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▶ To cite this version:

HAL Id: hal-01343577

https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01343577

Submitted on 12 Jul 2016

Sustainable Tourism in Lebanon

An innovative approach in cultural landscape management

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Abstract

Protecting cultural landscapes is about managing the relation between the living heritage and the physical environment. Since the 19th century, scientists are interested in landscapes as field of research because of their distinctive, interconnected natural and cultural values. In Lebanon, cultural landscapes are affected by the ineffective management and protection as well as the inappropriate land uses. Furthermore, sustainable tourism which has merged in the last decade, is still unable to solve the negative impacts caused by mass tourism on the Lebanese cultural landscape. Therefore, for the purpose of improving sustainable tourism management at cultural landscape, this research aims to explore the characteristics of cultural landscape, through the identification of natural and cultural resources, and to assess their management and protection strategies based on an innovative approach in cultural landscape management.

Data were gathered based on nine semi-structured interviews with main stakeholders at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine and two major national tour operators; in addition to the non-participant observations conducted by the researcher to reveal important facts about different aspects of the cultural landscapes selected. The study revealed that the historical identity of the landscapes is negatively affected by the decline of the agriculture sector and the ineffective protection of the intangible heritage. On the other hand, a scoring system was adopted to measure and evaluate the level of sustainable tourism management; it demonstrated a fairly handled management practices for both landscapes with an advanced performance for Maaser El Shouf.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Cultural landscapes, Management, Heritage, Natural and Cultural Profiling

Résumé

La protection des paysages culturels consiste à bien gérer la relation entre l'héritage vivant et l'environnement physique. Dès le 19ème siècle, les chercheurs se sont intéressés par les paysages, grâce à leur aspect distinctif, et leurs valeurs naturelles et culturelles connectées. Au Liban, les paysages culturels sont influencés par la gestion inefficace et l'absence de protection aussi bien que par l'utilisation inappropriée des terrains. En outre, le tourisme durable qui s'est introduit la décennie dernière, ne peut pas toujours résoudre les impacts négatifs causés par le tourisme de masse sur le paysage culturel Libanais. Dans le but d'améliorer la gestion de tourisme durable au paysage culturel, cette recherche vise à explorer les caractéristiques du paysage culturel. D'abord par l'identification des ressources naturelles et culturelles, ensuite, par l'évaluation des stratégies du management et de protection de ces ressources, en se basant sur une approche innovante de gestion du paysage culturel.

Les données ont été collectées à partir de neuf entrevues semi-structurées avec les parties prenantes principales à Maaser El Shouf et à Bkassine, ainsi qu'avec deux grands tours opérateurs nationaux. En plus, des observations non-participantes ont été réalisées par le chercheur afin de révéler des aspects importants des paysages culturels étudiés. L'étude a démontré que l'identité historique des paysages est négativement influencée par la baisse du secteur agricole et la protection inefficace de l'héritage intangible. D'autre part, un système de notation, a été adopté pour mesurer et évaluer l'efficacité de gestion de tourisme durable, qui a montré des pratiques assez efficaces de gestion pour les deux paysages avec une performance supérieure pour Maaser El Shouf.

Mots-clés : Tourisme Durable, Paysages culturels, Gestion, Héritage, Profilage Naturel et Culturel

1. Introduction

Mass tourism is the concept that describes the mass number of tourists travelling together to the same tourism destination (Sezgin, and Yolal, 2012). During 2014, international tourism has contributed to 10% growth to the world GDP, which is equal to US$7.6 trillion economic generation, and 277 million jobs for the global economy (WTTC, 2015). On the opposite, while there are limited or no statistics showing sustainable tourism contribution to global GDP; studies have focused on the positive impacts this form of alternative tourism can bring to the environment, the society and the economy.

Sustainable tourism is the concept that encourages and maintains a sustainable economic, social and environmental development; promote environmentally friendly behavior, while preserving the natural and cultural heritage to satisfy present and future needs (Byrd, 2007). The purpose of adopting and implementing sustainable tourism is to maintain a balance between environmental protection and social cohesion and stabilizing the economic structure of tourism destinations (Gagnon, 2007; Lejeune, 2010).

Therefore, it is clear that mass tourism can contribute to the growth of the global GDP on a short term but its negative impacts on the society and the environment are crucial, such as, changing the cultural system and the social behavior, causing cultural clashes, environmental pollution, and degradation of biodiversity, etc. (Bogahawatte, 2013; Kim, 2002).

In Lebanon, sustainable tourism which has merged in the last decade, is unable to solve the negative impacts caused by mass tourism. This is due to its ineffective implementation, the lack of cooperation between the different stakeholders involved in creating sustainable tourism packages. Furthermore, the absence of a national sustainable tourism strategy is enhanced by the fact that the year 2015 witnessed the launching of the first comprehensive national rural tourism strategy in Lebanon (Lebanon rural tourism strategy, 2015; Faculty of tourism, 2014).

Rural areas are mostly affected by these negative impacts resulting in a change in rural inhabitants' living patterns, the decline of the agricultural sector and the deterioration of the cultural and natural landscape (Fawaz and Peillen, 2004). Rural areas constitute now 12% only of the total population in Lebanon (Central Administration of Statistics-CAS, 2014).

