

# The Role of the Local Community in Sustainable Tourism Development, Case Study (Governorate-Ajloun/ Jordan)

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## Abstract

Ajloun is considered as one of the tourist governorates in Jordan, which has diverse tourism types such as historical, natural, religious, and medical tourism. Therefore this research tries to highlight the importance of this city, and looks at the most important development projects in this governorate. so that, many benefits; economic, social as well as environmental benefits, will be achieved to the state and the local community.

**Keywords:** A short brief about Ajloun, Sustainable tourism development, The results, Recommendation.

## 1.0 Introduction

Tourism has political, economic, social and cultural influences on the host communities; on the political level and International Relations, Tourism plays a role in political socialization because it is a subculture of the community culture. on the economic side, tourism is an important source of hard currency and creating jobs to reduce unemployment, also tourism has varied influences in social and cultural tourism. it is a kind of cultural friction between different people and it facilitates the transmission of ideas, customs and new innovations from one society to another.

Tourism is one of the most growing industries in the world after oil. in Ajloun tourism is considered as the important productive sector from an economic perspective, which plays significant role in increasing the national income and improves the balance of payments in the state through foreign currencies which achieved by observation the increase of annual rate according to selling tickets indicators except the exempted of them. Also as it is noticed in the percentage of hotel occupancy and public interest by tourists in Ajloun.

## 1.1 The problem of the study

Ajloun is considered among the Jordanian governorates that enjoys a tourism diverse whether it is archaeological or natural. So that many policies are necessary to develop all these kinds of tourism in Ajloun by following the policy of sustainable tourism development. This research tries to know the reality of sustainable tourism development in Ajloun and the role of the local community as a strategic partner in this development.

## 1.2 Importance of the study

The importance of the study comes from the importance of developing Ajloun tourism. Ajloun has potential variety factors of tourist attraction; such as the natural and beautiful views as well as the archeological sites. The importance of the study comes from the importance of the local community in Ajloun as a tourism community that has customs, traditions and cultural heritage which can be highlighted to the tourist.

## 1.3 Aims of the study:

- 1. shed light on the reality of tourism in Ajloun.
- 2. Identify the most important development projects in Ajloun.
- 3. Identify the role of the local community in the development.

## 1.4 methodology of study:

- descriptive approach: this approach uses the available scientific references in Arabic and foreign languages, scientific studies and tourism brochures that are related to this study.
- Analytical Approach: this approach designs a questionnaire that is distributed to 230 individuals from the local community in Ajloun. (200) questionnaires were retrieved and (30)ones were excluded as the lack of information.

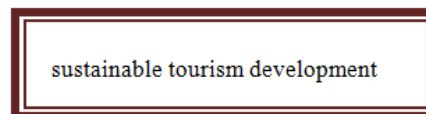
## 1.5 Modals of research

### The independent modal



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### the dependent modal



## 1.6 Hypotheses of the study:

- 1- There is no significant relationship between the between the active participation of the local community in Ajloun and the process of tourism development .
- 2- There is no significant relationship between the development of sustainable tourism projects and government funding for the local community in Ajloun.
- 3- There is no significant relationship between the economic dimension of the local community and sustainable tourism development projects in Ajloun .
- 4- There is no significant relationship between the social dimension of the local community and sustainable tourism development projects in Ajloun..
- 5- There is no significant relationship between the environmental dimension of the local community and sustainable tourism development projects in Ajloun.

