



Shiraka Project – Policy Brief

POLICY BRIEF ON KEY IMPEDIMENTS TO IMPROVE THE TOURISM SECTOR IN JORDAN

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, under the support of the Embassy of
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Abbreviations

JITOA	Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association
JTB	Jordan Tourism Board
MoTA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RSCN	The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
WTO	World Trade Organisation



Policy Brief on Key Impediments to Improve the Tourism Sector in Jordan

This tourism policy brief comes as part of the Shiraka project. The project is supported by the Embassy of Netherlands in Jordan and implemented by Leaders International. It aims at reviving the once-flourishing tourism industry within Jordan, in light of COVID-19 devastations to the sector. It additionally seeks to improve on pre-existing weaknesses in the Jordanian tourism sector by enhancing the competitiveness of the industry through diversifying touristic offerings and adapting to recent traveling trends. Building on the basis of the project, the policy brief aims at identifying the policy impediments to developing the tourism sector with particular focus on current experiences and products promoted by the project (i.e., cultural, ecotourism, wellness, Islamic, and Christian touristic experiences)

Introduction

Today, the overall idea of tourism has changed. The tourism trends are changing, there are more individual travellers that are looking for more green and sustainable tourism, and surely immersing themselves with the local communities and learning about new cultures. The WTO has deemed important elements of sustainable tourism. It emphasizes the optimal use of environmental resources, maintaining essential ecological processes and conserving natural heritage and biodiversity.¹ It additionally emphasizes the importance of host-communities and their roles in preserving cultural heritage and traditional values.² Furthermore, it reflects that sustainable tourism approaches and experiences lead to long-term socio-economic benefits, and increase employment and income.³ Surely, this incorporates specific potential for ecotourism, cultural and religious tourism, as tourists today look for more authentic experiences that are more affordable.⁴

The new approach to tourism, the created experiences, and the host-community-centric strategies, aim to put forth a bottom-up approach to tourism development. This in turn stresses the need for policies aimed directly at supporting local communities and entailing social empowerment aspects,⁵ by which they are able to solely and collaboratively manage initiatives, enhancing access to resources, equal opportunities and economic diversity.⁶ This should also entail a specific focus on women and youth, and the important part they play in the economy.

¹ Al Haija 2011

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Alananzeh, et al. 2015

⁵ Al-Oun and Al-Homoud 2008

⁶ Ibid



There are many global-trends that apply to and can be adapted by Jordan, including product diversity, uniqueness and sustainability, community values, and attendance value of historic places.⁷ There remains an unutilized tourism potential in the Kingdom, that should be integrated further within governmental policies,⁸ with a specific focus on preservation of cultural heritage,⁹ investment in the development of holy sites,¹⁰ and focusing on initiatives that foster employment opportunities and improve the standards of living.¹¹

Tourism Strategy and SME Policies

Tourism Strategies and policies are meant to offer guidelines for long term sustainable socioeconomic development in the sector.¹² In their core they should include demand and supply impact policies,¹³ market predictions of tourists' behaviours, budget requirements, and economic forecast models.¹⁴ Furthermore, there needs to be a set of clear goals, actions, and controls, developed alongside the community and stakeholders.

Jordan has a comprehensive tourism strategy that has been updated and improved for over two decades. The strategy is developed by MoTA in collaboration with JTB, and focuses on many sub-sectors, including: medical tourism, ecotourism, cultural, religious tourism, among others. It is composed of several key principles that contribute to the development of the tourism industry in Jordan.¹⁵ It encompasses a core policy and regulation focus, fostered by private-public partnerships.¹⁶ It additionally aims to achieve sustainable tourism, social equality, economic development and attracting further investment to its core initiatives.¹⁷ This includes site and environment preservation. The strategy also encompasses the importance of upskilling in the tourism sector and developing human resources. Important steps of the strategy include methods by which Jordan should be marketed as a tourism destination, to attract further inbound tourism.¹⁸

