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Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism

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Assessing City Marketing in Jordan: The Case of Petra

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to assess city marketing approaches used in promoting Petra in Jordan. To this end, four major criteria, including integrated marketing communication, quality of urban services, organizational procedures, and tourism receipt, were considered in this study. A qualitative method using in-depth, face-to-face interviews with top managers, was used to achieve the study objectives. Findings reveal that Petra suffers from a lack of effective city marketing strategies. The processes of city marketing, including integrated marketing communication, urban services, organizational aspects, and financial reserves, are greatly ineffective. Such processes are basically influenced by regulations, funding, and collaboration between various public authorities, as well as between the public sector and the private sector. The study provides useful insights for policymakers in order to improve city marketing in Jordan.

Keywords: city marketing; tourism receipt; integrated marketing communication; urban services; Petra; Jordan.

JEL Classification: R58; M31; Z32; R11.

Introduction

The use of city marketing to generate revenues is not a new phenomenon and it was extended to improve cities image and competitive positions (McCann 2020; Mistic and Podnar 2019; Chigora and Hoque 2018; Al-Weshah 2018; Akroush *et al.* 2016; Luo *et al.* 2013; Balencourt and Zafra 2012; Niedomysl and Jonasson 2012; Alnsour

2011; Akroush 2011; Cozmiuc 2011; Akroush and Al-Dmour 2006; Kavaratzis 2004; Chambwe *et al.* 2023). Many governments in both developed and developing countries have been practicing such marketing techniques to improve their economic situation. City marketing has several social-economic benefits, such as increasing tourism receipts, creating job opportunities, improving investment, and increasing the contribution of tourism to the national income. Kotler *et al.* (1999) argued that many cities are increasingly tending to depend on marketing approaches to intensify investment and tourism revenues. Also, McCann (2020) argued that not all governments can generate or maintain the same level of increased receipts from tourism marketing. Therefore, the success of marketing approaches depends basically on the collective understanding of many issues, such as destination marketing, effective coordination of marketing activities, efficient implementation of the marketing process, understanding of tourism development, local community participation, understanding of inter-urban competition, and monitoring and evaluating marketing activities (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2008; Ahmad *et al.* 2022).

A significant feature of city marketing is the development of innovative landmarks or 'flagship' buildings and structures (Kotler *et al.* 1999). City marketing includes changing external perceptions to encourage tourism, attract inward migration of residents, or enable business relocation (Czapliński and Kavetsky 2021). Thus, American Marketing Association has defined city marketing as "the coordinated use of marketing tools, supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy, to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange urban offerings that have value for the city's customers and the city's community at large" (Braun 2008, 43).

The study on assessing city marketing in Jordan, with a focus on Petra, presents a crucial examination of how innovative marketing strategies can bolster tourism and enhance a city's global standing, drawing on extensive literature that highlights the multifaceted benefits of effective city marketing. City marketing, as delineated by Kotler *et al.* (1999) and supported by a wide range of scholars (McCann 2020; Misic and Podnar 2019; Al-Weshah 2018; Akroush *et al.* 2016), plays a pivotal role in generating revenue, improving a city's image, and securing a competitive position on the global stage. This is increasingly relevant for both developed and developing nations that seek to leverage their unique attractions to boost economic growth and societal well-being.

The importance of this study lies in its comprehensive approach to understanding the complexity of city marketing, which encompasses not just the promotion of a city's image but also the development of infrastructure, enhancement of services, and engagement in IMC strategies. These elements are critical in attracting tourists, investors, and new residents, which in turn contribute to a city's economic development and cultural vitality. The American Marketing Association's definition of city marketing emphasizes a coordinated effort that benefits both the city and its stakeholders (Braun 2008), highlighting the importance of a customer-oriented philosophy.

Moreover, the study addresses the need for a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing city marketing's success, including destination marketing, the effectiveness of promotional activities, local community participation, and the application of urban policies (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2008). The case of Petra is particularly significant, given its status as a world heritage site and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, coupled with its potential to generate substantial tourism revenue for Jordan. This research thus not only aims to assess current marketing strategies but also to identify ways to enhance Petra's appeal and competitive edge in a crowded global tourism market.

