

Reformist of Rural Tourism's Strategy in Jordan: Crucial Factors Towards Destination Appeals Among Tourists

Sakher A.I. Al-Bazaiah*

Faculty of Business, Al-Balqa Applied University, Assalt, Jordan

*Corresponding Email: bazaiah1@bau.edu.jo

ABSTRACT

Rural tourism plays an important role on the post pandemic, local economic recovery and community development empowerment in Jordan. Rural tourism destination appeals take focus as endogenous variable on the research journey and, the present study hypothesised destination image, destination awareness, destination accessibility, hard and soft factor attractions, community-based tourism and cultural events, local meeting, incentives, conventions and exhibition and characteristics of rural tourism destinations as exogenous variables on the structural model analysis configuration. Resources Based View (RBV) was stated as underpinning theory of seven endogenous variables of rural tourism destination appeals. Stratified random sampling using probability mechanism gathered 283 respondents through combination online and offline data collection. Advanced Quantitative Analysis (AQA) using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) SmartPLS succeed to identified direct effect of exogenous variables on the rural tourism destination appeals. This thesis found local meeting, incentives, convention and exhibition as a highest influence on the endogenous variable and follow by characteristics and community-based tourism practices within rural tourism in Jordan. The present study significantly contributed to the body of knowledge of tourism management and will play role as a main guidance for local government, tourism practitioners and relevant stakeholders on their daily as well as decision making policy.

Keywords: *Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Rural Tourism Destination Appeals, Rural Tourism Jordan.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has spread to nearly every country in the world, with a few exclusions impacting primarily economically fragile nations. Like many other nations in the world, Jordan faces a variety of challenges. There are several significant socioeconomic challenges, such as a high unemployment rate, especially among youth, and economies that do not provide enough jobs to meet the needs of the labor market, causing young people to engage in risky behavior and the impact of the COVID-19 problem. Recognizing the need to deepen national conversation on future skill requirements through the identification of job growth drivers and the development of associated employment demand scenarios. As a result of diverse previous activities and policy dialogue initiated with concerned policymakers in Jordan, the tourism sector has been chosen to be highlighted in terms of the skills required for its various occupations, as it has been the most severely impacted of the major economic sectors by the COVID-19 outbreak (UNESCO & EU, 2020). Since the dawn of time, people have travelled all over the world for various reasons and for varying lengths of time. Travel has continued to expand and assumed an important position in the global evolution of civilizations. Now, the term tourism has been coined by the United Nations before the widespread practice of travelling throughout the world. According to UNWTO, travel and tourism contributed nearly \$2.9 trillion to the U.S. gross domestic product in 2019. In addition, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that there are around 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals each year, a number

that rises gradually practically every year and rural tourism becomes preferred destination among recent tourists ([UNWTO, 2017](#)).

Jordan, one of the few Middle Eastern nations, in the stony desert of the northern Arabian Peninsula. Jordan's national economy depends heavily on tourism. Jordan offers all types of tourists, including cultural, therapeutic, environmental, and agricultural tourism. It is also the second-highest producer of foreign exchange and the second-largest private sector employer. Jordan's economy receives \$14,190 million in US dollars from tourism, which contributed 14.7% of the nation's GDP in 2015 (as opposed to only 10% in 2004) ([Bickerton et al., 2022](#)). With its consistently pleasant weather throughout the year, Petra (which was named the second wonder of the world in 2007), the Dead Sea, Madaba (Church of the Map), Nebo Mountain, Jerash, and the Baptism site in the Jordan Valley, Jordan is home to numerous well-known tourist destinations. Tourists are drawn to it because of its political stability, which has made it one of the region's safest nations for as long as 40 years. Formal consideration in terms of promoting tourism and conserving nature 1966 marked the beginning of Jordan's resources with the establishment of Ministry of Tourism (MoT) and Royal Society for the Promotion of Tourism Conservation of Nature (RSCN), which holds the designation duties for managing Jordan's natural resources under a mandate from the government of Jordan ([RSCN, 2017](#)). Numerous ministries and organizations have endeavored since their establishment to develop a network of protected areas in Jordan that can serve as an economic incentive and a source of national income. Jordan's tourism is founded on community and environmental preservation. Consequently, it reduces the negative environmental and social impacts of activities and maximizes their local community and environmental advantages.

In Jordan, various rural homes and farms are available as tourist accommodations. This service is one component of the rural tourism business that appeals strongly to tourist families seeking an ecotourism experience. In effect, the tourism initiatives serve as a source of income for rural residents and aids in the protection and management of rural landscapes and buildings against unnatural deterioration ([Zamil, 2011](#)). Rural tourism is prevalent in certain regions of Jordan, particularly mountainous regions. This sort of tourism is based on activities that have favourable benefits on the health, natural resources, and climate of tourists ([El-Harami, 2014](#)). In this regard, agritourism activities include events highlighting agritourism products and services through edu-entertainment, which relates to tourists' and residents' on-site education ([Abuamoud, Libbin, Green & ALRousan, 2014](#)).

Rural tourism defined as a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle or culture, angling and sightseeing ([Sharin, Sentosa & Perumal, 2022](#)). However, some international tourists and locals in Jordan are uncertain and confused about the rural tourism destination's merits. Rural tourism's attractiveness to tourist places appears diffuse. Tourists or travelers typically visit destinations with attractions they can enjoy. It is stated that attractions are also common qualities of tourism destination appeals that might boost the number of tourists visiting a location. Tourism appeals, for instance, have been defined as specific tourism destination elements or characteristics, such as the people, culture, climate, landscape characteristics, tourist-related activities, gastronomy, and history ([Ruzulan, Jamaludin & Hashim, 2022](#)).

