MANAGING HERITAGE TOURISM IN THE DECAPOLIS SITES OF JORDAN: PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Heritage tourism in Jordanian archeological sites experiences a wide range of problems, and current planning does not address all the difficulties in an adequate manner or in an equal depth. The primary goal of this article is to gain a better idea about present heritage tourism management in the Decapolis sites in Jordan. The article describes how heritage sites and heritage tourism are suffering chronic problems despite their valuable potential to offer heritage values within the framework of heritage tourism. In addition, the article is concerned with analyzing the main challenges that site operators have to face and how they can be overcome. The main questions that this article seeks to address are: 1) What are the proper approaches to heritage tourism planning at the site as well as its immediate surroundings? 2) What are the motives behind their nomination in the tentative list of World Heritage? In order to find answers to the research questions, the research on the three cases has focused on two main sources of evidence: on-site interviews and direct observation supported by documentation review. The article concludes that heritage tourism in the sites being investigated lacks a systematic integrated planning. Therefore, it is recommended that continuous comprehensive planning that views heritage and tourism from different perspectives be considered when developing any cultural heritage tourism project. The value of this article lies in the fact that it seeks to contribute to the sparse investigated heritage tourism management for archeological sites of the Decapolis cities.

Key words: Heritage tourism; Management and planning; Challenges and opportunities, Decapolis sites; Jordan

Introduction

Heritage tourism seems to be growing much faster than all other forms of tourism (Chandler & Costello, 2002; Timothy, 2007), particularly in developing countries (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009). Heritage tourism can have many impacts on the countries or regions in which it is staged; these effects can be positive, such as increasing employment and government income, or negative, such as deterioration of heritage assets (Dearden & Rollins, 1993). Furthermore, heritage tourism management emerges to be a resource for development, although the tendency of weak management may contribute to further marginalization of the tangible and intangible past of the tourism resources. The question of

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how heritage tourism can be successful cannot be answered very easily, because it is greatly dependent on situation. However, the guiding principle of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) highlights a sense of balance between heritage tourism and heritage sites' management and conservation.

Tourism is one of Jordan's largest and fastest growing sectors. Jordan has paid special attention to its cultural resources and tourism development since the foundation of the Trans Emirate of Jordan in 1921. Since then, tourism has played a paramount role in the development of the country's social and economic aspects; this explains why the government considers tourism as an instrument for developing and promoting the country. Heritage places are a key part of many forms of tourism, and cultural heritage sites support much of Jordan's tourism product. At present, tourism in archaeological sites is more acknowledged throughout the country (Abu-Khafajah, 2007; Daher, 2007). The great majority of archaeological sites are open to the wide public and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) maintains an important activity of facilities that are made available to support tourism and visitors. Generally speaking, Jordanian tourism development—the infrastructure, management, and planning—is still in the early age of development; the legislative system is not complete and thus requires both further reforms and suitable measures. The heritage tourism sites are now held by the local government (Ministry of Tourism and Department of Antiquities) and consultative and donor agencies such as World Bank and Japanese International Cooperation agency are usually invited to co-manage heritage tourism at heritage sites.

Furthermore, the location of the development of heritage tourism is not in balance; the resources and attractions situated in the northern parts of the country remain without effective management while the more developed systems exist and are applied to the southern sites of the country. Thus, tourism has developed indiscriminately and has centered largely on Petra. In general, much of the limited research previously undertaken on heritage and tourism management in Jordan focuses on the potential of archaeological and historical sites to be developed as tourism products. In fact, over the

last decades, interventions produced by the Ministry of Tourism and the Department of Antiquities and the programs they operate are rather neglectful of cultural heritage. The Department holds a poor concept of heritage that focuses on archaeological monuments and excludes other nonmaterial components. The Ministry of Tourism usually searches for avenues to encourage incoming tourism, but it is obvious that a more comprehensive and integrated methods-based management of Jordanian heritage tourism is inevitable. This situation may be justified by the fact that management is almost new, even though there has been a growing interest raised by different entities towards both heritage and tourism.

However, with increased visitors to heritage sites and the growing importance of heritage resources in tourism sectors in Jordan, there is a vital need for such study to be undertaken. This article examines heritage tourism as a management tool. It then investigates the challenges that relate to heritage tourism management at archaeological sites. Such analysis could provide momentum to a better adjustment of Jordanian cultural heritage for tourism needs.

Literature Review

In tourism terminology, heritage tourism is generally used as a related component to cultural tourism (McKercher & du Cros, 2002; Yale, 1998). It is most simply defined by Yale (1998) as "tourism centered on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings to art works to beautiful scenery" (p. 21). A more practical definition including managerial components highlights "a phenomenon that focuses on the management of the past, inheritance, and authenticity to enhance participation and satisfy consumer motives by evoking nostalgic emotions; its underlying purpose is to stimulate monetary benefits for its various constituencies such as the museums, historic houses, festivals, heritage hotels and other stakeholders" (Chhabra, 2010, p. 5). Tourism in heritage settings and tourism activities based upon the use of heritage resources can be called heritage tourism. Heritage tourism includes visits to monuments and archaeological sites but it also includes experiences with traditions or living expressions of the visited local communities (Zeppel & Hall, 1992).

The specific link between cultural heritage management and heritage tourism has been discussed in many academic and practical researches. Many scholars in the area agree on the contribution of heritage tourism to the heritage management and development (Ap & Mak, 1999; Hughes & Carlsen, 2010). Heritage tourism management encompasses many activities and is supposed to address together conservation and the utilization of heritage resource for socioeconomic development. Many interrelated and sometimes conflicting issues influence conservation and tourism at heritage sites. Some of the major issues include visitor congestion, distribution of visitors in space and time, visitor safety, visitor experience and behavior (du Cros, 2008; ICOMOS, 1999; Pedersen, 2002; Timothy & Boyd, 2003), site interpretation and presentation of heritage values (Moscardo, Faulkner, & Laws, 2001), site impacts (Ortega, 2002; Pedersen, 2002), and sharing the benefits of tourism. Heritage tourism management also, of course, encompasses measures including stakeholders' partnership (Mckercher & du Cros, 2002). However, transformation of heritage sites into travel destination is seldom straightforward.

