

Athens Journal of Tourism



Quarterly Academic Periodical, Volume 11, Issue 2, June 2024
URL: <https://www.athensjournals.gr/ajt> Email: journals@atiner.gr

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Athens Journal of Tourism

Published by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER)

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The *Athens Journal of Tourism (AJT)* is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of tourism and related disciplines such as culture, leisure, recreation, geography, urban planning, heritage, sports, historical cities, landscape, architecture etc. The AJT considers theoretical and empirical papers as well as case studies and policy papers. The journal's aim is to be useful to both academics of tourism research and the practitioners of the tourism industry. Many of the papers published in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by [the Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit](#) of the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER). All papers are subject to ATINER's Publication Ethical Policy and Statement. A journal publication might take from a minimum of six months up to one year to appear. All papers are subject to ATINER's [Publication Ethical Policy and Statement](#).

The Athens Journal of Tourism
ISSN NUMBER: 2241-8148- DOI: 10.30958/ajt
Volume 11, Issue 2, June 20224
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The current issue is the second of the eleventh volume of the *Athens Journal of Tourism*, published by the [Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit](#) of ATINER.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
ATINER



Athens Institute for Education and Research

A World Association of Academics and Researchers

18th Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies

14-18 April 2025, Athens, Greece

The [Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs](https://www.atiner.gr) organizes the 18th Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies, 14-18 April 2025, Athens, Greece sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies](https://www.atiner.gr). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Mediterranean Studies, such as history, arts, archaeology, philosophy, culture, sociology, politics, international relations, economics, business, sports, environment and ecology, etc. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2025/FORM-MDT.doc>).

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Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **17 September 2024**
- Submission of Paper: **17 March 2025**

Conference Fees

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Details can be found at: <https://www.atiner.gr/fees>

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- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
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- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
-

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Athens Institute for Education and Research *A World Association of Academics and Researchers*

20th Annual International Conference on Tourism **10-13 June 2024, Athens, Greece**

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- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **13 May 2024**

Academic Member Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. Valia Kasimati**, Head, [Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit](#), ATINER & Researcher, Department of Economic Analysis & Research, Central Bank of Greece, Greece.
- **Dr. Peter Jones**, Co-Editor, [Athens Journal of Tourism](#) & Professor of Management, University of Gloucestershire, UK.

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- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

More information can be found here: <https://www.atiner.gr/social-program>

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Parents' View of Child-Friendly Cities Initiative: The Case of Mersin

By Çağıl Hale Özel*

This study is about the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, which was carried out in 2014 and 2015 in Türkiye. A child-friendly city is a concept that responds to the needs of children, who represent the future of cities, to develop healthily, to feel happy and free, and to develop physically, mentally, and socially in the city they live in. Child-Friendly Cities Initiative started in 10 municipalities in 2014, to intervene in the difficulties faced by disadvantaged children and adolescents in urban areas in Türkiye. In this study, the situation in Mersin, which was within the scope of the project in 2014-2015, is discussed from the parent's perspective. Six parents living in Mersin are included in the scope of the research. Parents' awareness and satisfaction levels, together with their expectations, regarding the child-friendly city project carried out in the city are measured through in-depth interviews. Five main objectives of the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative are determined as a framework for preparing the interview questions. These goals are (1) the right of children to enjoy basic facilities such as health, education, and nutrition, (2) the right to be heard, (3) the right to be valued, respected, and treated fairly, (4) the right to be safe, and (5) the right to spend quality time with family, have free time and play games. The data is analyzed using descriptive analysis. The findings showed that most of the parents were not aware of the child-friendly city project carried out in partnership with the municipality and UNICEF in Mersin, but they could still define Mersin as a "child-friendly city". Parents' expectations from similar projects in the future focus on health, education, nutrition, and security components.

Keywords: *child-friendly cities initiative, children's rights, Mersin, Türkiye*

Introduction

A child-friendly city is a concept that refers to a city that responds to the needs of children, who represent the future of cities, to develop healthily in the city where they live, to feel happy and free, and to develop physically, mentally, and socially. A child-friendly city is also a city, town, community, or local government system that is committed to improving the lives of children in its jurisdiction by realizing their rights as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In these cities, children's voices, needs, priorities, and rights are an integral part of public policies, programs, and decisions. While the primary responsibility for ensuring the realization of children's rights lies with governments, other stakeholders such as civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, and the media, as well as children themselves, also have an important role to play in becoming a child-friendly city.

*Professor, Faculty of Tourism, Anadolu University, Türkiye.

UNICEF defines child-friendly cities as places where children's basic rights are respected. These rights include the right to influence decisions made about the city, to express their opinions about the places they want, to participate in family life, neighborhood life, and social life, to benefit from basic needs such as health and education, to drink clean water and live in places with good infrastructure, to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, and harassment, and to walk safely on the streets on their own, meet and play with new friends, have access to green spaces with plants and animals, live in an unpolluted environment, participate in cultural and social activities, and enjoy the rights of citizens in the cities where they live and have access to all kinds of services, regardless of their ethnic, religious, economic, gender and physical composition (UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child 2022). Similarly, UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities Initiative defines a child-friendly city as "a place where children are protected from exploitation, violence, and abuse, have a good start in life, grow up healthy and well-groomed, have access to quality social services, receive inclusive and participatory education, and express their views, a city where children can participate in decisions that affect them, live a family life, socialize, have safe access to green spaces, make friends, have fun, and be treated fairly regardless of ethnicity, religion, income, gender, and ability" (Child-Friendly Cities Initiative 2022).

The concept of a Child-Friendly City first emerged as a guarantee of the fulfillment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its grounding was based on the ideas that emerged during the Habitat II Conference held in Istanbul in 1996. As a result of this conference, it was decided to establish UNICEF's Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI). In 1997, important steps were taken for Child-Friendly Cities. Efforts have continued to create "child-friendly" environments in Northern European countries, Canada, Australia, and the United States (Çınar 2020). As of 2022, UNICEF is carrying out projects in a total of 36 countries all over the world with the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative. Projects in eight countries have been completed, and projects will be carried out in five countries shortly (Child-Friendly Cities Initiative 2022).

The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) acts around five main goals. These five goals are: children's right to basic amenities such as health, education, nutrition, the right to be heard, the right to be valued, respected, and treated fairly, the right to be safe, and the right to spend quality time with their families, have leisure time and play. Under these goals, cities and communities can choose the goals to focus on according to the needs of children and young people in their regions (CFCI Brochure 2018). Cities and communities that want to take steps towards becoming child-friendly city first sign a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF, thoroughly analyze the situation of children in their cities, and prioritize their goals and objectives in line with these five main goals. An action plan and budget are then prepared and approved. Following this, the city is awarded the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative Candidate Logo. Following the implementation of the action plan, which lasts between two and five years, progress is evaluated and if the result of the evaluation is positive, the city is given the CFCI logo, and the city can become a Child-Friendly City (CFCI Brochure

2018). The city in question also receives a certificate that includes its commitment to promoting children's rights and recognizes active participation (Çınar 2020). However, this is not a process that ends with the acquisition of the logo and certificate, but rather an ongoing process. Cities can restart the process cycle, prepare a new Action Plan, strengthen their work in selected areas, and eventually request a reassessment. UNICEF can recognize a city as a child-friendly city for a maximum of five years. Regardless of the length of the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative cycle, the initiative should review the cycle annually to ensure that the city is fulfilling its commitments under the Action Plan (Child-Friendly City Project Implementation Guidelines 2018).

Child-friendly cities is also important for the development of tourist destinations. The most important driver of resort tourism, which is the dominant type of tourism in most tourist destinations in Türkiye, is family tourism. In 2018, the Russian Federation ranked first with 1,083,669 people traveling with children aged 0-14, followed by Germans with 559,176 people. Considering that both markets are important tourist markets targeted by Türkiye, the importance of Türkiye's development of family tourism and child-friendly cities becomes evident once again (TUIK 2020). Thanks to this image, child-friendly cities and destinations can attract many tourists, especially those traveling within the scope of family tourism. On the contrary, tourists who see that children's rights are not respected and child labor practices are present in the destinations they travel to do not want to travel to these destinations again. There are research findings (World Vision Australia 2012) showing that tourists do not tolerate the child labor they witness in the destinations they travel to and that they shorten their visits to these destinations. From this perspective, being a child-friendly city is also important in terms of strengthening the image of a city in the eyes of tourists.

The main starting point of this study is the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, which was conducted in Türkiye in 2014 and 2015. The study aims to find out to what extent the local community, and especially parents, are aware of the Child-Friendly City Initiative in Mersin, and to understand how satisfied they are with these efforts. It is also aimed to determine which aspects of the change in their city within the scope of the Child-Friendly City Initiative are shared by the parents living in Mersin as stakeholders. The questions sought to be answered in the study were as follows:

- What is the level of awareness of parents about the effects and outcomes of the child-friendly city project in Mersin?
- What is the level of satisfaction of parents with the child-friendly city project and Mersin as a child-friendly city?
- What are the demands and expectations of parents from future projects like this one?

Child-Friendly Cities Project in Türkiye and the Case of Mersin

Child-friendly cities are becoming more important for countries with large child populations. When the issue is evaluated from the perspective of Türkiye, children constitute an important social and economic potential. Türkiye is a country with a young population. As of 2022, 26.5% of the country's population consists of children. In Türkiye, where children constitute a significant portion of the population, children bring along a dynamic and productive social structure, and many issues concerning the lives, wishes, and needs of children need to be taken into consideration in economic, social, and legal terms.

The first steps of the child-friendly city movement in Türkiye were taken by scaling the quality of life of 81 provinces according to certain criteria and nominating 12 provinces as candidates to become child-friendly cities according to these criteria. Between 2006 and 2010, UNICEF initiated efforts to create a "Child-Friendly City" model in 12 pilot cities, including Sivas, Uşak, Gaziantep, Kırşehir, Karaman, Antalya, Kayseri, Erzincan, Konya, Tekirdağ, Bursa, Trabzon, and Bursa. In this context, the organization of the Children's Festival in Tekirdağ, the establishment of the Science and Technology Center in Bursa, the launch of the Child-Friendly School Project in Karaman, the Baby-Friendly City studies in Konya, and the Baby-Friendly Hospital practices in Trabzon can be given as examples of the studies carried out in pilot cities (Berkün 2019).

In the following years, the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative was launched in 10 municipalities (Lüleburgaz, Mamak, İspir, Giresun, Bitlis, Eyyübiye, Yüreğir, Mersin, Manisa, and Bornova Municipalities) in 2014 to intervene in the challenges faced by disadvantaged children and adolescents in urban areas in Türkiye. The implementation was carried out under the coordination of the UNICEF Türkiye Office with the financial support of IKEA and the UNICEF Türkiye National Committee. In 2014-2015, these municipalities implemented practices such as the establishment of playgrounds adapted for children with disabilities, training for parents, raising awareness on children's rights through billboards and other communication tools, establishing Children's Assemblies, establishing a renewable Energy and Mechatronics Laboratory with child-friendly equipment, and establishing a children's street. UNICEF contributed to building the capacity of local administrations to support policies for disadvantaged children and adolescents through the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative. Guidelines and training materials were prepared and used to build the capacity of municipalities in child participation, child rights programs, preventing child marriage, combating child labor, developing child-focused strategies, budgeting, and resource allocation. Increasing the number of girls going to school, making streets safe for children, increasing the number of baby-friendly hospitals and sports and playgrounds for children are among the targets planned to be achieved in child-friendly cities. In Türkiye, a total of 40 provinces and nearly 100 municipalities have been reached in line with these targets. In total, nearly two million children were indirectly involved in this program (UNICEF 2020).

Mersin is located between Antalya and Adana in the south of Türkiye, neighboring Konya, Karaman, and Niğde. Mersin, which was called Klikya in the

classical period, has been an important settlement since prehistoric times. Under the rule of the Hittites, Phrygians, Assyrians, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, and Byzantines, the region came under the rule of the Seljuks in the 11th century and the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century. It is Türkiye's ninth-largest province in terms of area and 11th-largest in terms of population. It has 13 districts. It is a true city of culture and tourism with its natural beauties, faith tourism, and historical richness (Mersin Governorship website 2024). 2022 tourism statistics also confirm this. In 2022, the number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Mersin's accommodation facilities was 642,999. These tourists spent a total of 1,364,617 overnight stays in the same year (Accommodation Statistics of Facilities with Business Certificates 2024).

Child-friendly city implementation in Mersin started in 2014 in four districts of the central city after Mersin Metropolitan Municipality signed a protocol with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Türkiye. The first step in the preparations began with the delivery of training seminars at the initiative of UNICEF Social Policy Officers and the Local Coordinator of the Child-Friendly Cities Project. The training content was designed to include policies and programs that address the needs of children, identify the needs of children in urban areas, and create child-friendly spaces to ensure children's access to play and development rights. Young volunteers from Mersin Metropolitan Municipality, Mersin University, Toros University, Çağ University, Educational Volunteers Foundation of Türkiye (TEGV), and General Directorate of Social Services Policies participated in these trainings (Mersin Portal 2014). In 2015, a Children's Action Plan Workshop was held in Mersin with the participation of all stakeholders who supported this project (Anamurlu'nun Sesi 2015). In line with this plan, children's rights have been promoted throughout the province. Mersin Metropolitan Municipality also participated in UNICEF training in Istanbul with its representatives. Mersin Municipality, together with other municipalities, was invited to a three-day training on Children's Rights and Participation in Istanbul to promote children's rights and establish a children's assembly. During the training, representative children learned about their rights and the formation of the children's assembly through educational games and visuals, discussed how to disseminate their knowledge across the province, and turned their work into an action plan by making their city plans upon their return. Adult representatives were also told how to establish a children's assembly and children's rights (Hürriyet 2015). Following this, the Metropolitan Municipality established the Children's Assembly working office. After the completion of one year of Mersin Metropolitan Municipality's work, these efforts were evaluated, and Mersin was ranked among child-friendly cities (Milliyet 2016).

Becoming a child-friendly city is subject to a certain period. After the end of this period, it should be monitored how the initiative has left traces in the city, awareness and satisfaction studies should be carried out regarding these effects, and if awareness and satisfaction levels are low, the process should be continued by taking necessary measures and making improvements to restart the process. This study is based on this rationale and examines the situation in Mersin, one of the 10 municipalities that took part in the project in 2014-2015, from the

perspective of parents. In the literature, there is an academic study (Öktem and Akpınar 2019) that focuses on the results of the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative in Lüleburgaz and it aims to evaluate the results of this initiative. There are no studies that investigate the awareness in the city and the level of satisfaction with the results of this initiative in the case of Mersin. This constitutes the unique aspect of this study.

Method

The study adopted a qualitative methodology and collected data through face-to-face interviews with parents over the age of 18 residing in Mersin. Mersin was chosen as the city for data collection because it is one of the two metropolitan municipalities among the 10 pilot cities in the project. This creates an important expectation that child-friendly city practices have been implemented with care and dedication. In addition, there were no studies or reports on the results of the project in Mersin.

Data Collection Form

The five main objectives of the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) were used as a framework for the preparation of the questions in the interview form. These five goals are; (1) the right of children to benefit from basic facilities such as health, education, nutrition and nutrition, (2) the right to be heard, (3) the right to be valued, respected, and treated fairly, (4) the right to be safe and (5) the right to spend quality time with their families, to have free time and to play. The above-mentioned questions, the answers to which were sought in the study, were adapted to these five basic goals and directed to participants. Thus, it was aimed to obtain information about the extent to which the goals of the project could be achieved. The following questions were included in the semi-structured interview form in addition to the age, gender, and education level questions of the participants:

1. Do you have any information about the Child-Friendly City practices carried out in your city and their scope? Do you have information about the impacts and outcomes of Child-Friendly Cities Initiative project on the city? Please answer by evaluating it from the following perspectives (Benefiting from basic facilities such as health, education, nutrition, and nutrition, being heard, being valued, respected, and treated fairly, being safe, spending quality time with family, having free time, playing games)
2. Have you been satisfied with the results of the Child-Friendly City practices carried out in your city for children? At what point do you see Mersin as a child-friendly city? Please answer by evaluating it from the following perspectives (benefiting from basic facilities such as health, education, nutrition, etc., being heard, being valued, respected, and treated fairly, being safe, spending quality time with family, having free time, playing games)

3. What would be your expectations from the new project if the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative project is repeated in your city in the future?

Selection of Participants

In determining the participants of the study, parents over the age of 18 residing in different neighborhoods of the city were consulted. In the identification of the first participant, information was obtained from individuals known to the researcher and residing in this city, while the opinions of the first and subsequent participants guided the identification of the other participants. In this way, it was aimed to reach a diversity of samples belonging to different educational levels and age ranges and residing in different neighborhoods of the city.

Data Collection

Parents' awareness and satisfaction levels regarding the effects and outcomes of the child-friendly city project in their city of residence were measured through face-to-face interviews. In addition, parents' demands and opinions on the continuation of the project were also collected. Interviews were conducted online to reduce time and cost loss. For this purpose, the participants whose contact information was obtained were contacted in advance to obtain their consent and appointments, and a total of six people were interviewed online between December 20, 2023, and February 15, 2024. Interviews continued until the data reached a point of saturation. Participation in the research was voluntary. In addition, the Ethics Committee Permission Certificate dated May 2, 2023, and numbered 516504 Protocol was obtained from Anadolu University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board.

Data Analysis

The descriptive analysis technique was preferred in data analysis. For this purpose, firstly, audio and video recordings were taken for the answers. These recordings were then transcribed and deciphered, and narrative texts specific to each participant were obtained. These texts were used to determine parents' views on the child-friendly city implementation in Mersin. The data obtained from the narratives of the participants were transformed into findings to form the answers to the questions and were evaluated under these subtitles. Direct quotations were also included in the findings to reflect the views of the participants.