Similarly, to urban and coastal tourism, the attractiveness of rural tourism resides on the variety and quality of attractions and facilities ([Osman & Sentosa, 2013](#)). Prior studies confirmed that rural communities all around the world are developing and implementing tourism projects as a way to diversify and revive their local economies ([Obeidat, 2022](#);

Baskerville, 2013). Therefore, it's a crucial to study the best mechanism to boost this industry by examine the push and pull factors towards rural tourism destination in Jordan. The objectives of this study are to observe the determinant of rural tourism destination appeals in Jordan and also, to analyse the perspectives on destination appeals, especially among locals and tourists. A place which attracts a tourist may not become attractive to other tourists. At the end, this study can increase acknowledgement about rural tourism destination appeals in Jordan among the community and government to continue developing the rural tourism industry.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Underpinning Theory

The origins of resource-based view (RBV) theory may be traced back to the time when Penrose (1959) asserted that having, using, and deploying resources effectively will offer superior results than other industrial systems. This study can be linked to the exogenous variables (IV). This technique defined the firm's long-term competitive advantage in terms of resource performance (Wernerfelt, 1984), and he used the phrase "resource base view" to express how the researcher viewed firms in terms of key resources. Researchers highlight the definition of "core competency," whereas it placed an emphasis on a variety of significant resources, termed the firm capability, which they referred to as competitive advantage. Even now, the RBV appears to be a relevant theory that may be practised and used because it is an extension of the firm-growth theory. According to Samsudin et al. (2019), from a management standpoint, the sustainable development components should be prioritised alongside the enhancement and knowledge of the study's setting and methodologies. Aside from business owners on the path to expansion, it is necessary to examine a resource-based approach. Businesses can run more efficiently when all resources are evaluated. Business owners can overcome growth adversities or reduce direction changes and growth obstacles by selecting an appropriate development plan. This theory emphasize that the managerial team need a structure to define how a firm's innovation and openness characters and evolves into rapid and timely, or effect towards the dynamic of the marketplace and flexibility as well. Dimensions are expected to be the key influencers on the long-term viability of network service providers and the success of business performance in this environment (Kiiru, 2013). Furthermore, these resource dimensions are concurrently tied to the community's view or sentiments toward the repercussions of corporate activity. Papp and Luftman (1995) noted in their research that the use of competency aspects and the way SMEs operators organise resources among the community would create a discrete competency and positively impact industry and local economic growth (Sentosa et al., 2021). The RBV also discovered opportunities for firms to become more competitive in any economic situation by emphasising the resource's uniqueness (Grewal, Iyer, Javalgi & Radulovich, 2011).

2.2 Rural Tourism Destination Appeals

Examining the current literature demonstrates that there are a variety of definitions of tourist attractions. In addition to the definition of tourist appeals offered in the introduction by Krešić and Prebežac (2011), Ritchie and Crouch (2003) define tourism appeals as tourism attractions that significantly contribute to the destination's appeal. The destination appeals or tourism attractions, referred to as "core resources and attractors," at the centre of their model of destination competitiveness to underline the importance of these aspects as the fundamental reasons why visitors chose one area over another. In addition, Lewis (1987) defined tourism attractions as all the attractions of tourist destinations that motivate people to leave their permanent residence in order to travel to a geographic region in order to experience the numerous tourism offerings accessible there. Numerous research projects investigate how destination attractions attract visitors and investigate tourism theories. In the context of this study, these variables pertain to the push and pull elements of tourism business motivation. Some data supports the push and pull paradigm despite the absence of a broadly accepted understanding of tourist motivation (Yoon, Jeong, Chon Yoon, 2019). This is due to motivation

has fueled tourists' desire to travel or explore. This is a common hypothesis that attempts to explain why visitors choose a certain destination over others, the type of experience they wish to have, and the kinds of activities they wish to engage in (Prayag Hosany, 2014). Consequently, this concept helps to explain the purpose of this study, which is to determine the rural tourism destination attractions that will encourage visitors and locals to visit Jordan. This method is helpful when this research covers the variables that draw tourists to a rural place. The variables are a mixture of push and pull factors.

According to Prayag and Hosany (2014), a push factor is something that motivates someone to travel. Push factor refers to a psychological motivator, such as social engagement, the need for escape, adventure, relaxation, and self-exploration (Chen & Chen, 2015). As tourism is a complex service, according to Katsikari et al. (2020), travelers or tourists spend a large deal of time researching information before choosing a location. Searching is defined as the requirement for travelers to examine multiple sources prior to making a decision in order to facilitate travel preparation. Frequently, information is used to lessen the perceived danger and uncertainty connected with travel to unknown areas. Using analysis variables, a recent research study identifies nine (9) pull factors that have been decreased from fifty-six (56) qualities. There is community hospitality and services, travel cost and convenience, perceptions of a secure environment, refreshment and sporting activities, entertainment and drinking opportunities, personal and historical connection, cultural and shopping amenity, and unusual and remote vacation destinations (Sirakaya & McLellan, 1997). The push and pull strategy idea outlines the factors or attractions that travelers concentrate on since they believe there is nothing to see at a rural site. Push and pull aspects of tourist destinations have primarily been studied in locations other than rural tourism destinations, making the current study essential for determining the attractions of rural tourism destinations (Salsabila & Alversia, 2020). In addition, the original sources of literature indicate that portions of tourist destination appeals have been used to show tourist destination attractions. People may feel that Jordan has no rural tourism attractions, according to this survey. In addition to these literary analyses, the rural tourism attractions of Jordan are discussed in greater depth, with a particular emphasis on their diversity. As destination experiences, these appeals discuss public (infrastructures) and private (superstructures) service, accessibility, human resources, image and personality, as well as pricing or costs (Katsikari et al. (2020).

2.3 Destination Image

The image of a tourist site is one of its attractions. Destination image is important since it provides part of the answer required to establish a location's tourism appeal. A positive perception of a rural tourism destination is essential for recruiting potential visitors. According to Anholt (2010), national or destination image is vital to the travel and tourism industry, which is why destination branding has been granted such importance. Additionally, destination image is consistent with the research on the factors that impact the perceived destination image, such as trekking, landscape, weather, hotel and self-catering accommodations, relaxation, and gastronomy (Beerli & Martin, 2004). According to this study, promoting Jordan as a rural travel and exploration destination requires a strong destination image. This is due to the fact that a destination's image discloses and manages tourists' views and contributes to the construction of a unique personality, since places can be branded by managing their destination personality. In this study, the research framework measures destination image along three continuums representing dimensions. The first continuum is the image type, which can range from an attribute-based image to a global or holistic image. The second continuum is based on a functional image composed of bits of information, whereas the third continuum is based on a psychological image composed of perceptions and impressions. Therefore, it is expected that the positive of Jordan's image as a destination for rural tourism may appeal to tourists, indirectly contributes to the growth number of traveler (Al-okaily, 2015).

