consequences of the tourism industry (Sharpley, 2014). Since then, numerous studies examined resident's perceptions of socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts of tourism development (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; King et al., 1993). It is argued that host communities often devalue the negative impacts of tourism development when the tourist destination is still in its infantile stage (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Vareiro et al., 2013).

While tourism increases personal income, improved standard of living and creates job opportunities (Tosun, 2002; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006), it often increased prices of goods and services (Pizam, 1978; Var, Kendall & Tarakcioglu, 1985; Tsundoda & Mendlinger, 2009). It is argued that often, landowners and businessmen benefit most from tourism, whereas local people usually suffer from increasing cost of living (Tatoglu, Erdal, Ozgur, & Azakli, 2002). It is suggested that residents who depended on tourism for their livelihood had had more positive attitudes comparing to those who were not dependent on it (Haralambopoulos & Pizam 1996).

The sociocultural impacts of tourism have also received much attention by a number of scholars. Tourism is considered to be an opportunity for communities to know other people and other cultures which results in understanding and tolerance to others. Yet, tourism led to commoditization of culture, religion and social values and loss of native language/dialect and traditional values (Ryan, 1991; Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002). The negative sociocultural impacts of tourism include also use of drugs, prostitution and alcoholism (Milman & Pizam 1988; Carter, & Beeton, 2004; Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005).

Nature is often considered the basic element of tourism. The deterioration of nature results in the deterioration of tourism. The preservation of natural environment, establishing new park and nature-based recreation facilities are among the positive environmental impacts brought about by the tourism (Lankford & Howard, 1994). However, unplanned and controlled development can result in disturbing the ecological system, causing pollution and deteriorating of wildlife (Tsai, et al., 2016).

Several studies tried to identify the demographic profile both, supporters of tourism development and resistant ones. Residents who are enthusiastic to tourism development are considered to be more educated, have tourism-dependent income, and are usually employed in jobs with direct relation to tourism (Korça, 1998). It is also argued that wealthier residents are more likely to appreciate tourism (Tsundoda & Mendlinger, 2009).

Tourism proved to be the reason beyond several economic, sociocultural and environmental benefits. Yet, costs of tourism development on local community cannot be overlooked. Host-tourist interaction in the Arab countries generally and in Jordan particularly has received little attention. An earlier study on Jordan's most important tourist destination, Petra, Shoup (1985) found that tourism development in the city had led to major changes in the community's way of life. Although local community used to consider westerns as addicted to alcohol and sex, yet, demonstration effect was evident through imitating westerns in dress and manner. Shoup noted that people in Petra were more effected by Arab tourists, particularly those coming from Saudi

Arabia than western ones. Being born and raised in Petra, the third author's observations indicate that, demonstration effect seems to be much more evident today, particularly among young generation who tends to speak foreign languages more frequently (even among each other) and listen actively to western music.

Methodology

This paper aims at examining the resident's attitudes toward tourism development in Jordan's main tourist destination, Petra. To answer the research question, a self-administrated questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, the first one aimed at collecting demographic information about the respondents, while the second part aimed at measuring the impacts of tourism as perceived by host community using a 35-item scale developed by Ap and Crompton (1998). Ap and Crompton's scale was developed to measure both the belief and evaluation components regarding perceived tourism impacts. To measure the belief component, respondents were asked to rate the level of change related to each item on a five point Likert scale (1= *large decrease*, 2= *moderate decrease*, 3= *no change*, 4= *moderate increase*, and 5= *large increase*). To measure the evaluation component, respondents were asked to rate their level of like or dislike with each item on a 5 point Likert scale where (1= *dislike*, 2= *somewhat dislike*, 3= *neither like nor dislike*, 4= *somewhat like*, and 5= *like*). Thus, a respondent who believed that tourism had led to "positive attitudes of local residents toward tourists" may have indicated a score of 5 for this item. If the respondent's evaluation of this change was something he or she liked, a score of 5 would be assigned. The multiplied score for this item would be a maximum of 25, which indicate a strong and favorable perception with the attitudes of local residents changed by tourism. In this paper, the same methodology was adopted except omitting the additional sixth point "*I don't know*" added to the belief component measurement in the original scale. The factor analysis of the 35-scale resulted in excluding 6 items. Therefore, the new scale consisted of 29 items.