Validity and Reliability

To increase the construct validity of the study (Yin 2003, Yıldırım and Şimşek 2011), detailed information about each stage of the research was given. In addition, no interpretation was included in the presentation of the collected data as findings, the findings were presented directly to the reader with a descriptive approach, and the interpretation was left for later. Thus, the reader is allowed to

evaluate the results reached by the researcher according to these data. This is expected to increase the internal reliability of the study (LeCompte and Goetz 1982).

Results

Four of the interviewees were women and two were men. The ages of the participants ranged between 32 and 55. Three of the participants had undergraduate and three had graduate-level education. The findings of the study are presented under the following subtitles: Awareness about the Child-Friendly City Project in Mersin, Satisfaction with the Child-Friendly City Project in Mersin, and Expectations from Future Child-Friendly City Projects in Mersin.

Awareness about the Child-Friendly City Project in Mersin

The findings obtained from the descriptive analysis of the participants' views showed that the participants were not informed about the practices and scope of the Child-Friendly City project carried out in Mersin. In parallel to this, the participants were not informed about the effects of the project on the city and the results it produced. One of the participants, P1, stated this situation as follows: "I became aware of the child-friendly city practice as a result of your study. There has not been a situation where we have felt a child-friendly city in Mersin", while P2 expressed this lack of knowledge on this issue by saying, "I like such projects. Let children know, learn, gain self-confidence, and socialize. However, we were not informed".

P4, who was not aware of the child-friendly city activities carried out in Mersin but considered the city to be a child-friendly city and realized during this research that this feature of the city emerged due to the impact of this project, expressed his thoughts as follows "I honestly did not know that this was a child-friendly city. We just didn't realize that many of the good practices are based there. Mersin is one of the most beautiful cities to raise a child" (P4). Similarly, P6 also characterized the city as a child-friendly city, although she was not aware of the activities carried out: "I think Mersin is a child-friendly city. It is currently progressing very fast in terms of technology, child development, children's rights, libraries, etc. and this is reflected in the villages, too".

Satisfaction with the Child-Friendly City Project in Mersin

Participants were asked whether they were satisfied with the outcomes of the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative's practices in Mersin for children. While answering this question, some participants responded by thinking independently of whether the current practices in their cities were an extension/result of the Child Friendly City project or not and took Mersin's current situation into consideration. At this point, a significant portion of the findings served to assess satisfaction with Mersin as a child-friendly city rather than understanding satisfaction with the results of the

project. The biggest factor in the emergence of this situation is that most of the parents in the study were not aware of the project.

The first positive outcome of the Child-Friendly City project was the establishment of the Children's Assembly. The Children's Assembly, which came to life following the efforts of Mersin Metropolitan Municipality and UNICEF, offers children the opportunity to freely voice their opinions in a democratic environment. P6, expressed her thoughts on this issue: "When the Children's Assembly was established, they made very good announcements on social media. It had become remarkable. The Children's Assembly held a meeting and elected a chairperson among themselves. The fact that there were very qualified children who could express themselves attracted my attention". P5, on the other hand, approached the issue a little more cautiously and said, "Their energy at the foundation does not continue afterward. How much of the work of the elected assembly is effective? How much of it is used? Which children are included in which decision-making mechanisms?" and stated that he would like more information about the functioning of the Children's Assembly in the future.

Participants stated that following the child rights training provided in Mersin, children became more aware of claiming their rights and making their voices heard: "The municipality is active in terms of informing children and taking them to science schools. My 7-year-old son also participated in these trainings. He learned about children's rights. He says, 'My right is to play, children have rights'" (P2). In addition, in Mersin, meetings on issues related to the management of the city are organized with the participation of children: "We organized a meeting with the participation of children, university professors, the chamber of environmental engineers, and environmental associations. This time we asked children between the ages of 9-13: 'What would you like to do about the environment when you become an adult, when you become mayor? They told us, our teachers took notes" (P6). P6 also stated that training was provided for children and young people on screen addiction, peer bullying, career planning, and biodiversity. These training courses are not limited to the city center but are also delivered to children in villages: "We have an education commission in Mersin City Council. We mentor children in schools in villages and the city center and provide support training. For example, we organized a ceramic workshop with a ceramic artist for primary school students (P6).

The responses to the question about children's educational opportunities in the city showed that the quality of education received by children may vary across schools and that there may therefore be educational inequality. P2 stated that there are no vacancies at the nursery level in public schools for young children as follows: "We cannot find a daycare center for our children even for half a day, we cannot register. Unfortunately, they are all full". Another problem is the alleged difference in the quality of education between public and private schools. P5 stated that he did not think that education was at a good level except for one or two public schools, and mentioned the educational inequality caused by this. P4 stated that the quality of education in public schools has decreased due to the high level of migration to the city: "Our little one was going to a public school, we could only bear for two months. It is a very old, well-established school, but there is no

service I have encountered. Of course, migration also plays a role in this, there is chaos in education" (P4).

Another important component of being a child-friendly city is the availability of places where children can spend time with their families and play games. Participants stated that Mersin is a very advantageous city in this sense. The biggest advantage at this point is Mersin's long coastal band. Almost all participants stated that there are enough parks and social areas in this part of the city. For example, P4 stated "We have a wide coast that meets all our expectations. There are many parks. They are all very big. There is a lot of green space. There is also a Children's Rights Park. It is very nice that it is named like this". However, there are also participants who find the number of activities organized in these areas insufficient: "Although we have a very large and beautiful beach, there are not enough beach activities for children" (P1). Similarly, some parents cannot benefit from these opportunities because they cannot afford the cost of activities on the beach: "There are playgrounds and parks on our coastal band. There is a recently built traffic park. But unfortunately, if you have money, you can enter these places. If you don't have money, your children are deprived" (P2).

Mersin is also a city where science, art, and sports activities and opportunities for children are abundant: "Schools can visit the Meteorology House free of charge with an appointment. Courses are given to children. Science experiments are conducted" (P4); "The Metropolitan Municipality has a Children's Library, and a Science Center was established for children" (P5). One participant used the following expressions when talking about music activities for children: "Music activities are very much supported here. Children can receive education at very low prices. The education is like that in high-priced places. The staff are very devoted, the teachers do their best" (P4). Similarly, P4 emphasized that free training is provided in many sports branches in the city: "In terms of sports, I think the city is unique. For example, my child goes to taekwondo for free. There is also basketball, curling, and volleyball and all of these are free of charge. The sports facilities are good, very clean. It is very good for the individual development of children".

Another important component of child-friendly cities is child health. Participants' evaluations of the city in this regard are not as positive as in other components. Two participants mentioned that there may be problems in utilizing public health services in child health due to overcrowding: "You cannot get an appointment with a pediatrician. The examination fees in the private sector are high" (P2); "It is difficult to get an appointment at the State Hospital, so when the child gets sick, we have to take him/her to a private hospital" (P4). P5 stated that the Metropolitan Municipality has a Child Psychology Counseling Center, but he did not know how this center works. With a preventive medicine approach to child health, Mersin City Council also provides awareness-raising training on certain diseases: "We organized two programs for children with type 1 diabetes. We did a program with a team of professors, representatives of public institutions, and dieticians, with the participation of families and children. It was very well received. We learned what type 1 diabetes patients should pay attention to, issues related to the measuring device were discussed, and experiences were shared"

(P6). One participant's opinion and request regarding child-friendly hospitals that are expected to be in a child-friendly city is noteworthy: "When a mother goes to the hospital for her child, there should be a playground where her child can linger while waiting in line. Similarly, there should be an area where children can be taken to the playgrounds and cared for, and where children can spend time while the mother or father is being examined. Unfortunately, these do not exist in our city" (P3).

Participants were also asked a question about child-friendly food and beverage establishments, one of the components of a child-friendly city. The responses indicate that developments in this area are not yet at a sufficient level. P3 expressed her concerns about access to healthy food, citing unhealthy products sold in school canteens as an example: "In school canteens, there are still jellybeans, sugary products, packaged foods, and chips, which are not recommended to be consumed by children. Therefore, we are not a child-friendly city in terms of nutrition". P5 stated that there are a limited number of child-friendly food and beverage establishments in Mersin and that few breakfast places have a children's social area and that he has not yet come across a children's menu in the city.

Security was also one of the areas of concern for the participants. Participants acknowledged that the fact that the city has largely accepted the Syrian and Afghan population as immigrants has also played a role in this: "I don't think the city is that safe. Of course, migration also has an effect on this" (P4); "The city is not safe because of migration. Most of the population is Syrian and Afghan. It is an assimilated city" (P2). Security gaps in children's playgrounds were also among the narratives of the participants: "In parks close to the road, the side of the road or around the park should be protected, there should be a fence so that children do not get on the road. In most parks, I see that these fences are not there. In most parks, I can see loose screws, nails with the ends sticking out. This should not happen in a child-friendly city" (P3).

Expectations from Future Child-Friendly City Projects in Mersin

Another question asked to the participants in line with the objectives of the study was what they expected from future Child-Friendly Cities projects in Mersin. The responses to this question indicated that the training gap that parents felt was lacking should be addressed. Here, parents referred to the need for child development training for parents (P1), training to teach children proper nutrition (P3), and child rights training for parents (P5). For example, P3 emphasized the importance of conducting projects to ensure that healthier foods and snacks are sold in food and beverage establishments, school canteens, and hospital cafeterias, and providing healthy nutrition education to children, while P5 stated that a mental transformation is needed to respect children's rights: "This is not something that only municipalities or the state can do. There is a need for social and mental transformation. And we are far away from this. In Finland, they have children design children's parks". Similarly, P3 stated that training should be organized to raise awareness among adults that children are also individuals: "Children are not seen as individuals. It is thought that I am older than them, I have the right to this,

and children's rights are not respected. I think that this is due to ignorance and that training should be organized to teach that we should respect them" (P3).

One of the expectations from future projects is the practice that can be considered within the scope of the child's right to spend quality time with his/her family and play games. Participants demand the opening of a sufficient number of daycare centers located within workplaces to meet the increasing need for daycare centers for working parents. In this way, it is envisaged that both children and parents will benefit. P3 expressed her opinion on this issue with the following words: "There should be kindergartens that accept children between the ages of 0-5 in every workplace. Because the most productive time for a parent to work is when they know that their child is safe and healthy. If there is an active daycare center in your organization, you can spend your breaks taking care of your child. I think this would also increase work efficiency" (P3).

Increasing the number of child-friendly businesses is also among the expectations from future projects. Participants demanded child-friendly museums, child-friendly food and beverage establishments, and child-friendly libraries in Mersin. P5 stated that practices that would make it easier for children to spend time in these places should be increased: "Child-friendly museums have to have playgrounds, food, and beverage areas. Abroad, for example, libraries are important activity centers for children".

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the study showed that a significant number of the parents interviewed were not aware of the child-friendly city project carried out in Mersin in partnership with the municipality and UNICEF. A similar situation was also found in Öktem and Akpınar's (2019) study. Locals are largely aware of past and present efforts to make Mersin a child-friendly city, but there is no awareness that the seeds of these efforts were sown by the Child-Friendly City project in 2014-2015. This may be because the project was not sufficiently publicized to all stakeholders who could benefit from it. This is evidenced by the fact that participants stated that they had heard about the project for the first time during the interviews. However, despite this, Mersin was defined as a "child-friendly city" by almost all the participants. Based on this, it can be stated that in future similar projects, initiatives should be taken to ensure that local people have more information about the project. Local people's knowledge of this issue will enable them to cooperate to make the city more child-friendly. The announcement of similar projects in the future can be made more effectively through billboards placed in different parts of the city, advertisements to be placed on local television and social media, posters hung in playgrounds, and information given in schools.

The responses to the questions about satisfaction with the project focused on the evaluation of Mersin as a child-friendly city today, which was also related to the lack of awareness of the project. At this point, there were positive and negative aspects. For example, parents positively evaluated initiatives to promote the best interests of children, such as the establishment of a Children's Assembly,

providing children with children's rights training, giving children the right to have a voice, having parks and playgrounds where children can spend their free time with their families, and supporting science, arts and sports activities. However, there are also issues that parents see as obstacles to becoming a child-friendly city. For instance, it was emphasized that educational inequality has increased due to migration to the city and the growing population. This refers to the decline in the quality of education due to the increase in the number of students in public schools and the inequality that occurs because not all children can benefit from private education institutions. It is understood that migration-related problems also manifest themselves in health. In other words, parents stated that it has become difficult to get appointments at hospitals for pediatric illnesses and that the fees of doctors' private offices are unaffordable high. It was emphasized that food and beverage establishments are open to improvement in terms of both the content of the products sold and the quality of the service provided. Similarly, the possibility of security problems due to migration and the need to improve the security conditions of playgrounds are among the important results. As can be seen from the results obtained, while the project is sufficient in some areas, some areas are still open to improvement. In future projects, the child-friendly city should be evaluated with all its components such as health, education, nutrition, and safety, and its stakeholders should be increased, and its scope should be expanded.

The expectations of the interviewed parents from future projects are mostly in the direction of eliminating the lack of education. What is meant by education here is child development and child rights training for adults and healthy nutrition training for children. Parents also consider it necessary to establish kindergartens and to increase the number of qualified child-friendly businesses that can offer child-friendly products and services. The lack of training should be addressed in future projects by providing training to parents on child development, children's rights, preventing child marriage, combating child labor, and extending this training not only to the city center but also to rural areas. This training should even include how to communicate with children with disabilities. Similarly, the number and frequency of child rights and healthy nutrition training for children in schools should be increased. The work of the Children's Assembly, which is the best indicator of children's representation as individuals, should be encouraged, and the results of these activities should be shared with the public to raise awareness.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

This study has some limitations. First, time and money constraints made it necessary to conduct the interviews with the participants online; facial expressions and body language of the participants could not be observed and in-depth information that could be obtained through face-to-face interviews could not be obtained. Moreover, the fact that the researcher resided in a different province and had limited knowledge about Mersin prevented on-site observation of child-friendly elements in the city. In future research, it may be recommended to

conduct face-to-face interviews with participants to determine the child-friendly elements of the city and to support the research with field trips and observations.

This study aimed to understand parents' awareness levels and satisfaction with the Child-Friendly City Initiative in Mersin. However, it is also intriguing how Mersin is perceived as a child-friendly city by touristic visitors. In other words, how child-friendly do domestic and foreign visitors perceive the services of commercial enterprises offering services in different areas of tourism such as accommodation, food and beverage, transportation, and recreation? Future research could explore how Mersin is perceived as a child-friendly city holistically by consulting the views of different stakeholders such as domestic and foreign tourists, representatives of civil society organizations, representatives of tourism enterprises, and locals.

Acknowledgments

This study was supported by Scientific Research Coordination Unit of Anadolu University under the project number YTS-2023-126.

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Exploring the Role of Urban Design Development in Enhancing and Promoting Tourism of Historical Sites: The Case Study of Amman Citadel

*By Rania Matrouk**

Urban design development can play a vital role in enchaining and promoting tourism, by improving the physical infrastructure and creating a more pleasant and attractive environment for visitors. In this context, this paper discusses how urban design development can play a crucial role in increasing and promoting the tourism of historical sites. The paper focuses on the Amman Citadel site and analyses the challenges facing visitors and tourists. The study aims to highlight the possible urban strategies to develop the surrounding areas to increase site tourism. The study adopts an analytical case-study method by conducting a comprehensive literature review to build a theoretical framework, followed by analysing the site through observation and urban analysis. The goal is to propose a strategic plan based on urban design criteria for developing the surrounding areas and enhancing the site's touristic value. The study pointed out the importance of urban design as a key to increasing and promoting tourism as a whole and local tourism as a part. Furthermore, it set several recommendations to apply to the Amman Citadel area to enable its urban tourism development.

Keywords: *urban design, tourism, urban tourism, Amman Citadel*

Introduction

Tourism is a significant economic and cultural sector for its host country, which creates ways of effective interrelation among various cultures. The image of cities to visitors is demonstrated in their desire to explore and gain knowledge about the city's history, culture, and heritage. As such, the city embodies a tangible, social, and political outcome. Therefore, since the vitality of tourism adapts to the needs and preferences of tourists, cities serving tourists often require attention and internal planning which develop and enhance their image. These changes include the renovation of existing historical landmarks, the expansion of touristic accommodation capacity, the adjustment of touristic attractions to meet the tourists' demands and others (Blaževi and Krstini 2015). Consequently, Urban tourism, or "City tourism", is an expanding trend; various cities are eager to create an appealing environment, by leveraging and developing available heritage, religious, cultural, and entertainment attractions.

Urban tourism through heritage conservation is an essential aspect of preserving the cultural and historical identity of a city. This can be achieved through the process of protecting and maintaining the built environment, including

*Doctoral Candidate, Department of Explorative Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Hungary.

historical buildings, public spaces, and services (Zarlenga and Morató 2019). This conservation process plays a critical role in promoting tourism in urban areas. It enables visitors to experience the unique character and charm of a city, which is often closely tied to its historical and cultural heritage.

Jordan with its rich history and culture is not an exception to this trend, as tourism is one of the most vital sectors of the country's economy. Heritage conservation and development is one approach to promoting the city's tourism. Amman is the capital and largest city of Jordan; the city has a rich and diverse history that dates back to ancient times. It was revitalized in the early 20th century under the rule of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Amman underwent a period of modernization and urban development, and today it is a vibrant and cosmopolitan city that serves as the cultural, political, and economic centre of Jordan. Amman citadel which is located in the heart of the capital is of great historical and cultural significance. However, it faces some challenges regarding tourism development, such as inadequate touristic facilities and services, a limited number of activities and attractions, poor connectivity to the surrounding historical sites, and a lack of planning for the surrounding areas.

