Palestinian tourism: A period of transition

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Editorial criteria

It is the Journal's intention to encourage an interchange between hospitality managers, educators and researchers.

- Contributors are encouraged to identify the practical implications of their work for the management of hospitality across the range, from single unit concerns to large organizations
- Articles based on experience and evidence - rather than philosophical speculation - are encouraged
- Co-authored contributions from educators and managers on collaborative work are particularly welcome

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Contemporary Hospitality Management

Palestinian tourism: a period of transition

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Palestinian tourism: a period of transition

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Abstract
This research is designed to investigate the status of tourism in the parks of Wade Al-Badan, which is located near the city of Nablus, in the West Bank, during the period of political transition. Socio-economic, behavioral and spatial variables of visitors are examined and compared. The on-site survey was conducted on the last Friday of July 2000, starting at 1.00 p.m. and ending at 7.00 p.m. The results indicate that the majority of the visitors came from the West Bank. The findings suggest that tourism will be a major economic sector in Palestine, which lacks tourism facilities. Better spatial management of attractive tourism sites is also needed, but the Israeli security policies create barriers against the execution of Palestinian development plans. This study also reveals that it has managerial and policy implications in terms of preparation for growth and tourism promotion.

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the status of tourism in the parks of Wade Al-Badan, located in the vicinity of the city of Nablus (northern West Bank). The West Bank has faced dramatic political, economical and social changes throughout the last 50 years. It has moved through several stages of instability, which affected various tourism activities. After the 1948 war the West Bank was annexed to Jordan, while Egypt ruled the Gaza Strip. In 1967, both the West Bank and Gaza Strip fell under Israeli occupation, and 1987 witnessed the launching of the first uprising (*Intifada*) ending in 1994 when the Palestinian National Authority took over partial control.

After the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority, the West Bank and Gaza Strip entered a period of relative stability; people had the freedom of moving and traveling from one place to another and internal tourism started to prosper. The parks of Wade Al-Badan started to receive thousands of visitors each year from different districts of Palestine. As a result, it is necessary to examine the socio-economic, behavioral and spatial characteristics of the Wade Al-Badan visitors. This study also contributes to a further understanding of tourism by employing an empirical approach to aspects of socio-economic, spatial and behavioral variables. Finally, the study will furnish a proposed tourism policy advice that one can give to local and national managers for the parks of Palestine.

Wade Al-Badan and the development of its parks

This wade (valley) is located 4km northeast of the city of Nablus (Figure 1) and stretches eastwards to the Jordan Valley. It can be divided into three geographical sub-sections. The first section stretches from the mountains of Nablus until the village of Al-Badan. The second stretches for about 2km downward from the village of Al-Badan to the spring of Ein Shibli. The third stretches from Ein Shibli to the Jordan River (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 1999).

After the 1967 war, when the West Bank came under Israeli occupation, farming in Wade Al-Badan faced several challenges. First, spring water started to diminish as a result of the Israelis pumping the water; second, products from this area experienced strong competition by Israeli products, and third, residents of the area increased dramatically and parcels of land and shares of spring water were split between many inheritances. For all of these reasons the residents thought of better uses of their shrinking shares of water and land. Parcels of land were used for tourism purposes, which consume less amounts of water. Some inheritances did not split their parcels of land, but used it for tourism purposes and turned their parcels into parks. In order to receive clean spring water, and to avoid the polluted water that comes from the upper side of the wade, landowners connected their parks and springs with plastic pipes. Nowadays, the area urgently needs the development of its infrastructure, such as roads, communication, sewage and running water systems, electricity and security. Moreover, the area needs environmental protection against sewage water, garbage accumulation, traffic congestion, soil erosion, and trees and grass degradation.