Rural areas can take the form of natural and cultural landscapes (Landscape Europe, 2014). Cultural landscapes which are the core of this study, are those modified by people, and thus are more affected by the negative impacts of tourism. According to McCool and Moisey (2008), cultural landscapes as those associated with the history of indigenous people and the associated issues of territory, dislocation, secret knowledge, lost language and sacredness. Though, Mitchell *et al*. (2011) take the view that cultural landscapes are those where human interaction with natural system has over a long time, formed a distinctive landscape, these interactions arise from and cause cultural values to develop.

Adopting this definition, is about admitting that cultural landscapes are the symbol of heritage and represent the memory of a place. Since sustainable tourism promotes the sustainability and the protection of heritage for present and future generations, it is then the most effective tool that could be implemented to manage and protect the authenticity and richness of cultural landscape.

Within this context, the objectives of this study were to explore the identity of the cultural landscapes selected: Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine through the identification of natural and cultural resources from an integrated approach, and to assess their management and protection strategies based on an innovative approach in cultural landscape management. Results were used to develop sustainable tourism strategies and provide recommendations for tourism stakeholders at cultural landscapes for a better implementation of sustainable tourism.

2. Literature review

2.1. Culture and landscape: the combination of heritage and memory

In order to understand landscape components, it is important to differentiate between natural and cultural landscapes. "*Natural landscapes are made up of a collection of landforms, such as mountains, hills; plains, plateaus, and natural vegetation, etc.*". Though, landscapes that have been modified by people are cultural landscapes (national geographic, 2015).

To further understand and study the concept of cultural landscape, it is important to define the terms culture and landscape separately. While there is no universally accepted definition of culture, it can be classically defined as *"a dynamic process whereby people are actively engaged in constructing group life and its products"* (Johnston *et al.* 2000). Thus, the culture of a specific society is characterized by its dynamism, and the power of man in creating the components of heritage such as traditions, knowledge, beliefs, etc.

Landscape are the physical aspect of societies, that helps communities in viewing the environment and understating its composition (Mitchell *et al.* 2011). Hence, arising from the evolving means of culture and landscape, the concept of cultural landscape is the living heritage, whereby the history of societies is enhanced, and maintained but susceptible to change. Going deeper into tourism research, scholars argued upon that landscape assessment is the best way to address the concept of cultural landscape for a better management and protection strategies (Esposito and Cavelzani, 2006).

Traditional landscape assessment techniques used by experts failed to reflect the nature and range of values in a cultural landscape because it evaluates only one single aspect or discipline. New assessment models (Stephenson, 2008, Antrop, 2004, Plieninger, *et al.* 2013) offer an integrated approach to the landscape concept which study the cultural landscape from three different aspects: the physical form of the landscape, human relationships with the landscape and the actions or processes within the landscape.

However, assessing cultural landscape requires also the evaluation of landscape evolution and factors of change. Cultural landscapes have witnessed many changes due to globalization, the changing demographical characteristics. Furthermore, the changing living patterns which is seen in the decline of the agricultural sector in the 20th century and the movement of people from rural areas to urban ones searching for better life conditions (Plieninger et al, 2013). Furthermore, tourism is one of the major factors driving changes in cultural landscape due to the uncontrollable increasing number of visitors (Dorobantu and Nistoreanu, 2012).

2.2. The evolution of cultural landscapes: historical overview

The historical value of cultural landscapes is associated with painting. In the sixteen century painters inspired their work from the landscape' aesthetic characteristics. However, in the 11th century, the European paintings were influenced by the dynamics and wildlife of cultural landscapes. This was until the 19th century when scientists showed an interest in landscapes as fields of research, adopted mainly by the English, German, and French schools of geography.

Starting 20th century until today, cultural landscapes are seen as more than just places of beautiful and attractive features where people can enjoy and relax, however, as complex of interconnected values, and a symbol of cultural identity that distinguish a specific society (Mitchell *et al.* 2009). Moreover, the uniqueness of cultural landscapes is enhanced by its associated tourism value.

The concept of cultural tourism is defined as "*Tourism that embraces a destination lifestyle, heritage, arts, and people, make a destination distinctive and contribute to a range of visitor's experience*" (Rosenfeld, 2008). As major attractions of cultural tourism, cultural landscapes are attracting thousands of visitors, especially, after the designation of outstanding cultural landscapes as World Heritage Sites (WHS) (Esposito and Cavelzani, 2006).

Managing tourism at cultural landscapes is a subject that has been widely explored by tourism researchers for many years. An interest which has been motivated by the recognition of the importance of protecting landscapes while making them accessible for tourists. Many examples illustrate how effective tourism management have maintained a protected environment.

For instance, in the case of Grenada (the Isle of Spice), the Carriacouans (indigenous people of Carriacou which is the largest area in Grenada) has benefited from tourism to create, recreate and enhance their exclusive cultural heritage and build their identity (Montero, 2014). This shed the light on the role of local communities as main stakeholders in tourism management. Furthermore, the case of Angkor in Cambodia (designated as World Heritage Cultural landscape in 1992) demonstrated that the effective management of the relation between cultural resources and tourism is one factor for the success of cultural landscape management (Winter, 2004).