Heritage tourism management is recognized as an increasingly complex domain. Practitioners such as heritage managers face pressure in determining the most appropriate methods of site management and visitor-related activities (Kaminski, Benson, & Arnold, 2013; Swarbrooke & Page, 2012). Managers of such attractions need to solve major problems related to people and the site (Leask & Yeoman, 1999). For different researchers (Ho & McKercher 2004; Leask 2010), major concerns in heritage tourism management include funding, institutional and legislative framework, expertise, and operational activities. Some of these aspects are more complex to manage than others but are all vital for the enhancement of heritage tourism at a given destination. In their study about sustainable heritage management practices at visited heritage sites in Devon and Cornwall, Darlow, Essex, and Brayshay (2012) indicated that very few heritage sites produce sufficient surpluses to facilitate investment in sustainable practices that might ultimately enhance their financial viability and fund enhanced conservation activities. Leask (2010) identified some key challenges that may influence the management of attractions. These include an increase in visitor's expectations, imbalance within sector relating to funding and admission fee, a lack of skilled staff, conflicts of the objectives of stakeholders, and conservation of natural and cultural resources.

From another perspective, World Heritage sites (WHS) have increasingly grown as an important topic within heritage tourism research (Rakic & Chambers, 2008; Shackley 1998). The reason for this growth in scholarly research is that WHS status has become a label for heritage tourism attractions (Rakic & Chambers, 2008). The early literature on the impact of WH designation centers mainly on the benefits of designation. The benefits from receiving the designation occur in several dimensions such as research and conservation, civic pride, public awareness, and promotion of international cooperation. There are costs associated with the WH status-related activities arising from improvement of existing sites management and development such as infrastructure, accessibility, visitor experience and interpretation, and presentation that are also difficult to quantify because they would mainly depend on the type and degree of improvements, which are likely to be site specific. Different heritage sites, in the hopes of strengthening their position and attractiveness as cultural destinations, have applied for a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) WHS designation. As recognized by Hall and Piggin (2003), WH status should be seen as a benefit factor for tourism management in order to provide both visitors and local communities with means and motivation to care and maintain their heritage and cultural practices. As stated by UNESCO (1995a) in the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the WH convention, the purpose of a management system is to ensure the effective protection, management, authenticity, and integrity of nominated properties for present and future generations. However, an inadequate management system may jeopardize that. World Heritage Centre (2004) indicated that one of the main reasons for deferring WH nominations back to a State Party has been the lack of a management plan or an inadequate general management system.

Different scholars have identified success factors for heritage tourism. In fact, heritage tourism requires not only the long term collaboration among stakeholders (Jamal & Stronza, 2009) but

also the adequate protection of heritage assets and a high quality visitor experience and consideration of community views. Creating a meaningful visitor experience is considered as one of the most crucial elements for success in heritage tourism programs at cultural and natural resources (Morgan, Elbe, & de Esteban Curiel, 2009). McKercher and du Cros (2002) note that the finest way to manage on-site impacts and keep the reputation of an attraction is to manage actively the tourists' experience at it. du Cros (2008) has examined the nature of congestion and its impact on visitor experience at two popular WHS attractions in Macao. Accordingly, she has pointed that without active management to reduce negative impacts such as congestion, both tourists and the host community can become caught up in a downward spiral of poor visitor experiences and degradation of WH values. To deal successfully with these conditions, planning—being able to protect the sites' values and act sustainably—is essential. A broad examination of the literature has recognized a number of antecedents that facilitate success in heritage tourism, service, and experience development. Crafting successful heritage tourism products may be the challenges of developing effective heritage programs, especially when applying to heritage sites that have relatively complex values and social and political contexts. Mattsson and Praesto (2005) recognized four key success factors for cultural heritage tourism in relation to development of a medieval Scandinavian heritage site. These factors are the uniqueness of a local historical identity, the timing of introducing a cultural heritage attraction, building the region into a historical scene, and including the right people in the project, such as a celebrity.

Contrasting to the critical success factors, some drawbacks that might result into weakening heritage tourism development have been acknowledged as well. Heritage tourism, however, has challenges that could barren any opportunities to the site and its community. Authors such as Garrod and Fyall (2000), McKercher and du Cros (2002), and Hughes and Carlsen (2010) have identified a number of barriers for heritage tourism development, focusing on the key issues of funding, training, and planning and partnerships. Moreover, the weaknesses in the administrative and legal frameworks serve as constraints that limit the heritage tourism

development. The recent study by Jordan (2013) on managing built heritage for tourism in Trinidad and Tobago with a specific focus on identifying the built heritage resources of the country and identifying the challenges of its sustainable management states that a lack of appreciation of built heritage, as well as inadequate legal, institutional, and financial frameworks are among the main obstacles hindering the development and growth of this niche market. Along these lines, Wahab (1997) indicates that these challenges could be surmounted by ensuring successful partnership actions between the different stakeholders, conservation implementation of cultural heritage, and cultural landscapes. Further considerations should include visitor management and interpretation tools in order to enable visitors to appreciate and learn about the places they visit.

