

Sociocultural Impacts of Tourism on the Local Community in Petra, Jordan

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at identifying and evaluating the perceptions and attitudes of the Petraians towards tourism in Jordan. The sample in this study was chosen randomly to be more representative of as many as possible of the aspects that needed to be explored in order to complement the work that has already been done in this particular area. Both descriptive and analytical data results were interpreted to attain the findings about the perceptions of the Petraians of the sociocultural impacts of tourism on their community. It was found that attitudes varied according to people's level of dependency on tourism and certain demographic variables. It was also found that less educated people have a more positive perception of tourism than those who are more highly educated. Data analysis supports the evidence that there are positive sociocultural impacts of tourism on the Petraians. It can also be said that, benefits of tourism in Petra, far exceed its negative consequences.

Keywords: Sociocultural Impacts, Tourism in Jordan, Local Community, Petra and Jordan.

INTRODUCTION

Jordan is located in the heart of the Middle East. This strategic location is the reason for the country's prominence throughout history, particularly as an area of settlement for ancient civilisations and as a major trading route. The contemporary state has been formed out of the existence of many different cultures and civilizations. Due to its political stability, mild climate and, most importantly, the friendly character of the people, Jordan has become one of the world's most exciting tourist destinations.

Tourism is a major contributor to the national economy in Jordan. Total tourism receipts amounted to 2 billion in 2008 (UNWTO, 2008) and income from tourism in 2008 totalled 2.1 million U.S. \$ (MoTA,

2008a). For Jordan to sustain its tourist appeal and increase its market share of international tourism, it has to compete with Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Israel.

The city of Petra is the most famous attraction in Jordan. It was voted in 2007 as one of the "New 7 Wonders of the World" and is considered one of the world's most important cultural heritage sites (MoTA, 2008a). The total numbers of visitors to Petra in 2007 were 577860 (PAP, 2008), bringing in a total amount from entrance fees of 9.555.209 Jordanian Dinar (PAP, 2008). Located in the south of Jordan, Petra is the major historical site with antiquities dating back to 7500 B.C. The archaeological park covers an area of 200 square km, and is surrounded by Sandstone Mountains, which provide natural fortification.

Despite Petra's fame, the tourism industry in Jordan has not achieved its full potential (Saidi, 2007). Counting on Petra alone to stand for Jordan as its major attraction is myopic; therefore, it is crucial for the various stakeholders, not only in Petra but also throughout Jordan, to make a collaborative effort to develop Jordanian tourism. Petra is a premier attraction and has iconic status. This is empowered by the

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Petraians (the local community in Petra) themselves who have a passion for and pride in their national culture and heritage. The Petraians are inherently loyal to the place and all of its historical associations and this passion is often the motivation for becoming involved in tourism.

The Importance of the Study.

There are a number of reasons for studying the sociocultural impacts of tourism, which are:

1. They influence of the local communities' perceptions of tourism. Whether or not they have a welcoming attitude, for instance, might become an important factor in determining success or failure in terms of attracting or retaining more customers to the destination (Daye, 1997).

2. The ability to define and quantify the various sociocultural impacts of tourism on the local communities which help to create effective strategies that avoid potential conflicts between guest and host (Daye, 1997).

3. Additionally, this may lead to a reduction in the possibility of disruptive differences among the stakeholders and strengthen their relationships. The benefits will be passed on to the visitors and possibly lead to an increase in the numbers of visitors in the near future.

The attitudes of those local people who maintain misconceptions of tourism may also be changed by the ongoing impact of the presence of tourists in their locality. This involves a change of mindset, largely from a reluctance to engage with the tourism industry to being able to see the benefits of increased employment and the resultant increase in income from tourism. It is therefore important for tourism decision-makers to be fully aware of these local attitudes and conceptions so that they can take the appropriate actions to attempt to satisfy the desire of the local people to improve both their standard of living and quality of social welfare (Williams and Lawson, 2001). Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) state that the sociocultural impacts of tourism should be monitored continuously in order to maximise the benefits of tourism at the destination.

Study Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this study is to identify and assess how the Petraians themselves perceive the sociocultural impacts of tourism and also which factors may influence their perceptions regarding these impacts. Primarily, this study is an exploratory study to examine the sociocultural impacts of tourism on the local population in Petra and the way in which they personally perceive these impacts on their community.