## 1.7 The previous studies

1. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan (2009) conducted a survey entitled "Evaluation the challenges as well as the economic and tourism opportunities with the local community in the villages located along to Ajloun path . these villages are (Rason, Arjan, Ozareth, Wadi Rayan and the Mar Elias)" This study aims at identifying the main obstacles that hinder the development of the tourism sector from the perspective of the local community , government institutions, civil society and the private sector .The results of the study reveal that the villages have basic factors to be a tourist destination .
2. A study was conducted in 2004 entitled "The role of sustainable tourism in reducing poverty and unemployment", the study covers the current station in Madaba .This study aims at identifying the current economic and social situation in Madaba also it tries to illustrate the constraints towards the development of tourism and tourist activity in Madaba .The main results of the study shows that the local community appreciates the leading role of tourism in prosperity of Madaba by roads construction , delivering transport, health and education services and generating different employment opportunities and suitable income for the local community.
3. a study done by Hnaq and Otoum (2000) entitled "community attitude towards tourism" the study covers the current situation in Umm Qais / Jordan. It aims at showing the attitude of the Jordanians in Umm Qais toward tourism and its cultural, social, political and economic dimensions. The results of this study show positive sides for tourism such as providing employment opportunities for the people of the region, and increasing sales of local handicrafts.
4. Khasawneh conducted a study in 1998 entitled "Tourism and the local community in the Jordanian city of Jerash" This study aims at shedding the light on tourism planning approach done by the competent authorities in order to know the reasons for the reluctance of the local community of Jerash to put plans and participate in the tourism activities. one result of the study shows failure to observe the plans which are related to tourism development for the locals in Jerash and encourage them to invest in the field of tourism.
5. Dell Mell conducted a study in 1996 entitled "The attitude of local community towards tourism in Niagara Falls - Canada".The most important results of this study that the local community 's attitude about tourism in Niagara Falls was positive through the services presented by tourism sector such as providing employment opportunities and income for citizens as well as using the basic environment available for tourists and exchanging cultures between tourists and the local community.

## 2.1 A short brief about Ajloun:

The city of Ajloun located in the north of Amman , the capital, and in the south of Irbid city .it's population estimated at nearly 150,000 according to statistical data provided by Jordan Department of Statistics for 2014( [http://dos.gov.jo/dos\\_home\\_a/main/2004/2012/2-4.pdf](http://dos.gov.jo/dos_home_a/main/2004/2012/2-4.pdf) )

Ajloun is considered as the best place to spend summer holidays . that related to its moderate climate in the summer . Ajloun is known with its dense forest trees , mountainous nature and wonderful landscapes ( <http://www.ajloun.gov.jo> ) It is the most important monuments and natural in the governorate:

Ajloun castle : built by salah al din al ayoubi order . it is Located on one top of “Mount Auf” in the south-west of Ajloun, and rises 1023 meters above sea level. The aim of the construction was to prevent the spread of the crusader forces in the area of Ajloun, and to keep the trade routes to Damascus and pilgrimage routes between Syria and AL Hijaz

Mar Elias archaeological site: it located nearly 9 kilo to the north-west of Ajloun ( <http://ajlune.tripod.com/marelyas.htm> )

## 2.2 Religious tourist sites

- Ajloun Grand Mosque: Located in the center of Ajloun. It is one of the oldest mosque in Jordanit was built in the reign of King Najm al-Din in 1247 AD (<http://ajlune.tripod.com/marelyas.htm>).
- Religious shrines: the shrine of Omar -may Allah bless him- , Baaj shrine, the shrine of Ekremah bin Abi Jahl (Alwahadneh) and the shrine of Al khader in Ajloun (Ajloun Tourism Directorate).
- Mar Elias Church (Iesteb): it is related to the beginning of the Byzantine era and located within a forest surrounded by trees. It overlooks the Besan , Tabourie lake and Al- Shekieh Mount. the Mar Elias Church considered as one of five sites in Jordan accredited to the Vatican for pilgrimage every year in the 22nd of July. (<http://ajlune.tripod.com/marelyas.htm>).
- Lady of the Mountain Church (Angarah): it is related to the fourth century and it considered as one of five sites in Jordan accredited Vatican to evaluate the Christian pilgrimage .The importance of the church comes from the belief that Jesus and his mother Mary had spent a short time in one of Anjara' s caves (<http://ajlune.tripod.com/marelyas.htm>).

## 2.3 Natural sites

- Ajloun Nature Reserve: It covers an area of 1200 dunums and it contains many species of birds, rodents, mammals, reptiles and deer (Ajloun Tourism Directorate).
- Achtvina: It has forests of oak, the Eastern plane as well as wild herbs and flowering trees.
- Ebein / Ableen area: Both areas considered as fertile agricultural areas . they are famous for the cultivation of apples , almond and grapevines trees . they are also well known for rural houses ,which are frequented by tourists for rest and recreation.
- Wadi Kufranja: covered with forest and fruit trees .On both sides of the valleys ,there are water mills , archaeological ruins ,springs and Romania bridges.
- Waterfalls: Aezkiq Falls (Halawa) area, Rajeb Falls.
- Ajloun tourist paths: Ajloun tourist path, the path of Valley Mills, Ajloun Castle path.
- Museums: Abu Issam Museum (Rason), Ajloun Castle Museum (Ajloun Tourism Directorate) .
- Crafts: the house of Soap, the house of biscuits, Association of loyalty to the land ( Al – Wafa'a lla'rdh ) , Association of craftsmen for Heritage and culture ( Multaqa Al-Thaqafa )