However, much of heritage management demonstrates no concern for the cultural and physical integrity and authenticity of a place or territory (Engelhardt, 1999). One of the most important considerations is to spread the tourism development more widely spatially by developing tourist facilities, activities, and services along heritage sites, be it small or big in a manner that will facilitate heritage values dissemination at heritage stopover points in order to provide additional appreciation. Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) classified the following three factors affecting the tourist approach towards cultural tourism and consequently the tourist activities:

• Quantitatively: Tourists use a particularly small portion of the potentially available heritage sites and resources.
• Qualitatively: Tourism tends to select the large, spectacularly, or internationally unique over the smaller or more common place.
• Spatially: Tourism is particularly spatially selective in that it tends to cluster strongly in relatively compact areas and be located within linked networks of similar attractions at various spatial scales.

In common with the international experience, it can be argued that there are considerable research gaps in Jordan regarding heritage tourism in general. Furthermore, heritage and tourism development is frequently critiqued for its commodification of the cultural and architectural resource assets, treating

heritage as commercial products (Daher, 1999, 2007). In previous studies, scholars (Al-Kheder & Khrisat, 2007; Daher, 2005) observed that an important factor in the ineffective functioning of heritage tourism frameworks is institutional networking based problems. Haddad, Waheeb, and Fakhoury (2009) assessed the current management state of the Baptism site in Jordan and pointed out a variety of reasons why effective management is constrained: uncoordinated approach between government, private sector, and local community in managing the site for tourism, the lack of planning for the long term, the absence of technical regulation and lack of technical expertise, and awareness activities. Despite the rising interest in heritage tourism experiences in academic literature, further research is needed on challenges facing heritage tourism management and the internal and external factors that influence the experience in heritage sites. The key literature on heritage tourism tends to focus more on management issues within WH sites. There is a general recognition within the literature of heritage tourism that a pattern move has happened from services to experience and from material to social and cultural context of heritage resources.

Decapolis Sites: Background

The study takes place in three sites of the Decapolis cities (Jarash, Umm Qais, & Pella). These sites are located in north and northwest (Pella) of Amman and form with other cultural and natural resources the main tourism attractions in the stretched area between the city of Amman and the Jordanian–Syrian borders (see Fig. 1). The following is a descriptive overview of the case studies of the study.

Jarash

This archeological site is within the boundaries of Jarash municipality on the Amman–Irbid highway. Jarash is one of the most remarkable archaeological sites of the Hellenistic and Roman periods in Jordan with its nearly intact monuments. It contains natural, historical, and cultural heritage resources. The site is an architectural ensemble of monumental structures of varied sizes, set in an enclosure on a flat ground (Zayadine, 1986). Among the structures, some are individual monuments such as the Zeus

and Artemis temples (Jordan Tourism Board, 2012; Khouri, 1985) while others are multiple structures in one composite structure such as the two paved streets combined with the oval plaza and the cathedral. This spectacular site is an imposing landmark that covers approximately 27 acres of land.

Umm Qais

This important site is located 120 km north of the city of Amman. The ancient city of Umm Qais lays on a small hill, surrounded by the Valley of Yarmouk, the Golan Heights, and the Tiberias Lake. The rest of the archaeological site extends on the plains in close proximity to the modern city of Umm Qais. The city's history possibly started about the fourth century BC; it had cultural functions, and thus different poets and philosophers lived there (Jordan Tourism Board, 2012). The Greco–Roman city has contributed much information to the national history with its various inscriptions (Weber & Khouri, 1989). Archaeological excavations uncovered important features such as shops, colonnaded streets, nymphaeum, and monumental buildings revealing the rich heritage of the city.

Pella

Pella is the ancient name of the actual site known today as Tabqat Fahl. A site ranked as one of the top national sites in terms of its historical and ancient monuments (Jordan Tourism Board, 2012), it is situated about 115 km northwest of Amman and 3 km east of Jordan River. The finest archaeological monuments visible today at Pella all date back to the Roman period. Ruins remained from Byzantine and Islamic period can be seen at the site as well. It is known as one of the few sites in Jordan where different traces and monuments survived from prehistoric periods until present time. The site's biography is marked by the succession of the different cultural groups dating from the Neolithic period to the present. Pella is of profound historical importance as the site had witnessed settlements by successive human communities for many millennia without interruption since the prehistoric periods. Among the ancient monuments still intact are the theater, the western church, and the beautiful columns at the center of the site.
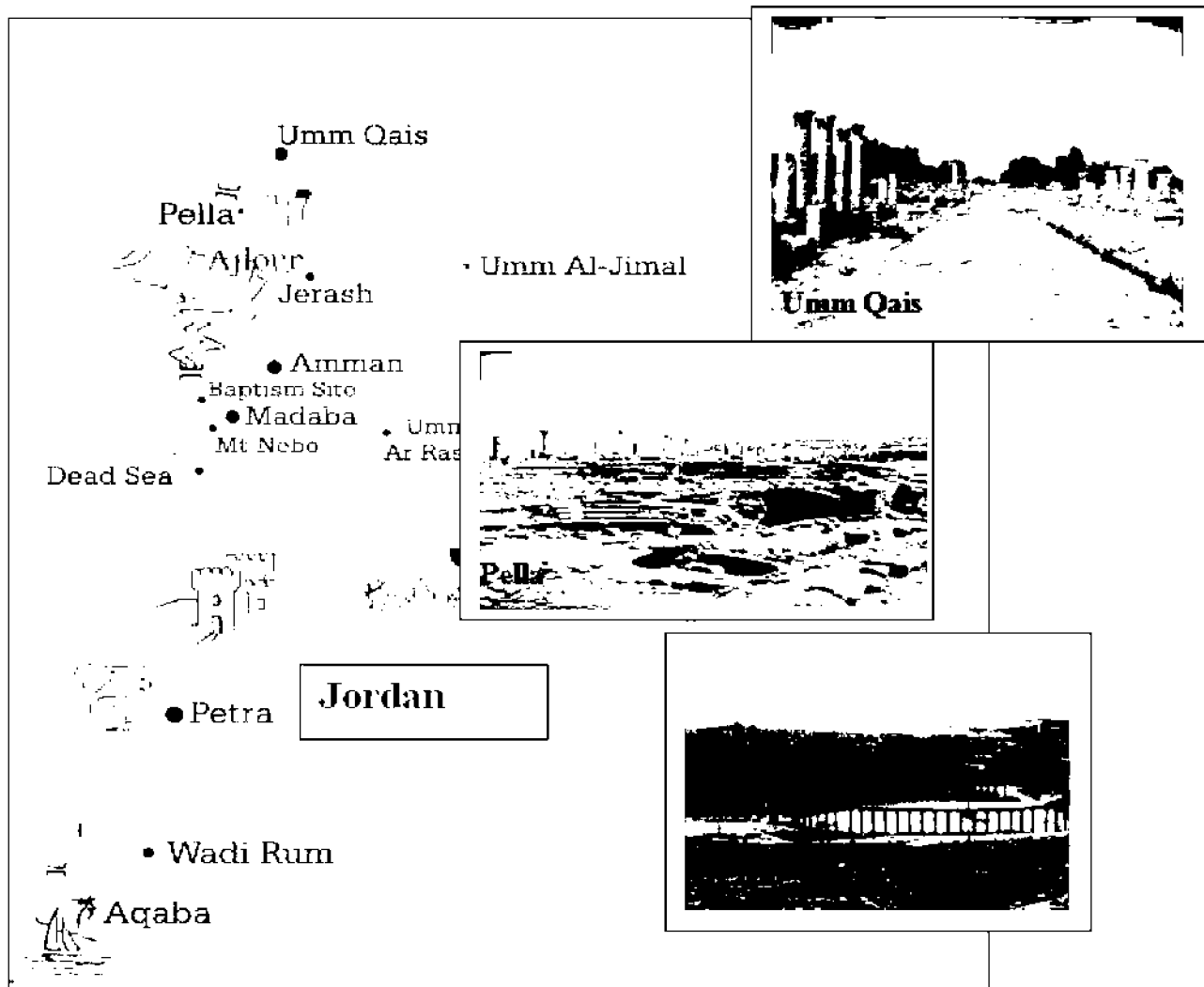
Figure 1. Map of Jordan with the location of the case study (source: modified by the author based on Jordan Tourism Board).