The following objectives have been devised in order to assess the Petraians' own perceptions of the sociocultural impacts of tourism on their community:

1. To identify the different sociocultural impacts of tourism on the Petraians.

2. To critically evaluate the sociocultural impacts of tourism on the Petraians.

3. To determine specific recommendations to enhance the awareness of government, the local community and tourists of the sociocultural impacts on the Petraians.

Sociocultural Impacts of Tourism in Petra

Taweel (2003) suggests that little is actually known about the sociocultural impacts on people around Petra. In his study of people's attitudes in Wadi Musa (the main district of Petra), Taweel (2003) found that their attitudes varied according to their level of dependency on tourism and certain demographic variables. Interestingly, he discovered that people with a lower level of education and because tourism is their only source of income, had a more positive perception of tourism than those with higher education. Hejazeen (2007) states that most of the sociocultural impacts are experienced in Petra rather than anywhere else in Jordan because Petra is the main tourist attraction in the country. The local Petraians therefore become more dependent on tourism. Hejazeen (2007) compared the sociocultural impacts of tourism on five communities at five historical sites around Jordan. Concerning Petra, he found that there were several negative impacts such as a number of local people starting to drink alcohol, children dropping out of school, tourism behaviours being

imitated by local people, sexual relationships being entered into with tourists, and evacuation of tourist sites by local residents. However, he also identified a number of positive impacts, such as that work in tourism helps to finance the education of local residents, locals learn foreign languages, and tourism creates investment opportunities and influences the interaction of locals with their own society.

In Petra, there are 1,572 local workers occupying tourist jobs at hotels, restaurants, car rental companies, travel agencies and working as tourist guides or horse guides (MoTA, 2008c and JTGA, 2008). Most of these jobs are by self-employment and the majority are taken up by men. Women are thus not encouraged to work in tourism in Jordan because of community social values which reflect the social restrictions concerning men and women working together in tourism initiatives (Hejazeen, 2007). Those younger men who work in tourism have adopted western dress to some degree and have also learned many languages because of the opportunities of acquiring and practising the various tourists' languages (Hejazeen, 2007). However, the wealth accumulated from tourism by these young men gives them more status than they would traditionally have in their society and thus isolates them from their own culture, giving them expectations beyond what they would normally have.

In his study of the impacts of tourism on five different archaeological sites in Jordan, Hejazeen (2007) concludes that tourism has the potential of creating jobs for Jordanians; this potential is still not visible to the Jordanian jobseeker. This is largely due to a lack of professional tourism education, feelings of insecurity generated by low levels of payment associated with the volatile and sometimes unpredictable nature of tourism, and the perceptions influenced by community social values about working in tourism. Revenue from tourism helps people to support their families and provide a better standard of education for the children, although there is also the negative effect of children dropping out of school at an early age because of the attractions of access to an immediate and easy source of income

(Hejazeen, 2007).

Some immoral behaviour of some tourists may result in issues such as the occurrence of sex tourism. It is the most controversial aspect of assessing sociocultural impacts (Swarbrooke, 1999). The argument centres around try to identify to what extent sex tourism is acceptable to the local communities. For example, sex with children is consistently considered as being totally unacceptable. Hejazeen (2007) states that in Petra, sexual encounters take place, but mainly between local men and foreign women. In this study, it was found that heads of households considered that tourism itself does not contradict religious practice and traditions although they indicated there were potential threats that might affect the younger generations in the future. The question arises of what has caused this sociocultural change in men's sexual behaviour and why? The rulings of Islam prohibit the free mixing of men and women. According to Delcambre (2005) and Hejazeen (2007), sexuality in Islam is controlled absolutely – any sexual relationship outside marriage is forbidden. Islam sets the rigidity of Islamic morality against the laxity of secularized western sexual morality. In this sense, one may speak of culture-shock. It is clear that Islamic morality applies equally to both men and women. In his study of the sociocultural impacts of tourism, Hejazeen (2007) states that “*Islam does not oppose tourism*” but on the contrary, encourages its followers to travel the world in search of learning and to interact with other peoples and cultures.