There is great importance in developing the discourse of heritage conservation through urban strategies to promote and improve tourism. This paper will shed light on the implementation of such strategies in Amman, with a particular emphasis on the Amman Citadel. The study highlights proposed urban design strategies aimed at enhancing the urban context of the Citadel and promoting tourism in the area. It presents an analytical and descriptive study based on a theoretical framework and observational analysis, concluding a set of urban strategy solutions to improve city tourism through its greatest attraction.

Literature Review

The paper "Current Trends in Developing Urban Tourism" (Yıldız and Akbulut 2013) provides a detailed and comprehensive analysis of urban design and architecture works that accompany tourism. It scrutinizes these studies from various perspectives, including urban, economic, cultural, and social movements. The paper aims to discuss ongoing projects in Istanbul and provide a wide range of recommendations for conducting collaborative, multidimensional perspective studies in the field of tourism.

The paper titled "Urban Design, Urban Space Morphology, Urban Tourism: An Emerging New Paradigm Concerning Their Relationship" by Gospodini (2001) explores the connections between the physical structure of urban environments and leisure activities. It investigates how urban space morphology can affect tourists' interests and preferences in the modern cultural context of urban tourism. The paper proposes an emerging new paradigm that considers the interrelation between urban design, urban space morphology, and urban tourism.

A chapter entitled "Heritage Tourism/Urban Conservation" (Zarlenga and Morató 2019) defines the concepts of urban conservation, heritage tourism, and architectural conservation. The chapter discusses the difference between the

various concepts and defines their implications on social context. In addition, it highlights the heritage tourism dimension and theory, history, and future trends. In general, this review explores urban morphology as another dimension that has characterized studies in conservation and urban heritage.

A study entitled “Shapes and Tourism Development Strategies of Urban Area” by Iordache, examines existing research, which seeks to elucidate various aspects of urban tourism development and propose strategies for effectively managing and enhancing tourist experiences within urban environments. As urban areas have evolved and modernized, they have become focal points for a distinct form of tourism known as urban tourism. This form of tourism has gained prominence due to the increasing number of travellers seeking diverse experiences and attractions within cities. This literature review aims to explore the content, specificity, and implementation methods of urban tourism, which contribute to the advancement of urban tourism planning and development practices, ensuring that cities can capitalize on their unique assets while meeting the needs of visitors.

A book chapter entitled “Urban Tourism” by Bouchon (2022) highlights the importance of understanding the complex interactions between tourism and urban spaces, considering factors such as cultural, architectural, and social attractions. Despite its economic benefits, urban tourism presents challenges related to overcrowding, environmental degradation, and social inequalities. However, scholars highlight opportunities for sustainable tourism development through community engagement, cultural preservation, and responsible tourism practices. By addressing these challenges and leveraging the unique assets of urban environments, cities can harness the potential of tourism to foster sustainable growth and enhance the quality of life for both residents and visitors.

Harrill and Potts (2003) wrote the paper “Tourism Planning in Historic Districts Attitudes Toward Tourism Development in Charleston” which dives into the tourism industry and its growth over the past decades, becoming a significant driver of global economic activity. Despite its economic importance, tourism often remains marginalized in urban planning discussions, with development decisions typically left to private developers. However, scholars emphasize the necessity of integrating tourism considerations into planning strategies, given its profound social, economic, and environmental impacts. While tourism has the potential to revitalize communities, particularly those facing economic decline, it also presents challenges, especially in historic districts where residents contend with the daily disruptions of tourism. This literature review explores the relationship between community attachment and attitudes towards tourism development, focusing on Charleston, South Carolina, to provide insights for effective tourism planning in historic areas. The paper aims to shed light on the complexities of tourism planning and its implications for community well-being and heritage preservation in historic districts.

Historical Review

Amman Citadel History

Amman Citadel, also known as Jabal al-Qala'a, is a historic site in the centre of Amman, Jordan. It has been inhabited for thousands of years, with evidence of human occupation dating back to the Neolithic period. Throughout its history, it has been inhabited by many different civilizations, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Islamic dynasties. The site has served as a religious centre, a military fortress, a palace, and a public space.

Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of human occupation at the Amman Citadel dating back to the Middle Bronze Age (1650-1550 BC) (Najjar 1993). During the Iron Age, the Citadel was known as Rabbath-Ammon, and an early Phoenician writing example called the Amman Citadel Inscription was found from this period (Horn 1969). The Citadel was occupied by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians before being conquered by the Greeks in 331 BC and renamed Philadelphia. Not many architectural changes were made during the Hellenistic period, but evidence from pottery suggests occupation (Najjar 1993). The site became Roman around 30 BC and later came under Muslim rule. In the 7th century CE, the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate conquered the region and made Amman the capital of their province. They built the Umayyad Palace on the Citadel, which is now a museum (Kadhim and Rajjal 1988). During the modern era, the site has been excavated and restored, and open to the public as an important tourist destination that represents the rich history of Jordan. Tourists can explore the ruins and artifacts, and the museum as well.

Figure 1. *Amman Citadel Historical Structures: Temple of Hercules*



Source: Author.

Figure 2. *Amman Citadel Historical Structures: Umayyad Palace*



Source: Author.

Figure 3. *Amman Citadel Historical Structures: The Byzantine Church*

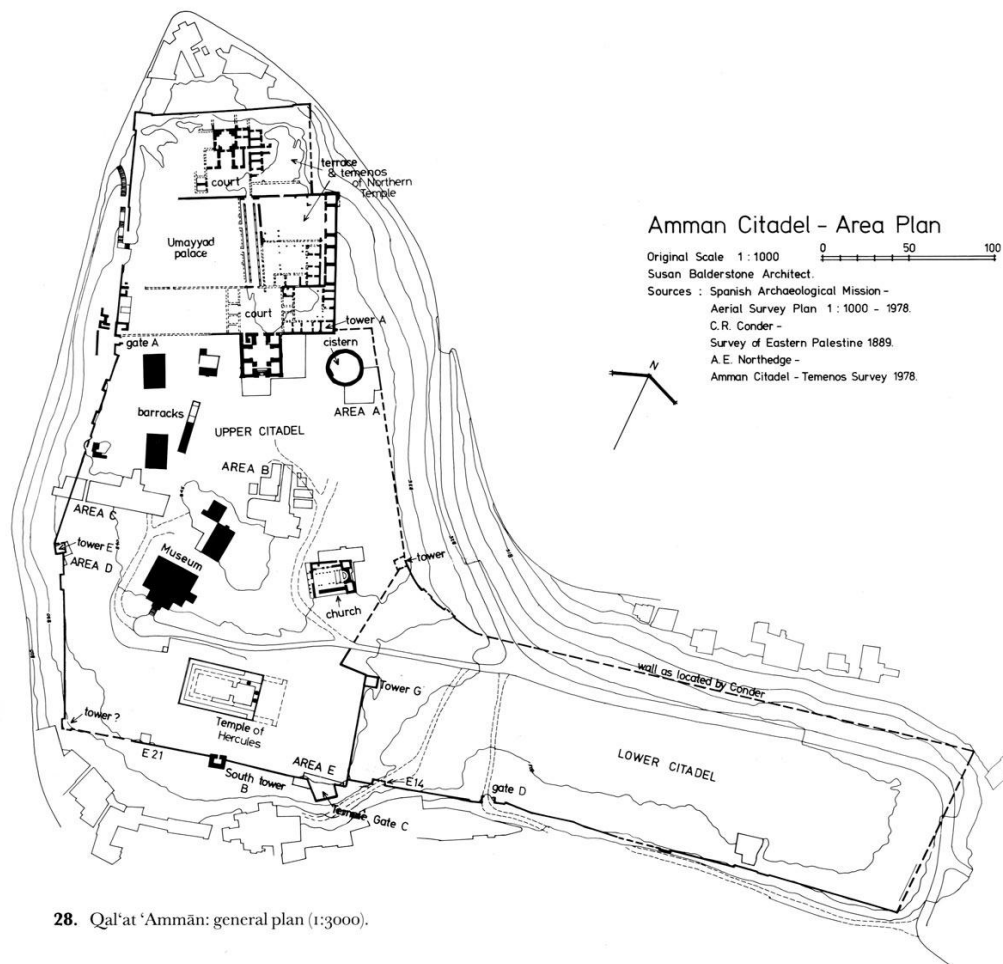


Source: Author.

Some of the most significant structures at the Amman Citadel include the Temple of Hercules (Figure 1), the Umayyad Palace (Figure 2), and the Byzantine Church (Figure 3). The Temple of Hercules is an enormous structure that dates back to the 2nd century CE and is notable for its massive columns and intricate carvings. The Umayyad Palace was built in the 8th century CE and features beautiful mosaics and frescoes. The Byzantine Church is a well-preserved Christian church that dates back to the 6th century CE. Additionally, the site contains a variety of historic structures, tombs, arches, walls, and stairs that have not been limited by modern borders, indicating that there is considerable potential for archaeological discoveries in the Citadel and its surrounding areas. However, building restrictions have been imposed on the site since the 1930s for preservation purposes (Bennett 1978).

The site of the citadel is divided into three parts in Figure 4:

1. The Northern Part “The palace”: This part is where the Umayyad palace and the Islamic remains are located. It is believed that this area was used as either an administrative building or the residence of an Umayyad official. It is a large palatial complex that was built on a pre-existing Roman structure. The structure was still in use during the Islamic Abbasid (750–969) and Fatimid (969–1179) periods. Now it is largely ruined, but the domed entrance chamber has been restored.
2. The Middle part “The Roman ruins”: This part can be considered the richest part of the site, it contains the Jordan Archaeological Museum, the Temple of Hercules, and the Byzantine church. The Temple of Hercules is the most significant building on the site, it belongs to the Roman period. The Byzantine church is another important building as it is one of the oldest churches in Jordan, the church is known for its unique hexagonal shape. In addition to these buildings, the site also contains a hand-carved stone structure known as the Hand of Hercules. This structure is believed to date back to the 2nd century AD and may have been part of a larger statue of Hercules. The Hand of Hercules is a popular attraction for tourists visiting the site.
3. The southern part “The Lower Citadel”: what distinguished this site is the discovery of the southern gate in 2002 by the National Archaeological Department, this gate is considered the only connection between Amman Citadel with the Roman Theatre, and in 2004 the western part of this area stairs was discovered, this stair has been used by people coming from the downtown. The fortress walls are clear in this part.

Figure 4. Amman Citadel Plan

Source: Spanish archaeological mission 1978.

Amman Citadel and its Connection to Amman Historic Urban Planning

Due to its central location, the Amman Citadel has played a crucial role in the urban development of the city of Amman. During the Ammonites period, the Citadel was considered a walled city that consisted of a palace and the administrative headquarters of the city, which was called “Rabwet Ammon”. The city itself was located on the northwest of the citadel mainly consisting of residential areas. Archaeological excavations have revealed the existence of additional residential structures, statues, and rainwater harvesting ponds within the Citadel site (Kadhim and Rajjal 1988).

In the period of the Roman Empire, the most important structure in the Citadel site was the Temple of Hercules. The temple is situated at the southern end of the Citadel, near the intersection of the *Cardo Maximus* and the *Decumanus Maximus*, the two main roads in the Roman city planning, which connects the north and south parts of the ancient city, and it ended at a monumental gate located in the vicinity of the Amman stream (Najjar 1993).

The planning of the Citadel was altered during the Umayyad occupation to conform to Islamic planning principles. The Umayyad Palace was built as a government building and residence for Umayyad officials. The citadel site included a mosque which represented the religious and justice authority, a market, a hospitality centre, and a public bath representing the social connection. All of these structures were interconnected by a network of streets and were protected by surrounding walls and towers (Almagro and Olavarri 1982).

Renovation Project

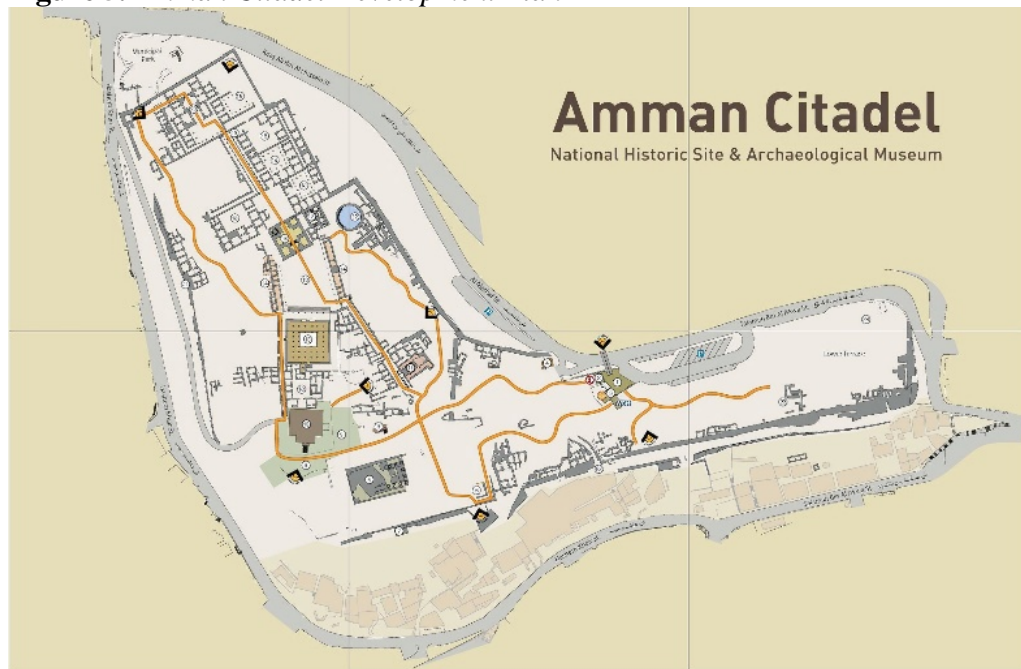
USAID 2008 Development Plans of Amman Citadel

The development of the Amman Citadel Project of 2008 was a cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DoA), and USAID's Jordan Tourism Development Project. The project aimed to plan and promote short- and long-term activities. As a part of the project, a site management plan was developed by USAID to promote and protect the Citadel as a culturally significant site, and to enhance its status as a tourism attraction. The plan entails the protection of the site and provides for effective long-term management (USAID 2013).

Between 2008 and 2013, work was undertaken to transform the site and create a leading destination, presenting and interpreting its importance and remarkable history pre-5500 BC. In addition, the project aimed to connect the Citadel with the surrounding historical sites, the most important one being the Roman theatre. The objectives of the project included preserving the heritage of the site, promoting economic and social development, protecting the environment, and achieving educational and cultural goals. The project focused on improving the site's accessibility from different areas, creating parking spaces, defining entrances to the site, and managing the movement of visitors within the site.

The physical site improvements included the introduction of Figure 5:

- Pathways
- Signage
- Sculpture gardens
- Visitors gateways
- Visitor amenities
- Lighting
- Parking
- Event staging areas

Figure 5. *Amman Citadel Development Plan*

Source: <http://lorianglin.com>.

The main improvements made at the Amman Citadel focused on the infrastructure and improvement on the overall site. Infrastructure and lighting were renewed to improve visibility and ambience. Safety barriers were installed, and designated parking areas were established away from the historic ruins. Regarding visitor circulation, to ensure orderly movement and enhance site aesthetics, visitor pathways were adorned with shrubs, guiding visitors along designated routes. Installation of new interpretive materials and informative signs, offering insights into the site's rich history spanning millennia up to the present day, enhancing visitors' understanding and appreciation of its significance.

In addition to enhancing the quality of the visitors' experience, additional buildings were renovated. First is the Monuments Garden, the museum garden underwent a complete renovation, transforming into a sculpture garden showcasing large artefacts. Shaded areas and resting spots were incorporated to provide comfort for tourists, strategically placed at the midpoint of the site tour. Second is the visitor gateway which was constructed to welcome and orient visitors upon arrival. It offers essential tourist services, and spaces were allocated for a gift shop and a refreshment area, enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Urban Tourism

Urban Design Role in Tourism

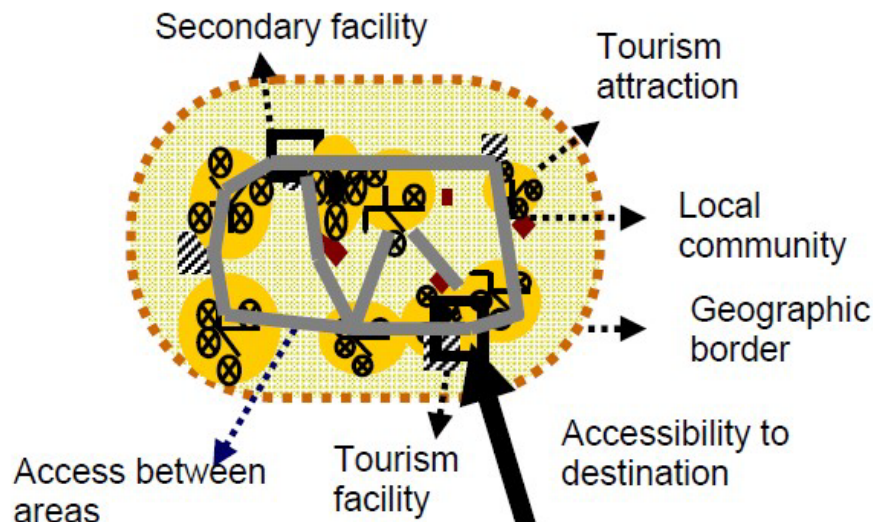
Urban design plays a defining role in designing the city as a tourist destination, one of the strategies of tourism marketing is to incorporate unique features that can

serve as a branding strategy for the city. Urban design refers to the process of designing and shaping the physical environment of a city, including its buildings, streets, public spaces, and infrastructure (Bouchon 2022). By designing urban spaces that highlight and complement historical sites, cities can create a more engaging and memorable tourism experience for visitors. Such distinctive elements can encourage potential tourists thus increasing touristic rates of the place. Therefore, it is important to present the uniqueness of the city by creating a distinctive setting (Giriwati and Homma 2013). To achieve this, architects and urban designers play a significant role in collaborating with various governmental and private sectors to promote and develop tourism.