At the opposite, in the Mediterranean region, in Lebanon for example, the unguided tourism practices as well as the ineffective protection frameworks have led to many negative impacts on cultural landscapes (Faculty of tourism, 2014). The fact that the total population of rural areas in Lebanon constitutes 12% only of the total Lebanese population (Central Administration of Statistics-CAS, 2014) is an indicator of culture loss and damaged identity. Therefore, the question of effective landscape management and protection should be discussed within the context of sustainable tourism which can revitalize and protect the cultural identity of vulnerable societies in Lebanon.

The general management framework of cultural landscapes is constituted of three main components. First, the "guiding principles" determine that the approach to be adopted should be related to the values and characteristics of the cultural landscape. Second, the "management process" which enhances on the importance of involving all the stakeholders concerned to evaluate the assets of the landscapes. Third "sustaining management" by implementing sustainable management and protection strategies (Mitchell *et al*. 2009).

2.3. Sustainable tourism and cultural landscapes

Sustainable tourism is "*tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities*" (UNWTO, 2011). Hence, implementing sustainable tourism requires the identification and management of all resources in a sustainable way, and the creation of equity between the needs of different present and future tourism stakeholders including visitors, host communities, tourism businesses, etc.

The introduction of sustainable tourism concept in 1972, with the first international conference on the human environment created many requirements on tourism destinations. Today, many tourism destinations around the world in both developed and developing countries are emphasizing the development of tourism to drive their "green" economic growth (CDR, 2011; CIADT, 2003). Studying the effectiveness and success of sustainable tourism is about measuring the three dimensions of sustainability: the economic, social and the environmental dimension (Stevens, 2006). Within the context of cultural landscapes,

sustainability should be adopted to avoid destroying the various values of its natural and cultural environment (Luekveerawattana, 2012).

From an economic perspective sustainability at cultural landscapes is about local people employment, fair trade, managing tourism visitation, providing tourism packages while preserving the authenticity and identity of the landscape. In other word, the intangible values of cultural landscapes should be maintained and protected (IUCN, 2008).

The relation between intangibility and tourism is emphasized by international laws that insisted on the protection of the intangible heritage as equivalent to the protection of the built environment, stating that "*the intangible elements that contribute to the identity and spirit of places need to be established and preserved, since they help in determining the character of an area and its spirit*" (ICCROM, 2009).

From a social perspective, sustainability at cultural landscapes requires the maintenance of social integrity, gender equity, the protection of heritage, and the active participation of local community in managing tourism. Finally, the environmentally sustainable aspect of managing tourism at cultural landscape necessitates the protection of biodiversity (flora and fauna), the existence of renewable energy techniques, and the existence of protection frameworks that prohibit tourism activities causing damages to the environmental resources especially to the rare and endangered, etc. (Europarc, 2014).
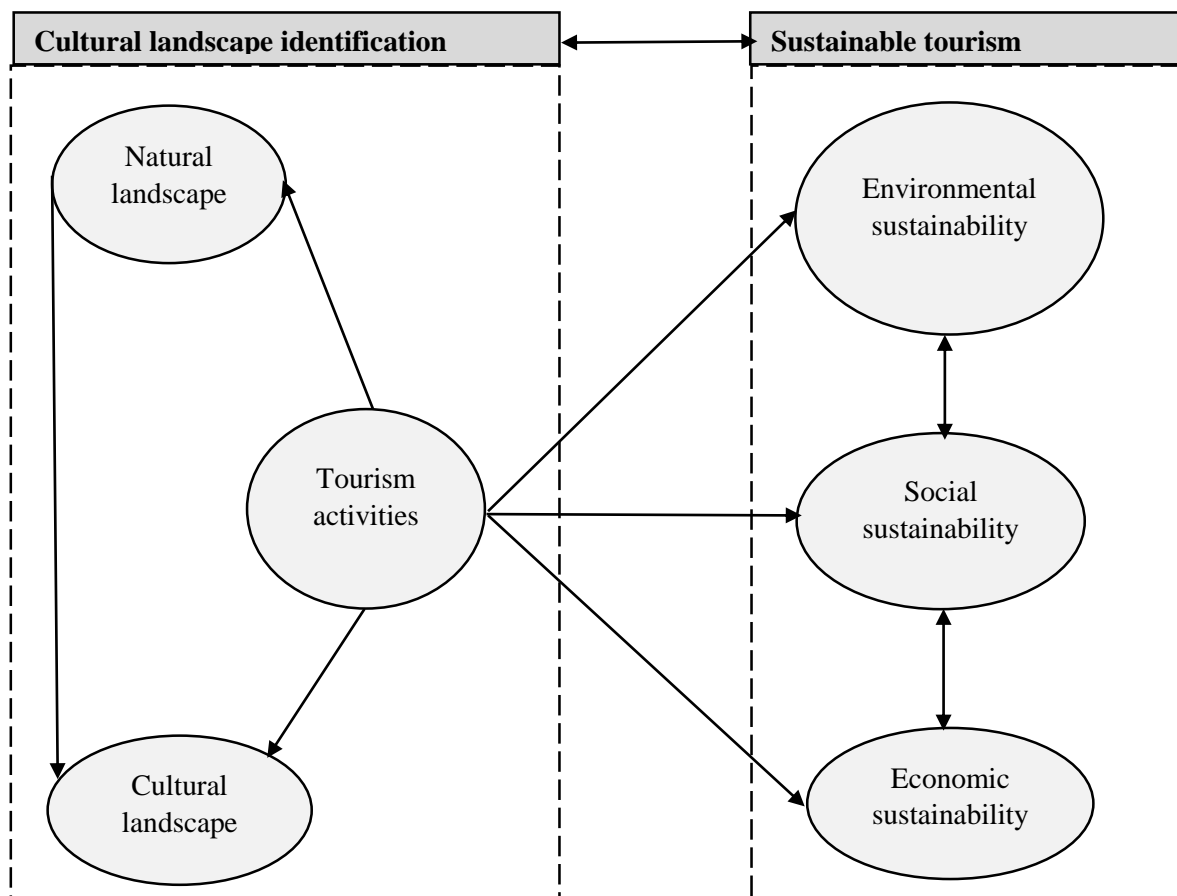
3. Methodology