The three above-mentioned sites belong histori-cally to the so-called Decapolis, a historical term used to designate a Greco–Roman league of 10 cities (Browning, 1982; Kennedy, 2007). With a history of more than 6,000 years, some sections of the sites are now in ruins or have even entirely disappeared. The sites are considered of great value from both a historical and architectural point of view. Jarash, in particular, is internationally acknowledged as the best preserved Roman city outside Rome, whereas Umm Qais is acknowl-edged as the city of intellectuals. Pella is considered an example of the continuous cultural interchange during different historic periods. Almost all sites of the Decapolis had specific legislation for cultural heritage management but a majority of the local heritage practitioners and scholars suggested that these needed to be reformed. According to differ-ent scholars (Daher, 1999; Al Rabady, 2013), this suggested that legislation does not necessarily ensure its integration into planning or development policies, and those general courses of action for the heritage need to be appraised.

Tourism Trends in the Decapolis Cities

Tourism is not new to the Decapolis cities as most early visitors were mostly explorers and adventurers coming from European and Arab coun-tries. With augmented promotional and marketing

efforts, the number of tourist arrivals in the country has increased progressively. Visitor numbers grew by 48%, from just over 5.5 million visitors in 2004 to more than 8.2 million by 2010. The number of tourists visiting the three archaeological sites has been steadily growing in recent years. However, the industry is negatively affected by the political instability in the countries of the Middle East. The total number of visitors at the three sites for the year 2012 was almost 449,000, but the number of visitors at Jarash was 228,350, at Umm Qais was 200,392, and at Pella was 21,351 (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2012). Pella is of obvious importance, but appears to merit less interest for most international and national visitors, and thus currently has a comparatively low level of tourism and is a little known destination in comparison with Jarash and Umm Qais. On the national scale, Pella is far below the big main destinations in Jordan. Both Jarash and Umm Qais have more grown-up tourism economies, their heritage assets are much better developed and marketed, and accordingly have many more visitors.

The dominant model of tourism falls in two main categories: foreigners visiting sites in packaged organized tours, and locals and Arabs from neighboring countries visiting sites with families but with no prior organization and thus concentrating on the archaeological aspects of the sites. Hence, Umm Qais receives the highest amount of national tourist interest; one reason for this is the location of the site as it is a favorite rural district of national interest. Although tourist arrivals have been rapidly growing in recent years, tourists have modest information and interpretation, incentive, or opportunity to spend more time and money during their visit, indicating that in spite of the great numbers of tourists, the local community gains limited profit from tourism. Most of the international visitors visit several places as part of a tour program; guided tours from Amman often stop at Jarash, Umm Qais, and Pella on their way to the north of Jordan. Recognizing that Decapolis's attraction as a visitor destination is largely based on its unique cultural and heritage resources, heritage tourism plays an important role in this region. All three sites form cultural heritage resources and are known first and foremost for their outstanding Greco–Roman monuments, which are still in an excellent state of preservation, in addition to an underestimated rural tourism including mountains, plains, and valleys.