One approach of urban design to enhance tourism of historical sites is the creation of attractive and accessible public spaces such as parks, pedestrian walkways, plazas, and gathering points for visitors. A well-designed public space that serves the needs of the visitors is vital to maintaining the functionality of the space, providing convenient amenities encouraging tourists to spend more time at the site, fostering engagement with the local community, and promoting the site as a welcoming and attractive destination for tourism (Blažević and Krstini 2015). Another way that urban design development can enhance and promote tourism of historical sites is through the preservation and adaptation of historic buildings and landmarks, cities can create a tangible connection between the past and present, allowing visitors to experience the historical significance of a site first-hand. Adaptation of historic buildings and landmarks can also create new opportunities for tourism, such as museums, galleries, and cultural centres, which can generate economic and social benefits for local communities.

Tourists consider the urban area as a destination which can be defined as the components that attract tourists. It is a comprehensive tourism product that consists of two main pillars: resources, and services (Giriwati and Homma 2013). Resources are the initial attraction that the place has to offer to visitors, while the services whether it is general once or solely touristic services, are provided to facilitate and enhance the visitors' experience.

Through understanding the urban design components and touristic demands, these components can be classified into three categories: Primary, Secondary, and Transportation components, these components represent the supply for the touristic demands. In order to promote tourism, cities need a unique identity that distinguishes them thus, the urban designer has a definite role in creating the city's uniqueness which impacts the perception of the visitors. It is essential to design a setting that highlights the city attractions and serves the tourists' demands, the synergy of architecture and other disciplines in the development of urban tourism is essential for creating a unique and sustainable visitor experience (Giriwati and Homma 2013) (Figure 6).

Figure 6. *Tourist Destination Zone Planning Concept*

Source: Giritwari and Homma 2013.

Urban Tourism as Tool to Promote Heritage

Adding the term “urban” to “tourism”, indicates placing the activity within a specific spatial context, to comprehend urban tourism it is necessary to first understand the urban context in which it occurs (Ashworth and Page 2011). Tourism is one of the economic and social forces that operate within an urban environment, it can be defined as the industry that manages and promotes a range of places and experiences to attract tourists. The engagement between tourists and the host community results in various beneficial outcomes for both parties. According to Blažević and Nižić (2015), cities must balance the demands of tourists and residents in their spatial organization as a tourism destination.

The city environment displays various elements to the visitors such as cultural, social, physical, and aesthetic where tourism can take place. Therefore, the urban layout influences the tourists’ experience as they interact with the attractions. Each urban area inherent its potential from its natural characteristics, sense of place and history, and cultural heritage. On the other hand, every individual has their perception of the city’s image, and a public image of the city is an overlap of the individual images. The concept of imageability in a city is more related to perception rather than physical or visual characteristics (Giritwari and Homma 2013).

Urban tourism is vital to the development of the city as it has various benefits, in addition to its economic benefits as a sustainable source of revenue urban tourism can advocate social and cultural exchange, by allowing visitors to learn about history and culture. One of the city’s unique assets is its historical and cultural heritage which can be leveraged to attract tourists and create a city brand (Gospodini 2001). Sustainable revenue from tourism can be used to invest in efforts to conserve and protect these valuable assets, such as restoring and maintaining historic buildings, preserving archaeological sites, and protecting

natural and cultural landscapes. Furthermore, urban tourism can raise awareness among locals and tourists about the importance of historical sites and cultural heritage, encouraging communities to take an active role in conservation efforts.

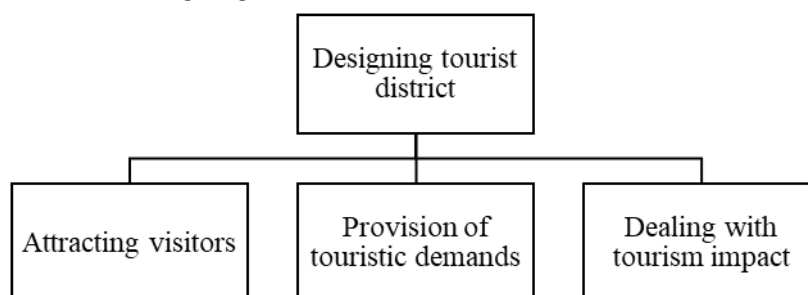
On the other hand, urban tourism faces some challenges, which should be taken into consideration, such as funding for development and collaboration with the designated authorities in order to implement development plans. Development projects can sometimes lead to the displacement of local communities and loss of cultural identity. Additionally, cities must ensure that development projects are compatible with the historical and cultural significance of the site, preserving its unique character and charm. A sustainable tourism practice that prioritizes conservation and preservation must be developed.

Achieving sustainable urban tourism requires considering market demands, political challenges, and demographic changes (Giriwati and Homma 2013). By addressing these challenges urban tourism can advocate sustainable development. The key to a distinctive user experience is providing opportunities to tourists through urban design will enhance their experience and understanding of the city's culture, history, and identity. However, providing uniqueness is not enough for a comprehensive touristic experience, to ensure the success of the industry it is crucial to provide adequate urban components which serve the demands of the tourists, such as basic tourist facilities that range from accommodation, and food to mobility. In conclusion, affordable and well-designed urban planning is essential for creating unique tourism experiences that will attract visitors to a city.

Theoretical Framework

Throughout the study of related literature, the main urban design components for promoting touristic historical sites can be defined. As the study presented, a well-planned destination has a crucial impact on the touristic experience of the place. What makes the place a tourist destination? A destination refers to areas that are designed to meet the requirements of the tourists, which includes functional and physical criteria. The design of a historical area is not limited to the development of new components, additionally, it encompasses rehabilitation, maintenance, and the provision of necessary services and infrastructure to ensure the functionality of the site.

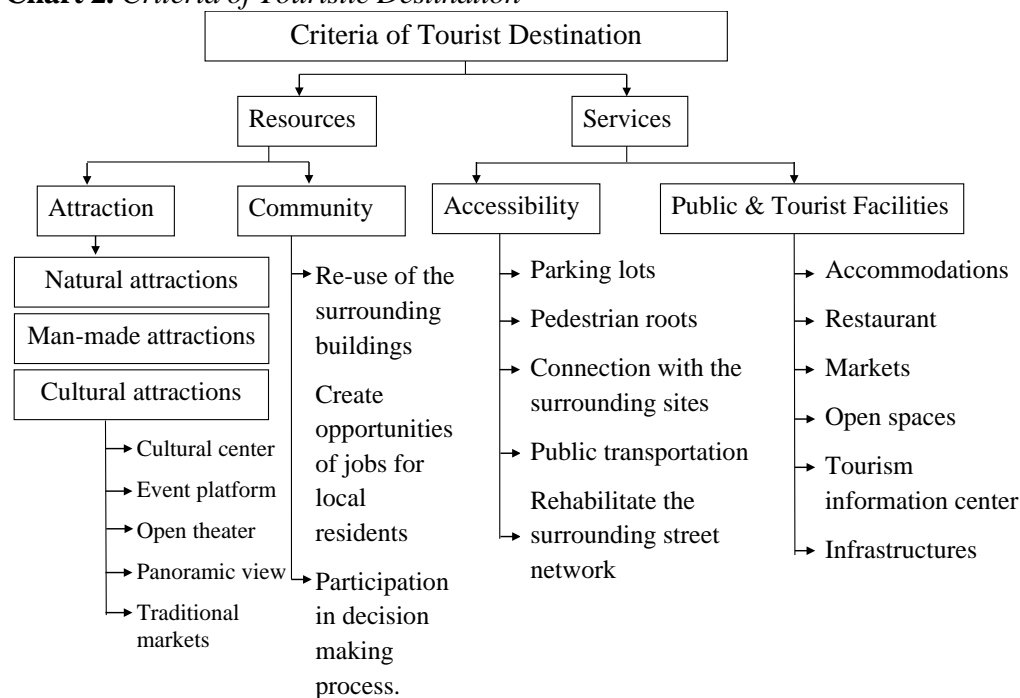
Chart 1. *Designing Touristic District*



Source: Author.

Tourist districts are areas that are specifically designed to cater to the needs and satisfaction of tourists. These areas include tourist attractions as well as infrastructure and services that are necessary to support tourism in addition to tourism impact (Chart 1). In some cases, new areas may be developed specifically for tourism, while in other cases, existing areas may be rehabilitated and maintained in order to make them more attractive to visitors. The design of tourist districts typically includes the provision of services such as restaurants, accommodation, and transportation, as well as infrastructure such as roads, public spaces, and utilities. The goal of these efforts is to create an environment that is both enjoyable and convenient for tourists, and that encourages them to stay longer and spend more money while they are there.

Chart 2. Criteria of Touristic Destination



Source: Author.

Chart 2 provided above illustrates the primary criteria that distinguish a site as a tourist destination, with two primary categories: Resources and Services. Resources include the attraction which consists of natural, man-made, and cultural which can be further developed by incorporating cultural attractions that augment the space's quality and enhance the sense of place. The other part is the community, in which the surrounding area can be integrated into the development scheme of the site. On the other hand, the services consist of accessibility and touristic facilities, two important urban components that contribute to the success of the site. Accessibility and easy mobility are important to the movement of the visitors, clear and easy accessibility facilitates the arrival of visitors to the site. Touristic facilities and services include all the essential amenities that serve the basic needs of the visitors and add to the activities visitors can do.

Methodology

The study adopts a case-study method of qualitative approach, which is used to generate an in-depth analysis of certain cases to gain insight into the complexity of the issue and shed light on potential solutions. The methodology is conducted through a combination of theoretical and analytical study. The first phase is the theoretical study of related literature, which aims to establish the presets of urban design criteria concerning tourism and the role of urban design in promoting historical tourist attraction. The objective of the theoretical study is to build a framework of the city's touristic criteria as a destination, the goal is to define the elements in which urban design can improve to enhance tourism in a historical site. The Second phase is case study analysis, the study conducts an observational and urban analysis on the site of Amman Citadel. The observational study goal is to define tourist patterns from the visitor's point of view, the aim is to study the surrounding area of the site and its condition, the accessibility to the site, and the facilities provided in the site itself. The urban analysis focuses on the planning elements of the site, including analysing the land use, density, and accessibility. As a result, the paper presents a conclusion diagram that indicates the challenges of the site and the development opportunities. Furthermore, a strategy map is presented to highlight the potential urban strategies that can be implemented on the site to enhance and promote its touristic criteria as a historical destination.

Observational Study

The observational study focused on the surrounding area of the historical site of the Citadel. The goal of the study is to explore the urban context and accessibility. The observational study was conducted to document the current status of the built environment and street network surrounding the Citadel.

Urban Context

Assessment of the built environment can play a crucial role in enhancing the general aesthetic and reflecting the identity of the site. As presented in Figures 7-12, the condition of the surrounding built environment primarily consists of residential areas. The housing units vary from small to medium-size units, mainly hosting an average to larger size families, based on the social structure of the area. Most units consist of two to three stories and use concrete and stone cladding as their primary building material. The initial image of the urban context reflects the identity of Amman with its cluster of stone cubes.

From the observational study of the conditions of the built environment, it can be concluded that the buildings suffer from material deterioration, lack of maintenance and inadequate infrastructure resulting in an unpleasant image. In addition, the surrounding context can be characterized as a dense urban area, which can lead to multiple obstacles both physical and visual for the visitors.

On the other hand, the current structures present an opportunity for adaptive reuse and rehabilitation, enabling their transformation into more functional spaces tailored to meet the demands of tourists. These repurposed spaces could encompass

a variety of amenities, including restaurants, traditional markets, and cultural centres, thereby enriching the visitor experience while simultaneously revitalizing the built environment and preserving its historical significance.

Figures 7-9. *The Surrounding Built Environment*



Source: Author.

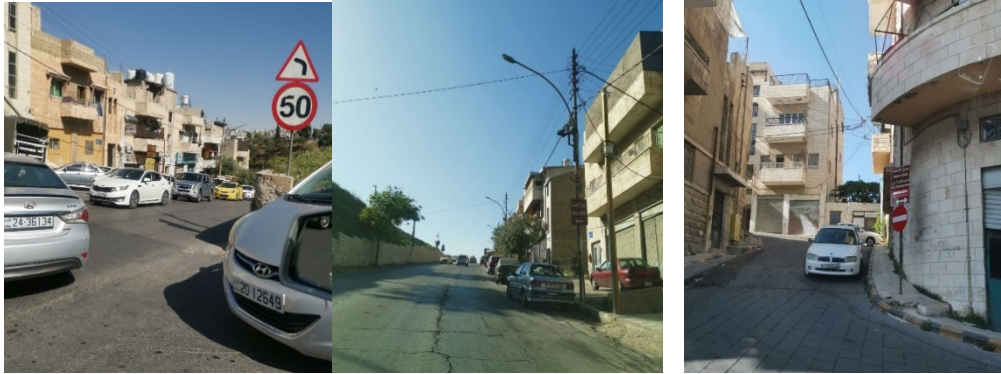
Figures 10-12. *The Surrounding Built Environment*



Source: Author.

Surrounding Streets

Figures 13-18 illustrate various streets leading to the Citadel, highlighting their narrow and deteriorated conditions. Additionally, the layout and orientation of these streets significantly impact visitors' wayfinding. The lack of clear signage, public transportation options, pedestrian pathways, and adequate parking exacerbates the challenges of navigating the historical site. These factors not only affect mobility but also diminish the overall tourist experience. Thus, addressing the condition and orientation of these streets is paramount for improving wayfinding and enhancing the accessibility and appeal of the destination.

Figures 13-15. *The Surrounding Street Network*

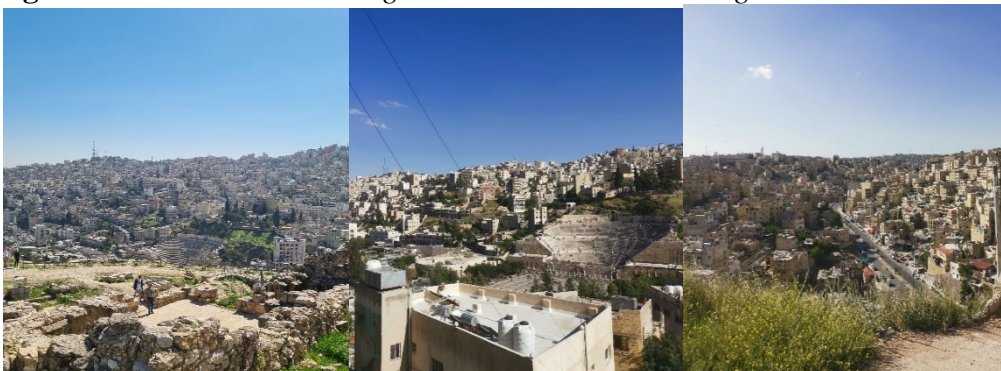
Source: Author.

Figures 16-18. *The Surrounding Street Network and Parking*

Source: Author.

Surrounding Views

Amman citadel is encompassed by significant sites, including the Roman Theatre demonstrated in Figures 19-21. Due to its location on top of the hill, the Citadel offers panoramic vistas of the city of Amman from different angles, the unique points present opportunities to design panoramic viewpoints for the visitors. Establishing a visual connection from the site to the city not only enhances the visitor experience but also provides insights into how they perceive and preserve the city's image. A strong attraction point that can be taken into account in developing the site to attract more visitors.

Figures 19-21. *The Surrounding Street Network and Parking*

Urban Analysis

Functional Analysis

Figure 22 displays the functional zoning in the area, highlighting the use of buildings for commercial, residential, and historical purposes. The neighbourhood spans an area of approximately 461,238.7 m², with historical and touristic sites occupying around one-third of the total area. The Department of Statistics reveals that about 44.3% of the buildings in the area are residential, and most residents belong to the low-income population range. The northern and eastern parts of the site generally consist of regulated residential plots, on the other hand, some of which evolved into unorganised informal settlements. Unfortunately, many of these buildings are old and in disrepair, with some abandoned or destroyed due to the lack of proper infrastructure.

The commercial sector is primarily located on the southwest side of the site, which can be considered in proximity to the historical site, nevertheless, the area lacks proper connectivity and adequate tourist services. Furthermore, as the diagram shows the absence of public parks or functional open spaces can have a significantly negative impact on the tourists' experience.

Figure 22. *Functional Analysis*



Source: Author.