It is worth mentioning that there are some limitations in terms of previous study on sociocultural impacts on the Petraians. Because this particular field of study is still emerging, the literature in this area is not comprehensive. Another difficulty has arisen because of the refusal of some officials in public and private tourism organisations to give out information or even to be interviewed. Some information sources have been unwilling or hesitant about offering their opinions or knowledge to be recorded. In addition, many of the professionals from international organisations have stressed that they are giving their own personal views

and not those of the organisations they represent. Moreover, it is questionable whether place of birth and duration of residency are efficient quantifiers of the relationship between attachment to a place or a community and residents' attitudes towards tourism and tourists. This present study, however, will investigate potential sociocultural impacts with specific reference to Petraians in anticipation of bridging the gap in this field.

Study Design and Method

Population of the Study

According to Sherlock (1999), access for study in an ethnographic study is much easier if it is one's own community. Although one has to be aware of potential bias in results from being an insider, this can also be advantageous in having local knowledge to contribute to the information gained from the community and also have more sensitivity to the impact of the study on the community. The local population is more likely to respond favourably to the researcher who is known to them as a channel for expressing their views and concerns.

The population of this study is representative of five residential areas around Petra, comprising a total number of 25,366 people, distributed as follows (See the below Table): Wadi Musa (16,347), Taybeh (5,473), Rajif (1,602), Umm Saihoun (156) and Baydha (383) (DOS, 2008). The representatives of Petraians include both those who work in tourism and those who do not. The different stakeholders in Petra include travel agents, tourist guides, horse guides, hoteliers, government departments and teachers at schools around Petra.

Area	Number of Population
Wadi Musa	16,347
Taybeh	5,473
Rajif	1,602
Umm Saihoun	156
Baydha	383
Total	25,366

Study Design and Data Collection Methods

The primary aim of this study was to identify, investigate and evaluate the perceptions of the local

population in Petra about the sociocultural impacts of tourism on their own community. In order to fulfil this aim, both descriptive and analytical methods were interpreted to attain some interesting findings about the perceptions of the Petraians of the sociocultural impacts of tourism on their community.

Nevertheless, secondary study was carried out including previous studies, statistics and any other relevant information about the sociocultural impacts of tourism in general and in Petra in particular.

Primary study was conducted in Petra, targeting representatives of the Petraians in five different towns around Petra. This study was conducted using complementary methods for collecting both secondary and primary data. The greater emphasis was on recently published study and articles on sociocultural impacts of tourism as well as a comprehensive literature review which included:

1. Review of literature of the most recent publications relating to sociocultural impacts of tourism in general with a further focus on the application of sociocultural impacts of tourism in Petra.
2. Documentation of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), Jordan: all legislation and formal reports relating to tourism sociocultural impacts of tourism in Petra were included.
3. Statistics from Department of Statistics (DOS) in Jordan were investigated to provide exact numbers of populations of the chosen districts in Petra and the number of employees in tourism services in Petra.
4. Documentation from the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) was examined.
5. The most recent arrangements and administrative decisions concerning the sociocultural impacts of tourism on the local community from the Petra Archaeological Park (PAP).
6. Documents of the Petra Region Authority (PRA) concerning the involvement of the local community in the decision-making process in Petra.

While the primary data collection methods were carried out by conducting a questionnaire in the form of a constructed survey based on the Likert five-point scale

(agree strongly, agree, neither, disagree and disagree strongly). According to MacGivern (2006), the researcher must consider that the *validity* is an indicator of whether the study measures what it claims it measures.

According to Johns (1999), questionnaires have greater validity if they consider the ease of use, in terms of completing the questionnaire easily and ease of analysis. As well as the importance of examining the reliability, this assumes that the questionnaire has to achieve the same result before and after the test. If the test or study is done again in the same context or if it gives different results, then it is not reliable. Reliability of the questionnaire used in this study has been calculated by using an arithmetical coefficient (Cronbach's alpha). The results showed that the value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all items included in the questionnaire is (0.77). This indicates that the questionnaire is reliable enough to measure the variables identified in the study.

Moreover, the *generalisability* or external validity must be established to find out to what extent the sample represents the population of the study. In this context, to guarantee fair distribution of the 500 questionnaires, the sample selection considered the following formula: *(number of population at each district ÷ total number of population in Petra × number of questionnaires)*. For example, in Wadi Musa: $16.347 \div 25.366 \times 500 = 322$. Thus, out of the 500 questionnaires, 322 were distributed in Wadi Musa only and the rest were distributed over the other four districts.