Methodology

This study contends that the heritage tourism planning has been given little attention by tourism and heritage managers of the country. The idea for this study sprouted while the author was firstly working as a tour guide and secondly as a professor of heritage management. Both working and teaching made possible to observe and understand the practical problems of heritage and tourism in archaeological sites of Jordan. The diversified heritage of northwest Jordan has not received adequate management approaches needed for identifying, maintaining, and promoting cultural heritage tourism, and reconciling protection with accessibility and use. Therefore, the study aims at obtaining in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the current management of heritage tourism in Decapolis sites in north Jordan. As mentioned before, this study seeks to examine heritage tourism in Jarash, Umm Qais, and Pella in northern Jordan. Its primary purpose is to analyze the main opportunities available at these sites and the main challenges that site authority has to tackle. The following research questions of this study help to gain the necessary understanding: 1) What are the approaches to heritage tourism planning at the sites as well as their immediate surroundings? 2) What are the motives behind their nomination in the tentative list of World Heritage? The study opted for multicase studies in the setting of rural and urban areas to investigate the real phenomenon of heritage tourism in managing heritage sites. A qualitative approach has predominantly guided this study from a critical perspective to explore the challenges that management of the Decapolis sites face when implementing heritage tourism strategies. The following methods were employed in this study to collect ethnographic data: in-depth interviews were conducted with site staff, community scholars, tourists, tour guides, and experts prior to the field study. The interviews focused on the issues of Decapolis heritage tourism management including issues such as visitor management, visitor experience, interpretation and

presentation of sites, WH status, and challenges facing heritage tourism. In the selection of the interviewees, maximum heterogeneity sampling method was used (Bernard, 2000). Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants as well as of the data was prioritized. Participants' identities were protected by pseudonyms and their comments and opinions were respected. To have more detailed information and to clarify the real situation of heritage tourism management at the sites, nonparticipative observations were adopted. On-site observation was conducted several times at the very beginning of the field work, which aimed to have a general overview of the following aspects: heritage tourism management, tourism infrastructure, tourist experience and visitor management, and interpretation and presentation. The secondary data were derived from the academic-related research and printed material, and the data brought some valuable information regarding cultural heritage systems. The data collected from the in-depth interviews were analyzed thematically by transcribing information. This was done through reviewing and classification of the data several times to generate a list of similar themes. The same principle was applied to other qualitative information such as nonparticipant observation and notes. The various themes that emerged from classification were then compared to produce comprehensive understanding of the information. All meetings and observations were conducted at the three sites (Jarash, Umm Qais, & Pella) in May and July 2013. Other Decapolis sites in Jordan were outside the scope of this study.

Managing Heritage Tourism: What Are the Approaches to Heritage Tourism Planning at the Site as Well as its Immediate Surroundings?

Cultural and heritage tourism has undoubtedly been Jordan's major tourism potential. Jordan is well known all over the world because of its sites with significant cultural and heritage values such as Petra, Jarash, Umm Qais, Umm er Rassas, and Umm El Jimal, and related cultural practices that have survived for thousands of years. Some interviewed participants in the study see that strategic tourism planning in Jordan has encouraged the growth of international arrivals at the end of the last century. Therefore, how appropriate is heritage

tourism management of the ancient Decapolis sites? There is a wide range of stakeholders who shape and influence the management of Decapolis sites as pointed out by the participants of the study:

> Although the administrative and legal framework of the existing cultural heritage management is officially within the scope of the Tourism Law No. 20 for the year 1988 and the Antiquity Law No. 21 for the year 1988 and administered through the Ministry of Tourism and the Department of Antiquities, the task of cultural heritage management involves many government and non-government bodies and laws in practice. (Study participant, 2013)

These two agencies (Ministry of Tourism and Department of Antiquities) have very gradually put in place different policies for the promotion of tourism, the development of facilities, and protection of heritage assets through a series of laws and a series of projects.

> The Government of Jordan has undertaken number of programs to support tourism growth and advance the state of affairs in tourism sectors. Over the past 20 years, the main heritage tourism authorities in Jordan including principally the Ministry of Tourism and the Department of Antiquities have started to respond to the tourism growth with varying degrees of commitment and relevance. (Study participant, 2013)

Practically, the heritage sites' management is in the hands of the Ministry of Tourism and the Department of Antiquities, which provide guidance and give instructions to all local archaeological sites. Tourism planning in the Decapolis sites is underpinned by the national tourism strategies including the national tourism strategy for the years 2004–2010 and the second tourism strategy for the years 2011–2015. As indicated by a member of the sites staff, the objective of tourism strategies is "to extend the economic benefits from tourism in order that government might raise the national revenue. Jordan has gradually put in action different tourism regulations and legislations in order to regulate the tourism operation" (Study participant, 2013).

Both the Tourism Law No. 20 for the year 1988 and its amendments and the Antiquity Law No. 21 for the year 1988 of Antiquities and Archaeology (Department of Antiquities, 2004) indicate that

archaeological sites have dual functions related to cultural heritage and tourism development. The involved actors presently engage in a variety of activities such as creation of facilities at the sites' wayside, arranging cultural festivals (Jarash festival, Umm Qais festival, Pella Orange festival), and producing and distributing maps, posters, brochures, and pamphlets, as pointed out by a study participant:

> The Department of Antiquities endeavors to preserve and communicate the national heritage and places of historic values to the future generation. The department seeks to communicate the sites to its visitors by offering them the opportunity to visit and spend time exploring the standing archeological monuments to learn about the national heritage through observation and interaction with the sites. (Study participant, 2013)

According to most of the heritage staff, history and archaeology are the main ingredients in the narrative and the experience of the Decapolis sites. History and archaeology define what the Decapolis cities were in the ancient times. Walking through the trails of Jarash and Umm Qais, and to some degree of Pella, entails a modest supply of commodities such as handicraft and restaurants and interpretive media such as maps, signs, guides, posters, postal cards, visitor centers, museums, and tour guides. Visitors' interviews confirmed that much of the interpretation of sites comes from tour guides. From personal observations made by the author, it is evident that tour guides at the sites use both information and humor to deliver factual and suggestive information about the history of the sites.