Fig.1. Conceptual framework of cultural landscape management and sustainable tourism within the Lebanese context

The methodology adopted in this research is based on the theory of cultural landscape management, and its relation with sustainable tourism which is highlighted in the conceptual framework elaborated (figure 1). According to the literature review, cultural landscapes are natural landscapes modified by people. These landscapes have developed over the history to become attractive tourism destinations. The implementation of sustainable tourism is characterized by the environmental, social and economic sustainable management to maintain a protective heritage and natural system as well as an equitable economic process.

In order to be able to study the relation identified in the conceptual framework, two cultural landscapes in Lebanon were selected. **Bkassine** and **Maaser El Shouf**. Bkassine lies in the South of Lebanon and Maaser El Shouf is located in the Mount of Lebanon. The choice of the study areas was guided by several variables: landscapes that are distinctive, varied cultural and natural values, unique attractions, tourism services availability, a local community that has developed strong connections with the landscape over time.

The identification of the two cultural landscapes selected was based on nineteen semi structured interviews with the mayors of the municipalities, six members of the local residents in each landscape (the local residents interviewed were selected based on some criteria: age between 40 and 70, long experience and a sense of belonging to the cultural landscape), two major national tour operators, and one member of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve-SBR team (technical coordinator of marketing and communication).

Additionally, one telephone interview was conducted with the manager of La Maison De La Forêt- LMDLF (one major attraction in Bkassine cultural landscape). Furthermore, the researcher relied on non-participant observations to reveal important facts about different aspects of the cultural landscapes.

On the other hand, for the purpose of measuring and evaluating the level of sustainable management at cultural landscapes, a total of 118 indicators (which are in majority qualitative) were developed and tested using scoring system per dimension (table 1). These indicators were developed based on the concept of sustainable tourism at cultural landscapes, and the results of HELAND (heritage and landscape) project, which was conducted for a period of four years by the Lebanese university-faculty of tourism and hospitality management, in addition to six regional institutions.

Table.1. Scoring system per dimension for Maaser El Shouf & Bkassine measurement of sustainability

Type of answers	Empirical values				
	0	1	2	3	4
Qualitative	Weak	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Percentage	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
Yes, or no	Not existing		Existing but need improvement		Existing

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, each indicator was given a score as mentioned in table one. A hypothesis testing (T-test) was used to test the results of the overall score of sustainable tourism management obtained between Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine. Finally, the comparative analysis conducted between Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine was used to develop effective sustainable tourism strategies.

4. Findings

4.1. The physical characteristics of the landscape

The name of Maaser El Shouf is associated to the existence of mills "Maaser" in Arabic at the region, which was a main activity for local residents, and "Shouf" since the region is located in the high mountain. The village has a population of 1,450 people from which 950 are permanent residents. It has an area of 1,843 hectares with 1,250 above sea level. Maaser El Shouf is one of the 24 villages (figure 2) protected and promoted by an Appointed Protected Area Committee (APAC) which is represented by the Shouf Biosphere Reserve (SBR) management team and Al-Shouf Cedar Society (ACS).

The Shouf Nature Reserve was declared by UNESCO as Biosphere Reserve in 2005. The reserve is the largest in Lebanon (5% of the Lebanese rural territory), with the most extensive cedar stands accounting for 25% of the remaining cedar forests in the country. The SBR includes: Al- Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve as an IBA: Important Bird Area (established in 1996 by Law No.532), the Ammiq Wetland protected area and 24 villages surrounding the biosphere from the eastern and western sides of the Barouk and Niha mountains.