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Alanzeh, et al. 2015

¹⁰ Bathatho 2006

¹¹ Bader 2012

¹² Al-Oun and Al-Homoud 2008

¹³ Murphy and Williams 1999

¹⁴ Al-Oun and Al-Homoud 2008

¹⁵ Al Mughrabi 2007

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid



SME Policies

Here local SME policies interact with tourism policies, as most of the local communities operating in the tourism industry are micro and small enterprises, which also has been demonstrated by the Shiraka project in their stream of support. Thus, it is important to present a brief of the SME policies in Jordan. SME policies in the Kingdom are put forth by a wide range of ministries and private & public actors.¹⁹ They focus on multiple areas including trade, labour, regulatory policy, industrial and sectoral, financial, education, and technology.²⁰ Therefore the success of any SME policies depends on multiple dynamics that may not always correlate effectively.

In 2015, a National Entrepreneurship and SME Growth Strategy was developed to propose a more specific governance structure for developing, coordinating, implementing, and monitoring policy and programmes.²¹ Nevertheless, the implementation of this strategy was hindered by the rigid bureaucracy and complex institutional dynamic in the country. Especially due to the cross-cutting nature of SME policies.²² The implementation of such strategies becomes more complex, as regional authorities have the flexibility to develop their own policies,²³ which may not always lead to collective effective results, especially, when correlating with tourism initiatives. On the contrary, the smaller enterprises and local communities have less opportunities to participate in SME policy development and to voice their concerns. The public-private dialogue in the country is still conducted in a very traditional manner concentrated on large corporations and the ministries.²⁴

Specific Experience-Tourism Supported by the Shiraka-Project

In reference to the supported experiences by the Shiraka-project and in correlation to the sub-sectors with highest potential in Jordan, previous development programmes have been directed towards: cultural & heritage tourism; ecotourism; and religious tourism, with the latter having more focus on Islamic sites. There has not been anything specific in regard to wellness tourism, where focus here was more on medical tourism, that has been witnessing vast competition for the Gulf region and Saudi Arabia. Thus, the Shiraka project, has been able to offer more diversified tourism offerings. Within these sub-sectors of focus, the overall status of each in relation to policies and programmes is presented below.

¹⁹ OECD 2019

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid



Cultural & Heritage Tourism

Cultural & Heritage tourism forms a significant form of tourism that is based on living cultures and material residence of local communities.²⁵ This kind of tourism depends on vast access and willingness of the communities to share their culture and resources.²⁶ This type of tourism still has an untapped potential, and is highly dependent on fostering strong partnerships between the government, governorates representatives, and the local communities.²⁷ This type of tourism has reflected positive results on preservation of culture, building community pride in, and awareness of the past.²⁸ In Jordan, there is a vast number of cultural heritage sites, reach 26,000, most of which is still unharnessed,²⁹ or needs vast investment in infrastructure. This includes castles, forts, towers, palaces...etc., that are of great interest to tourists.³⁰

Ecotourism

Ecotourism, as well, still has a vast untapped potential in Jordan. This has become evident by the creation of protected areas in the Kingdom (i.e., Dana ecolodge, Fenan ecolodge...etc.) and their increased popularity among tourists. There have been more and more initiatives and efforts in managing and developing this sub-sector.³¹ Especially as the National Tourism Strategy includes very specific guidelines on how to increase outreach and market these kinds of activities.³² The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) is the designated organization responsible for this sub-sector, and they have worked on improving it greatly,³³ in continuous collaboration with MoTA and JTB.

Given the specificity of this kind of tourism, special regulations and considerations should be put forth. The initiatives created are anticipated to provide positive benefits, but awareness should be raised on possible negative implications and environmental damages, from populated visits and activities.³⁴ Furthermore, there are various individual initiatives that go unrecorded in the more remote areas,³⁵ and a more extensive database and registration process needs to be conducted.