Tourism in Palestine and its benefits in peace time

Tourism in Palestine is not a new phenomenon. Palestine is located on the

Figure 1
Parks of Wade Al-Badan in Palestine
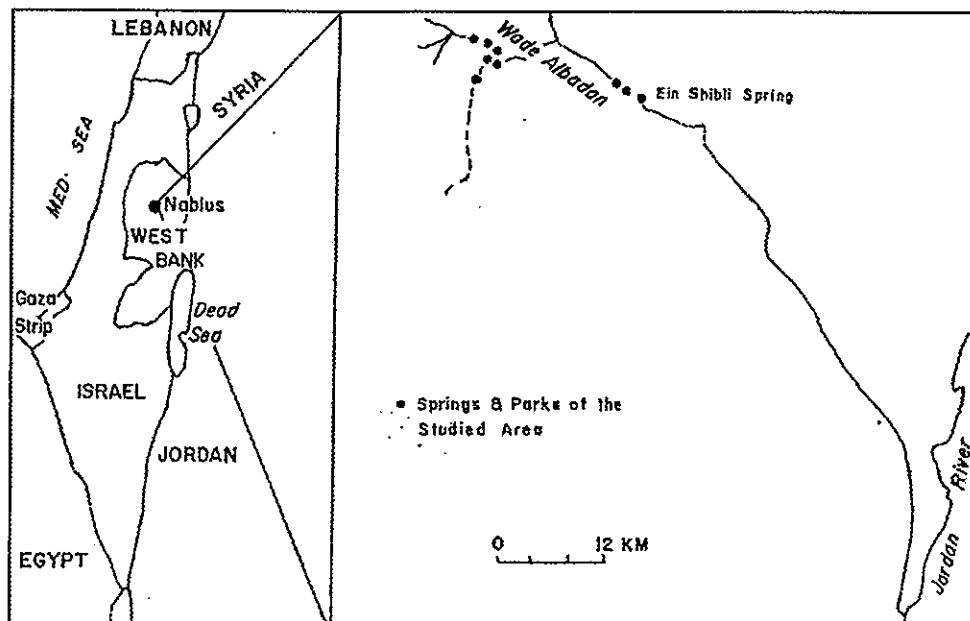
Source: Tumaizeh (1999)

crossroads between three continents, Asia, Africa and Europe. It is considered the cradle of civilization and a place of the world's three major religions (Alavi and Yasin, 2000; Wizermass and Al-Hiyari, 1987).

After the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994, several necessary steps were carried out to promote tourism. First, an economic agreement was signed between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel on 4 May 1994. Second, the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities was established and took responsibility for reorganizing the tourism industry in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But because of political unrest and the Palestinians' limited resources, the ministry was not successful in its mission. However, the Palestinian ministry has its own plan to develop the basic infrastructure. For example, it is working to increase the hotel rooms from 2,400 to 14,000; reorganize the internal transportation, restaurants, tourism agencies and other segments; and rehabilitation of religious places and cultural centers. Moreover, the ministry is in charge of upgrading laws and regulations to meet the needs of today's tourism industry (Al-Khawaja, 1997).

Tourism benefits derived from peace are great and play a major role in eliminating negative attitudes and intentions among enemies. It also helps in creating salient economic and social developments. Tourism, on the other hand, is considered highly labor intensive (Jamson, 2000). Domestic and international tourism in 1995 combined to create over 200 million jobs worldwide. Tourism output reached $3.4 trillion in the same year and the industry's contribution to the world's gross domestic product reached 11.4 per cent. Furthermore, more people engage in pleasure and tourism business than ever before according to demographic statistics. As a result, Palestinian tourism issues merit considerable attention (Cheong and Miller, 2000). However, Fleischer and Felsentein (2000) argue that despite tourism being considered as job generating, it is also blamed for creating low wages and only seasonal employment. However, tourism creates one job among 20 jobs in the Middle East, despite the low investment (about 2 per cent) in this important sector. To compare, investment in tourism on the international level is about 7 per cent (Abu Dayyha, 1997). This helps in creating one job in tourism among each 15 jobs created in general, world wide (Al-Khawaja, 1997; Jamson, 2000).

Abu Rabah (1998) reports that:

... tourism industry is a major base for future economic development in Palestine. It requires, therefore, perceptive and clear policies with vision and prospects. To execute such policies, all Palestinian governmental offices should be involved. Assessments of the tourism infrastructure and tourist characteristics are needed.