By examining Petra's case within the broader context of city marketing theories and practices, this study contributes valuable insights into how cities in the Middle East, particularly those with significant historical and cultural assets, can optimize their marketing efforts. The findings have the potential to inform policy-making, guide strategic planning, and inspire innovative marketing initiatives that can elevate Petra's profile and, by extension, Jordan's tourism sector.

Kotler *et al.* (1999) distinguish between four distinct strategies for improvement, which are the foundations for building a competitive advantage, namely design (place as the character), infrastructure (place as fixed environment), basic services (place as the service provider) and attractions (place as entertainment and recreation). However, strategies such as market research and place promotion (Hankinson 2004) cannot operate effectively without being supported by effective urban policies. Hubbard and Hall (1998) have also noted that successful city marketing requires the re-imagining of localities and the transformation of previously unproductive urban centers into spectacular cities for increased consumption. They suggest five measures of the marketing mix, namely, publicity and promotion, large-scale physical development, civic and cultural facilities, mega-events, and cultural regeneration. Clark (2006) has also identified six measures of success that can be identified from the indices as important for achieving successful city marketing, namely; a good image, efficient transportation links, an attractive business climate, the presence of global players, security, safety, and transparency. To build the attractiveness of a place, global recognition is one of the most important influencing

factors (Czapliński 2023). According to Kavaratzis (2004), achieving such aims requires specific instruments, for instance, advertising and promotion, large-scale physical redevelopment, public art and civic statuary, mega-events, cultural regeneration, and the public–private partnerships. To create effective marketing of tourism destinations, towns, and cities need to differentiate themselves through the provision of more unique tourism products and services (Heeley 2016). Hence, the effectiveness of city marketing is mainly influenced by how urban policies are selected and applied to the proper combination of these measures. Literature on destination marketing has investigated different methods to measure destination image from customer perspectives and the influence of image recognition on customer decision-making (Chigora and Hoque 2018; Pike and Page 2014).

Cities can be marketed like other products in order to enhance their brand image and identity by improving their competitive position in the market. Hence, it is important for any city to make some improvements in different areas, especially in the areas which are critical for successful marketing of tourism cities by improving unique identity of competitive tourism (Chambwe *et al.* 2023).

City marketing is influenced by four main areas. Firstly, integrated marketing communication (IMC) aims to promote the city to public audiences. The communication and Internet technology revolution has dramatically changed the business landscape (Al-Weshah *et al.* 2013). There is a piece of clear evidence in the literature that image formulation and communication play a critical role in city marketing. In some cases, the importance of image is expressed as a sole focus in the customer relationship and promotion process (Al-Weshah 2023). Tourism choices to visit attraction locations affect tourism marketing strategy. Accordingly, if it is not equipped with inadequate promotions and there are no attractions at the destination, tourists will not visit a particular location, tourist attraction, and other events in any destination area (Sudarmayasa 2022). Gale and Donaire (2005) determined that image is a collection of messages which are created consciously or unconsciously. On the other hand, perceived images are created in the mind of an individual and are, thus, an interaction between projected messages and specific consumer needs, motivations, prior knowledge, experience, preferences, and other personal characteristics. Word-of-Mouth (WOM) is another important element in the IMCs process. Advertising by either WOM or printed materials should be developed in a way that promotes customer awareness and minimizes negative feedback, which can significantly affect customer retention and acquisition percentages (Maaiah and Masadeh, 2015) positively. Gale and Donaire (2005) indicated that positive WOM could create a favorable image and can eventually reduce promotional expenditure. Printed materials are important as marketing tools for tourism practices and activities to reduce risk and contribute to understanding customer needs (Al-Weshah 2018; Maaiah and Masadeh 2015). Promotion from social media is influenced by honesty of the news that is conveyed. displayed, sustainable, and a well-known brand that can attract potential customers (Sudarmayasa 2022). It has been accepted that IMC can generate better income for cities due to the expansion of promotional activities.