Two close-ended and two 5 Likert scale-based questions were adopted from Milman and Pizam (1988) to examine residents' overall attitude toward tourism. The questionnaire was first written in English, then translated into Arabic by professional bilingual who is specialized in tourism management. Two Arabic-native speaker academicians specialized in tourism management were asked to revise the translation, and in the light of their comments and critics, the final version of the questionnaire was defined. By using a stratified sampling technique, 220 questionnaires were equally distributed to industry-involved and non-involved respondents in Petra. Two local interviewers working in tourism industry were trusted to distribute the questionnaires. In addition to the interviewers being part of the local community, Petra is one of the author's own community, which resulted in easy access to the local people and residents' willingness to participate in the survey (Sherlock, 1999). Data was collected in the first half of January 2015 which is considered a low season in the city. Of the 220

questionnaires 208 were returned. Twelve questionnaires were excluded from the final analysis for the massive amount of missing data. Therefore, 196 questionnaires were usable (112 questionnaires completed by tourism-non-involved respondents and 84 questionnaires completed by tourism-involved respondents). Descriptive analysis was conducted and principle component factor analysis was used. Findings are presented throughout the following part of the paper.

Results

Demographic profile of respondents:

The overwhelming majority of respondents were male (78.6 percent) who were married (64.3 percent), holding a Bachelor degree (56.6 percent) and living in Petra for more than 15 years (75.5 percent). The median age of most respondents (40.8 percent) was between 25 and 34 years. About 57 percent of respondents who were involved in tourism industry reported to be working in hotels and 8.3 percent were working in travel agencies, while most of those who are not involved in tourism industry were civil servants (70.5 percent).

Overall attitude toward tourism

Results suggested that host community in Petra generally favored tourism development. About 76.5 percent of the surveyed sample favored somewhat or strongly favored the presence of tourism in the city. The majority (56.6 percent) said that tourism activities improved somewhat or significantly improved the image of Petra. More than half of the respondents (about 52.5 percent) reported that they would willingly take jobs in the tourism industry. Fifty-four percent said they would suggest to their friends or relatives to take jobs in the tourism industry.

Perceived impacts of tourism

Principle component factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to determine the underlying factors. Only items with factor loadings and commonalities greater 0.4 were included in the final factor structure. Therefore, 6 items of the original scale were excluded. The factor analysis generated 7 factors with relatively high internal consistency ranging from .77 to .91. The coefficient of internal consistency of the total scale reliability was calculated as .92 indicating a high reliability of the instrument (Nunnally, 1978).

As illustrated in table 1, items related to the cultural impacts of tourism received the highest mean scores. In addition to that, local community in Petra seems to acknowledge tourism for its contribution to the development of the local services.

Table 1: Factor Analysis of the Perceived Impacts of Tourism Development

Impacts of Tourism	Means	SD	Rank
Social and Cultural (<i>Eigenvalue=10.69; Variance=34.49; Alpha=.88</i>)			
Demand for historical activities and programs	9.94	6.89	23
Demand for cultural activities and programs	10.53	6.34	18
Variety of cultural facilities and activities in the community	10.46	6.26	21
Opportunity to learn about other people and cultures	14.22	6.79	2
Awareness/ recognition of the local culture and heritage	12.86	6.37	8
Variety of entertainment in the area	10.47	5.82	20
Opportunities to meet interesting people	14.27	6.49	1
Economic (<i>Eigenvalue=3.21; Variance=10.38; Alpha=.88</i>)			
Personal income of local residents	11.49	6.39	13
Amount of income going to local businesses	11.50	6.56	12
Revenue generated in the local community	12.30	6.33	9
Investment and development spending in the area	11.08	5.64	17
Variety of shopping facilities in the area	11.48	5.74	14
Crowding and Congestion (<i>Eigenvalue=2.41; Variance=7.78; Alpha=.91</i>)			
Size of crowds that restrict what activities you do in public areas	9.48	5.91	24
Size of crowds that affect your enjoyment of activities in public areas	9.21	5.89	25
Level of traffic congestion in the area	10.14	6.54	22
Noise level in the community	8.53	6.05	27
Community attitude (<i>Eigenvalue=1.98; Variance=6.40; Alpha=.88</i>)			
Community spirit among local residents	12.17	7.00	10
Pride of local residents	13.54	7.49	6
Positive attitudes of local residents toward tourists	11.62	6.94	11