The questionnaires were issued directly to 500 locals. The number of returned questionnaires was 341, which were all valid for analysis, sufficient to produce results, which can be generalized over the population of the study. In order to obtain the required information from the local people themselves, the questionnaire was designed so that a quantitative study could be conducted with locals from different specialities in terms of exposure to tourism, whether that exposure was dependent on the respondent's place of residency, or working in the tourism industry in Petra, thus anticipating meeting the objectives of the study and

obtaining certain quantitative information about the sociocultural impacts of tourism in Petra. The questionnaire was self-completed and, where necessary, with the help of those who distributed the questionnaire on behalf of the researchers in places where locals mostly spend their time in restaurants, shopping streets, cafes, hotels, homes, wedding parties, schools and companies. In order to avoid repetition in the case of families, the questionnaire was given to only one member of the family. Basically, the questionnaire was written in English and translated into Arabic and delivered in the individual local language. In order, as far as possible, to avoid misunderstanding of the questions, the researcher's representatives stayed with the correspondents while they were completing the questionnaire to answer any inquiries. Once the questionnaires were collected, they were analyzed using the SPSS software.

The questionnaire was handed out to the local people in Petra, with easy access to the selected sample. The targeted correspondents were randomly chosen according to the voters' list. It is very important to stress that the questionnaire was carefully prepared and the necessary questions properly set, with appropriate editing and assessment by the researchers to ensure its validity, reliability and generalisability.

Results of the Study

In order to introduce an appropriate framework for the collected data and present an interpretation, results of the data analysis will be discussed in two sections. The descriptive data results, namely those related to the independent variables such as the characteristics of the respondents (age, gender and level of education) will be presented in section one; whereas the analytical data results will be presented in section two.

Characteristics of the Respondents

To provide a supportive framework for the data analysis results, it is essential to present the characteristics of the respondents being investigated in the study; hence the demographical attributes of the respondents (age, gender and level of education). Additionally, respondents were also defined according to

their residential areas; therefore, places of residence have been divided into five subgroups (Wadi Musa, Taybeh, Rajif, Umm Saihoun and Baydha). These will also be highlighted within this section. These characteristics (demographical attributes and residential areas) will also be employed as independent variables to test the hypotheses of the study.

Age

As indicated earlier, the current study targets those individuals aged 18 years or over within the areas

investigated. This study identifies five different categories of respondent ages. Results of the current study indicate that out of the 341 respondents, the majority of respondents (63%) are aged between 18-30 years, whereas within the following categories, the number of respondents significantly decreased in the older age ranges. This result suggests that the category most potentially affected by tourism is the youth. Table (1) summarises the different age categories of the respondents according to their residential areas.

Table 1: Age Categories According to the Residential Areas

Age category	Residential Areas											
	Wadi Musa		Taybeh		Rajif		Umm Saihoun		Baydha		Total	
	#	% *	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
18-30	96	62.7%	55	59.1%	37	74.0%	17	54.8%	10	71.4%	215	63.0%
31-40	35	22.9%	26	28.0%	8	16.0%	6	19.4%	1	7.1%	76	22.3%
41-50	15	9.8%	10	10.8%	5	10.0%	5	16.1%	1	7.1%	36	10.6%
51-60	6	3.9%	2	22.0%	0	0.0%	3	9.7%	1	7.1%	12	3.5%
≥ 61	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	7.1%	2	0.6%
Total	153	100%	93	100%	50	100%	31	100%	14	100%	341	100%

* This percentage represents the percentage of frequencies in each category to the total number of respondents within the same location.

Gender

Gender is the second demographical attribute outlined in this part of the study. Results of the data analysis indicated that 56% of the total respondents were males and that over 58% of them were within the age range between 18-30 years. Surprisingly, over 68% of the totals of 150 female

respondents were between 18-30 years. These results suggest that young females as well as males in the investigated areas tend to be interested in exploring the potential impact of tourism on their local communities. Table (2) illustrates the two gender categories according to the five age categories identified in this study.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents According to Age

Age Category	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	#	%	#	%	#	%
18-30	112	58.6%	102	68.5%	214	62.9%
31-40	46	24.1%	31	20.6%	77	22.5%
41-50	27	14.1%	9	6.0%	36	10.6%
51-60	5	2.6%	7	4.7%	12	3.5%
≥ 61	1	0.5%	1	0.7%	2	0.6%
Total	191	100.0%	150	100.0%	341	100.0%

Educational Level

Education is a critical issue to societal development. As indicated earlier, the current study is interested in evaluating the extent to which educational level influences the perceptions of the local community in

Petra towards the impact of tourism.