²⁵ Al-Oun and Al-Homoud 2008

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ de Burlo, 1996

²⁸ Al-Oun and Al-Homoud 2008

²⁹ Alananzeh, et al. 2015

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Al Mughrabi 2007

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid



As per the cultural tourism, this sub-sector also faces funding issues, as the investment is insufficient to revive many cities and make them tourist-ready, especially in terms of access and public transportation, where the latter presents a serious problem that affects Jordanian tourism negatively. Here as well, more partnerships and closer ties need to be established.³⁶ Lastly, there have been gaps in skilling and upskilling for individuals working in the sector, which is a component specifically targeted by the Shiraka project.

Religious Tourism

MoTA has been working on developing religious tourism since the late 1960s.³⁷ Furthermore, MoTA has worked alongside the Ministry of Awqaf since 2001 to develop specific strategies to promote Islamic tourism, including a specific focus on the mausoleums of the pre-Islamic prophets and the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad.³⁸ The efforts have been supported by the Royal Committee of Shrines, whereby they renovated and rebuilt various shrines across the Kingdom.³⁹ The joint efforts led to showcasing these sites as attractive regional tourist destinations, efforts which were strongly supported by the Shiraka project, through the digitization and technology upgrade of shrines both virtually and on-site.

Promotion campaigns were conducted by MoTA, Ministry of Awqaf, and JTB to promote this sub-sector further, this was paralleled by infrastructure development efforts and rebuilding of mausoleums in order to attract tourists.⁴⁰ The building of the sites also came as means of promoting national heritage and improving the lives of the local communities around it, through offering new streams of income. In more recent years, the ministry has focused on the promotion and development of Christian tourism,⁴¹ and have incorporated it within the sector's priorities.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Al Haija 2011

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid



Current & Conducted Policies

The policies and regulations related to the tourism industry in Jordan are fostered, prepared, and initiated between the government, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan Tourism Board, Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature RSCN (where applicable), and Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association (JITOA). The main policies adopted revolve around 3 main themes, as follows: improving tourism infrastructures (airports, streets, hotels, facilities) in tourist zones; rehabilitation of some historic centres targeted predominantly to tourist needs; and increasing the involvement of the private sector in tourism projects.⁴²

There have also been a multitude of more specific policies that are either sub-sector, governorate, or region dependent. In the more underserved areas in Jordan that have catered to tourism in the past, joint initiatives have been conducted to provide housing, education, and healthcare to the local communities, especially near Wadi Rum and Petra.⁴³ This also entailed governmental efforts for the rehabilitation of traditional, cultural, and religious centres across the Kingdom.⁴⁴ Wadi Rum has also been targeted by MoTA in developing the capacity of the local community and providing alternative income sources.⁴⁵ Yet further efforts are still required to involve more the voices of the local communities, and have more collaborations with the Bedouins in the area.

Aqaba has also undergone special policy considerations, and the most important is segregating it as a special economic zone, a policy that is meant to foster further economic development via inducing self-sufficiency and increasing investment.⁴⁶ Other examples have included the development of Dhana Nature Reserve, Fenan Nature reserve...etc., where local communities and Bedouins in these areas were expected to strive and have additional sources of income, and be more open to tourist initiatives. Although there was success in some cases, an accelerated tourism enhancement is yet to be anticipated.

What is important to note here is that many of the major tourism policies in Jordan, have come to support, what is known as the Golden-Triangle (Al-Mothalath Al-Dahbi), which represents Aqaba, Wadi Rum and Petra. Therefore, there remains a gap in the policy and regulation directed towards other initiatives, especially in regards to the sub-sectors mentioned earlier. Initiatives that have become essential, through the new way of experience-tourism, and the Shiraka project.

⁴² Al Haija 2011

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Lanquar, 2004

⁴⁶ Al Haija 2011



Laws & Regulations

The first documented law relating to tourism in Jordan was published by MoTA and goes back to the year 1988.⁴⁷ The law covers regulations in relation to: Tour Operators & Tourism Agency; Tourism Transportation agencies; Hotels; Tour Guides; Handicrafts; Restaurants; among others. The main regulations entail the following:⁴⁸

