

PERCEPTION OF LOCAL COMMUNITY TOWARDS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY ON RURAL TOURISM SITES OF JORDAN

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Abstract: Tourism is one of the most effective solutions for overcoming poverty in rural areas. Jordan has many renowned tourist attractions situated in urban and rural areas. Tourism plays an integral role to boost the national economy of Jordan. In an increasingly globalized society, rural tourism is expected to rise, thus it is important to examine how the locals feel about tourism development. The study aims to examine how the locals in the rural areas of Jordan's Ajloun and Jerash governorates perceive the effects of tourism development. For the analyses, 395 households of data were used. Residents' attitudes toward the development of tourism have been evaluated using multiple regression along with descriptive statistics, both positively and negatively. IBM AMOS 22.0 has been used to complete the statistical analysis. The results indicated that tourism in the selected villages is in the pre-development stage and respondents strongly supported the development of the tourism industry because it creates jobs, attracts investment, and increases the value of agricultural products by creating a market. However, respondents expressed little concern about the adverse effects, such as the loss of traditional value, environmental degradation, pollution, and traffic congestion.

Key words: Residents' attitudes, rural tourism, tourism development, Jordan

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INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has its significance in economic development and contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The tourism industry has huge potential to fulfil economic social and aesthetic needs in developing economic diversity (Tsaur and Wang, 2007). Tourism has both negative and positive impacts (Ross, 1992), which include socio-cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions (Stylidis et al., 2014). To assess whether tourism is acceptable, it is crucial to ascertain how the local community feels about the expansion of the industry. Because tourism has the potential to create jobs, generate revenue, improve quality of life, develop infrastructure, and attract investors, local populations may see unfavourably (Saner et al., 2019). On the contrary local community may negatively observe tourism because of sociocultural costs and increased levels of inflation in many host areas (Chen, 2000; Muresan et al., 2016).

Policymakers and planners may better address issues and concerns to increase benefits, engage local communities, and promote local cultural identity by being aware of how the local community perceives tourist growth and its positive and negative effects. According to many academicians, local community involvement in tourism planning is the most effective strategy for the industry's growth. They contend that including the neighbourhood community maximizes the positive effects of the tourism sector while minimizing its negative effects. (Lee, 2013; Boonsiritomachai and Phonthanukitithaworn, 2019). Therefore, various studies have been found to examine local community perception of tourism development worldwide (Kim and Butler, 2015; Afthanorhan et al., 2017; Gursoy et al., 2019; Obradović and Stojanović, 2021).

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A common finding has been found that local community involvement is an inevitable part of sustainable tourism development. Jordan has many renowned tourist attractions. Tourism plays an integral role to boost the national economy of Jordan. The governorates of Northern Jordan, Ajloun, and Jerash have been considered for this study. Ajloun and Jerash are about an hour's drive from the North of Amman. They are known for sites of antiquity, archaeological attractions, thick green forests, and lush vegetation that is among the best in the Middle East. The number of visitors to tourist sites by location during Jan-Dec 2020-2021 has been shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The number of visitors to tourist sites by location during Jan-Dec 2020-2021 (Source: MoTA, 2021)

Area	2020		Total	2021		Total
	Foreign	Jordanian		Foreign	Jordanian	
Ajloun	17,053	38,905	55,958	22,486	1,14,530	1,37,016
Jerash	58,698	23,050	81,748	42,528	62,022	1,04,550