The second factor is urban services. Rana *et al.* (2018) argued that the widespread use of information technologies can enable cities to enhance service delivery. According to Alnsour (2016, 2014), urban services can be classified into two main areas, including physical services and social services; physical services include water supply, sewerage system, road network, and drainage system, whereas social services comprise road maintenance, waste collection, health amenities, education services, transportation, fire protection, safety and security, public parks, green spaces, leisure areas, libraries, worship centers, lighting, shopping areas, and tourist facilities (hotels and apartments). Both physical and social services represent the fundamental base of city marketing. Therefore, urban services can be considered a basic instrument for coordinating tourist development by avoiding environmental problems and simultaneously providing efficient use of tourist resources (Alnsour, *et al.* 2023). The distance of travel and different road conditions affect the decision of tourists to visit any destination area (Sudarmayasa 2022). On the other hand, the term 'services' is directly linked to the concept of 'quality of services,' where improvement of quality leads to promote and to enhance tourism development (Alnsour and Meaton 2015; Kakeesh and Ahmad 2020). As a result, increased profits from effective city marketing will result only from the provision of good quality services.

The third factor is the organizational aspect of city marketing. Short and Kim (1999) considered the political economy to be an essential organizational tool for city marketing. The city authorities' play proactive roles in policy development in city marketing, by combining horizontal networks of local communities, non-governmental organizations, and other entities in tourism cities (Broadhead 2020). According to Warnaby *et al.* (2005), the partnership between the public sector and the private sector is the most important organizational tool by which entrepreneurial activities related to city marketing are organized and carried out. It is important to recognize how people experience some aspects in regarding to space and place, thus, it is essential to consider the different groups of customers of a place (Czapliński 2023). The Jordanian government formulates many strategies and plans to improve tourism services and to attract international attention of tourists (Alhammad *et al.*

2021). This requires an organizational capacity which can be described as the ability of the public sector and the private sector to develop a new vision and to carry out a policy drawn to achieve sustainable development (van den Berg and Braun 1999). Hence, vision, objectives, and policy should be taken place relying upon the shared understanding between the public sector and the private sector.

The final factor is concerned with economic measures which express the financial returns of city marketing against marketing costs. Alhammad *et al.* (2021) stated that most of developing countries such as Jordan depends upon the economic returns of tourism. They stated that the contribution of tourism industry to the Jordanian GDP was 15.8% Goovaerts *et al.* (2014) suggested that Return on Investment (i.e., gain from the investment – the cost of investment/cost of investment) is the most suitable formula for city marketing. Profits typically result from several investments (Goovaerts *et al.* 2014). Improving IMC, services, and the organizational aspects of city marketing can result in substantially increased investment in the city (Shatnawi *et al.* 2020). Such investments can then yield more profit and income-generating activities over time (Al-Weshah 2017).

Assessing city marketing, based on the above criteria, of the ancient city of Petra in Jordan is the basic objective of this paper. The ancient city of Petra is located in the southern region of Jordan (see Fig. 1). It is the most important historical site in Jordan and was listed as a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1985. It was selected by popular vote in 2007 as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. In 2020, the number of Petra visitors was estimated at 470742 for the period from January to September 2022 (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2023). According to the World Bank (2021), the income receipts from tourism in the Middle East and South African countries are estimated at \$84,45 billion in 2021. In 2021 the income receipts in Jordan from tourism were estimated at \$6,3 billion, Egypt's \$32 billion, Israel's \$14,78 billion, and Lebanon's \$7.68 billion (World Bank, 2021). It can be seen clearly that Jordan gains lower receipts from the tourism sector compared to the surrounding countries. Therefore, the assessment of city marketing approaches for Petra is an urgent need to enhance policies and strategies which deal with city marketing and support the decision-making process. Moreover, this research can enrich existing knowledge of comparative purposes among countries in the Middle East region based on empirical findings. In addition, empirical research on city marketing is relatively rare. Hence, analyzing case studies from the Middle Eastern environment is important for expanding both urban and marketing research.

1. Research Methodology

Methodology refers to the procedural framework within which the study is conducted. A qualitative method was used to meet the study objectives, including the use of in-depth, face-to-face interviews with top managers in the marketing and urban management sector. The major principle of the qualitative method is assessing various interpretations and meanings which top managers give to city marketing. Managers' thinking and interpretations of city marketing are key axes in the assessment process accurately (Al-Weshah 2019). These interviews aimed at identifying several dimensions, including respondents' understanding of city marketing, IMC, services, a partnership between the private sector and the public sector, financial performance, planning process for city marketing, activities that have been carried out so far to market Petra and a general evaluation of city marketing. The interviews were implemented in the respondents' workplace offices. The target was to conduct 45 interviews; however, several of the selected interviewees refused to take part in the study, with only 33 interviews conducted. Table 1 illustrates the breakdown of these interviews.