The current study identifies four different categories with respect to educational level, ranging from elementary education (primary school) to university degree level (see table 3).

Table 3: Educational Level According to Respondents' Age

Age Category	Educational Level									
	University		High School		Preparatory Education		Elementary Education		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
18-30	93	77.5%	74	63.2%	31	48.4%	17	42.5%	215	63.0%
31-40	22	18.3%	31	26.5%	15	23.4%	8	20.0%	76	22.3%
41-50	5	4.2%	10	8.5%	11	17.2%	10	25.0%	36	10.6%
51-60	0	0.0%	2	1.7%	5	7.8%	5	12.5%	12	3.5%
≥ 61	0	0.0%	0	.0%	2	3.1%	0	0.0%	2	0.6%
Total	120	100%	117	100%	64	100%	40	100%	341	100%

Overall, the results indicate that 35% of the total respondents were holders of a university degree against 34% with secondary education certificates. What is really interesting in the data analysis results is that almost 57% of the young people who responded were secondary school educated or lower. This may give a primary impression that tourism may have an impact on young people's decisions about their future education as well as their future career.

Residential Areas of the Respondents

Generally, exposure to tourism activities may have long-term influences on the participants, variable according to the degree of engagement within these activities and the condition of the tourism industry overall.

In the current study, the degree of influence was measured by the extent to which the participants are exposed to tourism activities. This is most likely to be affected by the area of residence. Around Petra, there are several districts that are sited within varied distances of the tourist and historical site. However, the current study identifies five residential areas within the investigated area: Wadi Musa, Taybeh, Rajif, Umm Saihoun, and Baydha. Table (4) summarises the number of

respondents according to these five residential areas.

Table 4: Respondents According to their Areas of Residence

Residential Areas	Frequencies	%
Wadi Musa	153	44.8%
Taybeh	93	27.3%
Rajif	50	14.7%
Umm Saihoun	31	9.1%
Baydha	14	4.1%
Total	341	100%

Results of the study show that almost 45% of the respondents are from Wadi Musa (the main district of Petra) where the greatest number of the population resides. It should be noted that this district has the most tourism activities within the whole region. This includes, for example, hotels, restaurants, banks, travel agents and many other activities. Additionally, the results show that over 13% of the respondents are much closer to the site than the other residents. These represent the communities that used to live within the historical site for a long period, and they are still the closest despite

governmental efforts to build new residential districts far away from the historical site. Information from this particular group of residents within the current study also contributes to the findings regarding the perceptions of the long-term impacts of tourism.

In addition to the four main demographical dimensions outlined above, the current study is also concerned with exploring the occupational status of respondents in order to illustrate the impact of tourism on the employed population of the region. The results show that almost 38% of the overall respondents are employees against 41% unemployed. Furthermore, 21% of respondents have their own businesses (most of them are close to the historical site). Significantly, results in this study revealed that the closer the residency to the historical site, the greater the opportunity for employment.

Descriptive Analysis

This section of the study focuses on analysing responses to the questions addressed in the questionnaire. Attention is mainly given to those responses in the three groups of questions (questions

from 1-30) that are intended to measure the sociocultural impacts of tourism.

As indicated earlier, the first section of the questionnaire (questions 1-10) was designed to investigate the positive as well as the negative sociocultural impacts of tourism from the perspective of the Petraians themselves. Within this section, particular attention is given to examining the perceptions of the respondents towards the potential positive impacts of tourism on the local community. Such impacts may include, for example, increasing the level of education; enhancing the infrastructure and public services; improving family and societal behaviour and creating more opportunities for employment and investment. Additionally, this section addresses the potential negative impacts of tourism on the local community. The negative potential impacts proposed here may include: increasing the immoral behaviours of the local people; increasing crime; and raising worries about future employment. Table (5) illustrates the responses of the study population (measured by Mean and Standard Deviation) on questions (1-10) of the study questionnaire.