Since 2004, the government has realized the problems of current planning and management approach. Many initiatives have been taken to preserve urban historic district from further physical deterioration and to transform them into tourist areas. In order to provide better services for the tourists, the government has privatized some of the commercial property units at the sites such as the restaurants at the three sites and the souvenir shops at Jarash. Apart from this, a number of working projects targeting urban regeneration for historic centers have also been implemented such as the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Urban Development [CHTUD] Project, funded partially by the World Bank. The chief objective of these projects is to transform declining urban historic centers into tourist attractions as an essential part of the contemporary development. In 2014, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities published its own Strategy for Management of Jordan's Archaeological Heritage which spelled out the agency's responsibility for the heritage legacy; the strategy outlines strengths, weaknesses, and threats facing the country's archaeological assets. Nevertheless, in terms of heritage tourism at archeological sites MOTA acknowledges that visitors' experience at archaeological sites is often "poor" due to a lack of support services and qualified interpreters (Department of Antiquities, 2014).

When discussing the problems and challenges concerning heritage tourism management, the people interviewed in this study presented the following points of view and perspectives: A study participant described current heritage management in the Decapolis cities by stating that: "in general, cultural tourism issues were touched upon slightly in the planning documents. While they expressed the development ideas, they don't provide a clear outline of the on-site physical planning and who will bring these ideas on the ground" (Study participant, 2013).

Tourists and tour guides assume that Pella is an untouristic site due to the lack of infrastructure and thus the site is too hard to navigate in. These observations pointed that Pella differs slightly from other known tourist sites in that it in many ways needs the infrastructure that would guide the tourists in their experience. Based on personal observations, there is a strong awareness that the interpretive experience at the three sites requires greater enforcement through modern interactional interpretive media such as information-based technology. A tourism practitioner and government employee expressed this concern in these words: "One of the challenges of heritage tourism in the three sites is the lack of expertise in tourism planning. Often, in Jordan, tourism and heritage management is considered by foreign consultants" (Study participant, 2013).

The people made reference to the issue of the lack of coordination and cooperation. A tour guide pointed out that they were not consulted when some decisions were made that could greatly impact their business, such as the raise of the entrance fee as

well as certain rules about visiting route such as redesign of on-site trails.

Efforts undertaken by the government to preserve cultural heritage assets have been criticized as practice has suffered from a narrow understanding of cultural heritage. This has largely arisen because of the loss of important historical buildings and areas such as the old village of Umm Qais and the eastern part of Jarash, as well as other types of places that may not fit into the protected monuments established by the antiquities law, which protect only monuments of pre-1750. Most participants in this study argue that the lack of public awareness becomes an obstacle that needs to be overcome if heritage tourism growth and cultural heritage preservation are to be balanced.

Based on the above analysis, the following conclusions could be drawn. Firstly, tourism plays an important role in the present and future-oriented conservation and development concept of the Decapolis sites and their environs. It will further grow because of strong government support; the local government plays a very significant role in all models to develop tourist sites and their adjacent urban historic district. Generally speaking, the local government and its associated developers, representing the influential class, are the main drive for the management while residents close to heritage sites are not fully involved. Secondly, economic value of heritage sites through only physical upgrading of monument conditions and visitor infrastructure has been overemphasized while the other values of the sites seem to be ignored. Last but not the least, multiroles and actors caused by the different government departments may be a possible risk for heritage tourism development if the activities of different government apartments are not planned in a synchronized way.

What Are the Motives Behind Their Nomination on the Tentative List of WH Sites?

Jordan signed the WH convention in 1975 and the UNESCO concept of WH was rapidly adopted by the Jordanian authorities and then the tourism industry. Consequently, MOTA has so far registered four sites on the WH list: Petra in 1985, Qusair Amra in 1985, Umm er Rassas in 2004, and Wadi Rum protected area in 2011. In the hopes of

strengthening their position and attractiveness as a cultural destination, the Ministry of Tourism and the Department of Antiquities have applied for WH site designation. The nomination process began in 1985 for the site of Jarash and in 2001 for the sites of Pella and Umm Qais. In 1985 and 1986 UNESCO deferred the nomination dossier of Jarash. In 1995 UNESCO (1995b) referred once again, demanding the extension of the buffer zone of uncontrolled urban development in the surrounding of the site, a more cooperation between MOTA and DoA, and removal of permanent structures used mainly for Jarash festival. Yet, a resolution regarding the designation of the three sites is still pending. At this point, the three sites in spite of their undeniable value have not yet qualified to be included on the list of Jordanian WH sites. According to MOTA, these sites are considered to meet all or most cultural criteria (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), and (vi) for outstanding universal values and for satisfying integrity, legal, and management requirements to such a high level that they should be an immediate priority for placement on the tentative list.

In light of this, what is the impact of the preparation process for nominating these sites to WH list? Almost all the interviewees believed that the pursuit of the nomination process of the sites has captivated the attention of national heritage actors including the government of various levels to put forth more efforts on applications for WH designation. It was assumed that a WH designation for the three sites would have a proportionate impact on tourist visitation. As indicated by the comments of some participants, it was noticed that a WH concept in these sites was pursued by Jordan for both the economic benefit it brings through the flow of international tourists and the management concept it bears. As a participant stated: "it is believed that the status of the designation and related publicity would result in an increase in the number of tourists visiting the site and thus generate positive economic impacts on the local economy" (Study participant, 2013).