2.4 Destination Awareness and Identity

Commonly, place awareness and identity refer to a traveler's ability to recognize the existence of a tourist site that offers an extraordinary tourism experience. How a traveler becomes aware of a tourism destination is the central issue. Due to rurality, isolation, and the lack of marketing efforts to promote rural tourism destinations, destination knowledge and identity are especially important in rural areas. However, the most effective strategy for developing destination awareness and identity is word-of-mouth. [Harrison-Walker \(2001\)](#) defined word-of-mouth as "informal, person-to-person communication about a brand, product, or service between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver." For the purposes of this study, destination awareness and identity are the most important determinants of whether individuals are aware of or familiar with a location prior to vacationing or travelling there. Aside from that, this is crucial for delivering a satisfying tourism experience to visitors and other groups in Jordan. According to a separate study, destination or place brand is a substitute for destination consciousness and identification. It is a network of institutions in a physical or virtual area where marketing-related transactions and activities take place, which is formed in the consumer's consciousness through visual and verbal manifestations of a location. Consumer perceptions of a destination's communication, values, and culture comprise its brand ([Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006](#)). Prior research has shown that locality awareness and identification contribute to the allure of rural tourism locations. Tourists are more inclined to visit a location if they are aware of its accessibility. Consequently, it is hypothesised that destination awareness and destination identity are related to rural tourist destination appeals ([Sawagvudcharee & Preechawong, 2016](#)).

2.5 Destination Accessibility

Mobility policy objectives have for a long time sought to develop more eco-friendly transport in tourist destinations ([Smith, Robbins & Dickinson, 2019](#)). The accessibility of a destination has an effect on a location's tourism potential among residents and tourists. Transportation and road access are crucial for attracting tourists and assuring their safety or comfort. As demonstrated by the contents of this variable, measures of Jordan's accessibility are based on the attractive placement elements in addition to the existing transportation in rural areas. Jordan is a small country, so it is easy to locate and access, yet within this small area, there are several tourist destinations that are simple to locate. Accessibility is a theoretical concept that illustrates the location of opportunities such as activities, services, goods, and facilities in relation to individuals, as well as the ease or difficulty of acquiring access to these chances ([Yen, Chen, & Ho, 2021](#)). Therefore, it is argued that destination accessibility is a factor in the attraction of rural tourism destinations.

2.6 Hard and Soft Factors Attraction

From previous studies, the hard ([Pride, 2008](#)) and soft ([McIntyre et al., 1993](#)) factors contribute to the destination's appeal for tourism. Both hard and soft element attractions are essential in a rural tourism region. According to various sources of information on rural tourism destinations, the physical environment, which includes ecotourism, recreational forest/flora, fauna, mountains, rivers, beaches, sea, and sand, is considered to be the most challenging feature ([Jiwan, Alan & Lepun, 2008](#)). Soft aspects consist of culture, traditional clothes and beliefs, language, traditional music, societal norms and values, history, heritage, people and local residents' behaviours, intellectual needs of tourists, storytelling, past legend-related activities, natural environment, climate, and feel ([Illiachenko, 2005](#)). Some individuals perceive these variables as attractions because each hard and soft aspect offers them unique sensations and gratifications. It indicates that the previously specified hard and soft features attract visitors to the place. This is because some tourists may find the physical beauties of a rural region appealing, while others may find the abstract attractions intriguing. In addition, rural tourism is today a competitive industry in which

the identification of tourists' perspectives on the hard and soft services components for the expansion of rural tourism is essential for survival in the expanding tourism sector (Lo, Chin & Law, 2019). Consequently, it is theorized that both hard and soft characteristics draw tourists to rural areas.

2.7 Community-Based Tourism and Cultural Events (CBTCEs) and Local Meetings Incentives Convention and Exhibitions (L-MICE)

The purpose of Community-Based Tourism and Cultural Events (CBTCEs) and Local Meetings Incentives Convention and Exhibitions (L-MICE) is to elicit information from participants regarding their knowledge of community-based tourism and cultural events (CBTCEs). In this section, community-based tourism and cultural events (CBTCEs) are distinguished from local meetings, incentives, conferences, and expositions (L-MICE). Prior research reveals that there are intriguing perspectives of various events that can be transformed into tourist events to complement annual food and cultural festivals in building a framework for destination appeals for rural places, especially in Jordan for the objectives of this study. Consequently, this implies that the uniqueness of each event attracts tourists to rural areas. Consistent with recent studies on the roles of events in tourism destination development (Esu & Arrey, 2009) and the benefits of tourists' return journeys to the host area, these findings suggest that events play an important role in the development of tourism destinations (Yu, Wang & Seo, 2012). Government and travel agencies in certain nations believe that these events could stimulate the tourism industry, especially in rural areas. Tourists are intrigued by the novelty and uniqueness of the events held, since each site has a unique set of contents and procedures for event management. According to Getz (2012, 2013), event tourism at the destination level is the marketing and growth of organised events as tourist attractions, catalysts, animators, and place marketers.