He also adds that, at present, tourism in Palestine lacks policies for the public and private sectors. In addition, marketing and information studies, which take the

responsibility of upgrading the image of Palestine as an important tourist attraction country, is absent.

In Cyprus, there has been a remarkable growth in tourism and tourist arrivals during the last 20 years. It was perceived that economic progress would be achieved by means of job creation and foreign exchange earning. On the other hand, there has been a growing concern for social, cultural and environmental costs imposed by tourism (Ayres, 2000).

A high proportion of unskilled laborers characterize the tourism industry in Palestine; those who were educated to serve in this industry are very few (Abu Rabah, 1998; Szivas and Riley, 1999). Therefore, the Palestinian tourism industry should have plans to rehabilitate those who are involved in every level of this salient economic sector. Furthermore, the Palestinian tourism industry should incorporate religious, cultural and geographical aspects. One may consider the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip to have great potential for tourism development. For instance, the Gaza Strip shoreline promotes the possibility of accommodating 60-80 hotels with 200-room capacity each. The needed investment for this project totals up to $920 million. Moreover, the shore of the Dead Sea can market 400 hotels each with 200-room capacity and their total cost is estimated at $300 million accompanied by the creation of 120,000 jobs.

The area of Jerusalem-Bethlehem combines the main elements of the Palestinian tourism industry. Israeli studies indicate that 91 per cent of tourists visit Jerusalem and Bethlehem, of which 85 per cent prefer to lodge in this area. This is taking into consideration that tourists usually stay more nights in areas of religious significance. The Jerusalem-Bethlehem area can incorporate an additional 100 hotels of 200 rooms each. The total cost of this project will be around $200 million and 10,000 jobs will be created (Abu Dayyah, 1997).

The Israeli authorities have been in charge of international tourism in Jerusalem since 1967, and they execute their policies in such a way as to be the only franchised power. For example, the Israeli authorities do not allow their tourist groups to stay in Bethlehem for more than one hour (45 minutes to see the Church of the Nativity and 15 minutes for shopping). In addition, most of the generated revenues that come from tourism go to Israel. For example, Israel gets 85 per cent of the added value because it dominates transportation, lodging, food services and other facilities (Al-Khawaja, 1997). To

compare, the Palestinian revenue from tourism is about $120 million, but the Israeli revenue reaches $2.6 billion (Abu Dayyah, 1997).

At the beginning of its independence, Palestine will have a weak market share if compared to the Israeli market. However, Palestinians are trying to establish their own strategies and tactics, which encourage international travel to their country. It is conceivable that the Palestinian independence could result in the influx of tourists from the Arab, Islamic countries and the rest of the world. In addition, political policies and processes would be a major influence on the tourism activities of the eastern Mediterranean region. Cheong and Miller (2000) report that:

> ... relative to the substantial attention given to the practical business and marketing of tourism and its economic costs and benefits, very little is presented about its political nature.

In relating tourism to environment, Palestinian tourism may fall under three categories, which were brought by Kousis (2000):

1 *Environmental impact.* After the establishment of Palestinian National Authority, environment has caught the attention of various governmental and non-governmental offices. Most of the Palestinian research is concentrated on the impact of pollution on water resources. Several international agencies are concerned with this matter.
2 *Environmental attitude.* During all the years of Israeli occupation, Palestinians were aware of environmental issues in their homeland. They did not have the opportunity to talk about the negative environmental effects of military occupation. Nowadays, they have started to establish local and governmental committees in order to take charge of environmental problems. Furthermore, Palestinian media is taking its role to make people aware of the problem (Abu Sirhan, 2001). The geography department at Birzeit University is offering a class about environment to its students each semester. Students of this department have found, through organized field trips, that most effects of tourism activities are related to traffic congestion, fresh water pollution, solid waste dumps on the sides of streets, noise which comes from construction and operation of tourism projects, soil pollution and erosion and plant cover degradation.
3 *Resistance to tourism-related activities.* Palestinian local municipalities have

started to establish certain regulations which are supposed to be applied by park owners for the purpose of protecting the fragile environment.