According to the staff working at the sites, there was no formal plan for the three sites when they were designated by the national authorities on the tentative list as potential WH sites, although prior to that several programs with planning elements had been developed. The nomination process was supported by on-site activities and projects. Many

excavations have been subsequently carried out in the sites by national and international teams; these excavations have discovered an unprecedented amount of finds (settlements, monuments, objects) that have enabled archaeologists to disseminate their knowledge about the sites to the visitors. Most of the monuments have undergone a series of alterations over many years. Protection of the sites is offered through rules, incentives, and education. The subtargets of these activities were:

• Preservation of the archaeological heritage by improving conditions for protection. The focus is on restorations of monumental buildings, documentation, and registration.
• Installation of infrastructure.
• Development of joint projects and securing financial support.
• Creation of basic conditions for a favorable heritage tourism.

Heritage and tourism management in these sites evolved differently during the last decades; Jordan's emphasis was shifted from site conservation to economic development through tourism management and planning. However, implementation has received less attention and much of the intervention has been achieved to fulfill the nomination purposes. Equally, some major objectives have not been achieved and there are still problems emerging from tourism activity.

Yet, criticism is not scarce, as noted from the views of the study participants, especially from individuals directly involved with these sites. An experienced tour guide expressed with resentment his disappointment with the approaches of visitor management. He underlined that the interpretation at the three sites in general and Pella in particular appears to have a low impact on the visitor's experience. Through the interviews and meetings with locals and tourists, it appears that people did not know much about the history of the sites and the process of their nomination. Thus, for one of the tour guides it is the site's aesthetic value rather than the site's archaeological value that justifies their popularity and their attractiveness among tourists. There are strong managerial variations between archaeological sites. For example, Petra, a long-time heritage destination has been the mainstay of Jordanian

tourism's focus. This well-established destination has benefited from its notoriety as a WH site and as one of the new seven wonders. Dissimilarly of the Decapolis sites, Petra has drafted five management plans jointly with foreign institutions which include conservation strategies, environmental management, landscaping, infrastructure redevelopment, zoning system, a land use plan, additional facilities, carrying capacity and visitor management, interpretation and presentation, as well as a proposed budget and the administrative structure (Akrawi, 2012).

On visiting the three sites the author made several observations about the state of services provided for visitors. Firstly, medium-size buildings for tourism purposes inside walled cities (Jarash, Umm Qais) and close to the three sites have recently led to countless critics over the adequacy of their location and material design. A high number of restaurants and tourism-related infrastructure were introduced; the main rest house at each site is an example of unplanned and invasive tourism infrastructure development, the erection of restaurants has disturbed the historic appearance of the sites. The tourist infrastructure was considered insufficient and the few available motels did not meet the standards required to promote a planned heritage tourism and did not sympathize with the historic city. Different heritage tourism infrastructures carried out by the Jordanian Authorities do not respect the principles and the ethics expressed by the Charter of Venice adopted in 1964, and the Nara Document on Authenticity (see Fig. 2). During the field study it was observed that tourists as well as locals drive their vehicles inside and nearby the ruins as every site has multiple points of access. Another common problem that tourism development in the three sites faces is the threat from the inside highway (Jarash) and nearby routes (Pella and Umm Qais). Additionally, interviewees indicated that the use of interpretive media needs to be increased to cope with the modern heritage tourism and ever-changing visitor needs and desires of the local community. Another point for management in the three sites is the different degrees of restoration and interpretation between the different monuments and historic periods. As noted during the field work, the eastern part of the archaeological sites, the historic village at Umm Qais, and the western church at Pella are neglected in terms of restoration and interpretation

Figure 2. Invasive activities at the three sites (source: author).

while the archaeological core of each site is care-
fully preserved and protected. The inconsistency is
also mirrored in the number of people who visit the
core area and the historic part of each site, as one of
the tour guides indicated that the guided tours are
organized at the archaeological center of each site,
excluding the historic parts such as the eastern part
of Jarash and the historic village of Umm Qais.

Evaluation and Findings

*Heritage Tourism Management:
Constraints and Opportunities*

Heritage tourism planning at archaeological
sites in Jordan is still new when compared with
developed Western countries. The small body of
national literature dealing with heritage showed
that much attention has been placed on Greco–
Roman archaeological issues and research is rarely
found on heritage tourism plans. When we look at
heritage tourism, we have to conclude that the topic
almost receives no major attention, at least on the
administrative level. At the same time there is an
emerging consensus concerned with conservation
of built cultural heritage. However, common issues
in Decapolis heritage tourism regarding the guiding
questions of this study indicate that heritage tour-
ism planning in many Third World countries has
become increasingly oriented towards economic
consumption and benefits favored by the hierarchi-
cal social and political environment. It is obvious

from site visits and documentation reviews that the nominated sites represent one of the longest sequences of the historic architectural evolution at a key period in human history. It can be stated that despite the fact that those sites have enormous potential in terms of heritage tourism, they are still significantly underdeveloped. The three sites have various significant arts, cultures, and heritage products but are still ignored, and thus are not developed to broaden the visitor's experience by supporting host locations. A local scholar spoke more frankly about heritage and tourism management. He pointed out that some of the resource management staff did not really take long-term preservation goals into consideration, and the working style of responsible authorities was very bureaucratic and formalistic. They lacked expertise, professionalism, and financial resources. Findings obtained from interviews and the field observation are presented and analyzed in the following section.

Uneven Heritage Tourism Management

One of the most important problems observed at the three sites is that tourists visit the same monuments although there is more to see (Russo, 2002). At the three sites there is unequal distribution of visitors across the sites through time and space. A small number of monuments such as theaters are subject to high visitation. These monuments are threatened by concentrated arrival of visitors within a small time period, such as early morning. Hence, visitor congestion and visitor flows within the theaters are central issues at the sites. Physical impacts to the monuments and their surroundings are easily identified including graffiti to monuments, damage to signage, and wearing and degraded pathways in frequently visited areas. The three archaeological sites cover a large area with both visible and uncovered monuments and scattered ruins; the existing footbaths and trails are designed near the visible monuments at the three sites, dividing the sites into two parts, and thus greatly impact the visual and the physical unity of the cultural and natural heritage. The theaters and the adjacent monuments at each site are the most visited heritage buildings on the sites, the on-site museums of Umm Qais and Jarash, for instance, have relatively few visitors compared to the crowds at the theaters and

the paved streets. The main constraints on the dispersal of tourists throughout the sites are the limited number of developed attractions or places of interest to visitors, and the limited number of conceived activities. As the remains of archaeological buildings are scattered over two parts at each site, the understanding of the complete ancient cities is quite complex.