Table 1. Breakdown of interviews

Organizations targeted	Number of interviews
Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority	9
The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	8
The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	3
The Ministry of Municipal Affairs	3
Jordan Tourism Board	6
Jordan Society of Tourism and Travel Agents	4
Total	33

2. Results and Discussion

This section concerns empirical findings of study variables, including IMC, services, organizational aspects, and financial return.

2.1 Integrated Marketing Communication

According to the interviewees, IMCs are responsible for the target market. Table 2 illustrates the range of IMC tools used by managers.

Table 2. The use of IMC activities

Activity	Percentage
Leaflets/ brochures	100%
Events and festivals	60%
Internet	85%
Public relations	75%
Direct marketing	80%
Trade shows and exhibitions	40%
Local/ regional press advertising	60%
Local/ regional radio advertising	20%
Local/ regional outdoor advertising	45%
Local/ regional television advertising	30%
National/ international press advertising	50%
National/ international outdoor advertising	40%
National/international TV advertising	30%

Table 2 substantiates that leaflets and brochures are the most common forms of marketing communication. The Internet, direct marketing, and public relations were also widely used. Interviewee 1 stated that "We use e-marketing tools to reach out target market." All these activities targeted tourists at both local and regional levels. Less widely used were local/regional press advertising, local/regional radio advertising, and national/international press advertising. The instruments which were used the least were local/regional radio advertising, local/regional television advertising, national/international outdoor advertising, and national/international television advertising. However, interviews revealed that promotional activities should be enhanced to raise historical awareness about Petra.

It can, therefore, be concluded that communication activities that targeted local markets were the most widely used, whilst those targeting regional and global markets were of less importance. Many of the interviewees acknowledged that the choice of communication instrument is severely constrained by financial cost and the lack of skilled human resources. Interviewee 4 stated that "The high cost of communication is one of the most important challenges to reach more markets." Findings also reveal that symbiosis exists between marketing communication activities; for example, events and festivals would be advertised simultaneously in leaflets, brochures, local media, and the Internet.

The growing use of trade shows and exhibitions confirms that marketing managers are becoming aware of the advantages of external investment. Although still only a small percentage on the scale at present and used by only 40 % of the interviewees, this instrument is likely to become more widely used in the future.

Analysis of data confirms that a comprehensive understanding of the concept of IMC is not yet completely understood by the tourism managers in the Petra Region. Interviews showed that promotional programs could be developed to satisfy different segments of audiences. Interviewee 6 stated that "We need to develop effective marketing programs to reach out to target markets." Although some IMC practices are attempted to some extent, the basic elements of city marketing (that is, IMC, services, financial aspects, and organizational aspects) have not been effectively utilized, thus contributing to low tourist receipts from Petra.

2.2 Urban Services

Respondents acknowledged that urban services are essential tools for enhancing accessibility to tourist places. They highlighted the importance of improving these services to enhance tourist receipts and attract higher rates of investment. As stated by all interviewees, excellent service is a profit strategy because it results in higher numbers of visitors, increased revenue, and a more competitive product. Interviewee 9 stated that "differentiated services can attract more visitors and create more profit in the region." Interviews also revealed that tourism services are critical for visitors, especially public services such as comfortable and timely transportation.

The Region of Petra is comprised of 1753.11 hectares and includes six local communities; Dlagha, Al-Rajev, Taybeh, Wadi Musa, Umm Sayhun, and Baida (Department of Statistics, 2022). Wadi Musa is the regional capital, where major infrastructure, including important public institutions such as banks and governmental administrative services, are found. Hence, the town of Wadi Musa also has the best tourist and administrative infrastructure. Additionally, Wadi Musa is the main transportation hub in the region, and transport services, ranging from small local buses to large JETT coaches, link the Petra Region to the other governorates of Jordan (Maaiah and Masadeh 2015).

