

Northwest Jordan's Untapped Economic Opportunities

Research Article

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Abstract:

Jordan has impressive well-known natural and man-made cultural heritage sites in fascinating destinations that have different meanings and promote different types of tourism. This is evidenced by Jordan's tourism indicators, which exceeded all expectations and show an increase in cultural tourism. The results are reviving sustainable economic development and increasing GDPI.

There are successes and failures depend largely on what tourists perceive as a destination's value. Decisions to visit particular locations may be biased and made simply based on the amount of available information about it. "Green" tourism plays an important role when it managed correctly, it can lead to significant positive impacts. In fosters long-term natural sustainable protection and economic growth, and traditional cultures.(<https://www.cbd.int>.)

Recognizing and developing the value of having nature reserve areas in northwest Jordan could diminish the damage to natural resources, increase species protection, involve local business and community and be a positive example for improving regional image and ultimately increase GDP through business and tourism.

Keywords: Economic Development, Nature Reserve Area, Tourism, Cultural Heritage.

INTRODUCTION

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been a destination for travelers for millennia. It has welcomed visitors from around the world who have enjoyed the true essence of traditional Jordanian culture. The Jordanian culture warmly opens itself and offers hospitality to everyone tourists and refugees alike.

Although Jordanian hospitality is enshrined in their daily lives, it has still not been enough to entice

larger numbers of tourists to visit lesser-known regions or sites. Consequently, there is an imbalance in the positive impacts being made often leaving out sites and communities.

While world-famous sites such as Petra, Wadi Rum and Jerash have benefited from tourism, on other places, particularly in the northwest of Jordan, did not have the same benefited from tourism. This is despite having sites such as the Decapolis cites as Umm Qais, and Natural sites as a Yarmouk valley, this just to mention a few. As it is known, the

tourism trade relies heavily on available information, quality of options and satisfaction of travellers. Therefore, if a city, state or nation wants to encourage tourism, it is necessary to provide the most accurate information, best quality and ensure satisfaction. And, Jordan is no exception in this.

This article and related research focus on the northwest region of Jordan in an effort revitalize and support economic development through untapped tourism opportunities. It is clear that tourism brings revenue and increases GDP. It is also clear that the global tourism industry actively searches for new areas with unique opportunities, while the northwest region has untapped potential for this side.

The main objectives of this study are to identify and promote the importance of natural and cultural tourism in an under-served region through sustainable economic development in northwest Jordan. The evaluation of the region's potential can further contribute to the sustainable tourism industry and add a new perspective to the current knowledge in this field.

To implementing the previous goals, this study will be based on two approaches: The first is based on retrospective examination of research conducted as part of the first international cooperative project between Brandenburg Technical University and Yarmouk University.

The second approach is reviewing unpublished Master's thesis work done by Frank C. Ritchie in 2001 entitled: "Establishment of a UNESCO MAB Reserve as an Instrument for Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Landscapes in Northwest Jordan; An Examination of Requirements, Benefits and Issues Related to a MAB Reserve in Northwest Jordan" and (this can come out) to examine current information and determine the region's untapped development potential within an economically depressed region.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology in this study divided into two parts; the first one was depending on reviewing and analysing the previous studies and research on the same field. On the other hand, the second part focus on A retrospective analysis was made of research

conducted from 2000-2002 as part of larger academic cooperation between Yarmouk University and Brandenburg Technical University.

Due to lack of support, logistical factors and political conditions in the last years, further implementation was extremely limited but remains nonetheless relevant and even more critical. However, the second round of analysis was made focused on the emphasis of Internet information and personal visits to the region, local interviews but also a review of existing conditions.

DISCUSSION

The Natural resources, geographical conditions, landscapes and wyes of land use are effective in local communities and economic development. In Jordan, the main's forested woodland areas are concentrate in the northwest; which could offer unique tourism opportunities.

It is prudent that Jordan has established reserve areas in this region and to support and promote such areas (See; Fig. 1). The following maps show Jordan has taken positive steps to designate reserve areas, which coincide with land use to play a critical role in regional opportunities. (See, Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

Tourism in natural areas, traditional lands and communities is a proven strategy. However, as we see in one of many examples of online tourism sites; not enough attention is being focused on natural sites or sites within the northwest region in Jordan. (See; Fig. 4).