Fig.2. Geographical location of Maaser El Shouf in relation to the Shouf Biosphere Reserve (source: Shouf Biosphere Reserve, http://www.shoufcedar.org/map)

Bkassine is a Phoenician word symbolizing "the city of sin" meaning the sun or the moon. In the French language, Bkassine means "Bécasse" which is an endemic bird (land chicken)

and it is abundant in Bkassine (Hnainy, 1999; Ghanem, 2007). It is located in South of Lebanon at an altitude of 810 m above sea level. The village with a surface area of 510 hectares stands on the foot of Misha Mountain, and it is surrounded by the mountain of Niha from the East. It has a topography varying between 1000 m till 500 m at the Awwali River (figure 3). Bkassine has a population of 1000 residents from which 500 are permanent.
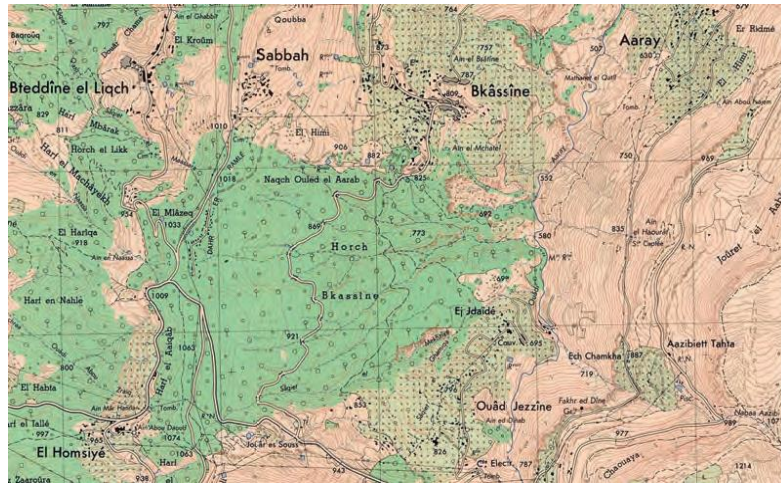

Fig.3. Bkassine topographic map *(Lebanese Army - Directorate of Geographic and Geodetic Affairs)*

4.2. Natural and cultural profiling

Maaser El Shouf is distinguished by its Cedar Reserve (which is part of the Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve) and is one of the oldest and most historically significant arboreal patches of land in the world. Having a symbolic value, Maaser El Shouf Cedar Forest (Arz El Maaser) is home to the world's oldest Cedar tree, estimated to be around 4,000 years old.

Bkassine is featured with its forest, known as "Bkassine Forest" with an area of 2,200,000 m². The forest is gifted by nature with a large and exquisite pine forest: Bkassine Pine Forest (BPF), which covers an area of 1 million m², making it the largest pine forest in Lebanon and in the Middle East. The forest is considered as "Hima Baladi", it is owned by the municipality and protected since 1997 by Decision # 3 issued by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).

Table.2. Biodiversity richness of Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine cultural landscapes

	Flora species	Fauna species
Maaser El Shouf [1]		
Well known	520 types including Syrian Acanthus, Kotschy's milfoil, Mountain anemone	32 wild mammals 275 types of birds 31 types of reptiles
Rare	14 types	9 types of wild mammals including pig, wolf, hyena 19 types of birds
Bkassine [2]		
Well known	Pine, oak, malloul, kaykab, Ghibri, defran	Many type of birds including: rock, Abou Zreik, Hassun, Em Skaakaa
Rare	Some types of wild flowers including medical ones	N/A
Endangered	N/A	Bécasse (land chicken)

[1] 30 types of the 520 flora species have economic potential values such as thyme and 50 types are considered as aromatic.

[2] The forest of Bkassine includes more than 100 types of plants, abundant is the pine trees with economic values.

Both landscapes encompass other natural resources including the landscape itself which is consider as rocky with fertile plains at Bkassine, and with high percentage of green areas at Maaser El Shouf in addition to the richness in biodiversity (flora and fauna) (table 2). Despite their significance for the local communities and visitors, the majority of natural resources identified at both landscapes, lack effective preservation strategies.

However, in the case of Maaser El Shouf, the division of the SBR into core area (representing the nature reserve), the buffer zone (for tourism and non-tourism activities) and the transition zone (where Maaser El Shouf exist) helps as possible as in protecting the authenticity of the landscape.

On the other hand, the identity of the landscapes is enhanced by recognizable cultural tangible and intangible values. The tangible values (table 3) at both landscapes include a variety of religious sites and other historical monuments. Three of the mills at Maaser El Shouf were considered as center of economic activities. Bkassine on the opposite, is well known for "Saint Takla church" which is one of the oldest in Lebanon and the second in the world. The church was built in the early century, renewed in 1750 to sustain the increasing number of visitors, and today it is classified as an antiquarian monument.

Table.3. Tangible cultural sites at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine landscapes

	Site	Value
Maaser El Shouf	Old roman caves	Historical
	Water mills	Cultural
	Pounders	Historical, cultural, industrial
	Old traditional houses	Sustainable
	Roman burial sites[1]	Memorial
	Pottery sites	Industrial
	Roman stone fortress	Historical and cultural
	Vineyards	Historical and industrial
	Mulberry orchards	Historical and industrial
Bkassine	Water and hydraulic mills	Historical and cultural
	Religious sites	Cultural and touristic
	Roofed traditional houses	Cultural and sustainable
	Old olive oil presses	Historical and industrial

[1] Based on the Roman burial sites and pottery identified at Maaser El Shouf, scholars have been able to date back the village to the year 450 B.C.E

4.3. Human relationships with the landscape

The findings of the interviews conducted with the local residents at both landscapes revealed great interest, an attachment and appreciation to the landscape' intangible values including myths, stories, memories, historical events, etc. At Maaser El Shouf for example, the physical tangible features of the region such as the caves inside the forest (El Khouri sarcophagi), the Roman inscriptions, the grape presses, etc. were identified by the local residents as having intangible meanings, because they are associated with the 1800 and 1900s way of living, and they were principle source of economic revenues.