Respondents went on to state that the low level of service is due to insufficient financial support from the government, which in turn hinders them from improving tourist services. They concluded that high-quality service delivery entails high-level investment. Interviewee 12 stated that "To develop the infrastructure, more governmental investments are needed." At present, due to political and social conditions both within Jordan and the wider Middle East region, the Jordanian government is facing hard economic conditions, which affects its ability to support the development sector to a high degree. Hence, most respondents confirm that the key component of value, which drives city marketing, is unlikely to be successful if service remains at a moderate or low quality. According to the respondents, value relates to the financial benefit received from a tourist location and is enhanced by an attractive service facility. Consequently, the current quality of service does not effectively maximize financial benefits. An example of a wasted opportunity on the part of the Petra Region is the current low level of spending in tourist shopping areas due to the limited shopping choices.

Furthermore, service provision is not regulated by a single authority, but by several organizations, with each organization having its vision and imposing specific regulations and standards rather than promoting standardization of high-quality services; due to this oversight, some services are better than others. Interviewee 8 stated that "Many authorities can contribute to developing the services standards." Deciding on and applying universal standards of service would be an important factor in improving service quality. As a side point, all respondents agreed that as well as a lack of standardization within the private sector, there are also multiple indices, rather than a single index, to monitor the quality of services provided by the public sector, which exacerbates the problem.

Unless the multiple regulations and standards which are currently used by service organizations are combined into a single, coherent system, significant improvement will not occur. Interviewee 19 stated that "There is an urgent necessity to uniform our work regulations." This fact has serious ramifications, not only for services that are already extant but also for future service management systems. 73% of interviewees stated that unification of regulations and standards would be a very difficult process due to the differentiation of the functional role for each organization; when asked if unification was achievable, only 27% gave a positive response. However, 60% of respondents responded positively to a system that controlled the decision-making process so that each organization would make decisions in line with other similar institutions, in the belief that it is more important to improve the quality of service rather than unifying regulations and standards. On the other hand, 40% of respondents believe that the decision-making process should be decentralized, with local organizations in control of all services; however, 60% believe it should be centralized, with the management process controlled by the national government.

Whether the control is centralized or decentralized, it is important to note that organizations can only be empowered to improve service quality if a complementary strategy, in tune with ever-changing tourist problems and contemporary economic contexts, also exists.

Moreover, 60% of respondents argue that, to some extent, an overlap exists in terms of both responsibilities and roles within the various organizations which provide or manage services, which limits the effectiveness of services provided by each and often relates to an oversupply of some services, and a corresponding lack of others. In contrast, 100% of the interviewees believe that building relationships between the various organizations involved in service management should take a participatory approach; all organizations should work cohesively to solve problems and obstacles facing the tourism sector to maximize the effectiveness of all services. If this suggestion is applied, then organizations will be able to develop a better understanding of their own needs and priorities, as well as those of other similar organizations, with the result that tourists will receive better services from all organizations. Interviewee 20 stated that "Many parties and units have to cooperate in developing a framework for tourism marketing."

2.3 Organizational Aspects

Findings reveal that 75% of respondents were already aware of the concept of city marketing, whilst 25% were not. However, 55% of those who were aware of the concept also noted that their knowledge and understanding of

individual elements of city marketing was weak. In this context, many interviewees admit that, in the past, they were rarely, if never, required to use marketing skills, but the importance of such skills has increased significantly in the past years to improve existing strategies used to market Petra. According to the interviewees, the concept of city marketing within urban management is ambiguous, as urban laws and regulations have not paid attention to the process of city marketing in the past. Interviewee 5 stated that "Our staff members need more training in tourism marketing skills." Decisions are often based on laws and regulations, and thus, the process of marketing Petra remains ineffective, even though some managers have begun to use marketing strategies. A recurring theme in all interviews was that insufficient marketing knowledge is also related to inappropriate or undesirable marketing activities. In this way, personal skills tend to be more important than educational levels in city marketing, which is also borne out by literature (Warnaby *et al.* 2005).