2.8 Characteristics of a Destination for Rural Tourism

According to various sources of information, the features or characteristics of rural tourism destinations are the starting point for identifying tourism destination appeals (Sharin et al., 2022). This is essential for participants to recognize the attributes of a rural tourism destination due to its link with tourism destination attractions, which attract people to the destination. In addition, the participants' ability to distinguish between rural tourism destinations and other tourism destinations is essential for obtaining accurate and complete information from them via a comprehensive and objective survey. Based on the primary reviewed research study (Adeyinka-Ojo & Nair, 2015), a number of respondents described rural tourism destinations using a variety of characteristics that were ultimately categorized into four essential components. These include a remote, natural, and authentic experience; a communal engagement; a lack of infrastructures; and people and culture. One of the components suggests that rural tourism is appropriate since it provides for emotionally strong and generous connections between visitors and hosts (Christou & Sharpley, 2019). Therefore, it is a characteristic of rural tourism destinations. Based on the key characteristics of rural tourism locations, it is obvious that these folks are familiar with rural tourism destinations or the countryside, as it is termed in developed nations (Nulty, 2004). According to Holden (1984), alternative tourism also stimulates people's engagement in decision-making and tourism development. Additionally, alternative tourism encompasses economic, social, and cultural concerns in addition to the physical environment concern that characterizes green tourism. Therefore, it is linked to the concept of sustainable tourism development. Consequently, it is possible to hypothesize that rural tourism destination appeals are related to rural tourism destination characteristics. The items and measurements utilised in this investigation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Variables and Measurements

Variables	Code	Items	Sources
Destination Image	DI1	Jordan has a unique rural destination.	Adeyinka-Ojo, and Nair (2015) Jeong, Holland, Jun, and Gibson (2012)
	DI2	I have a positive perception towards Jordan as a place good for travelling	
	DI3	Jordan has a rural hospitality experience	
	DI4	Jordan has an adventurous atmosphere	
	DI5	Jordan offers a lot in terms of natural scene beauty	
	DI6	Jordan is a safe place to visit	
Destination Awareness and Identity	DAI1	Jordan is known as one of tourist rural destinations	Adeyinka-Ojo, and Nair (2015)
	DAI2	I can find interesting places in Jordan when travelling through Internet	
	DAI3	Jordan has its own identity as a rural tourist destination	
	DAI4	I have seen advertisements about Jordan on television and pamphlets	
	DAI5	I have heard about Jordan a lot from my friends	
	DAI6	I have read recommendation about Jordan on social media	
Destination Accessibility	DA1	Good tourist information about Jordan is readily available	Jeong, Holland, Jun and Gibson (2012) Adeyinka-Ojo, and Nair (2015)
	DA2	Local transportation in Jordan is efficient and convenient	
	DA3	E-hailing services are sufficient in Jordan	
	DA4	It is more convenient to travel to Jordan by airplane than bus	
	DA5	Most of Jordan destinations are accessible	
	DA6	Local people are highly knowledgeable about places in Jordan	
Hard and Soft Factors Attraction	DA7	Jordan has good accommodation accessibility for tourists	Adeyinka-Ojo, and Nair (2015) Jeong, Holland, Jun and Gibson (2012)
	HSF1	Jordan has historical and cultural heritage	
	HSF2	Jordan has plenty of quality accommodations	
	HSF3	Jordan has many natural attractions	
	HSF4	Jordan has its own local product as souvenirs for tourist	
	HSF5	The local food in Jordan is amazing	
Community-Based Tourism and Cultural Events	HSF6	I can easily build a friendly relationship with Jordan community	Adeyinka-Ojo, and Nair (2015)
	CBT1	Jordan has its own cultural attractions	
	CBT2	Local community of Jordan often holds cultural events	
	CBT3	There are community-based places in Jordan for tourism activities	
	CBT4	I visit to Jordan for a food festival	
	CBT5	I have attended a traditional ceremony in Jordan	
Local meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions	LME1	Government agencies often chooses Jordan as one of tourism developmental places	Adeyinka-Ojo, and Nair (2015)
	LME2	Travel agencies usually sets up a tourism exhibition in Jordan	
	LME3	Jordan has suitable places for conventions	
	LME4	I have heard people do local meetings in Jordan for tourism development	
	LME5	Jordan has annual exhibitions for tourism	
Characteristics of Rural Tourism Destinations	CRT1	Jordan is a welcoming place for tourists	Adeyinka-Ojo, and Nair (2015)
	CRT2	Local people in Jordan are communicative	
	CRT3	Jordan is located out of city center	
	CRT4	Jordan offers natural experience	
	CRT5	Jordan offers leisure activities	
	CRT6	Jordan has beautiful scenery for relaxation	
Rural Tourism Destination Appeals	RT1	Jordan is an appealing rural destination for tourists	Adeyinka-Ojo, and Nair (2015)
	RT2	Destination image of Jordan is a factor of destination appeal for rural tourism	
	RT3	People are aware that Jordan is a rural tourism destination	
	RT4	Tourists can easily access to Jordan	
	RT5	Jordan has plenty attractions for rural tourism	
	RT6	Jordan regularly sets up community-based events for tourism	
	RT7	People often come to Jordan for cultural festivals	

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes and employs a quantitative methodology to obtain information from the samples. [Cohen & Manion \(1980\)](#) defines quantitative research as social research that utilizes methodologies and empirical assertions. In addition, he emphasizes that an empirical assertion is a descriptive statement that reflects what "is" the case in the "actual world" as opposed to what "should be" the case. Consequently, the quantitative method is essential for

this study to determine the actual observations on rural tourism and Jordanian destination attractiveness. Also used are empirical evaluations, which seek to determine the extent to which a certain program or policy empirically meets or does not meet a particular standard. In this instance, researchers finally use observation to uncover the truth. This method requires numerical data and mathematical terminology in order to determine the outcomes. Quantitative approach is essentially the collection of numerical data to explain particular phenomena and answering questions. The specific phenomenon that must be studied in this study is: What makes Jordan an attractive location for rural tourism? Therefore, this methodology is appropriate for this study, which examines the allure of rural tourism destinations in Jordan. Quantitatively observed specific questions are referred to as items in each variable of this study. Quantitative research focuses mostly on quantifying social reality (Sukamolson, 2007). The researchers apply quantitative methods to view the world as an observable reality. In order to avoid inaccuracies, data gathering, and analysis must adhere to strict protocols. Quantitative research employed for this study is survey research. Survey research is comprised of scientific sampling and questionnaire design to accurately calculate population characteristics. It allows researchers to compare groups and provides estimates from a sample that can be extrapolated to the complete population. In addition, survey research is employed in this study to test hypotheses between variables in order to further explain and establish specific links. The theoretical framework representing the hypothesised relationship between exogenous factors and endogenous variables is depicted in Figure 1. Based on the literature review, hypotheses of this observation for this study are:

H1: There is a positive relationship between destination image and rural tourism destination appeals.