As per the table-1 total number of visitors to both tourist sites has increased in 2021 and hosting both domestic as well as foreign visitors all year round. Ajloun Governorate is considered the best destination to spend the summer holidays because of its moderate climate. Ajloun is also known for mountains, natural landscapes, and its dense forest tree. Ajloun is one of the best destinations in Jordan in terms of natural sightseeing among all governorates. The reason, Arjan, Orzareth, Wadi Rayan, and the Mar Elias villages are also the largest localities of the Ajloun governorate. Ajloun city is located northwest of Jordan about 70 km from the capital city, Amman. As per the Ministry of Interior, The Hashemite of Jordan, (2022 a), the Ajloun governorate's population is 1,76,080. Jerash governorate is known for ten Roman Decapolis Cities, which are called Jerash in Arabic and Gerasa in Latin. These cities belong to Hellenistic and Roman periods that had cultural, political, and commercial significance. Souf, Sakeb, Reemon, Khufur Khal, Asfoor and Gafgafa villages are also the largest localities of the Jerash Governorate. Jerash city is located in the north of the capital city Amman about 45 km towards Syria. As per the Ministry of Interior, The Hashemite of Jordan, (2022 b) the Jerash governorate's population is 2,37,059.

Despite the foregoing indications that the study region is improving Jordan's tourism inventory, very lesser is known about how the local community feels about the development of tourism. Moreover, little study has been conducted on rural residents to examine their perception of tourism development. Traditional social standards also govern Jordanian society, particularly in the rural and desert regions, where women in particular have a great propensity to preserve predecessors' traditions and practices. Their timidity leads them to withdraw in order not to be observed by others (Al Haija, 2011). Rural inhabitants should not feel neglected in the process of fostering tourism. The local community's participation in the planning process will enhance sustainable tourism in the Ajloun governorate. (Fandi, 2015) and similar other touristic sites like Jerash. The local community should not be deprived of various tourism benefits associated with tourism, and their perception of tourism development should not be neglected. Local community opinions and perceptions should be included in the tourism policy formulation. In an increasingly globalized society, rural tourism is expected to rise, thus it is important to examine how the locals feel about tourism development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural tourism is an old phenomenon in the tourism literature and studies related to rural tourism dating from the late 9th century (Gao and Wu, 2017). In recent times rural areas have had more functions than just agriculture, they are the site of tourism, leisure, recreation, tranquillity, and specialty food production (Saxena et al., 2007).

Rural tourism sites are very popular among tourists. Numerous government policies are supporting rural tourism by managing rural tourism practices and coordinating residents and businesses (Liu et al., 2020). Because of its popularity among national and international tourists. Residents of the hosted destinations are one of the main stakeholders of rural tourism and are directly impacted by tourism development.

To further illuminate how the neighbourhood perceives the impact of tourism growth, other theories have been suggested. Dependency theory, community attachment theory, conflict theory, and social exchange theory are a few of the theories (Aref and Redzuan, 2009). As a theoretical framework, social exchange theory has been widely adopted in tourism studies for developing an understanding of local community perception of tourism development (Sirakaya et al., 2002; Jurovski and Gursoy, 2004). As per social exchange theory, these development impacts can generally be categorized into economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts (Rasoolimanesh and Jaafar, 2016). The local community will benefit economically from the growth of tourism by having more job possibilities and higher household income. (Andereck et al., 2005; Sandaruwani and Gnanapala, 2016). The rising cost of living and the increase in property taxes are examples of the negative economic effects (Látková and Vogt, 2012; Scarlett, 2021). The positive socio-cultural impacts include community benefits, community participation, cultural exchange, availability of entertainment, and recreational opportunities (Ramkissoon, 2020). The negative socio-cultural impacts include overcrowding, prostitution, alcohol abuse, an increase in crime, and vandalism (Ribeiro et al., 2017; Joo et al., 2019). The positive environmental impacts of tourism development spread awareness about the conservation of the environment and building environment through the provision of infrastructure and upgrading the building (Green et al., 1990). The negative environmental impact is damaging ecosystems, the natural environment, water, and air pollution (Ko and Stewart, 2002).

Locals who are aware of the many advantages of tourism are frequently more eager to work in the business and more active in the planning and decision-making processes. While negative effects lead people to stop intervening and supporting the growth of tourism, positive effects encourage the local community to promote tourism development by participating in tourism activities (Sharpley, 2014; Nunkoo and So, 2016). As tourist regions are characteristically

different, the scale of residents' attitudes has to be dynamically and individually adjustable for sustainable tourism planning (Gursoy et al., 2019 b). Various scales and indices to measure local community perception such as the Tourism Impact Attitude Scale, European performance satisfaction Scale, and Residence Empowerment through Tourism Index have been developed (S. Wang and Xu, 2015). These scales and indices have characterized local community perception of tourism development as a multi-dimensional framework (Harrill, 2004).