The nature area and wildlife in Jordan offer a surprisingly rich diversity of animal and plant species. Although there are also many conservation efforts in place to combat issues such as deforestation and over-hunting that pose threats to the natural landscapes as well as the animals of Jordan (www.goway.com). Some of those efforts include establishing nature reserve areas.

A graphic overview (Fig. 3) shows the distribution and approximate location of the reserves found in the northwest. The proximity to Amman emphasizes the relatively short distances tourists would need to travel to reach the designated sites. This fact could be used to promote the region's access to higher numbers of tourists to the region.

As information becomes more widely distributed, the question arises; are homepages which intend to describe sites and attract tourist inadvertently also

promoting negative images and information? Obviously from the following two examples the answer is, yes.



Figure 1: North Jordan's Reserves (Googlemap, 2019).



Reserve Examples

Ajloun Forest Reserve

An example of positive available information; “The Ajloun Forest Reserve is in north Jordan, near Jerash and Ajloun and is close to the Ajloun Castle. The reserve consists of rolling hills in a Mediterranean-like environment, covered in evergreen oaks, as well as strawberry and pistachio trees, among others. Stone martens, jackals, red foxes, striped hyenas, Persian squirrels, porcupines, and wolves inhabit this area.” (www.rscn.org.jo)

An example of negative available information; “Privately owned lands surrounding the reserve pose threats, including illegitimate access to the reserve, resulting in illegal hunting, woodcutting, and grazing. Cooperation with local inhabitants has resulted in increased awareness in the community regarding the preservation of the forest.” (www.rscn.org.jo). Both examples are from one homepage, which is easily found online.

Dibein Forest Reserve

An example of positive available information; “Dibein Forest, close to the ancient Roman city of Jerash, is the newest reserve in Jordan, established in 2004. The forest is a pine-oak habitat, housing the

Aleppo pine and marking the geographical limit of this type of forest.

Animal inhabitants such as the Persian squirrel were main reasons for the establishment of the reserve and were considered top priority. Strawberry, pistachio, and wild olive trees also grow in the reserve.” (www.rscn.org.jo)

An example of negative available information; “Trash, notably plastic, presents a major problem in the reserve, often the result of careless visitors.” (<https://www.rscn.org.jo>). Both examples are from one homepage, which is easily found online.

In order to reduce the negative publicity, improvements in standardized promotional materials could be made to eradicate the problems that afflict the sites. Here higher priorities must be put into action and followed up. This could include regular reviews of sites but also working on solving actual negative conditions for example, organized trash collection and a recycling program.

This is especially true since the Internet provides well-written descriptions of sites, tourism opportunities and contact information. Some examples even offer different types of tours depending on the location, price factors and duration. This also means tourists use these sites

not only before a journey but also to upload images, reviews and exchange opinions.

Modern tourists use the Internet to discover, learn, make plans and decisions about tourism. The Internet is a global source of information and this means it provides both positives and negatives. It also may simply omit information or be biased or highly inaccurate. All of these factors influence tourist decision-making.

One online example (see; Fig. 4) highlights what the authors of this particular homepage have

determined to be the relevant information. While nothing can be explained by one example, this example is typical of the online information this research has found. There are many more homepages which present a wide variety of tourism options but there is a consistent lack of information about the northwest region itself.

In other words, if there is “no information” it may not be discovered in an Internet search and therefore the assumption is made that must not be anything worth doing or seeing in that region.