Visitors can barely gain a clear idea of the urban design continuity of the sites and the physical fabric of the place due to the scattered appearance of the city layout enhanced by the introduction of the modern traffic roads and the tourist trails layout. It is observed that only a particular part of the site is presented through a routing pattern enhancing the double waking of paths. Consequently, the visitor circulation footpaths at each site should be drawn to the other remains on the site to decrease the visitor pressure. Additional challenges for heritage tourism in Decapolis sites include a lack of trails that pass through the neighboring localities to the archeological sector, which raises the issue of not having equal opportunities to economic and cultural benefits from tourists during their visit.

Underperforming Heritage Tourism

The interviews with staff at the different sites indicated that the sector of heritage and related tourism is generally underperforming; there also seems a lack of authenticity and the experience is staged for the visitor irrespectively of the historic and cultural layers of both sites and their communities. At present, there is a lack of interpretative material and activities offered to allow visitors to appreciate traditions, cultural heritage, and history at sites that they are visiting. From the visits to the sites, it is noted that the current heritage tourism activities are inappropriate in regard to the site's physical integrity coupled with low and unequal tourism planning and services at each site. In the case of the three sites, the heritage tourism management leads to the enhancement of the well-preserved sections (western part of Jarash, central part of Umm Qais, and central part of Pella) in the site, and this appears to be less true of the less preserved sections and sites, like the eastern part of Jarash and the site of Pella. Activities related to heritage tourism management in Decapolis have developed and followed the

patterns and routes followed by international tours organized by local tour operators; there have been evidence that organized tours for international visitors including the visit of the major icons of Jordan such as Petra, Jarash, and Wadi Rum while different sites including Umm Qais and Pella waiting to be truly packaged for tourism purposes, both sites have been largely neglected in heritage tourism management, thereby are receiving little attention from tourism industry.

Underestimated Heritage Potential

When comparing the potential of the three sites, one concludes that there is still an enormous gap to be filled in the tourism development. There are different reasons behind the slow development of tourism at these sites. The country's heritage tourism is influenced by its social background, political situation, and economic activity. The social barrier can be attributed to the lack of local community involvement and the conflicting relation between local community and private operators, particularly in Umm Qais and Pella. Politically, responsible authority encounters constraints due to the low power of MOTA to implement any law and to facilitate any kind of intergovernment cooperation. Another political factor encountered is the negative image of the Middle East as an unstable area. This explains why the greatest constraint of heritage tourism management at the Decapolis sites originates from the reality that heritage tourism management is focused on European tourists, a market used to be described as vulnerable to political events (Israeli–Palestinian conflict, War in Iraq, September 11 events, Arab spring). Apart from the political and social structural obstacles, there are the economic factors such as the fact that archaeological-based tourism needs ongoing funds for preservation and development. Jordan is known as a country with scarce natural resources and thus depends greatly on external financial assistance. For example, despite the importance of the sites and being among the most visited heritage site in Jordan, few of the economic benefits of tourism are being realized by local residents. Ticket revenues go directly to the Ministry of Finance, as do sales revenue from operation of retail stores and rental income from concessionaires such as souvenir

shops and restaurants. The three sites hold a potential to be WH sites, and in meeting the requirements of the WH convention of UNESCO the sites have an opportunity to update and expand their significance and promote stewardship of properties that the community values. The three sites have a great number of wealth of untouched resources and monuments that are waiting to be discovered. Many of them are attractive and bear a high heritage potential. If well managed, they can become tourism products that will attract potential visitors and the attention of heritage managers.

Conclusion

This study can be considered the first of its kind on heritage tourism management in heritage sites in Jordan. Specific heritage tourism management approaches were analyzed with regard to the questions and theoretical issues highlighted in the study. There are different factors that would hinder such potential development. With respect to the research questions, we can draw the following conclusions:

• Hard projects of both urban and tourism infrastructure development such as restaurants, parking, sewage, telecommunication, and routes affect negatively the sites due to their adverse impact on the physical and visual integrity of the entire sites.
• The absence of authenticity issue, which is one of the core elements of the sustainable heritage development along heritage tourism practices in these sites, has been generally limited to physical appearance and values excluding many potential inherent values and sectors.
• Concern on the subject is, and has been most of the time, initiated by foreign individuals or institutions that on some occasions do not have sufficient understanding of local cultural and social interests.
• Unawareness of the values of the tangible and intangible heritage resources available within these sites.
• Tourism growth does not match sites' potentials, the site of Pella in particular.
• The tentative list dossier for the three sites presents an example of incomplete submission where justifications of outstanding universal value,

statement of authenticity and/or integrity, and comparison with other similar properties are not clearly identified.

• Current problems in heritage tourism management include the fact that the experience offered to visitors is partially designed and visitors do not receive comprehensive information about the site, and its culture and actual measures do not encourage visitors to venture outside the walled city due to the lack of information on other attractions and local products.

Overcoming these challenges shall be the aim of the custodial authority and its partners who are willing to list the sites on the precious WH list. This study recommends that government has to overcome serious financial human resources but also organizational problems like developing an adequate legal framework. Furthermore, authorities have to offer more opportunities for locals to experience their multilayered heritage and give heritage tourism a place with respect to the national environment.

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