- Preserving tourist sites, developing these sites, and investing in them directly and indirectly, including their organization and management, and the implementation of infrastructure and construction projects.
- Licensing and classifying tourism professions in accordance with the provisions of this Law and the regulations issued thereunder. It is supervised with the intention of organizing and developing it to raise the level of services provided to tourists.
- Issuing permits for tourism services provided in tourist establishments and places, and the organization and supervision of all related activities, within the virtue of regulations issued for this purpose.
- Facilitating transactions related to tourists in cooperation with the competent authorities and tourism organizations within the Kingdom and abroad and providing the means of comfort and care for them.
- Develop comprehensive integrated programs for tourism advertising, implementation, supervision, and marketing, and promoting the Kingdom in cooperation with the concerned authorities.
- Concluding tourism agreements with regional and international tourism organizations and bodies with the approval of the parliament.
- Organizing, sponsoring, and encouraging investment in the tourism sector in accordance with the general policy set by council.
- Encouraging domestic tourism and tourism investment, organizing, and sponsoring it, and organizing tourism programs for this purpose, with the aim of introducing citizens to the Kingdom's landmarks.
- Work to provide the manpower and technical capabilities necessary for tourism professions to raise the level of performance, and sufficiency in the work of these professions in cooperation with local and international institutions, organizations, and bodies.
- Preparing special studies and research for the development of tourism professions. Carrying out any other work related to tourism decided by the Board.

⁴⁷ قانون السياحة رقم لسنة 1988 وتعديلاته

⁴⁸ These regulations have been translated from Arabic by the Author for purposes of this report.



The Tourism board is also responsible for carrying out the following more specific regulations, under the same decree:⁴⁹

- Setting the general policy for tourism in the Kingdom and the necessary plans and programs for its implementation with a specific focus on the development of touristic sites.
- Contribute to the development of tourism education, training, and rehabilitation policies and how to establish special centres and manage it in coordination with the relevant official authorities in accordance with its own legislation.
- Recommending the identification of tourist sites in the Kingdom.
- Approve draft laws and regulations related to tourism.
- Laying the foundations for licensing and classifying tourism professions.
- Laying the foundations for determining the prices of tourism services.
- Determining the tourism services provided in tourist establishments and places.
- Any other matters related to tourism that the Minister decides to present to them.

Along with any and all related registration processes, financing, and operational procedures that the tourism entities mentioned above follow.

In 2002, a manifest was created for the functioning of Regulation of the Jordanian Association for Crafts and Traditional and Popular Industries and its merchants;⁵⁰ this was associated with Law of Crafts and Traditional and Popular Industries and Trade No. (36) of 2002.⁵¹ These regulations however, did not really target the MSMEs working in handicrafts, which was restricted to one-page, but was rather more of an internal document on the meeting times, selection, and functioning of an association created for this purpose. Unfortunately the law was rather restrictive, and unaccompanied by supportive policies nor mechanisms to improve these industries, with the exception of initiating a training centre.

⁴⁹ These regulations have been translated from Arabic by the Author for purposes of this report.

⁵⁰ نظام الجمعية الاردنية للحرف والصناعات التقليدية والشعبية وتجارها رقم 38 لسنة 2002

⁵¹ نظام الحرف والصناعات التقليدية والشعبية والمتاجرة بها رقم 36 لسنة 2002



Later, in 2007, a manifest was created for the Jordan Tourism Board.⁵² Since then JTB has had a very vital role in the promotion of Jordan as a tourism destination, has implemented innovative strategies and contributed to positive change. Within the regulations, JTB had very important clauses to implement:⁵³