Table 5: Perceptions of Respondents towards the Impacts of Tourism

Q #	Statement	Results	
		Mean	SD *
1	Tourism has improved the image of Petra.	4.31	0.950
2	Due to tourism, infrastructure in Petra has been enhanced such as roads, hospitals, schools, parks, restaurants...etc.	4.06	1.095
3	Tourism increases the level of education in Petra.	3.50	1.217
4	Tourism improved my behaviour with my family and society.	3.22	1.168
5	Tourism creates opportunities for people in Petra such as employment and investment.	4.19	1.000
6	Tourism encourages some immoral behaviours of some people in Petra.	3.82	1.163
7	Tourism has increased crime in the local community in Petra.	2.70	1.288
8	Working in tourism makes me feel insecure about my future employment.	3.53	1.204
9	Tourism is the reason of some youngsters misbehaving.	3.79	1.126
10	Benefits of tourism in Petra outweigh its costs.	3.57	1.246

Σn = 341, * SD: Standard Deviation

Table (5) above shows that the vast majority of the respondents explicitly and strongly asserted that tourism had improved the image of Petra (with a Mean of 4.31 and Standard Deviation of 0.95). Furthermore, respondents agreed that tourism had contributed positively in creating opportunities for people regarding investment and employment. From their perspective, these positive impacts have also enhanced the infrastructure (such as roads, parks, schools...etc) within the region (with a Mean of 4.06).

Regarding the negative impacts of tourism, the respondents were neutral regarding the impact of tourism in increasing crime among the local community in Petra (with a Mean of 2.7). This may reflect uncertainty regarding this issue from the respondents' perspective. Unsurprisingly, the majority of respondents agreed that tourism had encouraged immoral behaviours of some people in Petra (Mean 3.82). In the same vein, respondents agreed that tourism was responsible for the misbehaviour of some young people in Petra (Mean 3.79). Regarding sociocultural advantages and

disadvantages, respondents agreed that the overall benefits of tourism far exceeded the costs.

In the second part of the questionnaire, attention was given to investigating the sociocultural impacts of tourism through the degree of exposure to tourist activities. In the current study, exposure to tourism is represented by two main elements: working in the tourism sector and residing within a tourist location. In order to measure the impact of exposure to tourism, the questionnaire has ten statements dedicated to undertaking this task (questions 11-20). In practice, for local people (either workers or residents) in Petra, exposure to tourist activities may affect their lifestyle positively or negatively. Such impacts may include: encouraging women to work in the tourism sector, increasing the cost of living in Petra, weakening of social bonds and family structure, and enticing young people to quit school at the early stages of their education. Table (6) illustrates the answers of respondents to questions (11-20) of the study questionnaire.

Table 6: Perceptions of Respondents towards the Impacts of Exposure to Tourist Activities.

Q #	Statement	Results	
		Mean	SD *
11	I benefit from tourism in Petra.	3.55	1.366
12	Tourism in Petra improves my lifestyle.	3.53	1.266
13	I support tourism and welcome tourists to come to my community.	4.28	0.944
14	Women should be encouraged to work in tourism industry.	3.12	1.356
15	Tourism weakens the social bonds and family structure in Petra.	3.34	1.189
16	The closer my residency to the tourist site the more I benefit out from tourism in Petra.	3.93	1.137
17	Tourism increased the cost of living in Petra.	4.28	0.981
18	I have more money to spend because of my work in tourism in Petra.	3.43	1.273
19	I deal with tourists almost every day.	3.15	1.221
20	Earnings from tourism lure children at my community to drop out of school at an early age.	4.19	1.236

$\Sigma n = 341$, * SD: Standard Deviation

The results show that, despite the relatively medium level of exposure (reflected in question 19 – Mean 3.15),

respondents agreed that while tourism had improved their lifestyle, it had also caused the weakening of social

bonds as well as family structure. In the same vein, the degree of acceptability of women working in the tourism industry had improved (with a Mean of 3.12). Previous work by Hejazeen (2007) had confirmed that the majority of the local people of Petra disagreed with women working in tourism and this was attributed to social and religious reasons. In terms of the negative impacts caused by exposure to tourism, respondents strongly agreed that tourism had increased the cost of living in Petra (with a Mean of 4.28). Furthermore, they also agreed that tourism had contributed to young people quitting their education at an early age (Mean 4.19). It is noteworthy that, despite the negative impacts of

exposure to tourism, Petraians strongly support tourism and remain enthusiastic about welcoming tourists to their community (with a Mean of 4.28).

In the third part of the questionnaire, attention was given to investigating the perceptions of Petraians towards the sociocultural impacts of tourism resulting from factors such as seasonality, cultural differences between hosts and guests, type of tourists and the particular stage of tourism development in Petra. Questions (21-30) were devoted to measuring respondents' perceptions regarding these factors. Table (7) summarises respondents' answers to questions (21-30).