Previous studies also examined the perceptions of the local community towards tourism development and suggested that more study is required to better understand, the perception of the local community, towards the tourism development in the rural tourism sites from more different perspectives. (M. Wang et al., 2021; Halim et al., 2022; Pekerşen and Kaplan, 2022). The former studies in various countries highlighted that local community perception towards tourism development varies from country to country, this difference may be due to the country's level of tourism development, understanding, and level of acceptance for tourism development due to psychological, geographical, cultural and religious norms among the local community (Pearce and Stringer, 1991; Tosun, 2002; Maruyama et al., 2023; Papadopoulou et al., 2023). Therefore, further study is required to investigate local community perception towards tourism development in different geographical contexts. Moreover, the rural population is more sensitive toward tourism development, especially those who are not involved in the tourism planning and development process (Bachleitner and Zins, 1999; Ibanescu et al., 2018).

1. Research Gaps in local community perception and tourism development literature

It is noted that there are not many studies that look at how the locals feel about the development of tourism in Jordan's rural tourist destinations. Local community perception in tourism development cannot be ignored because of their integral role, their involvement in tourism planning is very important in bridging the gap between governance and tourism development (Progano, 2018). Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that no studies have been conducted to examine how residents in the villages of Arjan, Wadi Rayan, and Mar Elias in the governorate of Ajloun and Souf, Sakeb, and Khufur Khal in the governorate of Jerash feel about the development of tourism. Considering the given research gap the aim of the study is to identify the perception of the local community towards tourism development in the rural tourism sites of Jordan. Carbon, (2014) claims that the study of perception is a more current phenomenon among people. As a result, additional research on perception is necessary to better understand this concept within the local community.

2. Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been suggested to explain the connection between local community perception and tourism development.

H1: Local communities with a positive perception will support tourism development.

H2: Local communities with a negative perception will not support tourism development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Investigating the research objectives has been done using a quantitative approach. There were three primary sections to the questionnaire. The demographic profile, including the subjects' gender, age, education level, annual household income, place of residence, and employment, was the main topic of the first section. The second section of the survey focused on respondents' opinions of how tourism development has both benefited and hurt them. The survey instrument was modified from earlier research (Látková and Vogt, 2012; Rasoolimanesh and Jaafar, 2016) on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 equals strongly disagree and 5, strongly agree.

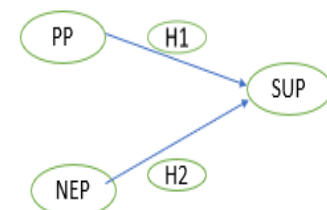


Figure 1. Hypothetical framework (Note: PP= Positive perception; NEP: Negative perception; SUP: Support tourism development)

Study area

The survey was conducted on Arjan, Wadi Rayan, and the Mar Elias villages of Ajloun governorate and Souf, Sakeb, and the Khufur Khal villages of Jerash governorate. As per the local Administrative Council of the selected villages, Arjan, Wadi Rayan, Mar Elias, Souf, Sakeb, and Khufur Khal the population numbered 6000,7144, 8192,15744, 11586, and 7355 respectively. The residents of these six villages have been considered as respondents. Due to their location near natural and historical monuments and their potential for tourism growth, these settlements were chosen. As per Krejcie and Morgan, the minimum sample size for a population of 56000 is 381 (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970).