- Marketing and promoting tourism movement inside and outside the Kingdom, including historical tourism, leisure, health, religious, adventure, educational, and any other tourism activities that the council deems to be within the concept of tourism marketing in cooperation with the ministry and various tourism events.
- Preparing, producing, publishing, and distributing films, brochures, tourist posters and magazines, professional periodicals, and production of other means of promotion, including digital and electronic tourism content, with the approval of the competent official authorities if necessary.
- Preparation of studies, market research and tourism statistics.
- Contribute with the Ministry, public official institutions, and the tourism sector to provide the necessary funding for the implementation of marketing and promotion campaigns approved in accordance with instructions issued by the Council for this purpose.
- Cooperating with the Ministry to develop the National Tourism Strategy and the necessary plans and programs for its implementation.
- Develop a long-term strategic plan for the board, and the work plans emanating from it.
- Provide suggestions to the Ministry about projects and related works aimed at the development of the tourism product, and development of tourist sites in the Kingdom.
- Building a reliable database and information related to the tourism sector for research work, carried out by the board in coordination with the Ministry.
- Participation in national, regional, and international events, exhibitions, and conferences to serve the marketing of tourism, and promote it in accordance with instructions issued by the board for this purpose.
- Strengthening ties of cooperation and integration with the tourism sector revitalization bodies at the Arab and international levels.

⁵² نظام هيئة تنشيط السياحة رقم 79 لسنة 2007

⁵³ These regulations have been translated from Arabic by the Author for purposes of this report.



In 2014, an additional document was issued to initiate a management system for tourism sites.⁵⁴ The document did offer some general guidelines, but it was quite short, and capacity building policies within this premise were not initiated. Similar trends followed with a manual for registering the “tourist restaurants” in Jordan, which entailed mainly the nightlife venues that have higher than average prices. The manual does not suggest the best methods of operations, mention any standards, or requires improvements. It is mainly a guideline for registration.⁵⁵

After that in 2020, Regulations of the Jordanian Tourist Guides Association No. (29) of 2020⁵⁶ was prepared. This was an important association, as the tour guide industry was consistent thus far of mainly freelancers, and did not follow certain standards, and it was important to set certain guidelines. The document in its 14 pages, is mainly very administrative, describing general assemblies and what not. Nonetheless, the aims of the associations are quite important for the local tour guides, entailing the following:⁵⁷

The association works to raise the level of practice of the profession, spread tourism awareness among members and increase tourism, through carrying carry out all necessary actions to achieve these objectives, as follows:

- Taking under consideration the interests of members and protecting their rights and provisions related to health, social and professional services, through the establishment of the necessary funds, including the social solidarity fund and the cultural fund, and where members benefit from the funds in accordance to the instructions issued by the Minister of tourism based on the recommendation of the Council.
- Cooperation and coordination with the ministry, departments, institutions, associations, and other tourism bodies specialized in areas related to tourism work and its revitalization.
- Preserving the national tourism interest and the reputation of other tourism professions.
- Contribute with stakeholders in disseminating knowledge about the principles and guidelines of the Global Code of tourism etiquette.
- Cooperating with and participating in Arab and international tourism associations and professional bodies

⁵⁴ نظام إدارة المواقع السياحية رقم 23 لسنة 2014

⁵⁵ نظام المطاعم السياحية الأردنية رقم 32 لسنة 2018

⁵⁶ نظام جمعية أدلاء السياح الأردنية رقم 29 لسنة 2020

⁵⁷ These regulations have been translated from Arabic by the Author for purposes of this report.



As a complementary document⁵⁸ The Tourist Guide Services Law No. 31 of 2020, was created. Here, similar to other documents, it is purely administrative, and does not offer any form of supportive nor development policies. The document also presents strict regulations on the requirements needed to register as a tour guide, with required educational qualifications, that should not be a must for this job, putting further pressure on labour market integration across the Kingdom. Lastly, there has also been a presentation prepared by MoTA that acts as a guide for the procedures required for renewing the license and classification of the hotel establishment, and it is quite simple and has figure illustrations to follow through.

Compatible Business (SME) Laws

As mentioned in the SME policies sections, there still needs to be further and better collaboration between tourism policies, and SME policies, to incorporate the tourism SMEs. Currently the interconnections and collaborations are not sufficient and still need further work. There are separate and specific SME policies that are worth mentioning here that offer a basis for collaboration.

It is important for SME policies, regulations, laws created and established, to encompass an interdepartmental and ministerial coordination and continuous communication.⁵⁹ Therefore, it remains essential to link tourism policies with SME policies and needs, to foster a more integrated development sphere that enables upgrading the sector and businesses. This requires continuous and effective dialogue between the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, and tourism-related SMEs across different governorates, with sub-sector representation. The approach to enable better collaboration entails many steps, but centres on voicing the needs of SMEs and their requirements to upgrade their business and offer better touristic experience, whilst increasing their income and improving the livelihood of the local communities.