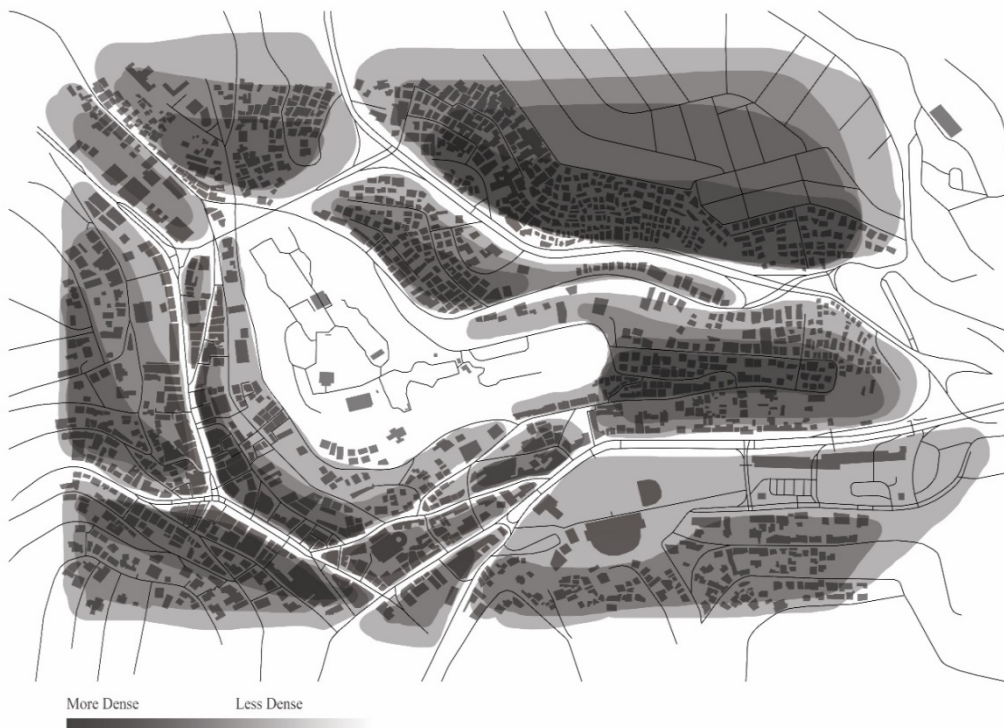
Density Analysis

The diagram presented in Figure 23 provides an overview of the building densities surrounding the archaeological site. As mentioned earlier, residential

buildings cover most of the area, with the highest population density observed in informal settlements, which can pose an urban hazard to the archaeological site. The densely populated areas adjacent to the touristic site limit its opportunity for development and expansion. Building density in the surrounding area typically ranges from 60% to 90%, and the poor condition of these structures presents a challenge to the city's tourist image.

One possible approach to tackle the issue of informal settlements and their dense presence is to consider the community participation urban approach in revitalizing the district and exploring ways to rehabilitate these settlements as integral parts of the city.

Figure 23. *Building Density*



Source: Author.

Accessibility Analysis

The diagram in Figure 24 presents the accessibility to Amman Citadel from various parts of the city. Visitors can readily reach the site from Jabal Al-Hussein south of the site by travelling along Khaled bin Al-Waleed Street, from the north via Al-Urdon Street, and from the east through Army Street East. However, the map highlights a challenge in reaching the Citadel from downtown and the Roman Theatre, an important historical site adjacent to it.

Visitors can face issues navigating the chaotic street network and lack of direct routes. Additionally, the lack of available public transportation adds to the challenge of clear wayfinding to the site.

Furthermore, the Citadel is in the old downtown area, featuring a street layout aligned with ancient mobility networks, resulting in a network of narrow and somewhat confusing streets leading to the city. The disorganized street network may pose a challenge for visitors regarding wayfinding and can lead to confusion while trying to reach the Citadel's entrance. Thus, addressing these issues becomes crucial to improve the overall accessibility and enhance the visitor experience at the historic site.

Figure 24. *Accessibility Diagram*



Source: Author.

Findings

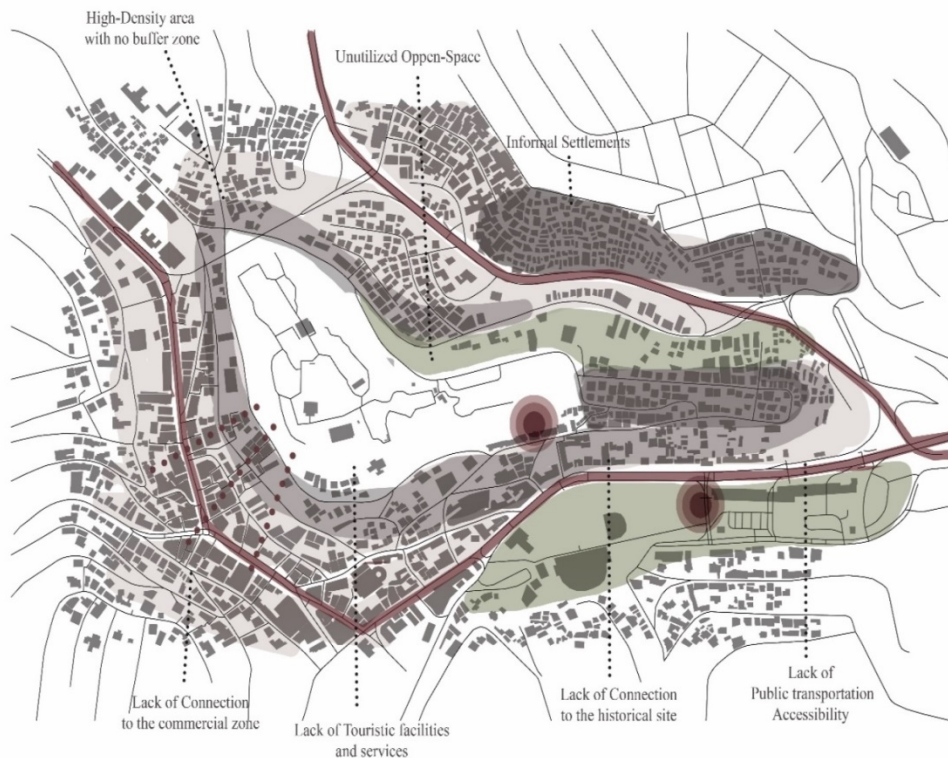
After conducting observational and urban analysis, the study identified the challenges and limitations at the Amman Citadel site. These challenges focus on the urban issues that face the historical citadel, as Figure 25 illustrates. The identified challenges are Urban context, mobility and accessibility and functional connectivity.

Regarding the urban context, the surrounding buildings consist mainly of the residential sector, which lacks tourist facilities. The high population density in the residential zone can result in areas with minimal or no buffer zones. This situation often leads to overcrowding along the site's boundaries. Further, the physical condition of the surrounding buildings is deteriorating, and it lacks proper maintenance for the built environment.

Moreover, the existing open urban spaces are without designing or planning to accommodate or support the needs of the tourism industry.

Concerning mobility and accessibility, the site lacks public transportation accessibility, and tourists rely on touristic buses. Additionally, the site lacks pedestrian routes. As for the site connections, the nearest attraction to the site is the Roman Theatre, and there is no direct access to connect the two historical and touristic sites. Moreover, the lack of functional connectivity between the site and the nearest commercial sector affects the quality of tourism services, which could otherwise enhance tourist activities.

Figure 25. *Challenges Diagram*



Source: Author.

Results and Discussion

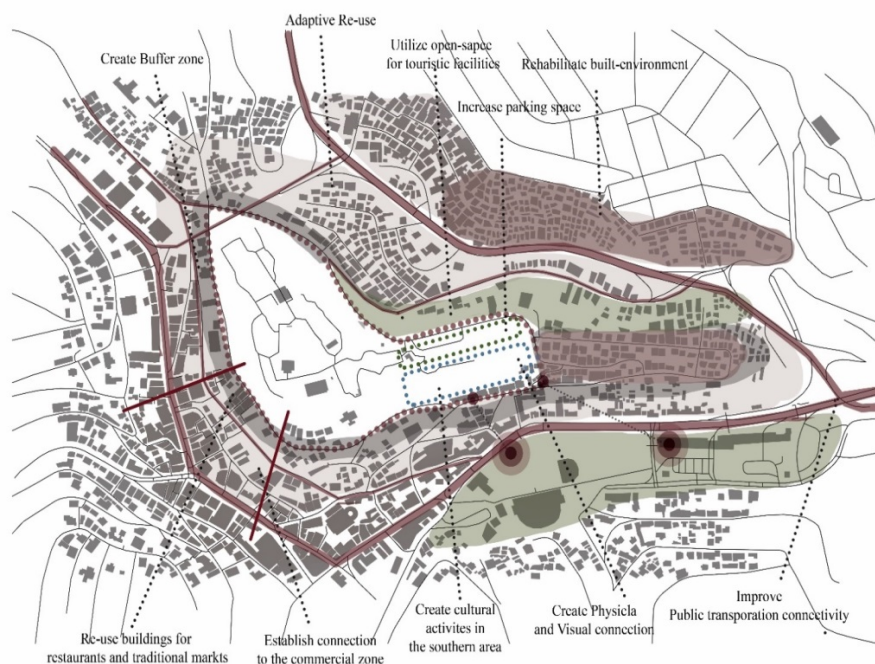
The development plan for the citadel should implement both the functional and physical aspects highlighted by the theoretical framework. A set of urban strategies presented aims to promote and facilitate tourist activities, as shown in Figure 26. These strategies include:

- Adaptive reuse of the existing built environment to cater to visitors' needs.
- Rehabilitating the surrounding built environment to promote the area as a tourist attraction.

- Providing sufficient tourist facilities such as restaurants, traditional markets, and accommodation.
- Increasing the diversity of cultural activities by establishing a cultural centre and platform for activities.
- Emphasizing the visual connection of the citadel to the Roman Theatre by creating a panoramic viewpoint.
- Providing public transportation accessibility from different parts of the city, such as the downtown and Raghadan Square.
- Offering sufficient parking lots for both cars and touristic buses.
- Providing pedestrian routes in the site that lead from the surrounding areas to the site and connect the Roman Theatre with the site through stairs.
- Rehabilitating open spaces into public parks and landscapes to serve the historical site.
- Improving the infrastructure of the area.
- Ensuring the participation of the local community in decision-making through workshops, consultations, and design surveys.

The study emphasizes the importance of urban design in enhancing tourism in historical locations. By providing a set of strategies based on a qualitative method of the site, the paper sheds light on how the citadel can be upgraded to a higher standard, making it one of the most attractive historical sites in Jordan. The urban interventions presented in the study aim to develop the urban context of the site based on different aspects, which contributes to enhancing the overall quality of the area.

Figure 26. Strategies Diagram



Source: Author.

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Cloud Computing and Mobile Technologies as a Marketing Strategy towards Innovation and Business Growth among Small Tourism Enterprises

By Abigail Chivandi* & Thembelani Mlilo[±]

This study examined the impact of Cloud Computing and Mobile Technologies as marketing strategy towards innovation, business growth among small tourism enterprises (STEs). Mobile commerce is viewed as next generation, e-commerce refers to any transactions, either direct or indirect, via mobile devices, such as phones or personal digital assistants (PDAs). Most significant features of mobile technology are mobility and portability. Ability to access services ubiquitously, on the move, through wireless networks, various devices. The study highlights business risk of being left behind and gives a contemporary research gap, how frequent businesses are engaging with mobile technologies and innovation marketing strategies. Positivist Paradigm- Targeted population were Southern African border countries players in STEs. Data analysis utilised SMARTPLS, Tested CFA, Model Fit, Reliability and Validity, Path Modelling and hypothesis. Raosoft calculator was used to calculate sample size. Calculation considered population of approximately 350 STEs officially registered with Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA), a 5% margin of error, 90% confidence interval & recommended 50% distribution, and returned a minimum sample size of 184 respondents. Findings revealed transactions can be business to business applications (targeted to other firms, business to consumer applications (targeted to final customers, e.g. advertisements based on SMS/MMS) e- catalogues on what the small tourism enterprise offers and networking regionally and at global level.

Keywords: cloud computing, innovation, mobile technology, tourism enterprise, marketing strategy, business growth

Introduction

In Southern Africa, small tourism enterprises lie at the heart of the industry and form a major part of the tourism sector, serving as cornerstones of tourism development in emerging economies. Mobile commerce is viewed as the next generation of e-commerce and is referred to as any transactions, whether direct or indirect, via mobile devices such as phones or personal digital assistants (PDAs) (Alshamaila et al. 2013). The most significant features of mobile technology are mobility and portability, enabling access to services ubiquitously, on the move, and through wireless networks and various devices.

*Lecturer/Researcher, Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, School of Business Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

[±]PhD Candidate, Faculty of Management, College of Business and Economic, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

The purpose of the study aimed at assessing the influence of relationship proneness on cloud computing and mobile technologies as innovation capabilities towards business growth for small tourism enterprises in Southern African countries. Despite increasing research on small tourism enterprises, there appears to be a paucity of studies that have interrogated innovation capabilities towards business growth for small tourism enterprises in Southern African countries. In today's post-modern era, the ability to build a competitive network through relationships can be seen as one of the small tourism enterprise's core competencies. Cloud computing and mobile technologies help Small Tourism Enterprises develop better marketing networks that build mutually profitable gains through innovation and competitive advantage in the market (George and Bock 2011). Marketing scholars have suggested that firms should leverage firm–customer/ tourists' relationships and networking to gain privileged information about customers' needs and thereby serve them better than competitors (Ndubisi and Nair 2009). Gao et al. (2010) reported that cloud computing is important for small tourism enterprises since establishing and maintaining relationships with customers fosters customer retention, customer share development, and increased profit and business growth. According to Mostert and De Meyer (2010, p. 28), cloud computing and mobile technology hold benefits for small tourism enterprises, and they should increasingly focus on building services that are innovation-oriented with a consumer service orientation, leading to business growth in terms of customer base and business attractions at a global level. Laukkanen (2007) stipulates that in any form of relationship networking between customers and service providers, the attitude of the customer towards such a relationship is likely to be of importance. Thus, the stronger the customer perceives the importance of mobile technology relationships in general, the more likely the customer is to develop a stronger relationship with the service provider.

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

Mobile commerce is viewed as the next generation e-commerce and refers to any transactions, either direct or indirect, via mobile devices, such as phones or personal digital assistants (PDAs). The most significant features of mobile technology are mobility and portability. The ability to access services ubiquitously, on the move, and through wireless networks and various devices. To date, mobile technologies have been applied to consumer-oriented areas, applications focus on voice communication than wireless data transformation. Large-scale usages are still scarce in business world specifically to Small Tourism Enterprises (Gebauer and Shaw 2004). Although there is a general notion in which mobile technologies could be applied in business, very little has been done in exploring how to enhance Cloud Computing and Mobile Technologies as innovation capabilities strategy towards business growth for small tourism enterprises.

Adopting mobile technology may create two kinds of impacts on business operations. It is to facilitate communication among small tourism enterprises and customer. Through the enhancement of communicating efficiency and information

timeliness, mobile technology can increase organizational productivity and profitability. Re-vitalizing business processes through changing data access patterns in small tourism enterprise contributes immensely to business growth. The use of cloud computing (CC) and mobile technology (MT) can improve business competitiveness, and has provided genuine advantages for small tourism enterprise (STEs) in tourism sector in southern Africa, enabling them to compete with large firms within the industry (Bayo-Moriones and Lera-Lopez 2007; Picoto, Bélanger and Palma-dos-Reis, 2014) Some of the promised benefits from cloud computing can be very appealing for Small Tourism Enterprises, which need to maximise the return on their investment and still remain competitive in an ever demanding business environment in the tourism sector (Liu and Orban 2008).

A synopsis of the literature interrogating the past and prevailing business environment in the Tourism/ hospitality industry in addition to the description of the concept of cloud computing and mobile technology is presented. The small tourism enterprise provides services for three categories of consumers of its services: local tourists, foreign tourists and residence travelling abroad as well as tourists coming into the country (Akbar and Parvez 2009). The services that small tourism enterprise to travellers/tourists are characterised by the need for both physiological (food, drink) and physical needs (rest and entertainment). The origins of small tourism enterprise can be traced as far back as the 16th century (Zott and Amit 2009). Over the ages the origin and development of small tourism enterprise can be tracked to images of inns, Ale houses and Taverns (Zott and Amit 2009). People travelled from place to place for thousand years and in their travels, they needed food, accommodation, and drink. The need for both physiological (food, drink) and physical needs (rest and entertainment) led to development of Inns (Chen 2009). In those early developmental times, some of the early places where services were offered were initiated and set up by the state while in other cases the church took the initiative to provide the travellers with accommodation and food (Chen 2009). Private individuals also began to set up businesses, such as Inns, that offered food and accommodation to travellers. An Inn can be defined as a house which provides accommodation to travellers who are willing to pay (Drucker 1994). As the Inns continued to grow, they began to attract and accommodated many travellers. Initially most of the travellers catered for by Inns used road transport. Horses-drawn coaches and scotch carts were initially the major modes of transport (Medlik 2003). With progression in technology and development of motorised modes of transport, there was a transition from the use of animal-drawn transport modes to more modern road, rail, and sea transport which gave rise to the development of structures of accommodation at terminals and seaside (Medlik 2003). As travelling became easier and more convenient, aircraft took over from road, rail and shipping as the main mode of transport particularly for the long-distance travellers. This development led to the growing volume of international travellers leading to the genesis and development of the small tourism enterprise (Kandampully 2006).

Small tourism enterprise plays important functions: they provide business transactional facilities. By virtue of its positive impact on foreign tourists, it is one of critical industry players that provide services contributing to generating of

foreign currency (Medlik 2003). Small tourism enterprise act as major earners of foreign currency and contribute towards balance of payments especially in countries with limited export capacity (Cohen and Levin 1989) and repeat business purchases by the consumers are realised directly and indirectly through the subsequent diffusion of expenditure by foreign tourist which translate to benefits to the communities of the Southern African countries (Karambakuwa et al. 2011). Small tourism enterprise demands a multiplicity of skills inclusive of cloud computing and mobile technology in order to meet the various services and deliver services at global standards. As such they provide huge opportunities for personnel with a multiplicity of capabilities and have positive downstream effects on other industries, like construction and relations industries (Zeithaml and Bitner 2003). The recent development of Cloud Computing (CC) and mobile technology provides a convincing opportunity for small tourism enterprise to outsource their Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Cloud computing is a model for enabling convenient, on demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources such as networks, servers, storage, applications, and services that can be rapidly provisioned and released with minimal management effort (Alshamaila et al. 2013). The fundamental concept of cloud computing is computing in the “cloud”, accessing software, storing data in the “cloud” and representation of Internet/network using associated services. Most cloud computing infrastructures consist of services delivered through common centres built on servers. Cloud Computing (CC) and mobile technology is being used by small tourism enterprise as business mobility strategy to acquire a wider market entry, tourists’ information and importantly in growing their business.