Table 7: Perceptions of the Respondents According to Seasonality, Cultural Differences between Hosts and Guests, Type of Tourists and the Particular Stage of Tourism Development in Petra

Q #	Statement	Results	
		Mean	SD *
21	Tourism during the high season contributes to issues such as crowding, inflation... etc in Petra.	4.48	0.762
22	Working in tourism during the high season is feasible, though I prefer having a more permanent job in another sector.	4.23	0.925
23	I interact with individual tourists more than I do with tourists in groups.	3.61	1.053
24	Tourists show respect to our culture and traditions.	4.07	0.974
25	Tourism made me understand other cultures better.	3.93	1.051
26	Tourism increased my pride in our national culture.	4.16	0.983
27	I encourage more tourists to come and see Petra.	4.46	0.931
28	I support tourism development in Petra concerning more marketing and in site infrastructure.	4.50	0.890
29	Community representatives in Petra are involved in development decisions concerning Petra.	3.19	1.389
30	Negative impacts of tourism may drive me to leave Petra.	2.84	1.401

Σn = 341, * SD: Standard Deviation

The results show that Petraians strongly agree that, despite the high earnings during the high season, tourism seriously contributes to crucial issues like crowding and inflation (with a Mean 4.48). In terms of the cultural interaction between the locals and the tourists, respondents confirmed that visitors do respect the locals' culture and traditions (Mean 4.07). Such positive interaction between the two groups would encourage

further positive achievements. From the locals' perspective, tourism has contributed to a better understanding of other cultures, as well as increasing the degree of pride in the locals' national culture (with a Mean 4.16).

In addition to the cultural impacts addressed above, respondents strongly expressed their desire to see tourism being developed further in Petra – namely in

relation to marketing, promotion efforts and site infrastructure (with a Mean 4.50). In this respect, respondents confirmed that the involvement of local community representatives in development decisions about Petra is at a medium level (with a Mean 3.19). Overall, despite the negative impacts of tourism, Petraians give the impression of being hesitant about leaving Petra as a result of disturbances caused by tourism (with a Mean 2.84), and on the contrary, they strongly encourage more tourists to come to Petra (with a Mean of 4.46). This result firmly supports the previous one about the benefits of tourism far exceeding the costs (from the perspective of Petraians).

Conclusions

The primary aim of this study was to identify, investigate and evaluate the perceptions of the local population in Petra about the sociocultural impacts of tourism on their own community. In order to fulfil this aim, both descriptive and analytical data results were interpreted to attain some interesting findings about the perceptions of the Petraians of the sociocultural impacts of tourism on their community.

A 'snapshot' of the characteristics of the respondents (age, gender, level of education and residency) revealed that the youth aged between 18 – 30 years are affected more by the sociocultural impacts of tourism than the other age categories.

In terms of gender, 44% of the respondents were females and 56% males. In terms of education, almost 57% of the young people have participated in secondary education or lower. This may explain the impact that tourism has on young people's decisions regarding pursuing further education or choosing their future career. Moreover, it was found that 45% of the respondents live in Wadi Musa because it is the main district which has been hosting guests in Petra for the last 50 years and therefore is the location of most of the tourist services and accommodation. 13% of the residents live much closer to the site than the others. It was this group of people who lived in caves in the ancient city of Petra until 1985 (Hejazeen, 2007). In terms of employment, it was revealed by this study that

the closer the residency is to the historical site in Petra, the better the opportunities of employment. This was confirmed by the statistics: almost 38% of the overall respondents were employees against 41% unemployed. In addition, 21% of the respondents have their own businesses.

Data analysis supports the evidence that there are positive sociocultural impacts of tourism on the Petraians. The vast majority of the respondents believe that tourism has improved the image of Petra, that it creates jobs and investment opportunities as well as enhancing the infrastructure in Petra. In contrast, the study also revealed the negative impacts. Respondents considered that tourism is responsible for some immoral behaviour among some Petraians as well as being the cause of changes in some young Petraians' behaviours. It can also be said that, while respondents were neutral regarding the increase in the crime rate in Petra, they agreed that the benefits of tourism far exceed its negative consequences.