4.4. The different processes within the landscape

Agricultural activities were the most important source for generating income at both landscapes. Today the farming activities at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine occupies only 10 to 20% of the economic sector and is considered as a secondary source of income. Although, Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine are both attractive tourism destinations, tourism is considered

as an income generating alternative because of its seasonal nature, where local residents cannot rely on tourism benefits all year round.

The most common types of tourism enjoyed by visitors at both landscapes are ecotourism, and culture tourism. Results of the interviews conducted with the tour operators selected revealed a lack of interest in organizing tours to Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine. This could be associated with the ineffective cooperation between the landscape and the tour operators.

At Maaser El Shouf, visitors can do hiking, cultural tours in the village, sightseeing, biking, food tasting, bird watching, etc. Regarding the tourism facilities provided, Maaser El Shouf offers three type of eco-friendly accommodation: Auberge St. Michael, Maaser eco-lodge, and two guest houses.

Bkassine on the other hand, provides visitors the opportunity to enjoy different types of tourism activities including hiking, represented mainly by the hiking trails inside Bkassine forest, camping, horse riding, and religious tourism. In addition to the activities taking place at La Maison De La Forêt-LMDLF including climbing, rappelling, canoeing, etc. Guest houses and wooden tents as well as other alternative lodging such as the Albergo Diffuso (which is partly a house and partly a hotel) are all types of accommodations provided for visitors all year round.

4.5. Sustainable tourism at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine: a comparative analysis

This part of the results is analytical and empirical, it measures sustainable management at cultural landscapes. The 118 indicators selected were divided under seven categories of sustainable tourism (table 4). The scoring system as stated earlier was used to evaluate the level of sustainable tourism management at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine based on a 100% weight score (Total score of indicators is between 0-20%: very weak; 21-40%: weak; 41-60%: fair; 61-80%: good; 81-100%: very good).

4.5.1. Measuring the indicators of sustainable tourism at cultural landscapes

Table.4. Measuring sustainable tourism management at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine

Category	Max total score	Maaser El Shouf		Evaluation	Bkassine		Evaluation
		Value	%		Value	%	
Conservation of natural and cultural resources	84	46	54.7	Fair	44	52.4	Fair
Tourism and community development	24	15	62.5	Good	15	62.5	Good
Monitoring tourism visitation	44	24	54.5	Fair	19	43.2	Fair
Use of new technology	64	29	45.3	Fair	5	7.8	Very weak
Effective overall management	112	59	52.6	Fair	38	33.9	Weak
Planning and research	80	58	72.5	Good	43	53.7	Fair
Successful marketing and promotion strategies	64	30	46.9	Fair	21	32.8	Weak

The indicators of "conservation of natural and cultural resources" which are indicators of environmental sustainability included the existence of fresh water, unspoiled sector, species assessment, biodiversity conservation frameworks, existence of support from tourism revenues for conservation purposes, linkages between reforestation programs and tourism activities, existence of renewable energy techniques, preservation of the intangible values, etc. Results in

table 4 revealed that the protection and management of natural and cultural resources at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine is evaluated as fair.

For example, the implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment-EIA at Maaser El Shouf which is a method of specie assessment is an indicator of environmental protection. While, at Bkassine the protection of biodiversity takes the form of forbidding harmful activities only (such as grazing) which is consider as ineffective tool. Furthermore, the hunting law at both landscapes is not well applied. But this is not because of the bad management, however, because of the ineffective application of the law n° 580, date 25/02/2004 (ministry of environment, 2013) in all the Lebanese regions.

Moreover, the tourism managers interviewed at Bkassine, showed more interest in the intangible values than at Maaser El Shouf. The LMDLF at Bkassine is taken into consideration the protection of food heritage at the region by presenting for visitors authentic Lebanese food. However, none of the sites are maintaining the linkage between these values and the identity of the villages. It is worth mentioning, that the lack of effective protection strategies is not always related to the bad management of the natural and cultural resources, but to the lack of cooperation between the different stakeholders involved or the absence of national protection laws.

"The tourism and community development" category of economic and social sustainability which is evaluated as good at both landscapes, included indicators about tourism contribution to economic development, gender equality in the tourism industry, employment seasonality… It is clear from the total score that tourism strategies at both landscapes are being developed in a way that contribute to the sustainable local economic development and community improvement.