Theoretical Background

A theoretical background is provided to formulate the structure that holds the theory of a research study. The following discussion provides the theoretical background of this study.

The Resource Based View

The Resource Based View (RBV) (Barney 1991) is the theoretical orientation underpinning the present study. RBV purports that resources and capabilities are important for understanding the sources of sustained competitive advantage and growth by firms (Barney et al. 2011, Wernerfelt 1984). From the RBV it can be noted that resources and capabilities involve bundles of tangible and intangible assets. These tangible and intangible assets include an organisation’s management skills, organizational processes and routines, and the knowledge and information it controls which it uses to select and implement its strategies. The successful implementation of strategies by organisations results in a sustained competitive advantage and growth (Barney et al. 2011). Therefore, for this study cloud computing and mobile technologies are key resources that enhance service innovation and business growth among tourism SMEs.

Empirical Literature

This section presents a review of the literature related to the purpose of this study.

Cloud Computing

Armbrust et al. (2010) states that the cloud computing is a set of active network services, providing scalability, quality of service, an inexpensive computing infrastructure and can be accessed in a simple and pervasive way. Cunha et al. (2017) define cloud computing as a model where technological capabilities are scalable and elastic, and they are provided as a service to end-users over the Internet. From the standpoint of a small and medium enterprise, the benefits of cloud-based technologies are low start-up costs, low cost for sporadic use, ease of management, scalability, device and location independence and rapid innovation (Javaid 2014). Therefore, helping businesses to attain the benefits of cloud computing, by taking advantage of its potential for incremental improvement, avoids disruptive transformation of business processes (Javaid 2014).

Attaran and Woods (2019) postulate that these days, the economic landscape is being redrawn due to several shifts happening worldwide. In this setting, many entrepreneurs are using the potential of cloud computing technology (CCT) to develop novel, effective business models. A time and effort investment are required to implement a successful cloud computing strategy.

As a result of the wide-ranging effects, the complexities of the decisions, and the necessity to consult with interested parties, the entire organisation must be on board. As a result of needing a cloud strategy based on the supply of IT services tied to business process results, many businesses have failed with their cloud computing deployments. And many organisations are still determining the best way to kick off their cloud initiatives. Organisations should first determine where cloud services will yield a return on investment before moving towards widespread adoption. The next step is to devise a strategy for scalable deployment (Attaran and Woods 2019).

Furthermore, RightScale conducted its annual survey of cloud computing trends in 2017. Almost a thousand professionals were polled on their experiences with CCT; half worked for micro, small, and medium enterprises. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of more than a thousand IT pros surveyed use private clouds, while about nine-tenths (89%) rely on public cloud services. The remaining groups intend to adopt cloud services within the following calendar year. Additionally, 67% of participants reported using some hybrid cloud architecture. Since 2016, the use of public clouds has been about the same, while private and hybrid clouds have decreased. More than 80% of workloads at small firms use the cloud, with 50% using the public cloud and 33% using the private cloud (Attaran and Woods 2018, 2019).

According to the same survey, companies that offer cloud computing services also saw significant growth and greater acceptance in 2018. Among the pioneers of cloud computing was Amazon Web Services (AWS), which, in 2006, provided

a few essential computing and storage services. In 2018, AWS had a run rate of \$11 billion after being in business for ten years. With 68 percent of respondents using AWS, it is clearly in the lead in 2018. Microsoft Web Services (Azure) adoption rose from 34% to 45%, while Google Web Services adoption rose to 19% but remained in third place. The results showed an increase in market share for Oracle to 10% and an increase in market share for IBM Cloud from 10% to 15% (Attaran and Woods 2018, 2019).

Mobile Technology

According to Patil et al. (2012) mobile technology is the technology used for cellular communication. In addition, mobile technology is increasingly recognized as a contributor to social, economic, political, and environmental transformation, due to the universal and prevalent nature of mobile technology flooding all populations, even those at the bottom of economic pyramid (Kelly and Minges 2012). Njau and Njuga (2015) in their study which examined the impact of mobile phones usage on the performance on the micro enterprise in Moshi municipality and concluded that mobile phone services contribute positively to SMEs performance. Their study clearly showed the benefits mobile phone contributes; these include flexibility in terms of time and space, convenience when employed in business communication. In addition, mobile phone reduces costs and saves time for entrepreneurs with limited economic resources (Njau and Njuga 2015).

The capacity of mobile phones to circumvent infrastructure gaps in Africa's rural and outlying regions makes them a vital tool for the continents underprivileged. The mobile phone is an appropriate and flexible tool to close the digital gap because of its widespread availability, low cost, and rapid development in recent years. Businessmen are embracing mobile phones in underdeveloped countries (Onyango et al. 2014).

Although studies on mobile phone adoption make up a sizable subfield within the field of information systems, there is still room for improvement in the knowledge of what motivates or discourages the use of this technology amongst small tourism businesses. Inter-organisational systems, computerisation of firms, e-commerce, and other factors have all been cited as possible explanations for small tourism businesses' rapid uptake of new technology in the many relevant studies. Cost and a lack of education are two major barriers to the widespread use of information and communication technologies (ICT) by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Onyango et al. 2014).

Onyango et al. (2014) study showed that more than half of the SMEs had accepted and used mobile phone technology. The results demonstrate that adoption and use influence small tourism firms' performance. Awareness of mobile phone technology's vast possibilities grows as more people use them and as their owners develop the habit of incorporating mobile devices into their daily work lives and learn to exploit their capabilities thoroughly.

Lastly, businesses that invest in mobile technology are likely to expand faster than their non-mobile technology-using competitors because the former can better serve their clientele through strengthened relationships, present a more professional

front to the public, facilitate more effective information sharing, and increase competition. In addition, an entrepreneur's social network is a vital asset that can aid in acquiring knowledge and resources such as credit. When it comes to transaction costs, contract enforcement, and government regulation, social networks have the potential to play a far more instrumental role in assisting entrepreneurs in overcoming these challenges (Meressa 2020).

Service Innovation

Service innovation can be related to changes in various characteristics of the service product itself (Ryu and Lee 2012). In addition, Randhawa and Scerri (2015) conceptualise service innovation as an “elevated service offering” that is made up of “new client interface/customer encounter; new service delivery system; new organisational architecture or marketing proposition; and/or improvements in productivity and performance through human resource management”, further highlighting its multidimensional aspects. Vos (2010) is of the view that a service innovation is a new service or such a renewal of an existing service which is put into practice, and which provides benefit to the organisation that has developed it; the benefit usually derives from the added value that the renewal provides to the customers. Moreover, Chivandi and Maziriri (2018) points out that service innovation is a multi-stage process whereby organisations transform ideas into new or improved services, to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace.

Blommerde (2022) postulates that businesses in the service industry need to innovate frequently and quickly respond to consumer preference shifts to maintain their competitive edge, expand their market share, and increase their profits. This is especially true for small tourism enterprises (companies with less than 250 employees), which endure constant pressure from larger competitors despite their smaller size and fewer resources. Since this is the case, service innovation is crucial to the continued existence of such businesses. Despite the widespread agreement among researchers and industry professionals that service innovation is essential, more research needs to be done on the topic in the context of small tourism businesses. There is a startling discrepancy between the vast amount of empirical research exploring service innovation by manufacturers and the scant amount of literature in this area.

As a result of this discrepancy, micro, small, and medium-sized businesses are still determining how service innovation will affect their organisational performance, and they need to know how factors like firm age or client profile might affect this relationship (Blommerde 2022).

Business Growth

Growth determinants of small businesses can be classified by many factors: individual, organizational, and environmental, the factor of organizational resources, the competence of the company, organizational culture, and structure (Sarwoko and Frisdiantara 2016). In addition, Davidsson et al. (2008) describe business

growth as the very essence of entrepreneurship. The growth of SMEs is determined by the owner/manager characteristics (personal approach), and how the strategy is taken (managerial approach) (Sarwoko and Frisdiantara 2016). Additionally, Wodajo et al. 2020) maintain that although several studies have analysed the elements of business growth, each factor was analysed separately, and focus was only placed on personal features, organisational factors, and strategies. Wodajo et al. (2020) further concluded that the environment is a factor that also influences the growth of SMEs because growth is uncertain, due to environmental conditions such as competitive conditions and changing market dynamics.

In addition, the growth of small tourism enterprises is affected by a wide range of variables in developing and developed nations. Factors such as partnership formation, local leadership quality, government policy, and infrastructure investment are often cited as essential drivers. This debate will set the stage and offer context for the various factors contributing to small tourism enterprises' growth. Several studies have examined what factors contribute to the success of small tourism enterprises (Adesile 2020).

Recent empirical studies have examined both internal and external factors affecting small tourism enterprises growth. Additionally, growth is examined in terms of sales, employment, and company profitability. A growth study usually examines the effects of several variables. In these analyses, the intermediate process of controlling these determinants is omitted. In the empirical literature, there are a lot of studies about what causes the growth of small tourism enterprises in different fields. Still, they are primarily focused on exploratory research to find problems. In previous research, growth determinants were overstated using multidimensional components. Several factors influence the growth of small tourism enterprises, including external and internal environmental, contextual, political, social, economic, technological, and organisational aspects. No studies support or contradict the multidimensionality of small tourism enterprises growth factors (Wodajo et al. 2020).

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Drawing from the literature review and the postulated hypotheses, a conceptual model was developed (Figure 1). The model consists of four research variables: two variables predictor – Cloud Computing and mobile technology; one mediator service innovation and one outcome variable – Business Growth of STEs.

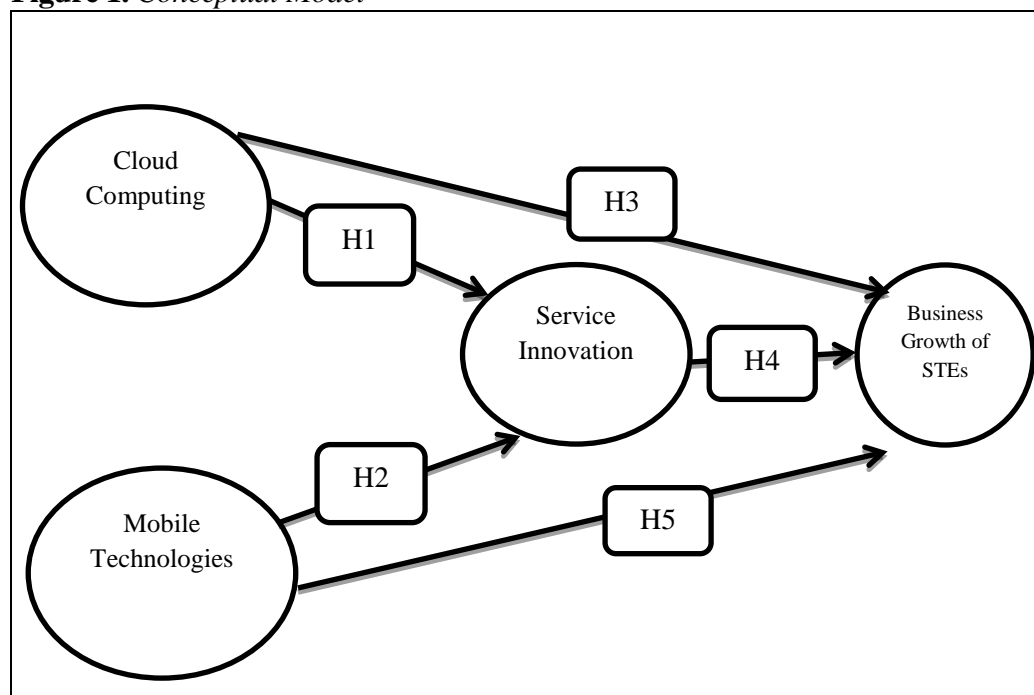
Proposed Hypotheses

The literature throws spotlight upon several validated works, thereby presenting the prospects to test a series of hypotheses in this work. This study used hypotheses to state specific relationships between variables in such a way that the relationships can be empirically tested. In addition, the hypotheses were used to validate the theory used in the research and to allow logical analysis of relationships of variables to deduce the interplay of those variables. Based on scientific evidence

regarding cloud computing, mobile technology, service innovation as well as business growth and considering the underlying theory, the study projected five hypothesis statements which are stated as follows:

- H₁: Cloud computing has a positive and a significant influence on service Innovation.
- H₂: Mobile technology has a positive and a significant influence on service Innovation.
- H₃: Cloud computing has a positive and a significant influence on the business growth of STEs.
- H₄: Service innovation has a positive and a significant influence on the business growth of STEs.
- H₅: Mobile technology has a positive and a significant influence on the business growth of STEs.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Research Methodology

This study adopted a positivistic paradigm in investigating the influence of cloud computing and mobile technologies on the business growth of small tourism enterprises. The choice of this paradigm was justified by the need to quantitatively analyse the data to meet the objectives of this study in a more objective manner. A quantitative approach in research is “a formal and objective methodical process of describing and testing relationships and examining the cause–effect relations among variables of interest” (Burns and Grove 1993, p. 777). The study utilised a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire. The design was suitable to solicit the required information relating to cloud computing, mobile technology, service innovation and business growth. In addition, the approach

enabled the examination of the causal relationships with the constructs used in the study.

Data Collection

Drawing from the literature review and theoretical grounding, a conceptual model/hypothesis were developed. The model consists of four research variables: two variables predictor – CC and MT; one mediator service innovation and one outcome variable – Business Growth of STEs. Research Philosophy took a Positivist Paradigm. Targeted population were Southern African border countries players in STEs. The data for this research was collected from small tourism enterprises within the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Southern African boarder countries inclusive of South Africa and Zimbabwe. Specifically, the target population was restricted to managers and owners of small tourism enterprises operating in Limpopo and Beitbridge Province. In terms of the sampling frame, a list of small tourism enterprises, registered within the database of small businesses, was used as a sampling frame. The database of small tourism enterprises was obtained from the Ministry of Tourism and Hospital Industry. Therefore, a simple random sampling technique was used in this study, because each element of the population had an equal and known chance of being selected as part of the sample (Konovalova et al., 2018) – for instance, where every name within the list of small tourism enterprises registered within the data of the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry had an equal chance of selection.

The questionnaires clearly stated that the anonymity of the participants would be guaranteed and that the study was purely for academic purposes. The Raosoft calculator for sample size was used to calculate the size of the sample (Lenth, 2001). Research Philosophy took a Positivist Paradigm- Targeted population were Southern African border countries players in STEs. Data analysis utilised SMARTPLS, Tested CFA, Model Fit, Reliability and Validity, Path Modelling and hypothesis. Raosoft calculator for sample size was used to calculate sample (Lenth, 2001). Calculation considered population of approximately 350 STEs officially registered with Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA), a 5% margin of error, 90% confidence interval and the recommended 50% distribution, and returned a minimum sample size of 184 respondents. Of the 184 questionnaires distributed, 151 returned questionnaires were usable, yielding a response rate of 82%. CC was measured, using a 17-item scale, adapted from Shoniwa (2016), MT measured, using a fifteen-item scale, adapted from Mabinya (2011) , SI measured, using eighteen-item scale, adapted from Yang et al. (2018) and BG measured using a nine-item scale adapted from Lotz and van der Merwe (2013).

Measurement Instrument and Questionnaire Design

Research scales were operationalised, mainly based on previous work. Proper modifications were made for them to fit the current research context and purpose. Cloud computing was measured, using a 17-item scale, adapted from Shoniwa

(2016). In addition, mobile technology was measured, using a fifteen-item scale, adapted from Mabinya (2011). Furthermore, service innovation was measured, using eighteen-item scale, also adapted from Yang et al. (2018). Moreover, business growth was measured using a nine-item scale adapted from Lotz and van der Merwe (2013) as well as Tan et al. (1998). All were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to express the degree of agreement.

Respondent Profile

The respondents were requested to report their demographic data, including gender, age, marital status, and kind of business inside the tourism segment. The respondents were mainly females (57.6%). The average age of the respondents was under 30 years (54.3%). Fifty-seven per cent of the respondents were single. Around 69.53% of the respondents demonstrated that they were occupied with transportation service types of businesses. In addition, 30.46% of the respondents disclosed that they were occupied with accommodation tourism companies, for instance, hotels, guest houses and guest lodges.

Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to the process by which the collected data transformed into a more manageable size to enable the categorisation of behaviours and the application of statistical techniques (Cooper and Schindler 2016, p. 94). The research model developed in the present investigation was tested using partial least squares (PLS), a variance-based, structural equation modelling approach (Subramaniam et al. 2017).

Monecke and Leisch (2012, p. 3) elucidate that 'SmartPLS is stand-alone software specialized for PLS path models and it is built on a Java Eclipse platform making its operating system independent'. Partial least squares have the ability to facilitate the assessment of both the measurement and structural models (Subramaniam et al. 2017). This study utilised PLS for two main reasons: firstly, the aim of the study was oriented towards prediction of the dependent variable (Chin 2010), and secondly the latent variable scores were used in the subsequent analysis for predictive relevance (Hair et al. 2011). Furthermore, Hair et al. (2011) further stressed that these arguments have led to the widespread acceptance of PLS in research. Specifically, this study used the smart PLS approach introduced by Ringle et al. (2005).

