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The negative sociocultural impacts of tourism on Bedouin communities of Petra, Jordan

Tourism impacts on destinations have been widely researched; however, few studies have investigated the sociocultural impacts of tourism on local communities in Jordan. The aim of this paper is to explore the negative impacts of tourism development on the local culture of Bedouins of Petra in Jordan. The paper employed qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews with (18) Bedouin employees in the tourism services in the region of Petra. The authors adopted the Social Exchange Theory (SET) to explain the behaviour and attitudes of Bedouins towards tourism development in Petra. The study showed that the Bedouins of Petra had witnessed significant negative impacts in terms of negative sociocultural changes; school dropouts and child labour; and alteration of sociocultural values. To interrogate some of the fundamental consequences of tourism development for the Bedouins, the researchers emphasise that strategic plans are needed to facilitate the sustainable development of tourism for the future.

Key words: Sociocultural impacts, Indigenous communities, Social Exchange Theory, Sustainability, Bedouins, Petra, Jordan.

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Introduction

Tourism plays a significant role in enhancing destinations' economies, social life, culture, and the environment (Jafaar et al., 2013). On the other hand, unplanned tourism growth can lead to negative outcomes and harmful influences, not only upon the destination environment but also on the social and cultural values of a community (Sharpley and Telfer 2002). The positive and negative impacts of tourism development on destinations have been researched extensively (Jafaar et al., 2013; Postma and Schmuecker, 2017; Pratheep, 2017; Pramanik and Ingkadijaya, 2018). For example, tourism provides job opportunities to local people, alleviates poverty, upgrades infrastructures, tourism investments, and supports the GDP with hard currencies. Tourism also spreads peace, tolerance, and cultural exchanges between nations. It can further protect wildlife and turns it to sustainable natural tourist attractions (Zhuang et al., 2019).

On the other hand, negative economic impacts of tourism may include leakages of currency outside the country, pressure on resources and infrastructure, increase in prices of goods and services as well as real-estate, preference of foreign labour (Ardahaey, 2011; Fletcher et al., 2018). Social and cultural negative impacts of tourism include differences in social and moral values between the host community and tourists. Tourism has also been associated with high delinquent behaviour in local host communities such as alcohol, drugs, gambling, and prostitution, school dropouts, and child labour. 'Overtourism' impacts on the infrastructures and the carrying capacity of tourist sites, traffic congestions, pollution, and noise are amongst the negative environmental impacts of tourism (Croall, 1995; Earth Summit, 2002).

Sustainable tourism, which considers the economic, sociocultural and environmental impacts of tourism upon the industry, environment, visitors and host communities, is an approach to understand the needs of all stakeholders involved in the tourism activities (The United

Nations Environment Programme- UNEP and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation- UNWTO, 2005; Sharpley, 2009). Past research on sustainability (e.g., Jafaar et al., 2015; Da Rosa and Silva, 2017; Pramanik and Ingkadijaya, 2018), has mainly focused on the industrial, environmental, economic and tourism sectors (Jafaar et al., 2013; Carrillo and Jorge, 2017; Ocampo et al., 2017; Lerario and Di Turi, 2018).

Tourism growth often contributes negatively and may erode the local culture of indigenous people and change their social values. Accordingly, tourism destinations should pay special attention to tourism growth, the flow of tourists and the local community's ability to address possible threats in terms of norms and traditions without causing radical changes in the local culture and identity.

In Jordan, sustaining growth in the tourism sector is one of the major priorities, where tourism is considered as the largest export sector with over four billion US Dollars income in 2018 (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities- MOTA, 2018). The total number of tourists visited the country in 2018 was 4.922 million, of which over 828 thousand have visited Petra. A large number of visitors has impacts for the sustainability of the sites as well as socio-cultural values of the local community. Thus, the aim of this research is to explore the negative impacts of tourism development on the local culture of the Bedouins in Petra. This study included three objectives: to investigate the negative social and cultural changes in the Bedouin society of Petra; to identify the phenomena of child labour and school dropouts in Petra, and to understand the alternation of cultural values in the Bedouin society of Petra.