Jordanian Tourist Sites

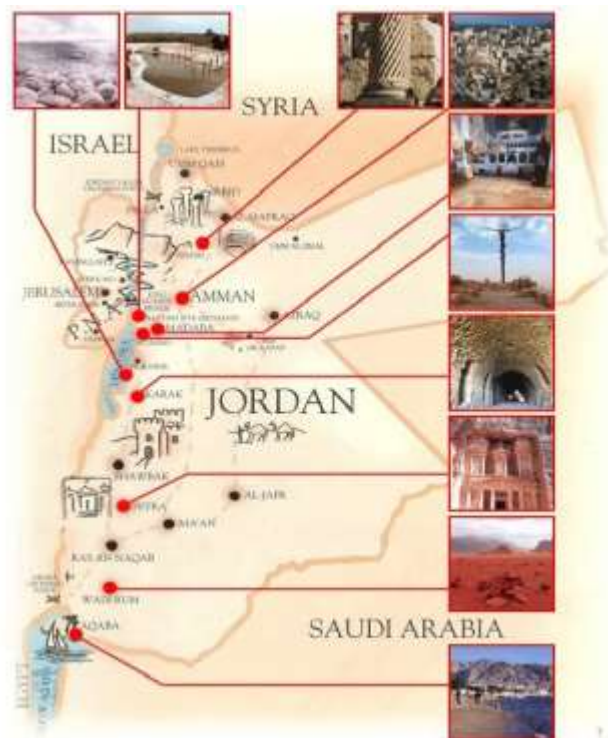


FIGURE 4- Image taken from: <http://www.explorejordantours.com/>

Natural Sites

The natural landscape area has changed dramatically over the last 100 years due to the loss of range lands and improper agricultural techniques. Yet, there remains enough of the unchanged physical characteristics to give a fairly accurate view of the way life may have been in the past.

There are many naturally formed sites here, which could support tourist interest. This would help to stimulate the local economy which could encourage

local communities to preserve their own cultural aspects; such as traditional food production including items like meat, cheese and olives.

In addition to the natural environment and the variety of biodiversity found only in the northwest region, there are a number of natural sites, which can encourage continued growth through cultural landscape protection, resource management and tourism development.

This is a geographically diverse region, which includes flat plains and mountains ranging from a 1200 to 1500 meter elevation further south. These

heights are generally higher than the highlands in the West Bank and provide a rough terrain, which is perfect for many outdoor activities.

The famous Khalid Hill (named after an Islamic Arabic leader in the second Islamic / eighth Christian century), which is where the Battle of Yarmouk took place uniting the Islamic community.

The Yarmouk River Valley itself forms the natural valleys and highlands that separate Jordan from Syria. Many of these valleys are rich with fossilized animal and plant remains easily visible to the untrained eye.

Remnants of the last Mediterranean Holm Oak forests and wild olive trees with surrounding man-made stone walls and demarcation lines dating to the Roman period and before dot the landscape.

In addition, the Jordan River Valley bordering Syria, Israel and Jordan plays an important historical role. This area has been in constant transition over the last several millennia and even today, tourists gather in the evening to view spectacular sunsets over the Golan Heights and Lake Tiberias.

Cultural sites

There are many historical and archaeological sites dating back to several civilizations such as the Greek civilization, Roman and Islamic. One of the most famous Roman cities wall (Umm Qais) the battle of Yarmouk is also one of the most important Islamic battles was in Irbid.

There are many mosques and Islamic buildings, such as Dar Assaraya (former Ottoman prison) which has been converted into a museum belonging to the Department of Antiquities, Irbid Mamluk Mosque, the house of the poet Arar and others.

The modern town of Umm Qais is the site of the ancient Greco-Roman town of Gadara, one of the cities of the Decapolis and, according to the Bible, the place where Jesus cast out the devil from two men into a herd of pigs (Matthew 8: 28-34). Rising 518 meters above sea level with views of Lake Tiberias and the Golan Heights, there is no better vantage point in northern Jordan than Umm Qais.

Gadara was renowned for its cosmopolitan atmosphere, attracting an array of writers, artists, philosophers and poets. It also served as a resort

for Romans vacationing in the nearby al-Hemma hot springs. Like Pella, its sister Decapolis city, Gadara was blessed with fertile soil, abundant water, and a location astride a number of key trading routes connecting Asia and Europe.