Petraians gain exposure to tourism through both working in the industry and living close to tourist activities. Interestingly, exposure to tourism resulted in a degree of acceptability of women working in the tourism industry. Simultaneously, tourism has improved some people's lifestyle, although it has also caused the weakening of family structures and social bonds compared to what used to exist before involvement in tourism. In contrast, the negative impacts associated with exposure to tourism were evident in certain perceptions where respondents strongly agreed that tourism has increased the cost of living in Petra. They further agreed that tourism has contributed to young people quitting their education at an early age. In spite of all the positive and negative sociocultural impacts, Petraians are still very supportive of tourism and are willing to encourage more tourists to come to their community.

Recommendations

It was the intention of the researchers to carry out further work on the sociocultural impacts of tourism on the Petraians, in particular to study the interrelationship

between the sociocultural impacts and other impacts such as economic, environmental, political and psychological; however, due to the constraints of time, distance, finance and available data, the present study is restricted to the sociocultural impacts only. Therefore, the researchers would recommend the following:-

- The first recommendation would be for the further study and investigation of the symbiotic interrelationship between the tourism industry and the host community.

- In light of the insight of this study and its conclusions, the first crucial element to emerge is the need to educate both tourists and local people about all aspects of tourism and in so doing, to pre-empt any negative encounters between tourists and local people. This can be achieved by devising and presenting a code of behaviour (including a dress code) for tourists even before they leave their home countries. Equally essential is the educating of the local people about tourists themselves, such as the cultural/attitudinal differences which can sometimes cause misunderstanding to occur in the interaction between tourist and local. This education could be delivered through formal and informal channels such as news studies, magazines, leaflets, TV, etc.

- It is also recommended that lectures are to be arranged for those who have direct contact with tourists such as airport officers, tourist guides, hoteliers, and others who work in ancillary tourism services.

- While it is essential to raise the awareness of the local people of the importance of tourism, it is equally important that tourism planners are given recommendations to provide clear information to the local communities about the long term benefits of tourism. Even more important is the direct involvement of representatives of the local community in development decisions affecting their locality.

- As for the methods of dealing with immoral behaviours as highlighted in the study, it is recommended that officials require activating strict laws and applying them to both tourists and local people when there are identified incidents of misbehaviour. It

might be useful to include as part of the education process for both tourists and locals examples of bad experiences in the past in order to avoid similar occurrences in the future.

- An incentive for local people to retain their native culture even though participating in tourist activities might be to encourage them to wear traditional dress and to disown the 'phoney' culture which has arisen out of the adoption of 'non-native' manners. This would increase the locals' pride in their own national identity while also providing the tourist with a genuine experience of the location.

- It is highly recommended that stricter regulations be introduced to control the employment of young people in tourism and that methods be considered to encourage children to remain in education rather than dropping out of school at an early age.

- Improvements cannot be achieved without acknowledgement of a proper reward for provision of a satisfactory tourism service. Efforts should be made therefore, to increase the payment to those who work in tourism services which would also enhance their social welfare. It would also be helpful to institute an alternative payment system to even out the fluctuations in income received in the 'high' and 'low' seasons of the typical tourism year.

- Development of the site infrastructure could include measures to avoid traffic congestion, for example, by constructing alternative routes within the site and allowing tourists to wander around freely on foot, but also adding unobtrusive controls to cover health and safety issues.

- Taking a longer term view beyond the immediate considerations, this study has highlighted the need for enhancement of awareness of tourism decision-makers, the local community and tourists of the sociocultural impacts on the Petraians. Specific recommendations are directly related to this point and should include the following:

1. More investment in specific projects such as the promotion of cultural tourism and encouragement of more women to enter employment in tourism.

2. A policy to support concentration on high yield tourism.

3. More development of tourism initiatives to reduce the level of unemployment of local people.

4. Addressing of issues at governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) level such as preservation of cultural heritage and limitation of environmental damage, which could be enhanced through careful tourism development.

The findings of this study clearly show that the locals of Petra are supportive of tourism and that negative

sociocultural impacts on the community have been relatively minimal. However, it is still important to implement these proposed recommendations, in order to continue controlling and reducing negative impacts and enhancing the well-being of locals through tourism. It is undeniable that once there is tourism there will be change. However, these changes may be managed and monitored to mitigate negative impacts for more favourable ones, by the implementation of judicious policy and planning measures that are vital for tourism destinations such as Petra.

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