Jordan has created an SME strategy, that can be assessed in terms of integrating with the tourism strategy, to offer a more diversified approach in terms of policies and regulations. The strategy covered the period from 2015 to 2019, its main aim is to foster job-creation and income generating activities, so that SMEs can contribute further to economic development.⁶⁰ According to OECD, nonetheless, the strategy has not been fully adapted nor implemented.⁶¹ Here cross-sectoral collaboration and division could be important to assess, especially in terms of divisions of specialization and capacity building requirements. Thus far, the Jordan National Committee for Higher-Level Support for SMEs, does not mention any collaboration with the ministry of tourism or related enterprises.

⁵⁹ OECD

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid

⁵⁸ نظام خدمات أدلاء السياح رقم 31 لسنة 2020



Specific Policy Considerations - Jordan

There are specific considerations that should be continuously put forth when formulating and adopting new policy premises in Jordan, and across similar focus sub-sectors, identified throughout this paper. Initially, Jordan has its special culture, traditions, and way-of-life and these need to be protected and preserved. As per any tourism endeavour, there could be certain effects that may intercept the local lives, environment and nature that need to be considered, so as not to exert any negative impact.

First, proposed policies need to be compatible with social identity and heritage, and respect cultural values and integrity, while encompassing a high degree of awareness of the local way of life.⁶² This entails the importance of the locals rights to resources, land, and integration within any developed tourism initiative.⁶³ Especially those living in areas of revamped sites, or sites that may be adapted for tourism purposes.⁶⁴ There are very specific considerations for Jordan that need to be considered with higher care when implementing new tourist projects and formulating new policies, especially in the more rural areas. These have been identified as: conservation of natural resources; fair distribution of tourist benefits; economic incentives for urban rehabilitation; co-planning alongside the local community; and preservation of local culture.⁶⁵

There have been concerns on the possibilities of tourism endeavours to lead to the displacement of the local population in the Jordan Badia desert.⁶⁶ Therefore, continuous assessments, collaborations, and incorporating the considerations above in every policy remains essential. The Bedouin heritage needs to be preserved and integrated within cultural and heritage tourism, this encompasses: (cultural practices, customary institutions, itinerant communities' traditional knowledge, and certain relationships with ancestral land and natural resources).⁶⁷

Another specific consideration is that related to the ecotourism sub-sector, and whether initiatives could actually cause environmental harm. As ecotourism could lead to multiple visitations to areas that were previously undistributed and cause harm to the environment, animals, and plants there.⁶⁸ For instance,

⁶² McLaren, 2002

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Bader 2012

⁶⁵ Al Haija 2011

⁶⁶ Al-Oun and Al-Homoud 2008

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Al Mughrabi 2007



building roads to the site, could lead to immediate ecological effects,⁶⁹ and special considerations need to be established, before embarking on any form of infrastructure.

Policy Constraints

In addition to certain policy considerations, it is important to attest to the policy constraints that may hinder effective implementation. A main constraint is that there still remains a lack of local resources in Jordan, especially core requirements for a functioning industry. There are limited water resources that have affected many projects negatively in the past decades, coupled with very high electricity costs, that have hindered development. Thus, core problems should be addressed before pursuing effective policy streams. In terms, specifically of the tourism sector, large capital investments are still required in facilities and infrastructure to enable upgrading the sector further.⁷⁰

Arising Issues with current policy approaches

In the past tourism policies and approaches tended to miss the mark on benefiting the local communities and improving their way of life.⁷¹ Certain Bedouin communities have been displaced, and there was conflict of interest between the private sector, foreign aid and public services.⁷² Especially as some infrastructure projects have focused more on tourists needs, and did not incorporate host communities' needs sufficiently, especially in terms of public services.⁷³ This implies that future policies should be more inclusive, and aim to upgrade the lives of the local communities within the tourist initiatives.