While there is no difference between the two sites in term of managing tourism, Maaser El Shouf was able to improve the economic structure to a big extent due to the existence of the El Shouf Cedar nature reserve and its effective management. As opposite to Bkassine with 1000 visitors to the Pine forest in 2013, Maaser El Shouf attracted more than 30,000 visitors (figure 4) with 15-20% annual growth. Despite the security instability since 2010 till now, Maaser El Shouf has been able to maintain tourism growth while enhancing domestic tourism.
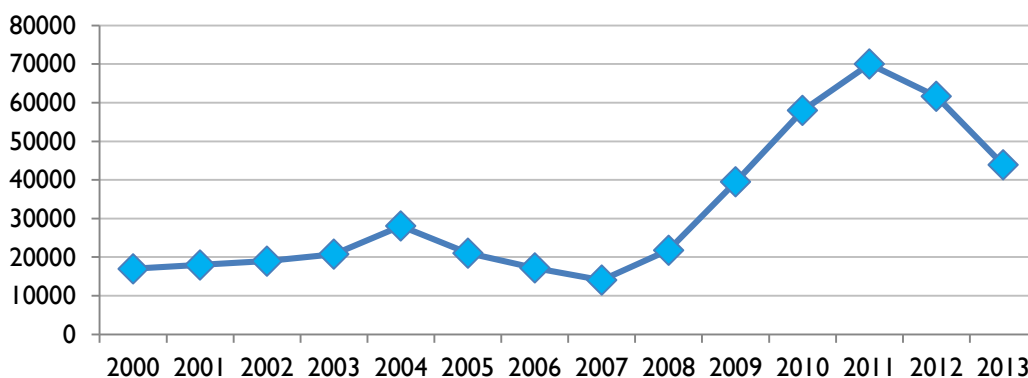

Fig.4. Yearly visitor number to El Shouf Cedar nature reserve

It is true that managing tourism in a way that contribute to sustainable economic growth was rated as good at both landscapes, but managing negative tourism impacts caused by the uncontrollable tourists' behavior and practices was evaluated as fair at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine. The restrictions presented in the form of panels at the four entrances of the nature reserve at Maaser El Shouf and in the form of verbal communication at Bkassine are not enough to control tourism visitation.

Moreover, no visit limitations (limited group size, seasonal limits) are required at both landscapes. But still at Maaser El Shouf in case of extreme weather and proliferation of flora and fauna species for example, visitations are restricted and open for small group size only. This could be interpreted either as a lack of awareness about the impacts of visitors or with the mission strategy which emphasizes on the generation of revenues as the main tourism goal.

The "use of new technology" was measured by the existence of GIS maps for tourism purposes, 3D modeling, virtual tours, which are all methods of decreasing visitor's impacts and managing tourism visitations while enhancing tourists' satisfaction. Other indicators included the existence of fire sensors for forest protection, existence of budget to invest in new technologies, existence of Computerized Visitor Access Control, etc. The overall score for this category is rated as fair for Maaser El Shouf and very weak for Bkassine. This is due to the lack of available financial resources and the absence of skilled local employees to use these technological tools. Despite the low rating, still Maaser El Shouf is considered the pioneer in Lebanon in the use of technology in managing cultural landscapes.

For the "effective overall management of the landscape", Maaser El Shouf is evaluated as fair, while Bkassine as weak. The former was able to implement more effective management strategies, developed mainly by the SBR team. For instance, the existence of an information office and the implementation of the international law No.532 that protects the nature reserve and its resources.

Networking and cooperation with external partners is also an indicator of sustainable management. Maaser El Shouf for example is in twining and networking with the ministry of environment, and Arcenciel which manage the accommodation sector in cooperation with the SBR team, etc. Bkassine, has also many partners including the ministry of environment, Union of Jezzine Municipalities, cooperative of native tree producers of Lebanon…

However, management at both landscape lacks the main indicators of sustainable development at a national and regional level. These included: being member of an international convention, existence of a code of conduct for visitors and tourism professionals, the application of carrying capacity techniques, and environmental carrying capacity in addition to the ability to identify and adopt to future trends and changes.

"Planning and research" identified mainly by the existence and implementation of business plan, action plan, strategic plan, crisis management plan, land zoning, solid waste and water management plans, water demand calculation etc. is evaluated as good for Maaser El Shouf and fair for Bkassine. At Maaser El Shouf, the SBR team in coordination with the municipality have developed an ecotourism plan, risk prevention and management plan, and the plan of sewage and installation of filtering system.

At Bkassine, the municipality in coordination with the Union of Jezzine municipalities has created an ecotourism plan, "preserving our land and building the future" plan, tunnels rehabilitation program plan, etc. All these plans were implemented in the form of projects funded by international donors including: the USAID, European Union EU as well as private donors such as Bankmed, Sannine, private sector, ministry of environment which cover only 20% of the expenses…

Regarding "successful marketing and promotion strategies", Maaser El Shouf is rated as fair and Bkassie as weak. In the case of cultural landscapes and protected areas, marketing should be conducted in a way that promotes the richness and attractiveness of the destination while protecting its tangible and intangible heritage. Tourism market segmentation, targeting niche markets, participation on international exhibitions, existence of specific corporate identity for the tourism destination are all indicators of economic sustainability. Results demonstrated that both landscapes lack the application of effective and innovative marketing strategies.

4.5.2. Level of sustainable tourism management at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine

In order to validate the results presented previously, and measure the level of sustainable tourism management at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine, the seven categories of sustainability at cultural landscapes were classified under economic, social and environmental sustainability. The total scores were associated for each dimension and then each score was multiplied by 100% divided by 700% (the total for all the percentages of the seven categories) (table 5).