Findings reveal that there is a lack of coordination between tourism organizations and urban agencies, with several gaps in services resulting from this drawback. 68% of the interviewees declare there are no effective plans and/ or strategies between the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority and other government agencies or NGOs regarding the marketing of Petra; 32% went on to say that a plurality of organizations concerning city marketing has usually resulted in barriers to improving city marketing. The interviewees confirmed that more support from governmental organizations is required. Interviewee 13 stated that "More governmental facilities are needed to enhance the quality of tourism management and marketing." Thus, the marketing of Petra is based on the interaction between the President of the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority with individual organizations or agencies organizations. Such interaction can occur formally (through official channels) or informally (through the personal efforts of the President). According to many of the interviewees, even though the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority was established in 2009, there has been no systemization of the marketing for Petra, and that effort is required at the national level from both the public sector and the private sector to rectify this. An effective urban policy that will result in increased organizing capacity can only occur if all stakeholders are taken into consideration (van den Berg and Braun 1999). Such a variety of involvement confirms the importance of consensual formulation in city marketing (*e.g.*, Fretter 1993; Kotler *et al.* 1993, 1999; Schmidt 1993).

Most of the respondents consider that there is no sustainable planning approach since marketing activities are carried out as part of individual business plans. However, 40% of respondents stated that they are collaborating with other organizations to some extent to develop marketing activities. However, they argued that the modest collaboration that barely exists is echoed in the weakness of the relationships among organizations concerned with city marketing, as well as the limited role these organizations play in marketing Petra. Interviewee 25 stated that "Long-term plans can be adapted to meet tourism goals in the target market." Hence, the basic concepts in tourism planning, including destination and site criteria, need to be more effective. Interviewees agree that the main reason for poor or even non-existent marketing planning is the lack of financial support from the public sector. Funding is a big challenge faced by all managers, with all respondents confirming that financial constraints affect their ability to effectively market their organization or Petra as a touristic destination.

2.4 Financial Returns

Even though Petra is one of the iconic tourist destinations in the world, with its inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, its success in the popular vote for the New World Wonder Competition, and its portrayal in numerous television and movie programs, it still suffers from relatively low tourist receipts. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2023), travel and tourism accounted for 14.6% of the GDP in Jordan. Within this framework, Petra's contribution to the total is estimated to be 30%, which is approximately U.S.\$ 1 billion annually. Respondents consider this contribution to be quite low, with many arguing that the lack of higher returns is related to poor or misguided communication activities, managerial challenges, and quality of services within Petra itself. However, 55% of the interviewees added a further comment by claiming that despite the relative safety of Jordan as a tourist destination compared with many similar destinations in the world as a whole, civil disturbance and political upheaval in the wider MENA region have resulted in a large reduction in the number of tourists to the Middle East region generally and Jordan in particular. Interviewee 27 stated that "Political stability in Jordan is attractive for visitors from different target markets." This results in reducing the flow of visitors from 813,267 in 2008 to 430,106 in 2015, an average drop of 53% over eight years, resulting in a significant negative adjustment for tourism receipts from Petra (the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2008 and 2015). A huge part of urban destination marketing is ineffective, failing to create visitors and deliver the commercial and economic returns on which it is premised, and it cannot market what is special and different about places (Heeley 2016).

The considerations presented above pose a huge challenge to increasing tourist receipts from Petra. Hence, adopting effective techniques which would attract further investors and investment would be an effective means of combating these issues. Most of the interviewees agreed on an important issue, in that all information regarding tourist receipts should be received and monitored by a central agency, in addition to monitoring by indirect indicators (for example, political conditions in the Middle East or comparison with neighboring countries) to determine weaknesses and opportunities which exist, and then working towards improving financial performance. Interviewee 30 stated that "Tourism information for visitors must be controlled by one managerial unit." The nature of the tasks to be carried out and the skills available to perform them should be taken into consideration when designing techniques. Developing suitable means would positively impact the financial performance of the tourism sector.

The number of local employees (as opposed to guest workers) working in the tourism sector in Petra was estimated to be 1,525 in 2008 (the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2008); in 2015, this number had grown to 1,808, distributed over a variety of tourist organizations such as hotels, restaurants, car rental companies and travel agencies (the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2019). Thus, the total number had increased by only 236 over eight years. Similarly, over the same period, there were thirty-eight hotels in Petra in 2008 (the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2008) which increased by only two to become forty in 2020 (the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2020).

Many of the respondents noted that, despite the huge potential which exists in Petra regarding job creation opportunities. It is largely ignored or underutilized by the local people due to a lack of proper tourism education and training, low levels of income generated by tourism in the current political and economic environment, and the negative perceived image of tourism as a career within the wider community. Interviewee 21 stated that "specialized training and education in tourism management and marketing are needed for workers in Petra."