The hotels and other tourist services are available in Ajloun. For example, Rabd Castle hotel, Ajloun Hotel, Ajloun reset house (Bonita), Achtvina rest, restaurant of Rabd Castle Hotel, tour guides sector in the courtyard of the castle, the Office of Car Rental Tourism, Oriental antiques shop in Castle Square Jordan River Foundation (within Bonita rest) to sell oriental Unique antiques and handicrafts (<http://www.mota.gov.jo/Documents/Arjan.pdf>).

There are a set of activities and events Such as: Adventure and hiking, the nights of Ramadan for each Thursday and Friday during the holy month of Ramadan.

## 3.1 Sustainable tourism development

The concept of sustainable development is considered as one of the basic concepts, which aims to reduce the tension , imbalance and environmental degradation that can result from the interaction and overlap between tourism industry and tourists on one hand and between the environment and local communities on the other hand. (Hall, 2000, p, 27). the world Tourism Organization (WTO) defined sustainable tourism development in 2004 as " tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is a perception that leads to management all resources in a way that could meet the economic ,social and aesthetic needs with the preservation of cultural integration and life support systems .). (<https://www.wordtourism.org/sustainableconcepts>)

## 3.2 The goals of sustainable tourism

- Conservation of the Environment , natural resources and the heritage the community .
- Providing the basic requirements of the local community and raise the standards of living.
- Applying the principle of justice at the level of a present generation, as well as the coming generations in order to use the environmental resources and distribute the income (Eeogi, 2003, p.7).
- Providing standards of environmental accounting and control over the environmental tourism.

- the basic environment and the development of services in local communities.
- creating a climate for investment to provide income and work for the local community.
- Developing the environmental awareness among tourists , workers and local communities.
- providing new markets for local products.

### 3.3 Elements of sustainable development

- achieve compatibility between the needs of tourists and trends of citizens in order to achieve all the requirements of tourists .In turn, the local community in the regions of tourism development has goals seeking to achieve them such as the preservation the customs, traditions and heritage
- 2-maintain the ownership of the lands which are suitable for tourism development of the citizens by adapting long-term deeds of assignment and lease agreements reaches between 20-25 years old.
- 3-Planning to invest in tourism development taking into account the investment interests of foreign investors and the local population.
- 4-rely on the national workforce heavily .
- 5- development the various elements and local values by maintaining the social traditions , architectural style of the local character, local values , heritage and the local national art in order to submit it for tourists. highlighting the food, services and local traditional industries (Abdel Samie 1993, p. 252).

### 4.1 The results of the field study questions

**First hypothesis:** There is no significant relationship between the between the active participation of the local community in Ajloun and the process of tourism development .

Statistical degree	Degree of freedom	K 2	The Standard rest	The rest	Expected Frequency	the percentage	Frequency	is there any active participation of the local community in the sustainable tourism development in Ajloun
0.000	1	122.247	7.8	87.0	95.5	89.6	174	Yes
			-5.5	-67.0	95.5	6.2	19	No
			-2.3	-20.0	95.5	4.1	6	don't know
						100.0	199	Total

The table shows that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significant  $\alpha = 0.05$  between seen and expected numbers which are related to the parties who try to achieve the sustainable tourism development from the local community perspective. It is indicated that the participation of the local community in sustainable tourism development is much lower than expected.

Which means that there is active participation of the local community in sustainable tourism development in Ajloun and they do not stand idly by idly towards our stimuli and engines of sustainable development, but they are the initiators of the raised and agitated.

**Second hypothesis:** There is no significant relationship between the development of sustainable tourism projects and government funding for the local community in Ajloun.