In 1995, two and a half million tourists visited Israel, with 80 per cent, 40 per cent, and 20 per cent visiting Jerusalem, Bethlehem and the Dead Sea, respectively (Khalaf, 1997). In addition, 92 per cent of tourists' expenditures in the areas governed by the Palestinian National Authority leaks out in imported goods, but in Israel only 50-60 per cent of such expenditures leak out. This means that the Palestinians have to reduce the leakage effect; otherwise tourism will become a burden on their economy, alongside the deterioration of tourism infrastructure and environment. Moreover, the tourism multiplier will decrease as a result of importing tourism goods. But in Turkey, for example, the tourism multiplier is around 1.96, which means any dollar spent in the Turkish economy will create approximately two dollars in that same economy (Al-Khawaja, 1997).

Method of study

The main purpose of this study is to find out the socio-economic characteristics of visitors from Palestine and other countries to the parks of Al-Badan. Although Wade Al-Badan Parks has been in operation since 1994, no empirical study has, as yet, been conducted to examine the spatial and socio-economic profiles of tourist flow. Thus, little is known about recreational travel to the parks of Palestine. The information on the nature and direction of the tourist traffic is necessary for future development of tourism in this country.

Faculty members from the Geography Department in the College of Arts at Birzeit University designed a questionnaire, which covered several socio-economic and spatial variables. Distribution of the questionnaire took place on the last Friday of July 2000, starting at 1.00 p.m. and ending at 7.00 p.m. Students majoring in geography at Birzeit University volunteered to distribute and collect the questionnaires. According to the owners of the parks, 3,000 visitors arrive each Friday. A convenient sample of 300 visitors was taken from five resorts, with 190 copies (63 per cent) of the questionnaires returned. To make the visitors aware of the study, the questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter explaining the purpose of the study. Because the data used in this article were collected from the respondents on one particular day, the sample may not totally be representative of tourist behaviors in

Palestine. Several variables were covered by the study:
- number of visits;
- type of employment;
- distance between visitor's home and the parks;
- type of food services;
- level of education; and
- monthly income.

Representation of visitors to Al-Badan parks

Table I illustrates frequencies and percentages of visitors according to their nationalities to Al-Badan parks. Visitors of the West Bank and Gaza Strip are the majority (86.3 per cent), Palestinians living in Israel are represented by 1.6 per cent, Palestinian-Americans are represented by 0.5 per cent, and visitors from Jordan are 6.3 per cent. In fact some of the Jordanians are Palestinian in origin and usually visit their homes during the summer. Palestinians in Jordan may be classified into two categories: first, those who work in Jordan and go back to their homes in the West Bank and Gaza

Table I
Socio-economic characteristics of visitors

	Percentages
Nationality	
Palestinians	86.3
Jordanians	6.3
Palestinian-Americans	0.5
Palestinians living in Israel	1.6
Missing values	5.2
Distance (km)	
<25	52.0
25-50	30.0
51+	18.0
Number of visits	
Once	28.0
Twice to <5 times	38.0
Five times and more	34.0
Occupations	
Professionals	12.0
Employess	17.3
Merchants	10.5
Students	13.0
Farmers and laborers	8.9
Technicians	17.3
Unemployed	12.0
Missing cases	8.9
Food services	
Carry food from home	37.0
Cook food at park	39.0
Eat from park restaurant	13.0
Do not carry or eat any food	4.0
Missing cases	7.0

Strip during the summer and, second, those who were forced to leave Jordan as refugees in 1948 and 1967 after the wars between Arabs and Israel. They often visit Palestine through visiting permits or visiting visas, which are issued by the Israeli Embassy in Amman. Visitors to Al-Badan parks may be classified as "day visitors" (Paul and Rimmawi, 1992).