Table.5. Overall sustainable tourism management scores at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine

Category	Maaser El Shouf	Bkassine
Economic sustainability	26.78	21.43
Social sustainability	13.17	5.79
Environmental sustainability	15.59	13.65
Average total score	**55**	**41**
Evaluation rate*	Fair	Fair

*The same evaluation total weight score was used 0-20%: very weak; 21-40%: weak; 41-60%: fair; 61-80%: good; 81-100%: very good

Based on the results in table 5, both landscapes were rated as fair in their sustainable tourism management of the landscape. There is no big difference between the two landscapes in term of managing economic and environmental sustainability. However, Maaser El Shouf has exceeded Bkassine in its social sustainable management, showing an interest in the protection of local heritage while satisfying visitors' needs. The average total score shows a difference between both landscapes with preference to Maaser El Shouf. A right tailed T-test was used (table 6) to validate these results (table 6). Since the test value is greater than the critical value, then there is enough evidence to prove that Maaser El Shouf has a better sustainable tourism management than Bkassine with type one error of 0.05.

Table.6. Right tailed T-test for sustainable tourism management at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine

Hypothesis testing N=7	Level of significance α	DF	Critical value	Test value
H_0: $\mu 1 = \mu 2$ H_a: $\mu 1 > \mu 2$	5%= 0.05	12	1.782	2.098

5. Discussion and conclusion

It is assumed that global tourism is one of the major reasons of climate change as it involves 50% of traffic movements which results in the emission of green-house gases (Roy, 2010). In addition to its environmental impacts, tourism contributes to negative social and economic changes when tourism stakeholders fail to sustainably manage its development.

The implementation of an innovative approach in cultural landscape management was an attempt in improving sustainable tourism management at cultural landscape. This approach has the added value of identifying the landscape and its resources based on a full site diagnostic, manage every single aspect of the landscape and develop strategies for its improvements and positive change.

The results of this study are thus consistent with the literature review. First, regarding the significance of cultural landscape especially for local communities. Second, the importance of identifying and managing cultural landscape based on their characteristics and values, which was enhanced by the comparison conducted.

For instance, the results of the scoring system adopted revealed that Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine are both far from being ideal in their sustainable tourism management of the landscape. However, since Maaser El Shouf is a part of a cluster of villages and the nature

reserve as main attraction is protected by international law, both variables were considered as advantages for a better management.

Furthermore, the overall results demonstrated a positive relation between economic and social sustainable management at both landscapes. This can be illustrated by the good management of tourism growth and social benefits. On the opposite, results revealed a negative relation between economic and environmental sustainable management, shown by the unsuccessful management of tourism visitations and tourists' behaviour. The negative relation seen also between social and environmental sustainable management can be explained by the lack of comprehensive protection frameworks of the intangible heritage at Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine.

Based on the above discussion, the central to retain here is that successful sustainable tourism management at cultural landscapes requires not only effective management of the three dimensions of sustainability but also the maintenance of balanced relationship between these dimensions. Therefore, it is recommended to develop a local sustainable tourism strategy/plan, with clear vision and specific goals and objectives. It is important to highlight on the idea that sustainable tourism cannot succeed without the cooperation between the different tourism stakeholders involved who almost always have different needs and perceptions about the future.

Moreover, the identity which is conveyed by the names of the landscapes and is reflected by the historical and natural features remaining (mills at Maaser and Bécasse at Bkassine) that are considered as endangered, is not well maintained. Hence, protecting the intangible, living heritage of the landscape can be achieved, first, by the implementation of effective protection frameworks and second, through the development of "historical districts" where significant historical elements could be kept to invoke in visitors the authenticity of the place.

Tourism activities are based on the natural and cultural richness of the cultural landscape. Thus, they could be developed in a way that satisfy visitors' needs, and at the same time sustain the authenticity and traditional attributes of the destination. The best example in the case of Maaser El Shouf and Bkassine is farming activities. Organizing farming activities in the form of tourism packages can provide visitors a unique and memorable experience, while revitalizing the agricultural sector which is in its regression stage.

Another important implication that could be drawn from the results of the scoring system is that the economic sustainable management could be enhanced by domestic tourism. Hence, it is recommended to adopt domestic tourism as a sustainable tourism strategy, since local visitors appreciate more their culture and are less sensitive with the day-to-day political instability than regional and international visitors.

Using technology is not only a way for a better tourist experience, but is also useful for landscape assessment and contribute to valuable results relevant for planning processes and nature conservation in changing cultural landscape (Bender *et al.* 2005). Finally, the non-participant observations applied by the researcher complement the results of the interviews conducted.

The limitations of this research should be discussed with regard to future studies. The conclusion of this research is based on two case studies. To test the generality of this innovative approach, more empirical and theoretical studies should be conducted by the consideration of additional sustainable tourism indicators, particularly for the relation between the three dimensions of sustainability. Besides, the role of tour operators in managing sustainable tourism at cultural landscape is critical, because they can affect negatively or positively the authentic image of the landscape. Eco-tour operators should be selected to measure and evaluate the relation between cultural landscapes and tour operators.

Acknowledgment

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