H2: There is a positive relationship between destination awareness and identity and rural tourism destination appeals.

H3: There is a positive relationship between destination accessibility and rural tourism destination appeals.

H4: There is a positive relationship between hard and soft factors attraction and rural tourism destination appeals.

H5: There is a positive relationship between community-based tourism and cultural events and rural tourism destination appeals.

H6: There is a positive relationship between local meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions and rural tourism destination appeals.

H7: There is a positive relationship between characteristics of rural tourism destination and rural tourism destination appeals.

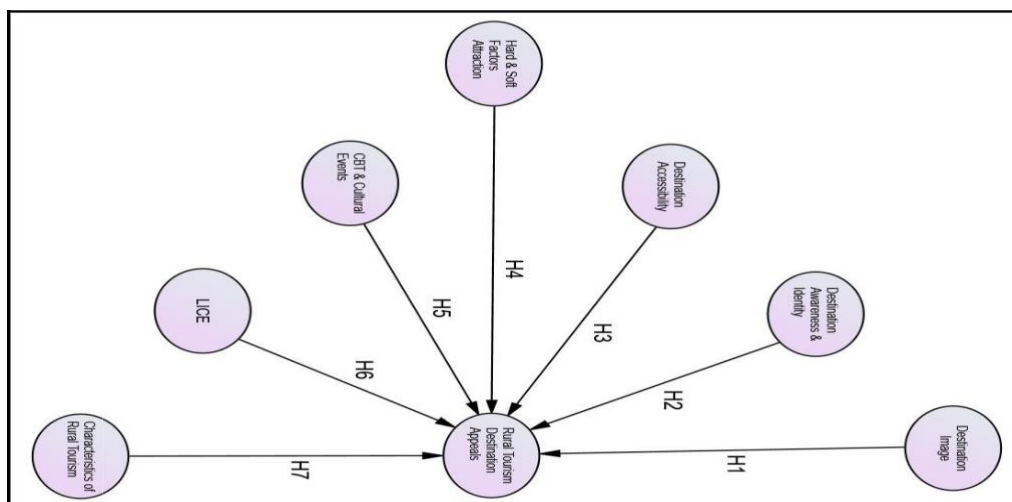


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework (Adopted from Adeyinka-Ojo and Nair, 2015)

3.1 Population and Sample

According to Sukamolson (2007), the ultimate objective of quantitative research is to generalise the degree of confidence discovered in samples to the population. Therefore, the quantity of samples is sufficient to analyse the population appeal of rural tourism destinations in Jordan. For this study, 283 samples answered to our survey, which was sent directly and indirectly through family and friends.

3.2 Data Collection Technique

Survey research that is conducted in this study is concerned with sampling, questionnaire design, questionnaire administration and data analysis. According to Creswell (1994), he states that quantitative research is a type of research which explains phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods, particularly statistics. Hence, Google

Form, Smart PLSS and SPSS are used as collective and analysis tools to collect the data. Google forms is a tool which allows people to collect information from users via a personalized survey or quiz. The information is then collected and automatically linked to the spreadsheet with complete responses. A research instrument is then designed and aimed specifically at converting every phenomenon into quantitative data through likert scale from 1 to 4 for strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. This data collection instrument is called questionnaires. The only way of handling the survey is self-administered questionnaires through Google Form which provides in English language for sampling units' favor. The questionnaire consists of two (2) sections: section A and section B. Part A contains the demographic profile of respondents, including their gender, age, work status, frequency of travel, and travel experience to rural destinations. Part B, meantime, includes of the items and variables of this study. Seven (7) independent variables (Destination Image, Destination Awareness and Identity, Destination Accessibility, Hard and Soft Factors, Community-based Tourism and Cultural Events, Local Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (LICE), and Characteristics of Rural Tourism Destination) and one (1) dependent variable (Rural Tourism Destination Appeals) are described in detail in section B. In addition, there are a total of 41 items for measuring independent variables and 7 items for measuring dependent variables.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

For this research study, there are two main soft wares that are used to analyze every data. Firstly, demographic profiles data were analyzed by using IBM SPSS Statistics, which is also known as Statistical Product and Service Solutions. SPSS is a comprehensive system for analyzing data to generate tabulated reports, charts, descriptive statistics and other complex statistical analyses. It addresses the entire statistical analysis process, including planning, data collection, analysis and reporting. Therefore, this software was used to generate the descriptive frequencies statistics of demographic data and analyze. Next, Partial Least Squares method (PLS) (Chin, 1998), specifically SmartPLSS was used to analyse the data from Google Form. According to Garson (2016), it is "the most prevalent implementation as a path model." PLS was developed as a second generation of structural equation modeling (SEM) technique. It is characterized as the most suitable technique where the research purpose is prediction or exploratory modeling. According to Gustafsson and Johnson (2004), PLS works well with structural equation models that have latent variables and series of cause-and-effect relationships. There are general ways that can be used to evaluate mediation and can be classified into three general approaches (Mackinnon et al. 2002) as cited in Osman and Sentosa (2013). The first method is known as the causal steps approach which this method utilizes regression analysis. Next, the second approach is the difference in coefficients methods that evaluates regression coefficients prior and after the mediating variable is included. The third

technique is used as the product of coefficients, involving paths in a path model approach. According to [Osman and Sentosa \(2013\)](#), PLS works fine with the causal steps approach that relies on regression analysis. PLS created path coefficients, giving a sign of relationships to be utilized similarly to the usual regression coefficients. In SmartPLSS as cited in [Garson \(2016\)](#), the estimation and calculation of the data is calculated by PLS Algorithm in the options. It computes in the standard or default PLS Solution. It consists of a weighting scheme which refers to assigning weights to the structural (inner model) path coefficients. [Noonan and Wold \(1982\)](#) found that the choice of weighting schemes between “Path”, “Centroid” or “Factor” made little difference in path estimates: $<.005$ for structural (inner) paths and $<.05$ for measurement (outer) paths. Therefore, in this study, the “Path” method was selected which maximizes the R2 value of endogenous latent

variables in the current model, with the latent variable estimated based on regression. The software needs raw data input but not standardized data. However, standardization process was implemented automatically and the indicator weights together with latent variable scores will be standardized as well. The results are then analysed in the findings in preparation for additional research inquiry.