One reason for the absence of foreign visitors to Al-Badan parks is that international tourism is still in the hands of the Israeli authorities. They do not direct their tourists to visit the Palestinian parks. International tourism is a promising economic factor when Palestinians get their independence and control their borders.

Table II illustrates that 32.5 per cent of the visitors come from the governate of Nablus, in which the Al-Badan parks are located. Also, the residents of the congested city of Nablus prefer to visit these parks which are on its geographic proximity. Around 17 per cent of the visitors come from West Bank villages, which lack tourism facilities. In addition, the parks help people who live in the countryside to get away from their homes for about eight to ten hours every weekend. It was expected that residents of the Palestinian refugee camps would be represented by a higher percentage because of the congestion of the camps and lack of recreational facilities. However, residents of these camps are represented by only 5.2 per cent. Low income and large family size characterize this group and restricts their ability to go out for recreation; 4.2 per cent, 5.2 per cent, and 5.2 per cent of the visitors represents governates, which border the governate of Nablus, such as Jenin, Tulkarm and Ramallah, respectively. But other governates, such as Jericho, Jerusalem,

Table II
Visitors' places of residence

Place of residence	Percentage of visitors
Nablus	32.5
Ramallah	5.2
West Bank villages	16.8
Tulkarm	5.2
Refugee camps	5.2
Jenin	4.2
Jericho	2.1
Salfeet	2.1
Jerusalem	1.6
Qalqeliyah	1.6
Palestinians living in Israel	3.7
Gaza	1.6
Jordan/UAE/USA	3.0
Missing cases	15.2
Total	100.0

Hebron and Gaza, have zero or low representation among visitors. This may be explained by distance or the availability of recreational facilities comparable to those offered at Al-Badan parks. Palestinians who live in Israel and visitors from abroad such as Jordan, the USA and the Gulf States are also represented by a low percentage (3.0 per cent). But the number of visitors from these areas may increase if and when complete peace is achieved between the Arabs and Israel.

More than 50 per cent of the visitors live in areas located within 25km or less from Al-Badan parks (Table I). This high percentage indicates the significance of establishing recreational parks within Palestinian populated areas. Those living in areas within 26-50km are represented by 30 per cent. Finally, 18 per cent of the visitors come from areas located within 51km or more. Residents of these areas are reluctant to visit Al-Badan parks because they may prefer to visit parks within their proximity because of time-saving considerations and of daily security conditions and availability of alternatives in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Gaza.

Because of large numbers of visitors and the frequency of visits, Palestinian parks face great congestion during opening hours. For example, 34 per cent of the visitors have visited Al-Badan parks five times or more, and 38 per cent visited twice to less than five times (see Table I).

Visitors of Al-Badan parks may be classified into the following categories according to their type of occupation:
- professionals: managers of banks and companies, laboratory directors, university professors, industrialists, physicians, pharmacists, lawyers, high-ranking police officers and engineers;
- employees: school teachers, government and private sector employees, retirees, and soldiers;
- students: university, college and high school students;
- farmers and laborers;
- technicians;
- merchants; and
- unemployed.

Table I illustrates that those visitors of Al-Badan parks come from various occupational backgrounds. The reason for the highest percentage of visitors from the segments of employees and technicians (17.3 per cent for each) is that these two occupations combine broad sub-categories. Professionals and unemployed are represented by 12 per cent each. In fact, professionals find Fridays a good day to take

their families out. The unemployed visitors are a reflection of the high unemployment rates within Palestinian society, which were about 17 per cent on the date of the survey. Students are represented by 13 per cent because universities are closed on Fridays. Students usually take advantage of Fridays and make trips to Al-Badan parks. In addition, the high percentage of student representation in the parks was because they, rather than the head of the family, answered the questionnaire. As a result, students filled in their present occupation instead of that of the household head.

All of the visitors to Al-Badan parks are characterized as excursionists. The parks enjoy geographic proximity to populated areas, but do not offer hotel facilities to tourists. For example, 39 per cent of the visitors eat food, which is prepared at home. Moreover, 39 per cent of the visitors carry their kebab and charcoal with them and cook at the parks. Few visitors (13 per cent) eat their meals from the park restaurants.