On more specific fronts, upgrade policies and infrastructure projects for tourism sites are still lacking and have not been covered sufficiently. Tourists have reported that the holy sites especially, were not serviced.⁷⁴ Furthermore, there were accessibility issues to reach these places, especially in terms of connections, transportation, and road development.⁷⁵ Issues which also present larger hurdles for the Kingdom. Furthermore, it has been reflected that in certain areas the local communities are unaccepting of tourist activities and are not willing to take part.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Al-Oun and Al-Homoud 2008

⁷¹ Al Haija 2011

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Bader 2012

⁷⁵ Alananzeh, et al. 2015

⁷⁶ Bader 2012



In terms, specifically of two of the experiences under the Shiraka projects, there are further policy implications. For religious tourism, it has been pointed, that policy collaboration and cooperation is lacking between the Ministry of Awqaf and tourism professionals,⁷⁷ and that these efforts need to be enhanced to upgrade this sub-sector. Furthermore, thus far, the current policy reforms have not been able to create effective means to enhance religious tourism, especially with vast competition of neighbouring countries for both Islamic tourism in Saudi Arabia and Christian tourism in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and further efforts are required in this regard.

In terms of ecotourism, there remains a gap in policy, as it has been limited thus far to nature reserves excluding many potential rural ecotourism destinations.⁷⁸ The sub-sector remains somewhat unorganized, as it is filled with individual initiatives.⁷⁹ In this regard, it has been assessed that further government funding should accompany policy upgrades, which also applies to all other tourism experiences, especially as mentioned earlier in terms of infrastructure and accessibility. This should be accompanied by specific investment directed towards transportation and accommodations, as it is still missing in most governorates in Jordan and will present hurdles to any policy reforms.

Recommendations

The research, data, implemented projects, and various stakeholder discussions, reflect that there are general guidelines and steppingstones that should be put forth, prior to introducing specific policy recommendations, to enable an effective and sustainable enhancement of the tourism sector in Jordan, with a focus on the presented tourism experiences. First and foremost, the upcoming tourism strategy should encompass more direct elements related to economic development and environmentally friendly approaches, where both encompass natural resources sustainability and planning.

Here, strategy and policy successes should be measured against industry enhancement, economy improvements, and further integration of the local communities in tourism initiatives. In other words, the policies should encompass a bottom-up approach, in partnership with the local communities. In parallel, stronger public-private partnerships need to be established with the aim of sustainable tourism, and to come-up with more comprehensive policies to upgrade various stakeholders' initiatives in the industry. This means that there should be strong cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, Jordan

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Al Mughrabi 2007

⁷⁹ Al Mughrabi 2007



Tourism Board, Jordan Inbound Tourism Association, Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, among others, especially for the sub-sectors, as mentioned earlier within this paper.

Further Capacity Building and Development

The policy recommendations should be accompanied by a set of capacity building activities that foster, enhance, and accelerate their achievement. Here, the efforts exerted by the Shiraka project in terms of providing in-kind support, training, and equipment to various MSMEs across the sub-sectors is considered an important pillar of the capacity building activities. The activities have incorporated strong community-based ties, across the more remote touristic sites in Jordan. It also included, where possible upgrading the facilities of the experience-providers.

It is essential to give the local community the required capacity building activities, to enable them, under better facilitated policies to generate higher income, and maintain their livelihood, where in turn, they contribute to the national economy. Accordingly, it is highly essential as well, for all upcoming initiatives to build the capacity of human resources, especially those working in new touristic experiences, that have not been implemented long in Jordan. Lastly, it is essential to upgrade the accommodation facilities, and give support along line the new created tourism experiences.