Local Services (<i>Eigenvalue=1.51; Variance=4.87; Alpha=.77</i>)			
Physical ability of local services (e.g. police, fire, medical, and utilities)	13.93	6.69	4
Quality of local services (e.g. police, fire, medical, and utilities)	13.87	6.60	5
Financial resources of local services (e.g. police, fire, medical, and utilities)	14.11	11.75	3
Level of urbanization (city-type development) in the area	13.36	6.94	7
Costs and Taxes (<i>Eigenvalue=1.32; Variance=4.26; Alpha=.89</i>)			
Amount of local property taxes collected	8.24	5.84	29
Amount of local sales taxes collected	8.47	5.90	28
Amount of local taxes collected	8.64	5.89	26
Environmental (<i>Eigenvalue=1.21; Variance=3.91; Alpha=.82</i>)			
Wildlife (plants, birds, and animals) in the local area	11.10	5.80	16
Quality of natural environment	11.27	5.69	15
Natural environment	10.49	5.53	19

Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of this paper was to examine the host perceptions of tourism development in Jordan's main tourist destination-Petra. By adopting Ap and Crompton (1998)'s scale and questions from Milman and Pizam (1988), a self-administrated questionnaire was designed and distributed to the local community in Petra. Data was collected from both tourism-involved and tourism-non-involved residents.

This paper showed that the host community in Petra has positive attitudes toward tourism development. It also suggested that social and cultural impacts of tourism like "opportunities to meet interesting people" and "opportunity to learn about other people and cultures" were most favored by surveyed sample. Host community is also assumed to favor tourism development in the city for the role of tourism in bringing about better local services.

This paper examined resident's perceptions of tourism in one destination in Jordan. It would be difficult therefore, to generalize the findings without conducting similar research in different destinations in the country. Another major limitation of this paper

is that respondents may be biased as they were approached by interviewers known to them and were asked to give information for researchers also partially known to them. Both interviewers were male, the authors admit that they should have considered the conservative nature of the local community in Petra and that a female interviewer should have been assigned to collect the data as well. This probably explains the high percentage of male respondents (78 percent) in this study. In other words, the findings might not be an accurate reflection of the host perceptions. To ensure full representation of the local community, similar studies should take into consideration the need to have access to wider and heterogeneous sample. For instant, recent figures show that out of 1164 employees in hotels in Petra, only 38 (3 percent) are female (MoTA, 2016). Although interest in tourism education among female Jordanian students has been recently increasing (Alrawadieh & Alrawadieh, 2015), tourism appears not to be appealing for female Jordanians especially in Petra. Therefore, it is important to understand the host perceptions of tourism development from the perspective of female residents.

Future research may approach the topic from a cross-sectional perspective within the tourism industry, that is, to investigate the perceived impacts of tourism by industry-dependents from different sector segmentations (hoteliers, tour guides, tourism planner and consultants).

Petra is the home of a number of half-western families. Perhaps one of the most popular is Marguerite van Geldermalsen, a New Zealand-born nurse who came to Petra in 1978 as a tourist, she got married with a local gentleman and wrote her story in a book entitled "*Married to a Bedouin*". In the context of host-tourist interaction, it seems to be interesting to examine the attitudes of the yesterday's tourists who are, today's hosts toward tourism development.

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