Reliability Analysis

The statistical measures of accuracy tests that appear in Table 1, indicate the distinct measures that were utilised to survey the reliability and validity of the constructs for the investigation. Accurately, the table delineates means and standard deviations, Item to Total connections, Cronbach alpha values, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR) and Factor Loadings.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed, and the SEM was estimated by using PLS data. Table 2 and Figure 2 depict the CFA findings, whereas Table 3 and Figure 2 summarise the SEM finding. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate the measurement model, representing the outer model in PLS. Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008) “mentioned that the purpose of the measurement model is to evaluate the reliability and validity of variables”. Table 1 shows that the item-total correlation value lies between 0.512 and 0.869 which is above the cut-off point of 0.5 as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988, p. 411). The higher inter-item correlations reveal convergence among the measured items. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994, p. 1) explained that “alpha values should exceed 0.6”. All variables in this study represented good reliability with the Cronbach’s alpha between 0.821 and 0.884. The study also used CR values in testing the reliability of the four research constructs. The CR values varied between 0.854 and 0.906. The obtained values from CR were above the acceptable reliability score of 0.7, thus validating the internal consistency of the five research construct measures, according to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The result shows that the AVE of this study was between 0.401 and 0.989. These AVE values were above the recommended 0.40, indicating a satisfactory measure (Anderson and Gerbing 1988, p. 411). As shown in Table 1, “loadings of all items should be more than the suggested value of 0.5” (Walker et al. 2017). Factor loadings in this study met the specification of the recommended value of 0.5 which ranged from 0.528 to 0.883. Items which were below 0.5 were deleted because of the low factor loadings which did not measure at least 50% of what there are supposed to measure. The remaining items fulfilled the requirement of reliability and convergent validity.

According to Hair et al. (2013, p. 13), discriminant validity refers “to items measuring different concepts”. Table 3 indicates the results of discriminant validity.

Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) demonstrate that one of the strategies used to observe the discriminant validity of the research was the assessment of whether the connections among latent constructs were under 0.60. A correlation estimates of under 0.60 is prescribed in the empirical literature to affirm the presence of discriminant validity (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). As appeared in Table 2, the inter-construct correlation estimates ran from 0.387 to 0.597 which is below the dependable guideline of 0.60 (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994), showing the accomplishment of discriminant validity. Thusly, Table 2 demonstrates that the outcomes additionally approve the presence of discriminant validity.

Table 1. Accuracy Analysis Statistics

Research variables	PLS code item	Test Item-Total correlation values	Cronbach's a value	CR value	AVE value	Factor loadings
Cloud Computing	CC1	0.611	0.884	0.906	0.497	0.582
	CC2	0.595				0.599
	CC2	0.565				0.661
	CC4	0.680				0.623
	CC7	0.638				0.819
	CC8	0.697				0.876
	CC9	0.697				0.801
	CC11	0.734				0.637
	CC12	0.773				0.814
	CC13	0.756				0.551
Mobile Technologies	MT1	0.768	0.821	0.854	0.401	0.545
	MT3	0.703				0.528
	MT4	0.577				0.545
	MT7	0.727				0.590
	MT8	0.845				0.535
	MT9	0.869				0.644
	MT10	0.787				0.736
	MT11	0.838				0.637
	MT12	0.830				0.529
	MT13	0.830				0.762
Service Innovation	SI1	0.852	0.872	0.895	0.440	0.722
	SI2	0.644				0.703
	SI4	0.690				0.638
	SI5	0.780				0.792
	SI6	0.788				0.600
	SI7	0.753				0.642
	SI8	0.640				0.713
	SI13	0.687				0.623
	SI14	0.726				0.537
	SI15	0.706				0.612
	SI16	0.512				0.626
	SI17	0.737				0.642
	SI18	0.708				0.713
Business Growth	BG3	0.717	0.855	0.894	0.589	0.847
	BG4	0.625				0.883
	BG5	0.645				0.769
	BG7	0.643				0.646
	BG8	0.651				0.822
	BG9	0.701				0.591

Note: a. Composite reliability (CR) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances) b. Average variance extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances) PLS=partial least square; scores: 1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – neutral; 4 – agree; 5 – strongly agree

Table 2. *Results of Discriminant Validity Analysis*

Variables	CC	MT	SI	BG
CC	1.000	-	-	-
MT	0.476	1.000	-	-
SI	0.597	0.433	1.000	-
BG	0.531	0.429	0.464	1.000

Note: CC=Cloud computing; MT=Mobile technologies; SI= Service Innovation; BG= Business Growth.

Assessment of the Goodness of Fit (GoF)

Overall, R^2 for service innovation and business growth in Figure 2, indicate that the research model explains 87.7% and 88.5% respectively of the variance in the endogenous variables. Following formulae given by Tenenhaus et al. (2005), the global goodness-of-fit (GoF) statistic for the research model was calculated using the equation:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Goodness of Fit} &= \sqrt{(\text{average of all AVEs values} * \text{average of all } R^2)} \\ &= \sqrt{0.48 * 0.44} \\ &= 0.46 \end{aligned}$$

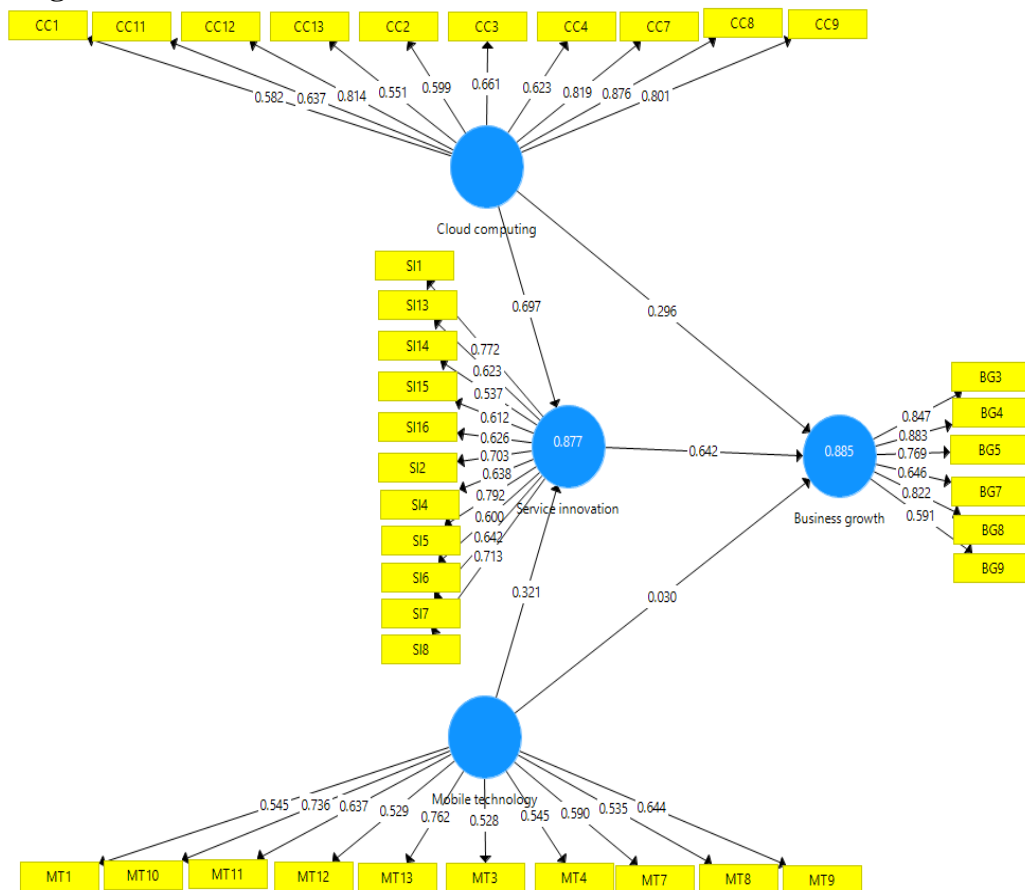
where AVE represents the average of all AVE values for the research variables while R^2 represents the average of all R^2 values in the full path model. The calculated global goodness of fit (GoF) is 0.46, which exceeds the threshold of $\text{GoF} > 0.36$ suggested by Wetzels et al. (2009). Therefore, this study concludes that the research model has a good overall fit.

Path Model Results and Factor Loadings

The PLS estimation results for the structural model as well as the item loadings for the research constructs are shown in Figure 2.

In this study, testing of the hypotheses was determined by path coefficient values, as well as the t-values for the structural model obtained from the bootstrapping algorithm. According to Beneke and Blampied (2012), t-values indicate whether a significant relationship exists between variables within the model, while path coefficients demonstrate the strength of the relationships in the model. Two-tailed t-tests were conducted at the 5% significance level. The findings of the structural model are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3 exhibits the five hypothesised connections, path coefficients, the t-statistics and the decision criteria. The value of the t-statistic indicates whether the relationship is noteworthy or not. A significant relationship is relied upon to have a t-value that is over 2. Drawing from the outcomes shown in Table 3, four of the six theorised connections (H1, H2 H3 and H4) were positive and significant. H5 was positive, however its significance level was weak.

Figure 2. Structural Model**Table 3. Result of Structural Model**

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path coefficient value β	T-value	P-value	Result
H1	CC \rightarrow SI	0.697	10.596	0.000	Positive and significant
H2	MT \rightarrow SI	0.321	3.751	0.000	Positive and significant
H3	CC \rightarrow BG	0.296	1.983	0.000	Positive and significant
H4	SI \rightarrow BG	0.642	3.710	0.000	Positive and significant
H5	MT \rightarrow BG	0.030	0.431	0.667	Positive and insignificant

^aSignificance Level $p < .10$; ^bSignificance Level $p < .05$; ^cSignificance Level $p < .01$.

Cloud Computing and Service Innovation

The primary hypothesis expressed that cloud computing positively and significantly impacts service innovation of small tourism enterprises. In this examination, this speculation was bolstered. It can be seen in Figure 2 and Table 3 that cloud computing applied a positive impact ($\beta=0.697$) and was statistically significant ($t=10.596$) in determining service innovation. This outcome proposes that the higher the level of cloud computing the higher the level of service innovation within small tourism enterprises. Along these lines, this examination fails to dismiss H1.

Mobile Technology and Service Innovation

The second hypothesis expressed that mobile technology positively and significantly impacts service innovation of small tourism enterprises. In this investigation, this supposition was upheld. It can be seen in Figure 2 and Table 3 that mobile technology exerted a positive influence ($\beta = 0.321$) and was measurably critical ($t = 3.751$) in anticipating service innovation. This outcome recommends that the higher the level of use in mobile technology, the higher the level of service innovation within small tourism enterprises. Subsequently, this investigation supports H2.

Regarding the relationship between mobile technology and service innovation, one study revealed that mobile technology favoured manufacturing enterprises' service innovation performance (Zhao et al. 2015). Mobile technology is an IT capability, and it is logical to assume that its impact on service innovation is similar to that of other IT capabilities.

Another study examined the influence of technology and marketing innovation on tourism SME productivity and showed that both categories of innovation have a significant and favourable impact on productivity (Nguyen et al. 2021). Although this study did not analyse the relationship between mobile technology and service innovation, it implies that technological innovation can have a favourable effect on the productivity of small tourism businesses.

While there may not be a direct study examining the impact of mobile technology on service innovation in small tourism businesses, the available research indicates that technological innovation, including IT capability, can positively impact service innovation and productivity in these types of companies. Consequently, mobile technology may have a comparable positive effect on service innovation in small tourism businesses.

Cloud Computing and Business Growth

The third hypothesis expressed that access to cloud computing positively and significantly impacts business growth of small tourism enterprises. In this examination, this hypothesis was upheld. It can be seen in Figure 2 and Table 3 cloud computing exerted a positive impact ($\beta = 0.296$) and was factually noteworthy ($t = 1.983$) in anticipating business growth. This outcome recommends that the higher the level of cloud computing, the higher the level of business growth with small tourism enterprises. Thus, this examination supports H3.

There is a lack of research into how cloud computing affects small tourism enterprises. According to Gartner, however, worldwide end-user spending on public cloud services is expected to climb in 2022, suggesting a rise in cloud adoption among organisations (Dar 2018, Aggarwal 2021).

There are no studies that look at how cloud computing affects small tourism enterprises, although it is known that SMEs can profit from digitalisation, of which cloud computing is a part. As a result of digitalisation, tourist enterprises now have greater chances to compete on a worldwide scale; SMEs, in particular, can utilise

digital technologies to boost their operations, attract more clients, and provide more customised services (Santos and Silva 2019, OECD 2020).

Cloud computing's indirect benefits to SMEs in the tourism industry are less clear, although there are signs that digitalisation, of which cloud computing is a part, can help SMEs in the sector compete more successfully and improve their operations.

Service Innovation and Business Growth

The fourth hypothesis stated that service innovation positively and significantly impacts business growth. In this study, this hypothesis was supported. It can be observed in Figure 2 and Table 3 that service innovation exerted a positive influence ($\beta=0.642$) and was statistically significant ($t=3.710$) in predicting business growth. This result suggests that the higher the level of service innovation, the higher the level of business growth in small tourism enterprises.

Davronov and Farmonov (2019) claim that research on service innovations in the services sector, which includes the tourism and hospitality industries, is in its infancy. This research, however, finds that service innovations are critical to a company's economic competitiveness and can even boost the growth of a small tourism business (Davronov and Farmonov 2019).

Regarding the tourism industry, service innovation is described as the result of a group effort on the part of multiple entities (Blommerde 2022). Expanding locally owned and operated tourism businesses may result from encouraging a thriving environment for new ideas and startups in the sector. In conclusion, service innovation can affect the development of micro- and small-scale tourist enterprises. Overall, the evidence suggests that service innovation can have a positive and significant impact on business growth and economic growth more broadly. By investing in service innovation and knowledge-intensive business services, firms may be able to enhance their competitiveness and achieve long-term success. However, the components that contribute to this favourable effect need more investigation.

Mobile Technology and Business Growth

The fifth hypothesis stated that mobile technology positively and significantly impacts business growth. In this study, this hypothesis was supported. It can be observed in Figure 2 and Table 3 that mobile technology exerted a positive influence ($\beta=0.030$) and was statistically insignificant ($t=0.431$) in predicting business growth. This result suggests that although mobile technology was statistically insignificant in predicting business growth, it is imperative not to rule it out as it positively influence business growth of small tourism enterprises.

Small tourism enterprises have significantly benefited from mobile technology, which has allowed them to grow their operations and attract more customers. The tourism industry's adoption of mobile apps has allowed consumers to explore the world in new ways. Meressa (2020) claims that smartphones have emerged as the central figure in the evolution of tourism, serving as a multifunctional tool for

tourists in the roles of tour guide, travel agent, best restaurant finder, map, and more. Small tourism enterprises can more readily connect with clients, advise them about their offerings, and process bookings and payments using mobile technologies.

In addition, Njau and Njuga (2015) note that cloud computing—which can be used to gain access to, manage, and store data online—is one of the technology trends impacting the travel and tourism industry. Using cloud computing, travel agencies of all sizes may streamline their data administration and make it easier for customers to access. As a result, they will be better able to make judgments, work more efficiently, and provide better customer service.

Mobile and cloud computers have greatly aided the growth of small tourism enterprises by expanding their consumer base, streamlining booking and payment processes, and enhancing their ability to keep track of and analyse their data.

Conclusions and Implications

The empirical study provided fruitful implications to academicians by making a significant contribution to the tourism destination marketing, specifically in small tourism enterprises literature by systematically exploring the influence of cloud computing and mobile technology and innovation towards business growth in small tourism enterprises. Cloud Computing (CC) and Mobile technology (MT), which includes applications based on cellular (e.g., GSM, GPRS) and wireless (Wi-Fi,) networks, represents the convergence between two of the most relevant technological emerging trends and provide a tremendous impetus to development of strategic applications for small tourism enterprise business growth and different industries like transportation (Chen 2009). This also helps on the managerial implication whereby transactions can be business to business applications (targeted to other firms, business to consumer applications (targeted to final customers, e.g., advertisements based on SMS/MMS) e-catalogues on what the small tourism enterprise offers and networking regionally and at global level (Liang et al. 2007). This study, therefore, stand to immensely contribute new knowledge to the existing body literature in small tourism enterprises in Southern Africa – a context that is often most neglected by some researchers in developing countries.

This study examined the impact of cloud computing and mobile technology on service innovation and business growth in small tourism enterprises. The results show that both cloud computing and mobile technology have a positive impact on service innovation, and access to cloud computing positively impacts business growth. Service innovation was found to positively influence business growth, suggesting that investing in service innovation can contribute to the long-term success of small tourism enterprises.

The study has important implications for small tourism enterprises, as it suggests that investing in cloud computing and mobile technology can enhance service innovation and business growth. Digitalization, of which cloud computing and mobile technology are a part, can help small tourism businesses compete on a

global scale and attract more clients by providing customized services. Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research that indicates that technological innovation, including IT capability, can positively impact service innovation and productivity in small tourism enterprises.

However, the study has limitations, including a lack of research on the impact of cloud computing on small tourism enterprises and the limited sample size. The study also did not examine the specific components of service innovation that contribute to the positive impact on business growth, suggesting that more research is needed to determine the underlying mechanisms. Nonetheless, the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between cloud computing, mobile technology, service innovation, and business growth in small tourism enterprises.

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Regenerative Tourism in the UK

By Peter Jones*

Some commentators suggest that regenerative tourism offers an opportunity to address many of the environmental, social, cultural, and economic challenges currently facing the tourism industry. While the UK is a one of the world's most popular tourism destinations, regenerative tourism in the UK has received little attention in the academic tourism literature. This short paper looks to offer some simple exploratory illustrations of regenerative tourism initiatives in the UK. The paper includes a description of the origins and characteristics of regenerative tourism, a short literature review, four cameo case studies of regenerative tourism initiatives drawn from various parts of the UK, and some reflective conclusions.