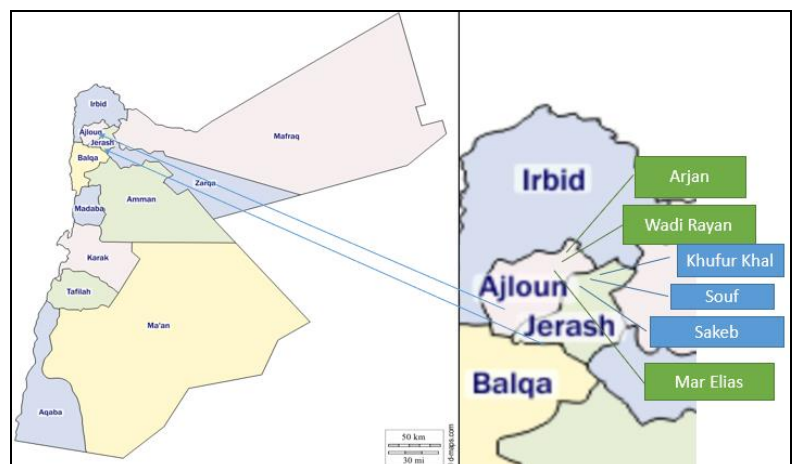


Figure 2. Location map of the study area

Various households in these villages received 452 questionnaires, of which 65, 58, 60, 82, 78, and 52 questionnaires were collected from Arjan, Wadi Rayan, Mar Elias, Souf, Sakeb, and Khufur Khal villages of Ajloun and Jerash

governorate respectively as shown in Figure 3. A total of 455 questionnaires have been distributed out of which 395 responses have been recorded with a response rate of 87%. Between February 15 and June 5, 2022, information was gathered from 395 households using both formal and informal survey methods. The local administration council gave a list, and the interviewees were chosen at random from it. The questionnaire was created in both Arabic and English. Additionally, regional terms were used to keep the respondents' trust. We have also used unofficial follow-up conversations and observations to confirm the accuracy of our results.

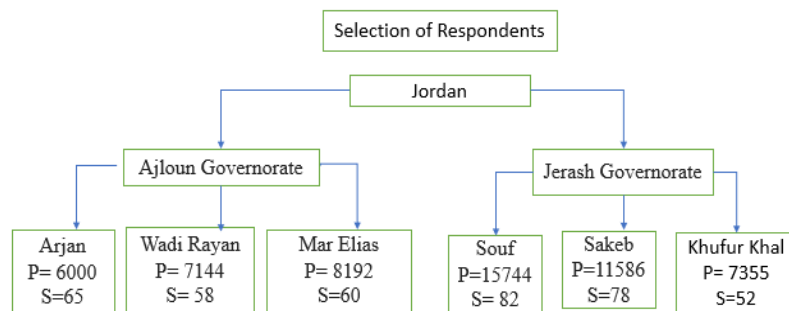


Figure 3. Selection of respondents Note: P= Population, S= Sample

Data Analysis

Using Cronbach's alpha, reliability and validity have been tested. The links between the constructs and the corresponding items have been determined using factor analysis. A series of descriptive analyses have been carried out to comprehend the residents' positive and negative impressions of their community and the extent to which they support tourism growth. Finally, multiple regression has been used to evaluate residents' attitudes toward tourism development, both positively and negatively. The statistical analysis was completed using SPSS (version 22).

4.1 Analysis and Results

Table 3 shows the factor analysis and reliability testing to assess the correlation between variables through grouping and dimensionality of the questionnaire items. A value of 0.770 falls into the range of being good for principal component analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The kaiser-Varimax rotation designates that questionnaire Items should be broken down into three categories: favorable perceptions, unfavourable impressions, and support for the growth of tourism. As per Table 3, the Cronbach alpha for all three factors has been found above 0.770. These findings show that the reliability and validity of the survey items are at an acceptable level. Table 4 displays the items with the greatest means of residents' positive (PP), unfavourable (NP), and support for tourism development perceptions (SUP). The mean values of the positive perception items ranged from 3.84 to 4.07. The statement "Tourism development attracts more tourists would produce more jobs" (4.07), followed by "Tourism development attracts more investment in rural regions (solid waste management, sanitation, and water supply)," has the highest mean favourable perception value. (3.99) and "Tourism growth creates new markets, increasing the value of farm products" (3.94).