Statistical degree	Degree of freedom	K 2	The Standard rest	The rest	Expected frequency	the Percentage	Frequency	is the government funding for the local community in Ajloun enough to achieve its tasks?
0.006	2	10.13	1.6	6.0	15.0	46.2	21	Yes
			1.0	4.0	15.0	42.2	19	No
			-2.6	-10.0	15.0	11.1	5	don't know
						100.0	45	Total

The table shows that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significant  $\alpha = 0.05$  between seen and expected numbers related to the adequacy of the government funding for stakeholders to achieve sustainable tourism development It is indicated that the government funding is much lower than expected from the local community perspective.

This means that government funding long, medium and short-term projects to establish in accordance with the logic of the sustainability of tourism development, as paving material to yield a reasonable profit and future periods characterized by continuity, and the results of a quick return to the local community.

**Third hypothesis There is no significant relationship between the economic dimension of the local community and the sustainable tourism development projects in Ajloun .**

Statistical degree	Degree of freedom	K 2	The Standard rest	The rest	Expected frequency	the percentage	Frequency	Do you think that tourism contributes to the economic development in Ajloun from the local community point of view?
0.000	1	119.039	9.6	79.0	86.0	86.3	177	Yes
			-5.9	-52.2	86	9.4	16	No
			-3.8	-26.8		4.3	7	don't know
						100.0	199	Total

The table shows that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significant  $\alpha = 0.05$  between seen and expected numbers which are related to the economic dimension of sustainable tourism development projects in Ajloun. It is indicated that the economic dimension of sustainable tourism development project is much lower than expected from the local community point of view.

This means that tourism contributes to the economic development from the point of view of the local community, such as providing employment opportunities, raise the level of income, vogue commercial traffic, building new roads and bridges, sewer, secure infrastructure and superstructure of the various sites in Ajloun.

**Fourth hypothesis There is no significant relationship between the social dimension of the local community and the sustainable tourism development projects in Ajloun..**

Statistical degree	Degree of freedom	K 2	The Standard rest	The rest	Expected frequency	the Percentage	Frequency	Do you think that tourism projects have social dimensions in Ajloun, from the local community point of view?
0.000	2	111.758	8.8	44.4	64.6	86.2	179	Yes
			-1.5	-11.6	64.6	10.5	16	No
			-4.1	-23.8	64.6	3.3	5	don't know
						100.0	200.0	Total

The table shows that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significant  $\alpha = 0.05$  between seen and expected numbers which are related to the social dimension of local community and the project of sustainable tourism development in Ajloun. It is indicated that the social dimension of sustainable tourism development project is much lower than expected from the local community perspective. From the point of the local community of view of a sample study that there are social impacts of tourism operation in the city of Ajloun, positive effects, such as cultural exchange, make friends, subjected themselves to new heights, raise living standards, create new jobs, seasonal jobs ... etc., and the effects of negative, such as drinking alcohol and rampant drug underage.

**Fifth hypothesis There is no significant relationship between the environmental dimension of the local community and the sustainable tourism development projects in Ajloun.**

Statistical degree	Degree of freedom	K 2	The Standard rest	The rest	Expected Frequency	the percentage	Frequency	Do you think that tourism projects have environmental dimensions in Ajloun from the local community the point of view?
0.000	1	49.382	9.6	54.4	74.6	56.2	109	Yes
			-3.8	-25.6	74.6	3703	66	No
			-6.2	-37.8	74.6	16.5	25	don't know
						100	200	Total

The table shows that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significant  $\alpha = 0.05$  between seen and expected numbers which are related to the environmental dimension of local community and the project of sustainable tourism development in Ajloun. It is indicated that the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism development project is much lower than expected from the local community perspective. Which means that there is a positive environmental dimensions of the tourist city of Ajloun process such as: maintain the archaeological and historical sites and restoration, building parks and restrooms, work sanctuaries



and wildlife conservation, provide sources of water ... etc. And negative effects such as air pollution, fumes and car exhaust, increasing the noise, the spread of waste ... etc.