Keywords: *tourism, regenerative tourism, sustainability, Cameo Case Studies, UK*

Introduction

Sustainability continues to be an imperative for the tourism industry. TUI (2024), the world's largest tourism company, for example, claimed that it was working '*to actively shape a more sustainable future for tourism*', while Booking Holdings (2024), the world's leading provider of online travel services, emphasised '*we are committed to sustainability efforts that will further our mission, including initiatives to promote sustainable tourism, act as responsible environmental stewards and further decarbonize the travel industry.*' However, in reporting on the '*IMPACT Sustainability Travel and Tourism*' conference in Victoria, British Columbia, in January 2024, Ball (2024), writing under the GreenBiz banner, suggested that '*sustainable tourism*' was giving way to '*regenerative tourism.*' That said, sustainable tourism and regenerative tourism have been described as '*different stages on the same continuum*' (The Tourism Collective 2023), in that while sustainability has been concerned to reduce the negative environmental and social impacts of tourism, regenerative tourism is actively focused on the improvement and enhancement of natural, cultural and social environments.

New Zealand is often cited one of the countries where regenerative tourism initiatives have taken root, and some of these initiatives have attracted attention in the academic tourism literature (e.g., Fuste-Forne and Hussain 2022, Becken and Kaur 2021, Matunga et al. 2020). The UK is one of the world's most popular tourism destination – and was recently listed in 6th place out of 60 nations by Visit Britain (2023) – but regenerative tourism in the UK has received little attention in the academic tourism literature and this represents a gap in that literature. At the same time, Bellato et al. (2022) claimed there had been little clarity and agreement on the '*transformative potential of regenerative tourism or its applications to*

*Emeritus Professor, School of Business, University of Gloucestershire, UK.

practice.' This short paper looks to offer some simple exploratory illustrations of the application of regenerative tourism within the UK and as such to contribute to helping to fill the gap in the literature. The paper includes a description of the origins and characteristics of regenerative tourism, a short literature review, four cameo case studies of regenerative tourism initiatives drawn from various parts of the UK, and some reflective conclusions.

The Origins and Characteristics of Regenerative Tourism

In outlining the development of the '*regenerative paradigm*', Bellato and Pollock (2023) argued that regenerative thinking was underpinned by an ecological perspective that views '*life forms as living systems*', which are subject to nature's longstanding '*laws and principles*', and as such stands in marked contrast to '*the prevailing paradigm based on viewing life through a mechanistic, materialistic lens that derives understanding from seeing objects as separate from one another.*' Much of the initial thinking in this genre was applied in regenerative agriculture, which White (2020) described as '*a suite of practices that restores and maintains soil health and fertility, supports biodiversity, protects watersheds, and improves ecological and economic resilience.*'

Bellato and Pollock (2023) traced the origins of the ideas underpinning regenerative tourism back to the 1970s, but claimed that the application of regenerative concepts in the business community only emerged in the 1990's. Interest in regenerative tourism is rooted in widespread concerns about the world's growing environmental crisis, and more specifically in tourism's contribution to that crisis, and the focus is on how tourism might be able to contribute to environmental improvement. At the same time, explanations of the recent growth in interest in regenerative tourism have also been linked to the vulnerabilities and uncertainties in the industry caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and which Duxbury et al. (2021) claimed reinforced the need to think about new approaches to tourism.

There is little general consensus about the definition of regenerative tourism and Bellato and Pollock (2023) argued that '*there is a minimal shared understanding of the core elements of a regenerative approach*', not least because '*very few communities, associations or companies have invested the time and money needed to understand its systems-changing implications or catalyse its true potential.*' That said, a variety of definitions of regenerative tourism can be identified. Earthcheck (2023), a benchmarking and certification consultancy, defined regenerative tourism as '*a process where tourism sector stakeholders, collectively, exert care and guardianship (through decision-making and practices) for the improvement and enhancement of natural, human and human-made elements when moving to, visiting, living or operating in, a destination.*

Tourism Insights (2023) argued that '*regenerative tourism embodies a holistic approach that transcends the confines of traditional tourism*', that '*it nurtures collaborations and partnerships among all stakeholders, fostering diversity within local economies to mitigate overdependence on tourism for survival*', that '*an*

inclusive decision-making space empowers local populations to contribute to both community well-being and environmental stewardship’, and that ‘travellers are encouraged to participate in projects that revitalize local communities and nurture the environment, fostering a deeper connection with the destination.

On the academic side, Dredge (2022) suggests that regenerative tourism *‘seeks to ensure travel and tourism reinvest in people, places and nature and that it supports the long-term renewal and flourishing of our social-ecological systems.’* Luong et al. (2023) defined regenerative tourism as a *‘responsible and proactive approach to tourism that prioritizes sustainability and seeks to restore tourism resources while promoting the well-being and harmony of local communities. This is achieved through activities that focus on resources restoration, carbon-offsetting, and energy-saving, while fostering harmonized communities and promoting sustainable practices.’* For Suarez-Rojas et al. (2023) *‘regenerative tourism is a novel concept that, in departing from the traditional ideas of sustainability, goes beyond the sustainable development paradigm in order to transform the social-ecological systems where tourism takes place’, and ‘it relies on social awareness building and the co-creation of meaningful tourism experiences, promotes local involvement and genuine community benefits, as well as a restorative relationship with nature in all dimensions and at all scales.’*

Discussions about regenerative tourism are often bound up with its relationship with sustainable tourism. For some commentators the two represent distinct paths, each offering a unique vision of the future. Here, sustainable tourism, looks to restrict and manage the tourism industry’s negative, environmental, social and economic impacts, and it looks to reconcile the often competing, interests of the industry, tourists, the environment, and host communities, and to encourage and facilitate more responsible, and ideally, more sustainable, patterns of consumption. Regenerative tourism is seen to be more concerned not only with a commitment to mitigate the damaging and exploitative impacts of tourism, but also to make a positive contribution to the revitalisation of local ecosystems, cultures, communities and economies. More generally, *‘regenerative tourism is not meant to be a one- size-fits-all phenomenon’, rather ‘a baseline to bring together mutually agreeable goals and is predicated upon different groups working responsibly, where outcomes should be regularly monitored over time and place’* (Sharma and Tham 2023).

Literature Review

In looking to undertake a review of the current academic literature, it is important to recognise that regenerative tourism is essentially a new field, and that clearly defined research agendas have yet to be formed. Corral-Gonzalez et al. (2023), for example, claimed that although regenerative tourism represented *‘a beacon of hope’*, to tackle tourism problems, its multidisciplinary nature and fragmentation had hindered the identification of major thematic areas for researchers. That said, four research themes, namely, the opportunities and challenges of regenerative tourism; mindset shifts; focus areas; and theoretical

approaches; can be identified within the existing literature.

Sharma and Tham (2023) looked to examine the opportunities and challenges of regenerative tourism. Here, the opportunities are centred on renewal to the natural and human environment, and on fostering resilience and peoples' sense of identity, on contributing to placemaking and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, and on creating new learning and leadership within the industry. A number of the challenges identified are associated with facilitating the growth of the circular economy, the need to facilitate the upcycling of resource utilisation, which will in turn reinforce the shift of tourism from being purely consumptive to taking on board how visitors can co-create transformative outcomes that favour tourism destinations and their communities. More generally Bellato and Pollock (2023) listed three factors '*stalling*' the shift to regenerative tourism, namely a reductionist mindset, which leads to fragmentation and competition, the dominant industrial paradigm which separates humans from nature, and the limited attention paid to how paradigm shift could occur in tourism.

Dredge (2022) emphasised the importance of the mindset shift needed to transition to a regenerative approach to tourism. She argued that the regenerative mindset was underpinned by an ecological view of the world, and that basically regenerative tourism seeks to ensure that tourism is concerned to reinvest in people, places and nature, and to support the long-term renewal of socio-economic systems. That said, Dredge (2022) further argued that making the required leap to a regenerative mindset in tourism was difficult, because of the industry's attachment to scientific thinking and strategic management. More specifically, Dredge (2022) claimed that regenerative tourism was a '*capacity building journey, not an outcome, a plan or a single output*', and that '*shifting individual understanding and mindsets provides the most powerful lever for change.*'

The literature on focus areas, embraced both specific geographical locations and thematic elements. On the geographic side, Fuste-Forne and Hussain (2022) provided a case study of regenerative tourism in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Here the authors argued that regenerative tourism should not be implemented as a new type of tourism, but as a holistic understanding of tourism futures that includes communities and the environment, where tourists are committed to preserve and protect both the natural and the socio-cultural environment. The findings revealed that regenerative tourism must protect and promote local identities, and enhance and enrich visitor experiences, with a focus on both cultural and natural heritage. Mathisen et al. (2022) undertook co-created case study research with the owners of a small value driven tourism company in Arctic Norway. The findings revealed that the values of the company's owners constituted the '*soul creating regenerative activities*', based on the reciprocity of soil and society, that the authors affirmed that '*soil, soul, and society*' were at the core of developing regenerative tourism activities, and that this is challenging for small ecologically driven companies within a capital centric system.

More thematically, Suarez-Rojas et al. (2023) recognised that the tourism activity of whale watching, which attracts large numbers of tourists, is causing increasing damage to the natural environment. Here the authors looked to build a new integrative framework for research actions developed on the concept of

regenerative tourism, with the aim of providing a more balanced evaluation of environmentally and socially responsible whale watching tourism. Alvarez (2024) argued that the regenerative management of coastal tourism destinations can transform them into carbon sinks and help to bring about the landscape scale restoration of blue carbon ecosystems, such as marshes, mangroves and seagrass meadows.

While much of the research on regenerative tourism has an empirical focus, some limited attempts have been made to explore theoretical perspectives. Bellato et al. (2022), for example, looked to leverage theory and practice to develop a conceptual framework, which consisted of five design dimensions. The design dimensions were a regenerative mindset; the inherent potential in the place and the community; the capability of tourism living systems to catalyse transformations and to adopt healing processes; establishing what will guide tourism stakeholders to develop a reciprocal relationship with nature and contribute to flourishing places and communities; and understanding how tourism stakeholders will contribute resources and implement tasks to enable regeneration within, and beyond, tourism systems.

Method of Enquiry

The paper employs a simple multiple case study approach and offers four cameo case studies to illustrate the characteristics of a range of regenerative tourism initiatives in the UK. Rowley (2002) that argued '*case studies have often been viewed as a useful tool for the preliminary exploratory stage of a research project*', and a case study approach has been used previously in examining regenerative tourism in the resort town of Yulara in Northern territories, Australia (Owen 2007). The material for the cameo case studies was generated by an Internet search, conducted in April 2024, using the single search term regenerative tourism initiatives in the UK. The four initiatives, used to develop the cameo case studies, used the term regenerative tourism to describe themselves, and thus there was an element of self-selection in the information collection process.

In developing the cameo case studies, the author developed a narrative account of each of the regenerative initiatives, and on a number of occasions quotes verbatim from the websites in order to lend authenticity to the narrative. The material used in the case studies is in the public domain and the author took the view that it was unnecessary to seek formal approval to use it. The author is well aware of the limitations of the cameo case studies, not least in that the initiatives were effectively self-chosen and in that the cameo case studies did not employ primary empirical material gathered from the leaders/managers of the chosen regenerative initiatives, but relied exclusively on Internet sources. However, the author believes this to be a valid approach to a topic that has, to date, received little or no attention in the academic literature.

Cameo Case Studies of Regenerative Tourism Initiatives in the UK

A total of four regenerative tourism initiatives, namely Broughton Sanctuary, Cynefin Regenerative Tourism, Discover Cullen, and Tourism Regeneration in North East England, within the UK, were identified for the cameo case studies. The four initiatives vary in their characteristics, they include well established and more aspirational ventures, and they are in different parts of the UK, and as such they provide a range of illustrations of regenerative tourism.

Broughton Sanctuary (2024), near Skipton in North Yorkshire, which offers a range of visitor accommodation, describes itself as *'a shining example of regenerative tourism'*, and claims to be *'a place where heritage, nature and modern wellness coexist in harmony'*, and to offer *'authentic and immersive retreats that go beyond traditional tourism experiences.'* Broughton Sanctuary emphasised that its commitment to regenerative tourism was rooted in three elements, nature recovery and conservation, sustainable agriculture, and community engagement and empowerment.

In addressing its commitment to nature recovery and conservation, for example, Broughton Sanctuary (2024) claimed that its 1,200 hectares of woodlands, meadows and farmland *'provides an ideal canvas for rewilding projects'*, that its *'dedication to biodiversity restoration includes planting native species, managing habitats for wildlife and even reintroducing species that had previously disappeared from the area'*, and that *'these efforts not only benefit the local ecosystem but also offer visitors the opportunity to reconnect with nature and witness the positive effects of regenerative practices.'* Community engagement is also seen as a key element in the regenerative tourism approach at Broughton Sanctuary. Partnerships have been established to support local businesses, and Broughton Business Park has over 50 companies and employs over 600 people.

The Cynefin Regenerative Tourism initiative at Galwad y Mor on the Saint David's peninsula in South Wales claims to have been established some 40 years ago. Here, there is accommodation for over 60 visitors, and the focus is on attracting and hosting visitors *'who want to make a difference to our community and volunteer within the wealth of local environmentally sustainable organisations who work ethically to protect our community and environment'* (Galwad y Mor 2024). This initiative includes Car and Mor, a community owned business, and Eco Dewi, a community group looking to contribute to tackling the climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis, and to weave community, nature, well-being and business together.

There is an explicit recognition that regenerative tourism is *'no quick fix'*, that *'solutions take time and are place specific'*, and that *'it only works by asking and empowering the local community'* (Galwad y Mor 2024). The initiative embraces what it describes as *'voluntourism'*, which involves individual and group volunteering designed to support both the local community and environment, and as such to contribute to regenerative tourism, which is seen as the *'mutual exchange of well-being of people and place'* (Galwad y Mor 2024).

Discover Cullen, a volunteer led community tourism organisation established in the mid-1990s, is a regenerative tourism initiative, centred on the small seaside

town of Cullen on the Murray Firth in the North East of Scotland. The focus is on promoting tourism, local businesses and a range of activities, and community groups, businesses and individuals to enhance the local area, for example, by supporting the creation of new walking trails and interpretation facilities, and safeguarding its heritage. The initiative claims to have developed a *'collaborative, inclusive approach that has created an enterprise that is truly embedded in its community and thus has sustainable tourism development. It inspires and fosters ideas, carefully balancing tourism and community needs'* (Scottish Community Tourism 2024).

Four elements, namely community, nature, place and visitor are identified as being central to the Discover Cullen approach. In addressing community, for example, the importance of leading by example is emphasised thus inspiring other groups to take on a range of spin-off projects, such as local festivals, as is the active collaboration and partnership working between local organisations and more informal groups. In focusing on nature, the emphasis has been on encouraging and promoting local excursions, on the provision of trail maps to encourage walking activities, and on regular beach cleaning events and the provision of seagull proof bins.

Looking more to the future, Destination North East England (2023), a UK government funded regional tourism pilot, claims that its *'Regenerative Tourism'* initiative is *'committed to working with industry to make tourism work for both people and the planet'*, and that regenerative tourism *'ensures that tourism is sustainable, driving value for local people and places as well as the tourist.'* Here, the focus is to be on the co-creation of a *'Regenerative Tourism Framework'*, and on aligning this activity across seven local authorities in the region. Within the framework, a task force, drawn from residents, local decision makers and industry, will look to co-create sustainable and circular strategies and mindsets to focus on destinations and communities.

More generally, the initiative is seen as an opportunity to raise the profile and unlock the potential of the North East region's visitor economy, which is the fourth largest employer in the region, and it is hoped that the additional support that will be available to existing businesses through the initiative will help to create the business case for further investment in the region's visitor economy. As such, the aim is for the region to act as a potential blueprint for other regions of England, to *'help shape the future landscape of tourism organisations.'*

Reflective Conclusions

The four cameo case studies provide some illustrations of regenerative tourism initiatives in the UK, but three brief sets of reflective conclusions merit attention. Firstly, there are issues about the scale of regenerative tourism within the UK, and here there are two dimensions. On the one hand, very few tourism initiatives explicitly publicly identify themselves as regenerative on the Internet. This suggests that the scale of regenerative tourism is, as yet, very limited, and that the assertion by Bellato et al. (2022) that there is little or no interest in applying the

concept, would certainly seem to resonate within the UK. On the other hand, the three established regenerative tourism initiatives, are all essentially small-scale ventures in rural areas, and this might be seen to call into question the efficacy of developing large scale regenerative tourism initiatives.

Secondly, and more generally, there are issues in, and around, the relationship between regenerative tourism and sustainable development. On the one hand, regenerative tourism's commitment, for example, to protect and enhance nature and to support and work co-creatively with local communities, is consistent with sustainable development. However, regenerative initiatives and venues cannot be considered in isolation, and visitors may generate carbon dioxide emissions on their journeys to these venues, or the venues themselves, may not always be able to source local produce. At the same time, if regenerative tourism is to make a significant contribution to sustainable development, then it will need to be developed on a large scale.

Thirdly, and more radically, there is the argument that genuinely regenerative tourism is dependent on a shift to a new global economic model, centred on abandoning economic growth and on prioritising nature and the natural and social welfare of the planet. At the present time, the prospects of such a vision of the future seems unlikely to commend itself to the mainstream tourism industry, the wider corporate world, or to governments. Cave et al. (2022), for example, argued that '*the challenge is that seven decades of growth have thwarted any appetite to imagine new and alternative economic models in tourism.*' By way of a concluding summary, it is surely premature to suggest that regenerative tourism offers a transformative solution to the current environmental, social, cultural, and economic challenges posed by tourism.

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