During picnics and visits to the parks, and according to their culture, Palestinians exercise their simple life. Family members distribute work among them. For example, the father prepares the grill, the older youth takes care of the kebab and chicken, children collect wood for the fire, and women prepare salad and manage food over the small wooden rug (Rimmawi and Ibrahim, 1992).

According to the above facts, the costs of visits are minimized. For example, the cost of each visit is approximately $50 for 59 per cent of the visitors, and over $50 for 27 per cent. The low cost of visits may not make owners satisfied, but it makes the visits to the park more frequent. However, visitors pay a $1 fee per family member to the park owners on entering the parks.

Toward tourism policy in Palestine

The Palestinian internal and international policies should address several points. For example, Palestinian parks, alongside the religious and cultural attractions, should have their "place identity", in which tourists get attached to them because of their symbolic and physical attributes. A person's attachment to a place is important in understanding his/her behavior, including repeat visitations. This will lead to an increase of tourists to a destination through referrals and positive word-of-mouth. Furthermore, Palestinian policies must concentrate on establishing a fair relationship between business and tourists, because it helps to demonstrate a kind of

destination attachment to a visited place. The attractiveness of the destination, past experience, satisfaction, familiarity with a destination and the age of the tourists may explain an attachment during their first visit (Lee, 2001). Destination attachment is related to tourism experience, which represents a discourse of learning. The knowledge can be achieved through "understanding and collecting differences between 'self' (tourists) and 'other' (hosts)". This means of understanding may contribute to the tourist's personal growth and development. Therefore, tourism is an ideological framing of history, nature and tradition, but only on commercial activity (Li, 2000). Moreover, Palestinian tourism has to observe the gap between tourists' financial means and their ambitions (Jacobson and Kristian, 2000).

Managers, travel agents and tour operators can play an important role in educating tourists while entertaining them. In fact, tourism contains cultural capital that can be collected by tourists (Li, 2000). For this reason the tourism industry needs training for its labor force, especially those entering tourism from other sectors (Szivas and Riley, 1999). In addition, if the longevity of the tourist resources is to be retained, marketing ethics must be explicitly discussed. Those who are involved in the tourism industry should pay attention to the tensions, which occur not only between tradition and modernization, but also between host population and international tourists (Li, 2000). Third World people may find tourism as highly exploitative, socially damaging and a new form of imperialism, if tourism is not put in the right perspective (D'sa, 2000). In addition, adverse social and cultural effects of tourism should be minimized. Extensive work should be carried out in order to create a high degree of mutual understanding between the host community and tourists, taking into consideration the benefits of the:

> ... awareness of the environment, a local culture, conservation of man-made monuments and wild life presentation (Dwyer and Forsyth, 1997).

But different societies usually respond in various ways to tourism, ranging from active resistance to complete adoption (Costa and Ferrone, 1995; Fredline, and Faulker, 2000; Besculides *et al.*, 2002).

Economic objectives, foreign exchange, production, job opportunities and infrastructure were not met by the promotion of large, industrially-scaled enterprises, but rather by small hotels which are more likely to market services to guests (Wanhill, 2000; Dwyer and Forsyth, 1997). It should be noted that Islamic tradition