Literature review

Research context

Petra is located in the southern parts of Jordan (Figure 1), and its history dates to the prehistoric eras (Hutchings, 2003). It was carved in the rocks by the Arab Nabateans, and many civilisations left their imprints in this city including the Romans, the Byzantines and

Arab Muslims (Hutchings, 2003; Jordan Tourism Board, 2017). Bedouins are identified as the inhabitants of deserts who move from one place to another, looking for water and available pastures for their livestock (Fuleihan, 2011). The Bedouins of Petra were described as the ancestors of Nabateans, but information about their lifestyle is not available before the rediscovery of Petra in 1812 by a Swiss traveller Ludwig Burckhardt. According to Burckhardt, there were around one thousand Bedouins living there at that time (Kooring and Simms, 1995). It is believed those used to work in simple commerce, breeding animals and farming activities in the nearby area of Petra called *Beidah*. They had their dialect that differs from spoken Arabic in cities or villages of Jordan (Miettunen, 2013).

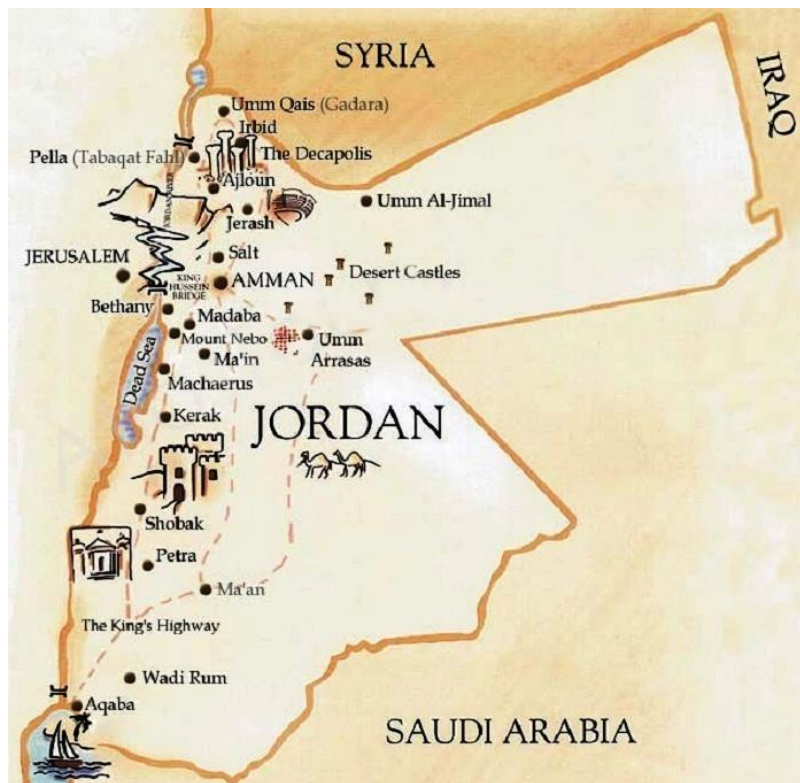


Figure 1: Map of Jordan and the location of Petra (<https://wonderstourism.com/blog/jordan-map-sites/>).

Petra between 1812 as rediscovered by Burckhardt and 1985 when it was announced as a world heritage site by the UNESCO, had very limited services and almost no infrastructure except for a small hotel and camp set by Thomas Cook in 1920 (Shoup, 1985). The life of Bedouins was modest; they used to live in the caves of Petra and under the tents. They earned

income from selling the products of their animals and weaving carpets. Visiting Petra was not an easy task since the only mode of transport was camels and horses. In 1985, when Petra was announced as a UNESCO world heritage site, the Jordanian government obliged Bedouins of Petra to move from the site and its caves to a small village built in the nearby village of *Saihoun*. However, around 150 Bedouins neglected the decision and decided to stay and settled in the caves of Petra until today.