However, the mean values for a negative perception ranged from 3.02 to 3.54 lower than those for a favourable assessment. The mean negative perception value for "Tourism produces alterations in our traditional value" (3.54) is the highest. The local population was found to be very concerned about maintaining their traditional values, which was followed by the statement that "environmental deterioration would result from tourism development infrastructure, such as the construction of hotels, restaurants, and other services" (3.26). and Increased tourism contributes to traffic congestion and pollution (3.21). Supporting initiatives for tourism development, the mean values were between 3.02 and 4.18. The highest mean value is "local community should actively participate in policy and decision-making process" (4.08), followed by "I believe that tourism should be actively encouraged in my community (4.18)," and "I would like to join those activities that are appropriate to the promotion of tourism at my destination" (4.04).

These results reveal that the residents of selected villages of Ajloun and Jerash governorate were keen to assist the growth of tourism development. The lowest mean value 'the initiative taken by the government are appropriate for tourism development' (3.02) reveals that the government intervention is not that much involved as per the expectations of residents. Summated scale method by Bernardin et al., (1976) has been used to calculate the values for attitudes toward and support for the growth of tourism. The largest mean value for support for tourism development is followed by favorable perceptions. The mean value of negative perceptions is the lowest. Multiple regression was used to examine how perceptions, both positive and negative, affected the expansion of tourism. Table 5's regression analysis findings highlight the important positive and negative influences of locals' perceptions on their support for the growth of tourism. Therefore, H1 and H2 are supported by the investigation's findings. Table 6 displays the regression model's R2 value, which is 0.201, and the adjusted R2 value, which is 0.189. Both of these values are deemed acceptable by behavioural research. (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents (Note: 1 JOD = 1.41 USD; During survey)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender (N=395)		
Male	203	51.3%
Female	192	48.7%
Age (Years)		
Lower than 30	56	14.1%
31-40	81	20.5%
41-50	135	34.1%
51-60	90	22.7%
61 and above	33	8.3%
Education		
Illiterate	59	14.9%
Primary school	92	23.2%
Secondary school	154	38.9%
Certificate/Diploma	25	6.3%
Degree	65	16.4%
Level of Income		
JOD 500 and below	97	24.5%
JOD 501- JOD 1000	104	26.3%
JOD 1001 – JOD 2000	72	18.2%
JOD 2001 and above	53	13.4%
Not fixed income	69	17.4%
Live in a village as a child		
Yes	319	80.7%
No	76	19.25%
Employment		
Part-time	57	14.4%
Full time	185	46.8%
Retired	74	18.7%
Not currently employed	79	20.0%

Table 3. The outcomes of factor analysis and a reliability test for the items that were adopted Note. KMO = .894; Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, p-value = .000

	Construct	Adopted Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach’s Alpha
PP	Positive Perception			0.810
1	Tourism development attracts more tourists would generate more jobs.		0.812	
2	Tourism development attracts more investment in rural areas (solid waste management, sanitation, and water supply).		0.801	
3	Tourism development adds value to farm products by creating a new market.		0.768	
4	Property owned by residents becomes more valuable as a result of tourism development.		0.754	
5	Tourism development diversifies the rural economy.		0.458	
NP	Negative Perception			0.816
1	Tourism development results in raising the cost of living.		0.723	
2	Tourism development infrastructure like the construction of hotels, restaurants, and other amenities would lead to environmental degradation.		0.820	
3	Tourism causes changes in our traditional values.		0.734	
4	Tourism development results in pollution and traffic congestion.		0.810	
5	Tourism causes overcrowding problems for residents.		0.699	
SUP	Support for Tourism Development			0.829
1	The local community should participate in the policy and decision-making process.		0.725	
2	The residents should be engaged in the heritage and local culture conservation programs.		0.739	
3	I am in favour of tourism and want to see it become an integral part of my neighbourhood.		0.751	
4	The initiative taken by the government is appropriate for tourism development.		0.712	
5	I would like to participate in those activities which are appropriate to the promotion of Tourism at my destination.		0.675	
6	In my opinion, my community should actively promote tourism.		0.633	