recommends having accompaniment on trips to distant places. Furthermore, Palestinians still primarily live within extended families. One may observe that two or more families enjoy their visit by sitting in one place. As a result, parks get congested with children (Rimmawi and Ibrahim, 1992). Policy makers should heavily invest in educating and training tourism-related human resources and improving infrastructure, increasing quality and efficiency of tourism agencies, and investing in information and planning systems. A Palestinian employee in tourism services must know that his duty is to provide service to a paying customer not to his personal guest. Carrying out such a behavior does not mean that he is losing integrity. In addition, an integration of tourism-related strategies with other economic strategies should be carried out in order to insure internal consistency (Alavi and Yasin, 2000; Samawi, 1998). Palestinians must be prepared to be flexible, innovative and responsive to emerging market trends (Ayres, 2000). For example, nowadays the cultural tourist has emerged. Such a tourist imbibes the destination lifestyle, heritage, arts, industries, and leisure pursuits. Heritage and culture of Palestine may furnish an authentic experience to a cultural tourist. Tourists may be attracted to Palestine because of its historical heritage, which provides them with authenticity and belonging. But Palestinians have to satisfy their tourists, otherwise dissatisfaction may occur. For example, 50 per cent of the visitors coming to Jordan were dissatisfied with transportation and sanitary facilities; 40 per cent found information on site to be lacking, and guidebooks, brochures, maps, and on-site signage were judged to be poor (Kelley, 1998; Wait, 2000; Maqableh and Al-Sarabi, 2001). Palestinian tourism has to influence the tourist taste, such as eating habits and home decoration, by rehabilitating its society and upgrading its tourism services. Tourists are "seekers" experimenting with alternative ways of life (Jacobson, 2001; Augustyn and Pheby, 2000).

Tourism may create undesirable externalities, which may affect tourism yield, unless carefully managed. For example, various tourism activities could result in increasing:

> ... pressure on fragile environment, erosion of sites, unwelcome socio-cultural effects, road congestion or the crowding out of attractions (Dwyer and Forsyth, 1997).

But negative effects of tourism may be avoided to a certain extent by the balance of spatial distribution of tourism activities between different regions of the country,

since tourism is an important means of regional development (Costa and Ferrone, 1995; Lavery, 1987). Owners of small firm enterprises in tourism should be aware of the relationship of tourism and principles of sustainable tourism and environmental concern. Despite the fact that sustainability and environment are confused terms to many Palestinians, there are four alternative frameworks for putting sustainable development into practice. First, the treadmill approach, which views ecosystems in terms of their utility to entrepreneurs and production-related agencies. Second, the weak sustainable approach appeals to the conservative wing of environmental social movements. Third, strong sustainable development, characterized by changes in patterns of production and consumption, is more appealing to ecocentric environmental social movements and to grassroots and political ecology groups. Fourth, the ideal type aims towards more profound changes at the socio-economic, ideological, and political levels (Kousis, 2000).

Palestinian authorities and managers of tourism firms should take into consideration the non-travellers or people who do not take holiday trips. It is also salient to understand the causes of their behavior. It may be that their conditions limit them from having the opportunity to take a vacation (Al-Sukar, 1994). Costa and Ferrone (1995) report that a casual relation exists between social factors and the lack of a holiday trip. Moreover, Palestinian authorities should be aware of constraints which lie on their tourism industry: first, the Israeli military checkpoints at the entrances of Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These check-points hinder the free movement of local people and tourists. Second, the Palestinian tourism industry lacks financial support, which is considered the backbone of development. Third, the Palestinian National Authority does not have either the power of issuing visas or controlling the borders. Also, Palestinian agencies lack communication with the rest of the world. Papatheodorou (2001) reports the significance of communication, advertising and information in promoting tourism. Fourth, the Palestinian tourism industry should have its mission accompanied with goals and objectives. Furthermore, a strategy should be developed to reach such goals. Israeli behaviors and policies are severe and hinder Palestinian tourism aspiration. Nowadays, Israelis have a strong grip on the flow of international tourists, starting from visa issuing, flights, lodging and tours within the country. Palestinian objectives can only

be achieved by negotiations on an equal basis. Palestinian independence will allow authorities to establish their control over borders (land, sea, and air) which are considered the cornerstone of tourism success. By pursuing its tourism policies, Israel achieves great benefits, which are supposed to be channeled to Palestinian economy.