There has been an increase in the number of tourists and tourism facilities in Petra since 1984 (Hijazeen, 2007; www.visitpetra.jo, 2018; MOTA, 2018). The number of visitors to Petra has fluctuated over the last 35 years (Figure 2). For example, it increased from 44,000 in 1984 to 481,000 in 2,000 and then dropped to 231,000 to 161,000 between 2001-2003,000 due to the war in Afghanistan and invasion of Iraq. In 2010 it reached the peak of 975,000 and then started to drop from 2011 until 2015 due to the political transformation in the Arab World, known as the Arab Spring. Recently, tourism recovered again in 2016-2018, which reached 828,952 visitors in 2018 (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Number of visitors to Petra 1984-2018 (Visit Petra: www.visitpetra.jo, 2018; MOTA, 2018).

As a result of this boom in tourism in Petra, hundreds of job opportunities were created, and most people have witnessed the financial impact either directly or indirectly, which resulted

in the improvement in the local's living standards and lifestyles (Alhasanat, 2010). The number of employees in tourism facilities in Petra was around 1,800, mostly in the accommodation sector during 2010-2018, of which only less than 2% were females (MOTA, 2018). These figures although have positive economic impacts, however, they have impacted negatively upon the archaeological site as the number of tourists exceeded the physical carrying capacity set by the UNESCO in 1994 to 1,500 visitors/day or 1,500 visitors/day or ca 550,000/year (Akrawi, 2012).

Sustainability

Sustainability is defined as: 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (United Nation World Commission on Environment, 1987). The concept of sustainability has a threefold focus on environmental, economic, and social principles. Sustainability implies the best balance involving economic benefits, the social perspective, and environmental cost. This equilibrium enhances the development of destinations without damaging their natural resources or environmental cost (Aranburu et al., 2016). The negative impacts of mass tourism in the 1960s led to the development of different approaches to conducting tourism. These emergent alternative forms of tourism include Ethical Tourism, Pro-poor Tourism, Volunteer Tourism, and Fair-Trade Tourism (Dangi and Jamal, 2016).

Negative sociocultural impacts of tourism

Tourism creates negative economic, environmental, and sociocultural impacts upon all the involved stakeholders, including the tourism industry, the environment, the visitors, and the host communities.

The impacts of tourism upon sociocultural values and local community have been identified by some researchers (Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Mustafa and Abu Tayeh, 2011). Some

literature has proved that tourism has led to social changes in many perspectives and dimensions, including norms and traditions, social values, woman's life and children status (Kim et al., 2013). Swarbrooke (1999) stated that radical change could happen in the behaviour of hosts and guests, new habits such as marriages between locals and tourists. However, Mustafa and Abu Tayeh (2011) identified other drastic changes such as sexual harassment and sex tourism, illegal sexual relationships between hosts and tourists, and alcoholism.

The commercialisation of culture is described as selling the local and traditional folklore, dance, songs, and creation of specific traditional events and performing a religious ceremony for tourists to earn income (Wall and Mathieson, 2005; Ivanovic, 2008; Kim et al., 2013). Accordingly, such practices distort the image of society. Also the local culture starts losing its identity and authenticity. Another critical negative influence identified is child labour. There were about 218 million children around the world working in poor conditions within tourism destinations (Plüss, 1999; International Centre for Responsible Tourism, 2013). However, the negative impact of tourism on indigenous people is relatively unexplored, and its impact differs between individuals and destinations. This difference is explained by many factors; the number of tourist arrivals to the destination, the type of relationship that is formed between the indigenous people and tourists in that more tourists means more negative impacts (Smith and Krannich, 1998; Alhasanat, 2010). In this paper, the negative impacts of tourism on the Bedouin community of Petra are explored and discussed.

The Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) was developed by Homans (1961). It is one of the most employed theories to explain people's social behaviour and attitudes (Andriotis, 2005; Soontayatron, 2013; Nunkoo, 2016). This theory focuses on the communication and interaction between individuals, which is based on rewards and benefits between them

(Zafirovski, 2005). The SET states that indigenous community enhances tourism development in case advantages of tourism are much more than potential disadvantages as the theory can investigate how people perceive tourism development in their destinations (Gursoy et al., 2002).

The SET was reflected in several tourism studies exploring residents' attitudes towards tourism impacts (e.g., Gursoy et al., 2002; Lee, 2013; Mazón et al., 2010; Paraskevaidis and Andriotis, 2016; Nunkoo, 2016). In the tourism context, indigenous communities' approval of tourism growth is conditional and associated with economic benefits they get from tourism development. Consequently, if the outcomes of the tourism exchange were perceived as unsatisfactory, the local people's attitudes will be negative and can result in withdrawal from being supporters to destination development. For example, Milman and Pizam (1988) found that individuals engaged in tourism activities perceived only the positive impacts of tourism. Likewise, Lee et al. (2003) found a strong correlation between high reward and positive attitudes towards tourism development. However, research in this area employing Social Exchange Theory is minimal (Zafirovski, 2005). Mazón et al., (2010); Nunkoo (2016) and Soontayatron (2013) postulate that the Social Exchange Theory is said to be the best theoretical framework to explain residents' attitudes towards tourism development as it explains the benefits of tourism increases, so the acceptance of local community to the inflow of tourists to the place. Therefore, the SET was found to be the best theoretical framework to underpin this paper to explain the behaviour and attitudes of Bedouins towards tourism development in Petra. Moreover, the findings of this research confirmed the utilisation of the Social Exchange Theory as best describes the current status of tourism exchange between indigenous people and tourists in Petra accordingly, though they received unbalanced impacts; high and positive economic impacts of tourism but negative sociocultural impacts of tourism in Petra.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was employed as it is more applicable to answer the research questions and to explore the aim of the study (Jennings, 2011). The population of the study incorporated all the Bedouins of Petra within the following criteria: Any individual above 18 years old and working in tourism. Official statistics reported that 1,800 individuals are working in tourism activities in Petra (Jordan Department of Statistics- DOS, 2017).

The sample of this research was of a non-probability type. Thus not every individual in the population had an equal chance to be included in the sample (Bryman, 2016). The researchers employed purposeful sampling, which is based on the researcher's knowledge and experience to decide and choose potential participants (Jennings, 2011). Accordingly, 18 participants from Bedouins working in tourism activities were chosen following the above criteria. The researchers to assert the diversification and thickness of information chose 18 different tourism activities. Most of the participants are males except two females due to the limited number of female employees in tourism activities, which could be explained by the pressure of local cultural values and norms.

Interviews were chosen as they were identified as the best data collection technique for this study, which aimed to explore individual experiences, beliefs and attitudes (Jennings, 2011; Veal, 2018) from the participant's point of view. The process of the interview started with preparing 'an interview guide' that covered three main themes, including the impact of tourism on Petra, sociocultural change, and locals' perception of tourism.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse transcribed data (Bryman, 2016). When analysing the transcribed interview using thematic analysis, common themes appeared amongst different interviewees. The process of data analysis included four stages: transcribing the data; coding each interview to discover the main themes; grouping the codes

to form themes; and describing and interpreting meanings (Bryman, 2016). Ethical issues were also considered; the data collected was used only for academic purposes; participants consented to record the interview, and names were fictitious to ensure participants' privacy and confidentiality. The findings of this research should be taken with caution as they cannot be generalised in qualitative studies. However, the findings can be transferred to other contexts that share similar sociocultural values (Daymon and Holloway, 2011; Haddad, 2013).

