

Best Practices for Tour Guides in the Northern Region of Jordan: “Land of Olive Oil and Indigenous Food”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism investments are concentrated in the southern region of Jordan (Petra and Aqaba). This chapter argues that if food tourism delivers its sustainable benefits, it could be a vehicle for regional tourism development by strengthening the regional food on offer so that deprived areas are regenerated. Villages in Ajloun are selected for the investigation as they are well-known for food production. These villagers have inherited the talent for preparing traditional Jordanian food. This study is the first scientific study conducted to compare two villages in Ajloun, namely Orjan village and Ibbin village for logic justifications: 1) Provide the best example illustrating the best practices of tour guides in Jordan who unconsciously apply the principles of alternative tourism that lead to a sustainable tourism development. 2) This chapter aims to identify many problematic issues such as whether tour guides apply the best practices that are the concrete reflection of sustainable tourism principles.

INTRODUCTION

In the post-globalization era, many changes have touched all aspects of life commencing with values and ending by lifestyle. Tourism as a global phenomenon has been affected, in that it becomes the sole solution for some countries to confront crisis, especially in areas with tensions, where employment opportunities have decreased. Urban tourism witnesses a growth in developed countries while rural

tourism becomes the ‘dernier recours’ for revitalizing the communities in developing countries, which have nothing to do with urban tourism.

Much research has been conducted on rural tourism from the 1990s until now. It started in Europe with bed and breakfast especially in the UK, France and Switzerland. Britain promoted this type of tourism by launching many slogans, ‘Feel as you are at your home’ and ‘Breathe fresh and clean air.’ France and Ireland imposed some conditions for rural dwellings. Spain has a competitive advantage with its wide offer that visitors could sleep in historic homes, towers and historic palaces. Italy was also the pioneer in the adoption of this type of tourism as the government took the initiative of constructing homes and pensions for vacations. Hungary is a distinct model as the government gives investors fiscal exemptions, besides organizing an equestrian festival. In sum, European governments support these types of tourism and contribute by promoting it online. However, other types of sustainable tourism such as agritourism and ecotourism are equated with rural tourism. As there are a lot of definitions, defining rural tourism is problematic.

Even in regions not suitable for tourism, tourism can function as a vehicle for rural development (Neumeier & Pollermann, 2014). Above all, some studies consider that not all types of tourism in rural areas are listed under the general umbrella of rural tourism. In some countries, rural tourism takes a limited seasonal aspect, such as Jordan that has a peak season in summer in Ajloun.

Rural tourism provides travelers personal contact with the local people, which is considered a unique insight into their lives (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2004). Rural tourism has the advantage over urban tourism, in that it is cheaper as it needs primitive services. This is a rule in developed countries, meanwhile in developing countries; a limited number of visitors frequent rural areas, as they are high cost destinations. For example, an overnight stay in Ajloun costs 50 euros.

The future plan for the economic sector, including the tourism sector insists on the necessity of developing many types of tourism, such as cultural, medical, environmental religious, adventure etc. However, it does not mention rural tourism, which is a niche market (Jordan Economic Growth Plan, 2018). Studies were conducted on a wide range of themes; however, they put emphasis on economic implications. Tourism can diversify local rural economies and increase their visibility (Lun, Penclaner & Volgger, 2016). The research by Neumeier and Pollermann (2014) conducted in five eastern German rural regions shows that tourism induced small economic impacts, while it caused important non-economic implications by enhancing the social and cultural aspects (Neumeier & Pollermann, 2014).

Developing sustainable tourism is a big challenge for planners and policy makers. The tourism industry faces a multitude of significant sustainability-related challenges including energy and greenhouse gas, water consumption, waste management, loss of biological diversity, and planning (UNWTO, 2012). Food has been considered a useful instrument of destination development (Henderson, 2009). Others stress the impressive role of food as *the key to understand homeland ...it is central to our perception of home and identity. In sum it is a tool for building a nation* (Raviv, 2015).

Anthropologists started studying gastronomy since the 1970s. Gastronomy was first defined as *the intelligent examination of whatever concerns man’s nourishment* (Arnott, 1975). These days, our modern world witnesses the suppression of traditional cooking and its replacement by fast food. It serves the interests of traders and fills the stomachs of consumers with junk food found all over the world. It is known for its dangerous impacts on health, putting away the recipes of ancestors who invented special recipes from the gift of their lands. These cuisines are not just simple recipes that reflect the lifestyle, religion, traditions, ideology, beliefs, and intelligence to prepare meals using ingredients well conserved

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