Today, a considerable portion of the original Roman amphitheater has survived. The seats face west, and are brought to life at sunset. Covered passageways stand in the back, and until recently, a six-foot headless white marble goddess sat at the foot of one of the amphitheater's internal staircases. The statue; thought to be of Tyche, the patron goddess of Gadara, can now be seen in Umm Qais' archaeology museum. The museum also houses a Byzantine mosaic frieze and a marble sarcophagus. (Mare, 1998).

Ten kilometers to the north, the road from Umm Qais winds down toward the Yarmouk River and the Golan where it ends at the baths of Hemma. There, Roman holiday makers sought rejuvenation and vitality from these health-giving hot springs. These are open to modern-day travelers as well. The main hot spring, whose mineral-rich waters are a warm 57°C, pours into an indoor pool. A number of chalets are also available for rent within the complex. The Hemma facilities have been renovated, and are now available for tourists.

Forty minutes north of Ajloun (88 kilometers from Amman), the bustling city of Irbid is an excellent staging point for excursions to Umm Qais, Pella and other sites in northern Jordan. Irbid's importance as a trading center with Haifa ended in 1948, but in recent years it has gained importance as the industrial center and administrative capital of the north. The city has a good selection of restaurants, a number of banks and hotels, and the campus of Yarmouk University.

Artifacts and graves in the area show that Irbid has been inhabited since the Bronze Age. Scholars have debated whether Irbid is the biblical site of Beth Arbel, or Beit Arbil in Arabic. Under Roman rule, the city was renamed Arbila. (Mare, 1998)

While most of this heritage is hidden beneath the new city of Irbid, there are two excellent museums located within Yarmouk University. The Museum of Jordanian Heritage is considered the finest museum

of archaeology in the country, while the Natural History Museum is also worth a visit.

Abila of the Decapolis located only a few minutes' drive from Hartha; is divided into several distinct "areas" which comprise the modern archaeological site of Abila. These areas are distinguished by their location and special architectural surface features. (Mare, 1998)

The northern summit marks the main tell of Abila, and is known today as tell Abil by local inhabitants. It is divided into Areas A and AA. Area D, which sits aloft the southern summit, is appropriately known as tell Umm el-Amad, or "Mother of all Columns".

This is the location of a beautifully reconstructed tri-apsidal basilica with 24 alternating limestone and basalt columns, which impressively flanked the sacred sanctuary or nave of a seventh century basilica. (Mare, 1998)

Walking eastward and slightly northward from the Area D basilica, one will descend down a short grade that ends abruptly at the edge of the steep theater cavea (This is also the site of another Byzantine basilica), which commands a spectacular view over the Saddle depression, consisting of Areas B, C, and E, as well as the luxuriant wadi Quailibah, with its pomegranate, olive and fig tree orchards. Running in front of the theater cavea is the partially uncovered Byzantine basalt street.¹⁵

The hills surrounding Abila are honeycombed with numerous tombs, and there is evidence of three underground aqueducts, one of which may have been cut as early as the Iron Age. Another was cut during the Roman era. All of the aqueducts were used through the Byzantine period. As the evidence suggests, Abila was an impressive and important city in antiquity, and the remains of its material culture classifies it as one of the most exciting excavations in Jordan.

The description here is insufficient, however, it does confirm that this site is only one of many within this region. Together these sites make-up a range of potential World Heritage sites, tourist destinations, scientific research opportunities and

cultural landscape wealth. For any of the above mentioned sites to slip quietly out of our grasp without an preservation and / or effort being made, would be an injustice to those cultures which created them.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The region is accessible by road from all neighboring countries as well as being only one and a half hours drive from Amman. Because it lies on the triangulation of the Syrian, Israeli and Jordanian borders this area is frequently traversed by travelers going from Syria to Jordan or further south; or by southern tourists from the Arab Gulf States traveling north to Lebanon or Turkey.

Although road accessibility may be sufficient or even advantageous for the traveler, it does little in actually bringing tourist trade to this area. This is mainly due to lack of any significant infrastructure for tourists other than the roads in this region. It may also be due to a lack of promotional support.

There are many small communities within the delineated area, which certainly add to the overall character of the region. Each of these communities independently may or may not add specific gain or loss to any particular issue; however, without each of these communities the entire spectrum of this tightly knit area would change.