If tourism services are developed in rural areas in which parks are located, natural rural environment must be kept intact (Samawi, 1999). But not every rural local is a candidate area for tourism development, because ill-advised tourism promotion may lead to the damage of local culture and exploit local labor (Fleischer and Felsentein, 2000). Finally, Palestine needs a national museum, tourism zones at the center of urban areas. Most importantly, east Jerusalem needs to be restored and beautified, since Israelis were not interested in this part (with the exception of the Jewish quarter). In addition, a museum for the Dead Sea area, visitor centers in cities and observation points for viewing the Rift Valley from the Palestinian mountains are very much needed.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that tourism will play a major economic sector and have significant policy implications in Palestine, which lacks tourism facilities. Residents of different social fabrics have great potential to take part in tourism activities. Exemplary plans, with goals from the Palestinian authorities, will attract both local and international investments. Our advice for local leaders and managers is to pay attention to creating attractive parks with a safe and clean environment which is conducive to tourism (Alavi and Yasin, 2000). This means that the quality of life is paramount. Palestinian society is quickly becoming urbanized. Urban housing, consisting mainly of apartment complexes shared with non-relative neighbors, make life more stressful and space more restricted. In practical terms and for the purpose of tourism re-generation several steps need to be taken. First, more rural parks have to be established and increase the capacity of existing resorts and recreational areas in order to serve more people and to relieve the new urban stress. Human resources have to be educated and trained for the purpose of upgrading the quality of efficiency of governmental and private sector agencies. Furthermore, various economic strategies

have to be integrated in tourism-related strategies. In this way, the imprint of tourism on the Palestinian landscape will be more pronounced. Tourism development will serve as a spearhead for the diffusion of modernization in the country's rural areas. Managers and private sector investors may get enthusiasm in establishing their firms in designated recreational areas with competitive advantages. Second, Palestinian authorities may have to expand the weekend holiday to two days instead of one. More jobs will be created in a country that has a high percentage of unemployment. However, the Israeli security policies create barriers (both physically and ideologically) against the execution of Palestinian development plans. Such policies will remain until true peace is achieved between the Palestinians and Israelis. Third, better spatial management of attractive tourism sites is also needed, because the size of the country is small and its environment is fragile. Tourism may be looked at as a means of bringing Palestinian society together and strengthening national unity.

Visiting their authentic historical places, Palestinians may enhance the feeling of belonging to their homeland, which faces Israeli threats.

Fourth, having decided the number of plans to be executed by local authorities, they need to decide how to deploy them. However, the plans may be executed by geographical areas, product group or type of customers. But it has to be noted that Palestinians' knowledge of how to market tourism products should be adequate, otherwise they may find themselves into unfamiliar prospects. Fifth, customers' reactions to a certain product should be observed and discussed. For this purpose, tourism products should be advertised to be seen, read, believed, remembered and acted on (Buttle, 1993). Finally, local and national tourism policies should ultimately be guided by policies of spatial neutrality, since tourism is a salient means of regional development, Costa and Ferrone (1995) report that the capacity of a particular place or resort for development is a managerial concept.

Local rural communities may respond positively or negatively to tourism development. It is necessary to examine such concerns in order to establish measures, which may be implemented to alleviate the causes of such concerns. Researchers may get closer to general theory, which is concerned with the interface between communities and tourism activities (Fredline and Faulker, 2000). In addition,

researchers have to tackle various matters in areas of political instability or transition. In fact, people need to go out because they are subjected to heavy pressure. Researchers may also get closer to theory, which is concerned with such areas and their population.

Palestinian tourism authorities should avoid personnel policies, taxation rates, and micro-managements and unreliable record keeping. Government regulations should not be over-emphasized. For example, no approval is needed for restaurant menu selections, visitors staying in the country do not have to be restricted by a limited period of time, and any visitor should pay no fines on departure. In order to keep the enthusiasm of foreign donor countries, Palestinians should try their best to compete with Israeli tourism. Tourism must not be carried out in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and the Dead Sea, but it must be carried out in other places for the sake of seeing more economic benefits from it (Kelley, 1998). Furthermore, managers of local, regional and international levels of various tourism services should keep in mind that Palestine is a unique, attractive place for tourists, despite the fact that it has a fragile political environment. Tourists start to pour into the region just after the political upheavals cool down. Palestinian authorities and academic institutions should carry out more tourism research in order to understand the profile of existing and potential customers, who will start to enter the area after the fragile political conditions cool down.

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