Findings

The sample of this study was composed of sixteen Bedouin males and two Bedouin females. Tourism is a male-oriented sector in Jordan; weak female participation (less than 2%) is explained by the burden of local norms and traditions, and that match the statistics by MOTA (2018). They included six receptionists, four tour guides, three travel agents, two souvenir shop owners, two waiters, and one car rental employee.

The following subsections section present the main themes that emerged from the interviews. Negative influences were significantly identified by those that participated in this study, including negative sociocultural changes; school dropouts and child labour; alternation of sociocultural values.

Tourism is an agent for negative sociocultural changes

All participants identified the change occurred in the local culture due to unorganised tourist influx to Petra. Participants highlighted different changes occurring to locals' lifestyles. The social bonds have become weaker, and because of tourism economic benefits, people's attitudes inclined to be money-oriented.

For example, when Ahmad was asked about the influence of tourism on local culture, He said: *'Do you believe in the in high season Bedouins are working 24 hours a day. They do not*

have time to visit each other; mobiles are closed because everyone is busy' 'everything changed, Bedouins became less social and more isolated..... Maybe its money.... Money changed everything'.

However, Tariq, a receptionist added: *'Bedouins do not care as before about social relations and family bonds because tourism is in our blood and a daily life activity and people are engaged totally in it. Bedouins know that tourism is seasonal, and the season is time to bring money'.*

Jordan is a collectivist society, and people have strong relations (Khattab et al., 2012). But in certain tourist attractions such as Petra tourism has caused a dramatic change in people's lifestyles. Bedouins in Petra are becoming individualistic in their behaviour and carefully consider what might be personally beneficial rather than looking out for the benefit of the group or family. They became money oriented, which was perceived as negative rather than positive for many participants. Money gained from tourism became the main power to change society, people behaviour, social relations, and lifestyle.

Participants put comments that reflect the Social Exchange Theory (SET). The SET suggests that people support tourism in case benefits were high. In this research, Bedouins are ready to sacrifice certain values because the economic benefits were significant. Tourism is tearing social ties in the Bedouin society as people are earning a lot of income. This finding confirmed the utilisation of the Social Exchange Theory within a new Arab Muslim context as the best theoretical framework to underpin this paper.

Some literature has proved that tourism has led to social changes in many perspectives and dimensions including norms and traditions, social values, woman's life and children status (Alhasanat, 2010; Mustafa and Abu Tayeh, 2011). However, the influence of tourism and its impact on indigenous people differs between individuals and destinations too. These differences are explained by many factors, including the number of tourist arrivals to the

tourism destination and the type of relationships that are formed between the indigenous people and tourists (Alhasanat, 2010). Hijazeen (2007) in his study found that the influence of tourism on Bedouins of Petra was keen because Petra is the most important tourism and historical site in Jordan attracting the largest portion of domestic and international tourists after the Capital Amman.

School dropouts and child labour

All Bedouin participants talked directly or indirectly about school dropouts and child labour in Petra and showed the seriousness of such a phenomenon. Tourism has a negative impact on local children of Petra and pulls them out from school and changes their attitude and behaviour. Bedouin children as adults were attracted by money and other advantages.

Maher was unsatisfied by the consequences of unorganised tourism development on Bedouins and particularly children. Maher stated, *'..... But the other thing that these children cannot write or read because they have never been to school, not even their mother language, and this is destructive'*.

Ahmad is an active tourist guide and worked formerly as a teacher, and he shared an incident that clarifies why students leave school. Ahmad said: *'If you open a wallet of a 10-year-old Bedouin child you will find €200, \$400 Dollars and JODs 150; Therefore, many Bedouin children fled from schools and go to work in any tourism-related job because at the end of the day tourism is money'*.

Earning high income is the main motive for children to leave school in poor destinations (Plüss, 1999). Participants' comments clarified that the income is very high. Thus Bedouin children prefer working rather than studying and being under control, and this is a major problem that requires handling.