Since many of the people in this area are unable to travel long distances outside their particular community, their lifestyles are rooted in their daily routines. This is the cultural landscape of this area. These are communities which have continued to exist and retain their habits and methods long after may be necessary. This is reflected in the infrastructure as well.

A "casual" approach against that of the hurried modern tourist expectations. There are no real facilities except for the occasional rest stop or cafe. Few hotels or restaurants or even accurate street signs away from the main highway to direct potential tourists (especially those who cannot speak Arabic). Major settlements, towns and villages include: Alyarmouk, Aqraba, Ar Rafid, Barashta, Hartha Hubras, Kufr Saw, Saham, Samar, Yubra. (Fig:5).

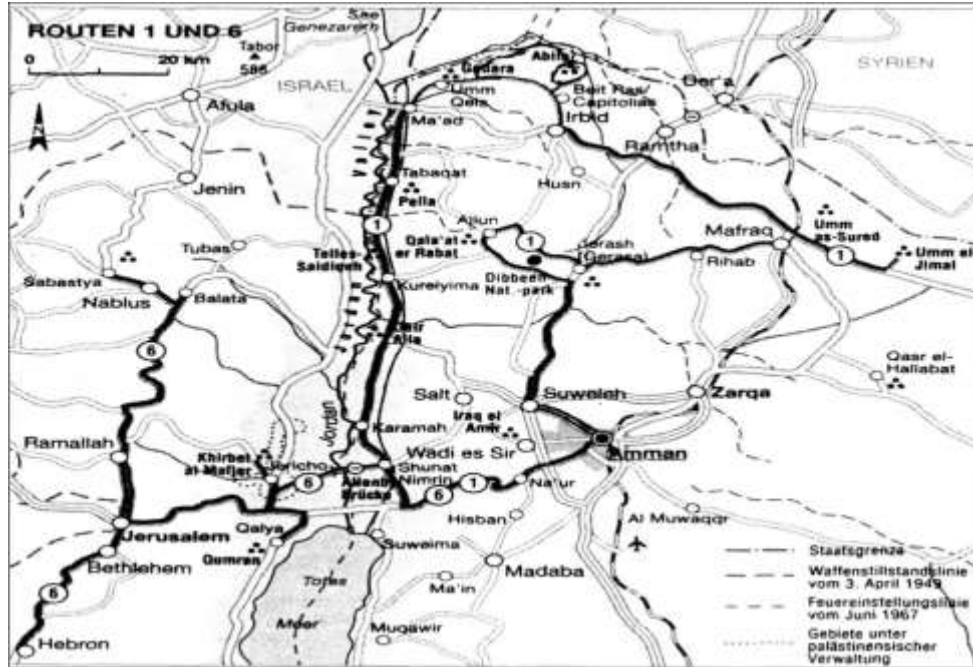


FIGURE 5- Regional Delineation with Major Settlements and Highways

Accommodation

Accommodation is a key factor for any region's tourism development. In Jordan's case and according to an interview with JTB Director General Abdul Razzaq Arabiyat written by Mohammad Ghazal (June 8, 2018); "Most of the Kingdom's 28,000 hotel rooms are located in Aqaba, Amman and the Dead Sea." Further emphasis is being place on already existing sites; "The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) is working on a plan to boost promotions to the country's attractions with the aim of attracting tourists from the Gulf counties, Asia and Europe."

'As part of the plan, we will soon start running commercials and launch promotional activities to attract tourists from these markets,' JTB Director General told *The Jordan Times*." (see article excerpt in Annex).

It comes as no surprise why the bulk of accommodations is in the well-established tourist areas and vica versa. This is due to the popularity of sites. The question could be asked, what is being done to boost the popularity and accommodation options in the northwest region.

Findings

The information found through this analysis often guides tourists only to specific sites while ignoring many other possible options. This leads to the more general mindset that there is no reason to invest in regions which are not heavily toured. Unfortunately, this creates a downward spiral and enforces a cyclical self-fulfilling outcome.