Conclusion and Implications

This research is important because it bridges theoretical knowledge with practical applications, offering a roadmap for cities like Petra to harness the power of marketing in achieving sustainable growth and global recognition. Through its examination of IMC, urban services, organizational aspects, and economic measures, the study provides a holistic view of the challenges and opportunities in city marketing, making a significant contribution to both urban studies and marketing literature. The findings verify that the positioning of Petra as a tourism destination has suffered from a lack of effective city marketing. The processes of city marketing, including IMC, urban services, organizational aspects, and financial return, are largely ineffective. Such processes are greatly influenced by regulations, funding, and collaboration amongst various public authorities, as well as between the public sector and the private sector. As a result, tourism decision-makers face a huge challenge to improve marketing standards. It is essential they not only explore how current policies are failing and the reasons behind low tourist receipts but also how they could add value to existing services, create more desirable attractions and services, and improve marketing strategies and procedures used to promote Petra by reforming current policies.

The major contribution of this paper is the provision of an original investigation of city marketing theory. It addresses four vital issues, (1) IMC, (2) urban services, (3) organizational aspects, (4) financial return, and how these issues can improve the knowledge and understanding of city marketing theory to create effective tourism strategies and urban policies. In addition, the current study offers a general theoretical framework for comparative research of city marketing theory. Therefore, further research should take into account comparative studies which can be conducted in different contexts in the world countries. In addition, as an interdisciplinary area, the study deals with city marketing, tourism development in cultural heritage sites, urban planning, and the economic aspect of heritage tourism. Thus, this study opens opportunities for further research in terms of the impact of urban politics on tourism development and community participation in tourism development.

Recommendations to enhance the decision-making process in city marketing can be summarized as follows:

First, city marketing is a social and economic practices. Thus, priority should be given to the activities of IMC. Improving such activities by mutual understanding, particularly at the international level, would enhance tourist receipts in Petra.

Second, Petra has a global historical identity. Increased financial support from the national government resulting in enhanced quality of service would provide various opportunities which would, in turn, stimulate further investment and augment the number of visitors and thus the total tourist receipts.

Third, tourist receipts in Petra will not increase unless substantial improvement to both infrastructure and service development is achieved, thus creating effective urban infrastructure, service planning, and strategic orientation. An important aspect is that day-to-day activities, such as maintenance, must be carried out regularly to maintain the improvement into the future.

Fourth, the differentiation of regulations and administration systems among and within organizations that provide services has led to contradictory policies. Designing, implementing, and adhering to a unified system of quality service with fixed standards would improve city marketing.

Fifth, the absence of a complementary, integral long-term management strategy has resulted in a history of lost opportunity and a failure to capitalize on the opportunities which have been presented; the result is relatively low-scale tourist receipts from the iconic World Heritage Listed site of Petra. Introducing an overarching strategy based on international standards of best practice would solve the issues caused by the multitude of public organizations and private companies which are currently involved in tourism and urban services within the Petra Region. However, designing and implementing an effective urban tourist strategy, and ensuring its implementation, will be a major challenge, particularly if the significant overlapping of urban and tourist organizations which currently exist are taken into account and legal, financial, and administrative impacts are minimized. Further research is required to identify and evaluate complementary organizations, in line with the overlapping of urban and tourist agencies which exist, as well as the political and regional challenges facing the marketing of Petra.

Sixth, one of the key challenges for decision-makers is to find an equilibrium between differences and similarities across destinations. Despite Petra's high-profile branding as both a regional and international destination, current city marketing policies need to work on a regional level to emphasize existing differences and similarities between Petra and other similar regional destinations. If countries within the region could cooperate in designing and implementing a regional strategy for destination marketing of similar attractions, all would benefit from each other and increase tourist receipts across the board. For example, Turkey, Egypt, and Lebanon, all of which have similar large-scale archaeological and historical sites to Petra, would be an ideal seed groups to begin working on a collaborative marketing strategy which would be mutually beneficial, as all have been affected by the political and social climate which exists in the Middle East. Finally, enhanced organizational aspects by building effective working relationships among and between intra-organizational Human Resources, in addition to the various urban organizations operating to develop the development of Petra as a tourist destination, would greatly improve tourism receipts in Petra.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Jamal Alnsour: developed the concept and plan for this project research, and reviewed and edited the manuscript.