Table 4. Descriptive analysis (Note. PP = positive perception; NP = negative perception; SUP = support for tourism development)

Positive Perception (PP)			Negative Perception (NP)			Support for Tourism Development (SUP)		
Items	Means	Std. Dev.	Items	Means	Std. Dev.	Items	Means	Std. Dev.
PP1	4.07	.642	NP1	3.02	1.018	SUP1	4.08	.633
PP2	3.99	.606	NP2	3.26	1.083	SUP2	3.94	.684
PP3	3.94	.696	NP3	3.54	1.034	SUP3	3.05	.984
PP4	3.84	.702	NP4	3.21	1.052	SUP4	3.02	1.018
PP5	3.91	.766	NP5	3.17	1.078	SUP5	4.04	.664
						SUP6	4.18	.581
Average	3.95	.517		3.24	.790		4.46	.470

Table 5. Results of Multiple Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.908	.318		10.820	.000
H1	.408	.079	.440	5.540	.000
H2	-.109	.049	-.182	-2.293	.028

a. Dependent Variable: Support for Tourism Development

Table 6. Findings from model testing (R²)

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.458 ^a	.201	.189	.47223

a. Predictors (Constant), Negative Perceptions, Positive Perceptions

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study outlines an effort to examine, how locals feel about and support tourism development in the villages of Arjan, Wadi Rayan, and Mar Elias in the Ajloun governorate, and Souf, Sakeb, and Khufur Khal in the Jerash governorate. Additionally, we looked at how citizens' opinions about tourism growth in general—both favorable and unfavourable affected their support for it. Ajloun and Jerash governorates are renowned for having some of the greatest greenery in the Middle East, as well as ancient ruins, archaeological attractions, and thick green forests. It would be accurate to say that the selected villages of Ajloun and Jerash governorate are in the pre-development stages of tourism development because little effort has been made to position the future as a tourist destination. Residents thus do not yet notice either the positive or bad effects of tourism. Therefore, they do not base their overwhelmingly positive assessments of the rise of tourism on their personal experiences. They assumed that tourism development would lead to generating more jobs, more investments, and adding value to farm products by creating a new market. These results, which show that locals have a favorable opinion of tourism development, are in line with earlier research (Rasoolimanesh and Jaafar, 2016; Muresan et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2020; Alrwajfah et al., 2019). However, few residents voiced concerns about the detrimental effects of tourism growth, like loss of traditional value, environmental degradation, pollution, and traffic congestion. According to earlier research, citizens' levels of positive and unfavourable perceptions vary between developed and developing nations. In the early stages of tourism development, inhabitants are

less concerned about the negative effects of the industry (such as traffic congestion, overcrowding, and rising crime), but as the development grows, these worries become more evident (Látková and Vogt, 2012).

In addition, we investigated how locals' attitudes toward overall tourism development both positive and negative affected their support for it in the chosen villages of Ajloun and Jerash. Previous studies have indicated that locals are supportive and enthusiastic about participating in the process of community development, regardless of whether they have positive or unfavourable attitudes toward the development of tourism. Residents perceived that tourism development attracts more tourists would generate more jobs and tourism development attracts more investment in rural areas (solid waste management, sanitation, and water supply). These results, which show that locals have a favorable opinion of tourism development, are in line with earlier research (Upchurch and Teivane, 2000; Abdollahzadeh and Sharifzadeh, 2014; Vujko et al., 2021) However, locals expressed little worry about the alleged detrimental effects of tourism, such as tourism causes changes in our traditional values, tourism development infrastructure like the construction of hotels, restaurants, and other amenities would lead to environmental degradation and tourism development results in pollution and traffic congestion. Látková and Vogt, (2012) observed that in the initial growth of tourism, inhabitants had fewer worries about the negative effects of tourism (such as crowding, traffic congestion, and rising crime), but as the industry matures, these worries increase. Tosun (2002); Sharma and Dyer (2012); Chang et al. (2018) reports have found that residents of established tourist destinations are more worried about the damaging effects of tourism. Therefore, the results of this study about the unfavourable attitudes of Ajloun and Jerash inhabitants are consistent with other studies because the two cities are still in the early stages of tourism development and are therefore very undeveloped.