#### 4.2 Results of the study

1. The study shows the weak role of the local community in sustainable tourism development in Ajloun is.
2. The study shows that the role of associations and handicraft centers is below the required level in participating in sustainable tourism development Ajloun.
3. The study shows that government funding for the projects of tourism development in Ajloun is low.
4. The study shows a lack of tourism awareness among the local community of the importance of sustainable tourism development socially ,economically, environmentally and culturally.
5. The study shows the weak role of the media in marketing Ajloun as a tourist destination.
6. The study also shows that the infrastructure and superstructure of the tourist sites in Ajloun, suffer from lack of attention and development by the concerned authorities represented by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, public works and municipalities.

#### 4.3 Recommendation

1. Activate the role of government represented by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan Tourism Board and Ministry of Culture by involving the local community in the projects of sustainable tourism development in Ajloun.
2. create awareness in local community in Ajloun of the importance of t tourism development and its impact on the economy in terms of creating employment , reducing the unemployment rate, raising the income level and providing of trade promotion.
3. activating the role of associations and cultural clubs in Ajloun .
4. making an annual and seasonal festival for heritage and local products in Ajloun .
5. Increase government funding to encourage the local community to invest in the small and medium projects of sustainable tourism development in Ajloun. For example, making tourist kiosks, tourist restaurants as well as popular restaurants which present Food popular, leisure services and hand crafts and popular products.
6. provide training programs for the local community in Ajloun , such as (hospitality skills course , languages, producing handicrafts courses, the significance of tourism)
7. activating the role of the media to communicate with the local community in order to market Ajloun by making tourism brochures talk about services, products and tourist facilities.
8. development of infrastructure and superstructure in Ajloun through rehabilitation and maintenance of tourism facilities and services, making the health facilities to serve the tourists , maintenance and repair roads, build bridges, street lighting at night in the tourist sites, maintain the cleanliness and beauty of the area by involving the local community by forming volunteer teams from school students and universities.

#### Conclusion

Environmental and cultural tourism in Ajloun , as the different types of tourism have different impacts, and consequently contribute in a different way to the sustainable development of the community. Based on the analyzed impacts, and discussion on its possible future, we can arguably conclude that cultural tourism in Ajloun is contributing to greater extent to the sustainable development of the local community. Cultural and tourism have various positive and negative impacts, which are contributing to the community's sustainability, but also jeopardizing it in the same time. The greatest contribution of both types of tourism can be seen through the economic impacts, and consequently followed by the social impacts. The number of tourists is increasing each year rapidly, as well as the income generated by the tourism. The cultural tourism is visible through the environmental impacts. Since environment is very vulnerable and sensitive on tourist activities, as well as the major source of the tourist product, it is very important to have high awareness of the danger that is facing if the tourism development is not managed in a correct way. Except the negative environmental impacts.

That positive consequences of tourism can arise only if, and when tourism is carried out and developed in a sustainable way. In order to achieve positive correlation between tourism and local community, an involvement of the local population is essential. 'A community involved in planning and implementation of tourism has a more positive attitude, is more supportive and has a better chance to make a profit from tourism than a population passively ruled (or overrun) by tourism. Additionally, steering tourism growth toward local needs, interests, and limits can greatly enhance value of the tourism to the community's sustainable development. According to Kreag (2001), 'creating a local tourism industry is not a daunting task, but making tourism really "fit" the community requires a lot of work.' First step in steering tourism development in a more sustainable direction is to change community's perspective of seeing tourism as an economic future. While doing so.

In order to achieve sustainable future of the tourism, the priority for Ajloun perhaps should be a development of the alternative types of tourism with the special focus on the cultural tourism, since it has great historical potential, which has been also recognized by the UNESCO. Although Ajloun is still on the UNESCO's world heritage tentative list, there is a great chance that will change in the near future, and that is something that can be well used in the promotion of Ajloun as a new cultural destination. In that way, Ajloun could become a whole year destination and provide more jobs for the local population, as well as greater income for the community. If the earned money would be well used in the protection of the environment and cultural heritage, as well as local population more involved in the planning process that would arguably lead to the more sustainable tourism in Ajloun. Consequently, a risk of becoming overcrowded and overdeveloped in the future, which would lead to replacement of Ajloun with the new fresh destinations, would be significantly increased.

**Finally**, we would like to stress once more that 'one of the core elements of the sustainable tourism development is a community development, which is a process and a capacity to make decisions that consider the long-term economy, ecology and equity of all communities.

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