This research confirms there is a severe lack of useful tourist information. This compounds "bad images", leads to negative impacts which then underpin the misconception that the northwest region has nothing for tourists and therefore requires no support.

This thinking enforces the level of disinterest among domestic and international tourists which ultimately affects the greater population and Jordan's GDP.

All of these factors damage the cultural landscape and create deeper divides within the tourism industry as well as entrenching the necessity for government aid rather than developmental success.

For positive impacts to happen, decisions must be made and effort must be put into developing concepts which will lead to and sustainable support.

It cannot be accomplished without a long term strategy, coordinated plans and dedicated financial support. It must also focus on local conditions and involve communities, their culture and interests. Some conditions which must be addressed include:

How much has changed since these words were said; "I have not the least doubt that Jordan has gone down in the production level from a country which would support eight times the number of its today's population to its present production capacity which is continuing to decline: this means that there is a major task ahead of the responsible Jordanians to re-educate the thinking of the larger group of people, to stop the present irregular and injurious practice relating to the land use which accelerates soil erosion, loss of water and extermination of wildlife and will at last bring starvation and catastrophe to the immensely increasing population of Jordan."¹⁸.

There are a number of open issues which must be addressed despite having an increase in tourist numbers to the popular sites. These include but are not limited to:

1. low level of services provided by public sector employees due to weak incentives
2. no link between scientific research and local communities
3. lack of incentives for researchers, resulting in a lack of scientific research efforts in the region
4. lack of an updated database for promoting coordinated local economic development
5. lack of a clear economic plan or map showing the advantages of the province
6. lack of agricultural awareness due to poor communication between research centers and farmers which has led to the adoption of agricultural patterns that do not fit the climate of the region
7. absence of regulatory mechanisms for marketing agricultural products
8. lack of awareness about the importance of the tourism sector and the lack of integration of the northern region and

tourist areas in Jordan tourism programs

9. lack of publications, maps and guides that cover the tourist areas and sites leading to the weak tourism culture
10. lack of coordination of efforts between the various parties such as antiquities, tourism and municipalities which serve these sectors
11. weak public knowledge and awareness of development programs due to the absence of media campaigns promoting the economic benefits of the Irbid Governorate
12. weak investment in natural resources
13. weak efforts to encourage investment in the absence of a special body to attract investments to the governorate
14. no action plans

Much more could and should be written on any one of the topics briefly highlighted here. It is an easy position to say that more support will improve conditions. This is true everywhere so this is not the main point of this article. The main point is to highlight specific conditions which can be corrected or improved by having better information and a fairer distribution of resources.

Some steps that should be taken include:

1. Preliminary studies must be conducted to determine the value of this cultural landscape. Assessment of natural and cultural assets in the area must be conducted and sponsored by the Jordanian Government and universities in cooperation with IUCN, ICOMOS, GTZ and other respected institutions.
2. Administrative, financial, scientific, educational and local support and responsibility must be established and coordinated with specific responsibilities clearly designated and regulated by relevant authorities.
3. Local benefit programs; such as business education, language training, polyglot

information and signage, tax relief for small businesses, must be established.

4. Educational programs at all educational levels regarding cultural heritage, tourism and environmental resource management must be initiated and routinely upgraded and evaluated by relevant authorities. International assistance in developing these programs should be encouraged through partnership programs in other countries as well as through the UNESCO, "Education in Young Hands" program, for example.
5. Promotion and marketing of tourism must be made in the region and equally supported by the Ministry of Tourism. This includes international and domestic tourism.
6. Encouragement of networking area communities in order to facilitate an effective distribution network for information, best practices, local products, goods and services.

Local Level

Since many of the local level requirements mirror the national level requirements or are direct extensions of them; such as business incentives, it is not necessary to re-state them below. However, current local conditions in and around Hartha requiring specific attention follow.