The recommendations henceforth are formulated and segregated in-line with the following guidelines:

- Expanding Jordan's tourism approach to incorporate different governorates, areas, and initiatives outside the Golden-Triangle (Al-Mothalath Al-Thahbi)
- Enhance current support programs, laws, and regulations to encompass enhancing and upgrading sub-sector based on experience-tourism as follows: cultural, ecotourism, wellness, Islamic, and Christian touristic experiences.
- Work in line of the three-themes determined by MoTA as follows: improving tourism infrastructures (airports, streets, hotels, facilities) in tourist zones; Rehabilitation of some historic centres targeted predominantly to tourist needs; and increasing the involvement of the private sector in tourism projects.
- Work in line with previous efforts to provide housing, education, and healthcare to the local communities.
- Foster further economic development via inducing self-sufficiency and increasing investment.



Laws & Regulations

- Expand the regulations formulated for supporting MSMEs in the tourism sector, specifically handicrafts, to include specific eased policies to incorporate further MSMEs into the sector. In addition to the capacity building efforts suggested below, this should include the following:
 1. Ease of registration procedures and reduction of bureaucracy
 2. Centrality of the unit of support (i.e., one ministry)
 3. Expansion of service centre in the more remote areas
 4. Tax incentives for newly registered
 5. Support units and centres across the different governorates
- Expand the document facilitated for the management of tourism sites to encompass infrastructure, upskilling, and capacity building policies as is explained below.
- Expand the manual prepared for “tourist restaurants” to encompass and regulate smaller cultural restaurants; restaurants offering authentic local experiences; and especially women-owned home-based businesses offering culinary and cooking experiences to tourists. This should encompass eased guidelines for registration, and targeted investment schemes.
- Expand the Tourist Guides documents, to encompass more direct support on capacity building requirements, eased registration, and certification, in terms of the following:
 1. Build-upon local centres that offer tour guide certificate and authentic a special one for Jordan.
 2. Ease the requirements for tour guide certification and build upon local community knowledge to offer more job opportunities.

Local Communities

- Direct investment and support towards local communities working in tourism, especially in remote and underserved areas.
- Invest in creating more experience-tourism and unique opportunities with the locals, as per the Shiraka Project.
- Form a committee with local community representatives, across different governorates and sub-tourism sectors, to meet with MoTA and JTB, and assess the state of the tourism activities on bi-annual basis.

Upskilling and Human resources

- Develop and invest in centres offering a specialized tourism education, including specialization in the sub-sectors, with an internationally accredited degree.



- Create awareness programs for local guides, and individuals working in tourism on cultural awareness, heritage, and tourism-etiquette.

Infrastructure

- Vast efforts and investment need to be directed towards developing proper roads and pathways to tourism sites.
- Development and investment should be directed to build and manage additional accommodation sites next to curated tourism experiences.
- Vast investment needs to go towards developing a proper transportation system for tourists, including buses, rails...etc., with specific stops and tourism sites and developed trials.
- Increase the effort of reconstructing and preserving cultural and religious sites.
- Provide facilities at each tourism location, including lavatories, canteens, information kiosks...etc.
- Maintain and monitor proper safety regulation standards at official sites, following international procedures, with specific access for elderly and persons with disability.

Value Chains

- Work towards integrating industrial and agricultural projects with tourism initiatives, to enable stronger value chains that foster economic development. This could incorporate farming and water harvesting with the local communities.
- Promote religious tourism as part of the cultural experience and historic presence in the areas, to offer a diversified range for different tourists.
- Enhance public-private collaboration, especially with MSEs owned by the local communities.

Assessments & Monitoring

- Create a system for regular monitoring visits, along with different tools across tourism locations. This should entail regular assessments and reporting mechanisms.
- The monitoring mechanisms should also include targets set by MoTA and assessed on an annual basis.

SME-related

- Set up a department within the MoTA focused on SME development and policy.
- Induce mechanisms for discussion, surveying, and forums to raise the voices of SMEs in the public-private dialogues to be conducted.



- Special enhancement support and funding should be directed towards SMEs owned by women and youth, as per the Shiraka project.
- Create a forum to joint efforts and establish regular meetings and shared targets between the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities and Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply for joint programs that assist the development and upscaling of SMEs.
- Conduct regular field visits by MoTA and JTB to tourism SMEs and assess their success, needs, and requirements.
- Establish a donor group with a specific focus on Tourism SMEs managed by MoTA



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