The results of this study show that people in the villages of Arjan, Wadi Rayan, and Mar Elias in the governorate of Ajloun, and Souf, Sakeb, and Khufur Khal in the governorate of Jerash, are extremely in favor of tourism development and marketing their home region as a tourist destination. Both tourism-related activities and environmental initiatives are acceptable to them. At this time, it is expected that tourism can spur local development and enhance inhabitants' standards of living in the villages of Arjan, Wadi Rayan, and Mar Elias in the Ajloun governorate, as well as Souf, Sakeb, and Khufur Khal in the Jerash governorate. The findings of this study also showed that residents' positive perceptions had a positive impact on their support for the expansion of tourism. Positive attitudes among the populace led to a willingness to support initiatives and advancements in the development of tourism. Additionally, they were willing to take part in campaigns to advertise rural tourism destinations. Numerous earlier research has confirmed these findings about the positive effects of locals' positive perceptions on their support for tourism development, particularly in rural and underdeveloped destinations. (Gursoy et al., 2002; Andereck et al., 2005; Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012; Muresan et al., 2016). The results of this study show that locals' unfavourable opinions about tourism development have a detrimental impact on their support for tourism development.

In the development and management of the chosen villages of Ajloun and Jerash, local officials should give priority to minimizing the negative effects of tourism on the local community. They should also inform the locals of their plans to do so, in the villages of Arjan, Wadi Rayan, and Mar Elias in the governorate of Ajloun, and Souf, Sakeb, and Khufur Khal in the governorate of Jerash. Residents will be inspired by this awareness to support and engage in the planning of the tourism industry and to help achieve sustainable growth. This knowledge will allay residents' concerns over the negative impacts of tourism on the neighbourhood. Jordanian are very much concerned about their traditional values and tourism development can affect the traditional value of the residents adversely. Today, it's critical to return built settings to the community, but it's also vital to consider how capable they are of organizing and administering their area. The answer to this question cannot be answered generally due to several factors including history, geography, human culture, educational attainment, etc. because of this, the application of proper policies and the progressive implementation of bottom-up upgrading initiatives can urge the neighbourhood to improve its surroundings from a social, economic, and technological standpoint. This is since a community's involvement in preserving and developing its environment will improve the area's development and conservation efforts, as well as the fact that a community's sustained living history will build its sense of community and social cohesion.

Limitations and Future Research

Although there are several limitations to this study, those constraints may affect how the results are understood. The first limitation relates to the study's context (Jordan), which restricts the generalizability of the findings to rural sites in other countries and should be taken into consideration for purposes of future research. Therefore, it is impossible to assert that the findings are applicable outside of specific circumstances. The location of this study is a rural community where the effects of tourism growth have not yet been completely felt by the locals. As a result, their judgments of the benefits and drawbacks of tourism are influenced by their general knowledge, the current projects they have in mind, and perhaps even past experiences with tourism development in other places. However, as locals in the villages of Arjan, Wadi Rayan, and Mar Elias in the governorate of Ajloun and Souf, Sakeb, and Khufur Khal in the governorate of Jerash experience the growth of tourism first-hand, these opinions may alter. The sampled inhabitants' ignorance about tourism development is thus one of the major weaknesses of this study that could bias the findings. Additional research might be done to attempt to quantify the advantages of tourism growth that residents are anticipating to better understand how residents' perspectives vary over time. This limitation adds value as a base for future research.

Finally, the distances between communities in Ajloun and Jerash differ. Respondents were chosen from settlements that were typically 6 to 10 kilometres apart from historical and natural landmarks. Therefore, depending on their proximity to the tourist destination, locals' perceptions may vary. When evaluating the results, it is important to keep in mind that the present study may have further limitations due to the absence of a distance control factor. Future research should try to account for the distance from the tourist destination.

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