1. Improved infrastructure: transportation network throughout the area including multi-lingual posted maps and printed information; small hotels, guest houses or arrangements for over-nighting at local homes; cafes or restaurants with multi-lingual menus and hours of operation; directions and access to local tourist sites, available tourist information and guides; proper medical, water and sanitation facilities; and public awareness of tourism increases.
2. Improvement of community environmental obligations; such as: regular trash collection, recycling programs and proper waste management facilities; local

environmental education program and organization of community awareness programs and incentives.

3. Development of tourist activities in cooperation with area sites, such as; guided tours, over-nighting in traditional atmosphere and environment, trekking, cycling, hang-gliding, camel or horse back riding, "cultural evenings" and events or festivals, traditional crafts education, animal or bird watching, "green" holidays promotion (working in specific locations such as an excavation); photography (plants, animals, birds, people, artifacts), historical treks, archaeological discovery tours, etc.
4. Organizations, clubs and associations (for example, parent / teachers associations) established in order to promote more community involvement and awareness. This could be in combination with experts working directly with the area. Recognition and support could be made similar to the Queen Noor / IUCN Youth Forum.
5. Nomination of a "Flagship Species" to serve as a concept to address bio-diversity conservation in an ecosystem context, which seeks to conserve integral ecological systems within which species can live and evolve. The focus is very much on the conservation of ecosystems rather than on single species. This said, in a number of biosphere reserves, individual 'flagship species' provide a rally-point for conservation action at the local level, creating a sense of communal pride in a region's heritage. They provide a tangible symbol with which people can associate themselves. As such, these flagship species play an important role in raising public awareness and in information, educational and fund-raising activities of various kinds.

The area has many traditional sites which could bolster tourist income which could then lead to a more practical approach to reversing migration while improving local conditions. However; some of these sites are currently in need of repair and

would require a substantial investment to improve their condition.

One potential method for beginning this restoration process could be the establishment of a network of specific representative examples of buildings with cultural, historical, religious and / or architectural significance. This network should be recognized by relevant authorities and given the necessary support to improve the sites' conditions. These sites could then be promoted as individual sites or as a collection of sites within the area's network.

A foundation created and supported by donations as well as government funds and tourist earnings could finance the restoration efforts. The function of this network would be to develop tourism to the area as well as to each specific community, which has a tourist site listed by the foundation. Communities with sites would benefit from special promotion of their communities and thereby increased benefits associated with the tourist industry.

Each site could also be individually promoted based on its particular historical interests. For example, as a place to view specific species migration (such as birds) or to participate in a local festival or concert. Each site would be responsible for creating additional activities within its home community and to use only local labor and / or products whenever possible.

This would have secondary income benefit potential for local craftsmen and farmers through the sale of souvenirs and food or other animal products. These sites could also serve as an educational incentive for local communities as well as creating both domestic and foreign tourist awareness in the region.

Some of these sites could be utilized as lodging in the form of locally managed guesthouses and in turn, provide employment through the promotion and protection of local points of interest and traditions; such as, handicraft lessons.

A small amount of outside funding for these guest houses would create initial support or the construction costs. Restoration efforts could be carried out by local craftsmen and laborers. The local people would then manage these guesthouses

thus earning a supplementary income during the tourist seasons.

Again, local craftsmen could provide the maintenance of the facilities and local farmers could produce the food offered to guests and local people as well. All of these related activities could create a greater responsibility and awareness of the protection of the natural resources and historical sites while encouraging community spirit.

Preservation costs and labor would come directly from local sources under the guidelines set forth as part of the initial agreements by the foundation in close cooperation with donors and authorities. Under these guidelines, the local people would assume the responsibility of maintaining and preserving their heritage and historical sites.

Failure to continue in the preservation, maintenance and promotion; or the misuse or abuse of sites would result in the loss of listing with the foundation as well as reduced secondary income potential. This would be clearly explained to local representatives in order to achieve local support for these projects.

Additional projects could include the development of a network of local agricultural producers and co-operative partners for the establishment of a regionally organized food distribution system. This system would highlight supplying local communities and tourist establishments within local communities rather than supplying larger cities.

For example, locally produced dairy products for sale to tourists in local villages. Production of Bio-products (such as honey or milk products) with endorsement on the labeling could attract a niche market.