Ghazi A. Al-Weshah: carried out the project administration, collected the data, carried out the analysis, wrote the manuscript.

Dana F. Kakeesh: developed the concept and plan for this project research, carried out the project administration.

Khalil Al-Hyari: collected the data, conducted a literature review, and wrote the manuscript.

Abdullah Radwan Arabeyyat: conducted a literature review and wrote the manuscript.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of Use of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies

The authors declare that they have not used generative AI and AI-assisted technologies during the preparation of this work.

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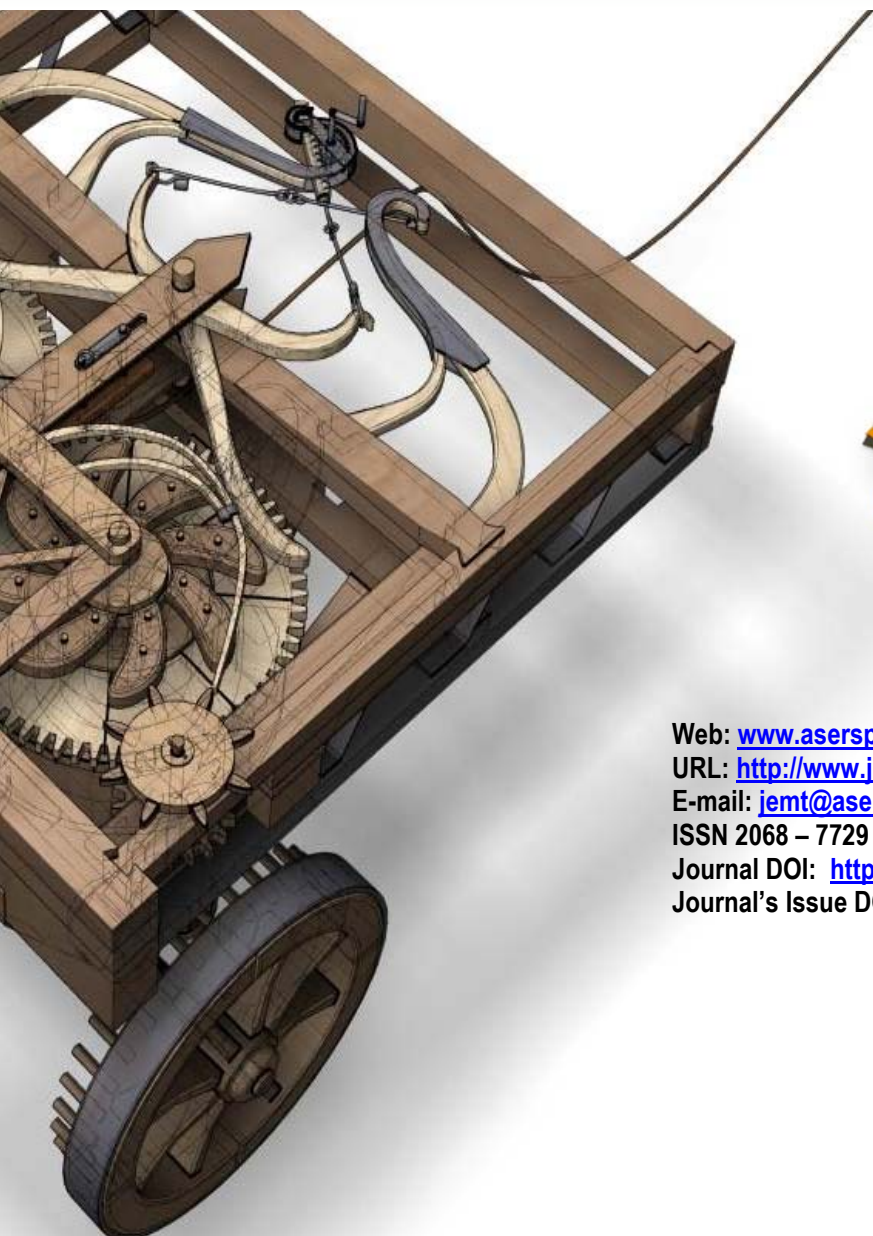
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