4.0 RESULT AND FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic Profile (d to combine all demo tables)

Table 2: Respondents' Gender

	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	184	65.1	65.1	65.1
	Male	99	34.9	34.9	100.0
	total	283	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows the number of respondents based on gender. There are 184 females (65.1%) out of 283 respondents who answered this survey, while 99 (34.9%) of them are males. This explains that the frequency and percentage of female respondents are higher than male respondents.

Table 3: Respondents' Age

	Age (years old)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-30	232	81.9	81.9	81.9
	31-40	27	9.6	9.6	91.6
	41-50	10	3.6	3.6	95.2
	51-60	14	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	283	100.0	100.0	

There are four (4) ranges of ages in this study, which are classified into 20 to 30 years old, 31 to 40 years old, 41 to 50 years old and 51 to 60 years old. From the data collected, Table 3 shows that the highest group of ages who answered this survey is 20 to 30 years old with 81.9% of respondents, which is equivalent to 232 out of 283 respondents, followed by 27 respondents (9.6%) who are 31 to 40 years old (9.6%), 14 respondents (4.8%) who are 51 to 60 years old, then lowest age group is 41 to 50 years old age group with 10 respondents (3.6%).

Table 4: Respondents' Status of Employment

	Status of Employment	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed	119	42.2	42.2	42.2
	Unemployed	14	4.8	4.8	47.0
	Retired	24	8.4	8.4	55.4
	Student	126	44.6	44.6	100.0
	Total	283	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 shows the total frequency and percent of respondents' status of employment in this study. The status of employment is categorized into 4 groups, which are employed, unemployed, retired and students. It illustrates that 126 respondents (44.6%) are students, followed by 119 respondents (42.2%) are employed, 24 respondents (8.4%) are already retired, then 14 respondents are unemployed.

Table 5: Respondents' Frequency of Traveling

	Status of Employment	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed	119	42.2	42.2	42.2
	Unemployed	14	4.8	4.8	47.0
	Retired	24	8.4	8.4	55.4
	Student	126	44.6	44.6	100.0
	Total	283	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 shows the descriptive analysis of the frequency of respondents traveling, in order to answer this survey. Above data collected explains that 235 out of 283 respondents, which is equivalent to 83.1% of total respondents travel occasionally, while 24 of them (8.4%) never go traveling and the data is similar to respondents who often go to travel. Therefore, the data explains that most of the respondents are knowledgeable about traveling or going to visit a place.

Table 6: Respondents' Experience Visiting Rural Place

	Experience Visiting Rural Place	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	174	61.4	61.4	61.4
	No	109	38.6	38.6	100.0
	Total	283	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 shows the frequency of respondents' experience whether they have visited a rural place or have not. The data illustrates that 61.4% of the respondents, which is equivalent to 174 respondents have the experience of traveling to rural place, whereas 109 of the 283 respondents (38.6%) have not yet traveled to a rural place. It shows most of the respondents are aware of this objective of this study, that focuses on rural tourism destination.

4.2 Structural Model Analysis

4.2.1 Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 7: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Destination Image	0.899	0.900	0.915	0.642
Destination Awareness	0.883	0.884	0.915	0.683
Destination Accessibility	0.893	0.914	0.916	0.610
Hard and Soft Factor Attractions	0.891	0.901	0.917	0.647
Community- based Tourism and Cultural Events	0.889	0.890	0.918	0.691
Local meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions	0.905	0.917	0.927	0.681
Characteristics of Rural Tourism Destinations	0.922	0.927	0.938	0.684
Rural Tourism Destination Appeals	0.923	0.926	0.940	0.724

4.2.2 STANDARDISED REGRESSIONS WEIGHT

Measurement loadings are known as the standardized path weights which connect the factors to the indicator variables, as according to [Garson \(2016\)](#). As data are standardized automatically in SmartPLS, the loadings vary from 0 to 1 and should be significant. Generally, the larger the loadings, the stronger and more reliable the measurement model. Outer model loadings appear in Table 8 are considered a form of item reliability coefficients for this model as the closer the loadings are to 1.0, the more reliable the latent variables. By convention, for a well-fitting reflective model, path loadings must be above 0.70. Hence, Table 8 shows that loadings of factors accessibility_2 (0.687) and accessibility_3 (0.652) to latent variable, Destination Accessibility and also, rural_4 (0.691) to the latent variable, Rural Tourism Destination Appeals are less reliable, while the other factors are reliable items.

Table 8: Factor Loading

	DI	DA	DACHSFA	CBTCEL	MICE	CRTDRTDA	
DI1	0.898						
DI2	0.873						
DI3	0.839						
DI4	0.824						
DI5	0.763						
DI6	0.742						
DAI1		0.831					
DAI2		0.855					
DAI3		0.801					
DAI4		0.763					
DAI5		0.784					
DAI6		0.790					
DA1			0.818				
DA2			0.687				
DA3			0.760				
DA4			0.652				
DA5			0.889				
DA6			0.797				
DA7			0.837				
HSF1			0.836				
HSF2			0.816				
HSF3			0.834				
HSF4			0.841				
HSF5			0.741				
HSF6			0.730				
CBT1				0.825			
CBT2				0.842			
CBT3				0.833			
CBT4				0.829			
CBT5				0.827			
LME1					0.761		
LME2					0.807		
LME3					0.822		
LME4					0.866		
LME5					0.871		
CRT1						0.850	
CRT2						0.768	
CRT3						0.829	
CRT4						0.855	
CRT5						0.899	
CRT6						0.897	
RT1							0.873
RT2							0.812
RT3							0.869
RT4							0.691
RT5							0.870
RT6							0.871
RT7							0.875