Dropping out of schools at tourism destinations was explored by previous research (Plüss, 1999). Such a phenomenon is common in poor and less developing countries. However, such

findings in Jordan as a developing country is surprising as education is obligatory, and Jordan has one of the highest education rates in the Middle East and North Africa- MENA region, and literacy is over 93% (United States Agency for International Development- USAID, 2016). The findings of the current research correspond with the outcomes of Shoup (1985) and Mustafa and Abu Tayeh (2011) who found that large numbers of Bedouin children in Petra are quitting school for the sake of work and money. Most of Bedouin children are working as horse guides, vendors, waiters, and waitresses in tourist restaurants.

Regardless the facts that child labour is forbidden in international and national laws (UNICEF, 2007), there are 75,000 children working in Jordan and more than 200 Bedouin children working inside the site of Petra (Jordan Times, 2016). In another study by Bait Alanbat (2015), the number of children working in Petra were estimated at 350 and rose to 600 in high seasons. The UNICEF (2007) reported that 4% of Bedouin children are working in tourism and particularly in Petra's restaurants, selling crafts and stones and local guides. This finding is not surprising in a developing country facing considerable economic difficulties such as Jordan. Similar results were found in previous research and in poor and underdeveloped and developing countries such as India, Thailand, Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, Guatemala and Argentina (Walters and Davis, 2011; Sharma et al., 2012).

Alteration of sociocultural values

All Bedouin participants spoke about the alteration of sociocultural values. Participants were not happy with these changes, such as bad manners and swearwords, but things looked out of control.

Ali commented, '*Bedouin children are using swearwords and dirty language and bad words not only between themselves but also with other Bedouins and tourists.... no morals whatsoever*'.

Amer added that things do not stop at this limit but go further to involve young people behaviour, he said *'Much more when you talk to young Bedouins, they use many foreign words, and some use many languages. Some of these do it by purpose to show off; while other foreign language became a part of their daily life'*.

Bedouins, in their nature, are simple, modest, and hospitable (Rice, 2003). Changes in local behaviour and traits such as showing off can be explained by tourism influence and mixing with tourists. Also, it could be associated with the high income they are earning. Johnson and Krueger (2006) explained that money has a positive and negative impact on people's lifestyle.

Likewise, Tariq agreed and added: *'If you go out at night and take a round you will see young Bedouin guys with long hair. Some are wearing low waist torn jeans'..... even our appearance.... our Bedouin identity changed'*. When Tariq was asked to clarify he said: *'I meant our Bedouin traditional clothes mirror our identity.... it is not jeans or hats or T-shirts.... it is something different that reflect our relationship with our country and identity....'*

Tariq looked worried about the loss of Bedouin identity and related it to the local traditional cloth. The traditional Bedouin cloth represents countries traditions and distinctiveness. It is a way to keep each country different from other destinations and to preserve the local culture and promote it internationally.

The participants' comments confirm that tourism has influenced all Bedouins of Petra, and it involves all sectors and aspects of Bedouin's lives. The negative influence of tourism on local people's behaviour was highlighted by many researchers (Tsundoda and Mendlinger, 2009).

Jordan is a Muslim country where Islam has an important influence on people's life. Social norms and religious instructions forbid consuming alcohol. All Muslims must respect these rules, but it seems that the case in Petra is different.

For example, Omar, who was working as a night manager in a hotel, stated: *‘Tourism influenced Bedouin’s religious affiliation. They drink alcohol and date female tourists even though it is forbidden in Islam, but many Bedouins do not care, and they drink in public; they are not ashamed any more’.*

Marriage between Jordanian males and foreign women are not favorable. Jordanians prefer marrying local women to keep strong family ties (Wraikat, 2006; Al-Khatib and Al-Boo, 2010). Further, Wraikat (2006) hypothesises that marriage to foreign women carries significant negative effects such as the social upbringing of children, their loyalty, their belonging, their relationship to their country of origin, and their constant sense of alienation within the father's home. Divorce is common in such marriages, leading to social disintegration (Wraikat, 2006). But Bedouin males in Petra had other intentions, so they think of marrying a female tourist, which is common in many tourism destinations.