This development would also reduce the amount of food currently imported into these areas and insure the preservation of traditional agricultural methods. Also, a special subsidy for farmers to reduce the sale of land or its destruction would ease the burden on existing land resources while providing incentives to adhere to guidelines. This could be implemented; as in other reserves, in the form of payments being made to farmers for not using land for a specific period. This would provide a chance for new growth

of grasses and consequently, habitat and food for various species.

In addition, local farmers would receive educational support as well as financial assistance in order to provide a lasting practical understanding of land use management. This education would highlight irrigation problems, crop types, crop rotation, fertilizer and pesticide use, crop storage and distribution, and other aspects of modern agricultural farming specifically tailored to the local conditions. The same approach would be utilized with respect to range land usage and animal raising.

Also, a scientific system of evaluation for determining the precise “value” of a particular natural landscape should be developed in order to provide more precise information regarding the actual human impact on this landscape through land use.

This system could be one step further than Limits of Acceptable Change. It would clearly link the status natural conditions with a clear “value” in order to determine; if an area should be given special consideration or not and with which priorities. In other words, assessing human needs as they are related to overall environmental conditions in a user-friendly format will enable scientists and decision makers to use a common system of evaluation.

Obviously, there are many more opportunities to encourage the establishment of local or national awareness and support for creating a reserve within this region. The purpose here is to highlight some of the main topics observed in Hartha and surrounding villages. However, the main task remains; acquiring sufficient support to nominate and maintain this region as a reserve area.

All of these efforts mentioned above would have a direct relation to the cultural landscape of northwest Jordan. The work involved here would not be easy but it could be the beginning of much needed sustainable development.

Only when this happens will the northwest region be more recognized, protected and prosperous. This will then led to more sustainable

development which will ultimately advance Jordan's GDP and quality of life.

Findings

There continue to be difficulties but there are also clear benefits in supporting existing sites as catalysts for economic development, educational and recreational activities, inviting and supporting tourism and promoting local awareness and cooperation. These steps can lead to further growth potential and reduce negative impacts while serving as a driver for sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

This study confirmed the importance of having nature reserve areas as a strategic instrument for creating localized economic development through managed tourism. Through greater motivated involvement by administrative and business decision-makers, improving local education, community involvement and awareness more positive future growth is possible. The diversity and authenticity of Jordan's natural and integral cultural heritage in the northwestern region can be an incubator in a unique tourist destination. This could reduce negative economic conditions through leadership by government, academic initiatives and financial support.

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Annex

“We will start by launching activities in the Gulf countries,” he said, noting that the JTB will place posters and ads in the main commercial centers and malls in the Gulf countries as well as distribute flyers and brochures highlighting the Kingdom’s tourist attractions and variety of tourism.

The official said they expect a rise in the number of tourists coming to Jordan this season. “There has been a rise in the number of visitors and in the sector’s revenues since the beginning of this year,” he noted, adding “based on data received

from inbound tourism travel agencies, there is an increase in bookings to visit the Kingdom this year which is promising. Thus, we expect the numbers to continue to grow”.

According to official figures, the number of tourists coming to the Kingdom rose by 8.7 per cent in the first four months of this year, reaching around 1.539 million visitors. The percentage of overnight visitors during the January-April period of this year increased by 8.5 per cent when compared to last year, according to JTB figures.

Of the total number of visitors over this period, 311,667 were from the Gulf countries, a 20.5 per cent increase when compared to the same period of last year.

The tourism sector, which contributes 11 per cent of the country’s economy annually, directly employs 51,000 individuals, 82.5 per cent of whom are Jordanians, in addition to tens of thousands of indirect jobs, according to the Tourism Ministry’s figures.

The Kingdom currently counts around 28,000 hotel rooms with around 92 per cent of the tourism facilities being located in Amman, Aqaba and the Dead Sea. Almost 90 per cent of the workers in the sector are present in these three locations.”

Reference; The Jordan Times; <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-tourism-board-sets-goals-increased-numbers-visitors-year>; Director General Abdul Razzaq Arabiyat; by Mohammad Ghazal (June 8, 2018)