4.2.4 Path Coefficients

Table 9: Path Coefficients

	DI	DA	DAC	HSFA	CBTCE	L-MICE	CRTD
Path			-				
Coefficients	-0.120	0.146	0.095	-0.003	0.264	0.457	0.348

Standardized path coefficients are the ones placed on the corresponding paths in the graphical model (Garson, 2016) analyzed from SmartPLSS as shown in Figure 2 below. The statistical results and research model analyzed by SmartPLS show that the paths from Destination Accessibility, Community-based Tourism and Cultural Events (CBTCE), Local Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (L-MICE) and Characteristics of Rural Tourism Destination have coefficients of positive 0.146, 0.264, 0.457 and 0.348 respectively. Meanwhile, the paths from Destination Image, Destination Accessibility and Hard and Soft Factors Attraction have coefficients of negative 0.120, 0.095 and 0.003 respectively. Path coefficients are usually standardized path coefficients (Garson, 2016). Given that standardization, path weights therefore differ from -1 to +1. Weights that are the closest to absolute 1 reflect as the strongest paths, whereas weights closest to 0 reflect as the weakest paths. Therefore, the statistical result explains that the path weight of 0.0146, 0.264, 0.457 and 0.348 show Destination Accessibility, Community-based Tourism and Cultural Events (CBTCE), Local Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (L-MICE) and Characteristics of Rural Tourism Destination have positive effects on Rural

Tourism Destination Appeals. The path negative -0.120, -0.095 and -0.003 has negative effects on Rural Tourism Destination Appeals.

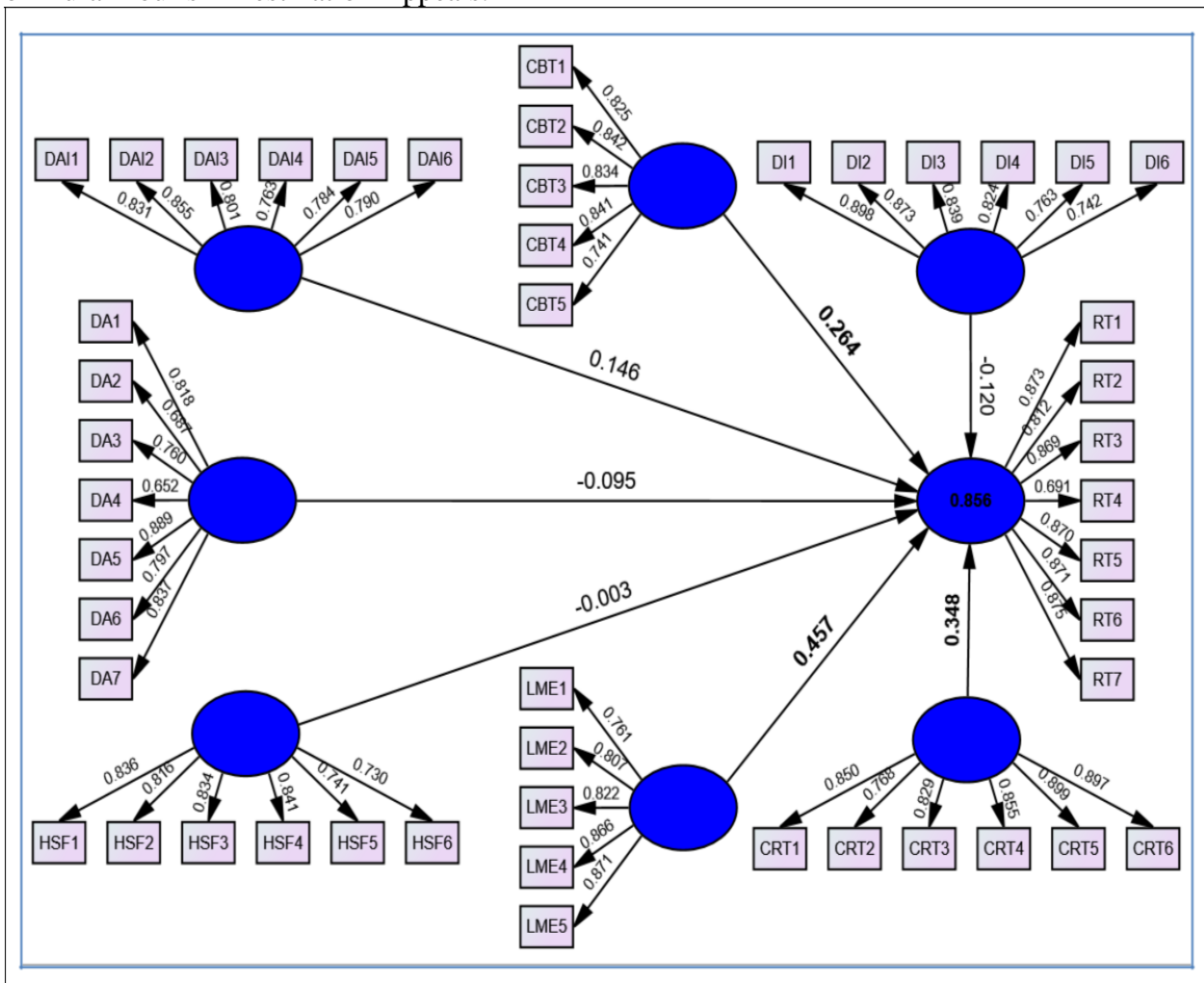


Figure 2: Structural Model Analysis

The R-square value is shown inside the blue ellipses for the dependent variable. It is the most common effect size measure in path models that carries an interpretation which is similar to that in multiple regression. As Rural Tourism Destination Appeals is the dependent variable (one with incoming arrows), the R-square value is 0.856 which also means 85.6% of the variance in Rural Tourism Destination Appeals is explained by the model, that is, jointly by the independent variables.