Haroon highlighted the issue of marriage between Bedouins and tourists. He stated: *‘Men get married to foreigner females, and Bedouins perceive it normally; it is not problematic anymore. A man gets married because either the [woman] wants his money or he wants a European, American or Australian passport’.*

Participants' statements describe the change in manners and behaviour of Bedouins; they looked blind when it comes to money. Being married to a non-Jordanian is based on mutual benefits between Bedouins and foreign female tourists. These benefits are variable; they can be either financial for Bedouins and tourists, as Bedouins want to earn income, and tourists want to invest their money. On the other hand, other benefits could be related to Bedouins who are looking forward to emigrating. Such influences can be perceived normally in an individualistic society. But in Jordan, things differ, since people are Muslims, conservative and traditional. Such findings contribute to the existing research about the negative influence of unorganised tourism on the local culture and identity.

Conclusions and recommendations

The research findings confirmed that Petra witnessed continuous development since the 1980s, but tourism is not organised and controlled. Large numbers of tourists are moving in and out the site all year round. Bedouin children are quitting school; young Bedouins are working for enjoying their night life and drinking alcohol, and local norms and religious rules are eroding gradually.

The inception of tourism in Petra has motivated most Bedouins to engage in tourism-related activities. However, their initial involvement was in particular areas such as selling souvenirs, giving horse riding tours and providing soft drinks and snacks for tourists (Koorring and Simms, 1995). At present, Bedouins are involved in various tourism-related jobs in restaurants, hotels, and museums. Moreover, many are engaged in some unacceptable types of jobs, such as working in bars, discos, massage centres, and Turkish baths (Petra Archaeological Park, 2011). Shoup (1985) stated that the financial benefits of tourism on Petra were noticed since the beginning of the 20th century. However, these economic benefits deviate from the social norms and religion and create an imbalance with the cultural values of people.

The tourism development that is taking place in Petra is unplanned and disregards the principles of sustainability. Tourism development is having a significant impact on Petra as a tourism destination from a variety of perspectives. However, minimising the negative influence of tourism on the Bedouins' local culture and identity is difficult. Specifically, economic dominance often contradicts the sociocultural interests when dealing with sustainability issues. This implies that sustainability does not complement tourism development in many tourism destinations. Furthermore, the notion of sustainability in the context of tourism development seems like an imaginary goal rather than a real and

applicable aspiration. This has negative implications for destination communities tempted by tourism development.

Accordingly, the researchers suggested the following recommendations:

- Increase control and supervision over schools and Bedouin children attendance by enforcing the education law.
- Engage tour operators in organising tourism development by educating tourists to help to preserve the local Bedouin culture.
- Organise tourists' influx to Petra and expand the tourist seasons all year round to minimise the pressure on the site and the village in high seasons.
- The provision of an educational programme about tourism for Bedouins. Specifically, what may be of interest is how to plan tourism in the long-term, and a focus on sustainable tourism planning and development.
- Full compliance with the recommendations of the UNESCO as regards the physical carrying capacity of the site of Petra by reducing the number of visitor to 1,500/day or 550,000/year to preserve the site.

This paper has made initial inroads towards exploring the various impacts of tourism development on Bedouins in the context of Petra. Moving forward, the researchers call for empirical studies to explore the perspectives of local Bedouins to improve the relationships between tourists and the Bedouin community of Petra. Do they perceive tourism as a threat to their culture and identity? How can such impacts be mitigated?

In conclusion, the research shows the residents have rather negative attitudes towards tourism development in Petra in terms of negative sociocultural impacts upon the local community. Further research is needed to explore the tourist/host relationship. Also, one can conduct comparative studies in similar sociocultural contexts to explore the pros and cons of tourism

development upon indigenous people. Moreover, further research can be undertaken to explore the balance of power between tourists and hosts in Petra.

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