Table 10: R-square and Adjusted R-square

	R-square	Adjusted R- square
Rural Tourism Destination Appeals	0.856	0.842

Furthermore, Table 11 shows that H2, H5, H6 and H7 ($\beta=0.146, 0.264, 0.457$ and 0.348 respectively) are statistically significant, while H1, H3 and H4 ($\beta= -0.120, -0.095$ and -0.003 respectively) are not statistically insignificant. Moreover, with the calculation of p-value for each variable, it shows that only H6 and H7 are hypothetically accepted with p-value (<0.05) of 0.000 and 0.00, respectively, whereas H1 to H5 are hypothetically rejected (with $p>0.05, p = 0.334, 0.198, 0.389, 0.982$ and 0.096 respectively).

Table 11: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Relationship	Path Coefficients	p-value	Supported
H1: There is a positive relationship between destination image and rural tourism destination appeals	-0.120	0.334	No
H2: There is a positive relationship between destination awareness and identity and rural tourism destination appeals.	0.146	0.198	No
H3: There is a positive relationship between destination accessibility and rural tourism destination appeals.	No	-0.095	0.389
H4: There is a positive relationship between hard and soft factors attraction and rural tourism destination appeals.	-0.003	0.982	No
H5: There is a positive relationship between community-based tourism and cultural events and rural tourism destination appeals.	0.264	0.096	No
H6: There is a positive relationship between local meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions and rural tourism destination appeals.	0.457	0.000	Yes
H7: There is a positive relationship between characteristics of rural tourism destination and rural tourism destination appeals.	0.348	0.001	Yes

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the findings, destination awareness, community-based tourism and cultural events (CBTCE), local meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (L-MICE), and rural tourism destination characteristics are determined to be the most influential factors in rural tourism destination appeals. In other words, these are the variables believed to contribute to the rural tourism destination's attractiveness. Local meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (L-MICE) are found to have the strongest positive link with rural tourist destination appeals, followed by rural tourism destination appeals' characteristics. Therefore, it is acknowledged that both variables have a favourable correlation with rural tourist destination appeals. In contrast, destination image, destination accessibility, and hard and soft component attractions have no bearing on rural tourist destination appeals. Although destination awareness and community-based tourism and cultural events (CBTCE) are reported to be significant, the hypotheses for these variables, as well as those for destination image, destination accessibility, and hard and soft factors attractions, are denied.

Each variable, with the exception of the dependent variable (Rural Tourism Destination

Attractions), is dependable with the items, allowing for a thorough examination of both push and pull forces. This indicates that the factor loading has demonstrated the relationship between the conceptualization of push and pull factors in this study. Rural Tourist Destination Attractions in Jordan It is exactly determined that rural tourism destination features, and local meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions constitute Jordan's destination attractions. This is because, according to the literature reviewed, Jordan has its own rural qualities that draw tourists from both inside and outside the country. As indicated by the items, respondents concur that Jordan is a tourist-friendly destination. The talkative nature of the locals encourages tourists to visit without apprehension, as they can be of assistance when tourists need information about directions or locations. People concur with Jordan's location outside of the city center and its provision of such leisure activities and natural experience. Tourists are enticed to travel to Jordan in order to enjoy the country's nature and culture, as well as its breathtaking beauty. In addition, respondents agree that local meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions bring tourists to Jordan. This is because some feel that government agencies frequently chose Jordan as one of the locations for tourism development in order to lure tourists to Jordan. In addition, there are travel agencies in Jordan that often host tourist exhibitions. Jordan has a good venue for conventions in addition to its exterior operations. Jordan hosts an annual tourism show so that travelers can always explore the country's unique locations. Jordan is also rumored to be conducting a local meeting for tourism development in order to revive their activities and establish more tourist destinations. The findings also assess the perspectives on destination appeals, particularly among locals and visitors, as the reasons why one person may visit a location may differ from those of others. Because the variables should not always be the aspects that attract visitors to visit Jordan as a rural location or make it appear appealing to tourists. Due to the diversity of perspectives, more theories are rejected than accepted. Efforts to support rural tourism are now primarily focused on enhancing the quality of available accommodations and leveraging ICT to drive tourism processes such as the recovery, conservation, management, and promotion of the vast natural and cultural heritage in the rural areas with the greatest challenges ([Maroto-Martos, Voth & Pinos-Navarrete, 2020](#)).

This study contributes to the current literature and theoretical framework of rural Jordan's tourist destination attractions by integrating related aspects to facilitate a better understanding of the interrelationships. It contributes to the existing understanding of what makes Jordan an attractive destination for tourists and people. In addition, future research can be undertaken to observe the other variables as independent variables using the same or a different conceptual framework. Importantly, this study may contribute to Jordan's tourism industry by enabling officials to identify factors that may entice tourists to visit a rural area and enhancing the area's attraction to tourists and locals prior to the findings. This is due to the fact that rural tourism has become a tool for attaining economic and social growth and revitalization that can benefit local residents ([Fang, 2020](#)). The Jordan Vision 2025 has set lofty socioeconomic growth goals for the country between 2015 and 2025([MOE, 2020](#)).

During the conduct of this study, a number of restrictions have occurred, which have affected the findings to some degree. Time constraints are one of the constraints. This study was conducted in such a short amount of time because it was necessary so quickly that the researchers had difficulty recruiting more participants for a better study. In addition, the small number of respondents affected the study's conclusions, in which the majority of hypotheses were statistically rejected. It would have been preferable if the current study had more time to conduct in-depth observations. A further disadvantage of this study is the absence of a qualitative design in the questionnaire, which prevents a more thorough examination of respondents' viewpoints on rural tourism in Jordan. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a comprehensive online survey had to be conducted, making the distribution of questionnaires

somewhat difficult and complicated. As a result, respondents may not have been fully aware of their reasons for answering the survey, resulting in inaccurate, insincere responses. This study strongly recommends that future researchers enhance this study with additional adopted case studies involving rural tourism in Jordan and additional item measurement sources. Next, it is strongly advised that future researchers use both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in order to be able to conduct face-to-face interviews and examine their perspectives more thoroughly. Last but not least, future research may examine the rural tourist destination appeals in Jordan further by focusing on additional rural places or by focusing the survey on locals and non-locals in Jordan in order to generate reliable and generalized results.

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