

## **Perceptions of Tourists from the United States about traveling to Jordan**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of tourists from the United States about traveling to Jordan and to identify the factors that may influence their visiting intentions and to provide data on current American perceptions of Jordan. Quantitative research method was used; data was collected from 430 respondents using a survey. The results show that there are significant differences in perceptions of American tourist. They are most concerned about the safety of traveling to Jordan and are uneducated about Jordan overall. In addition, this research also found that Americans do care about local communities as well as the local culture and would be interested in learning more about it.

**Keywords** Perception, Attitudes, Satisfaction, Tourism promotion, Tourism, Destinations.

### **Introduction**

For most people, traveling is an essential part of their life (McKercher & Chen, 2015). Over the years, the tourism industry has boomed and seen huge growth. In 2018, the Global Travel and Tourism sector contributed \$8.8 trillion to the global economy and supported 319 million jobs, approximately 10% of all global jobs (Ismaiel, Ibrahim, & Alrousan, 2018). Therefore, tourism has the potential to bring many benefits to countries that invest in it. One of these countries is Jordan, in which tourism makes up 13% of its total GDP (MoTA, 2020). In 2019, Jordan's international tourism receipts totaled \$6.864 billion and tourist arrivals of 5,361,000 (Bank, 2020). Although positive growth trends in the tourism industry were expected, unfortunately this was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 had the greatest negative impact on the travel and tourism sector as it forced countries to close their borders, restrict travel, ground planes, and close hotels and tourist sites (Harb et al., 2022). Overall, the world saw a change of international tourist arrivals of -74%, with the Middle East having a change of international tourist arrivals of -76%. Since Jordan is heavily reliant on tourism, it was in the top three most vulnerable countries to the negative impacts from COVID-19. With this being said, there is no single more important time for Jordan to understand the demands of tourists to ensure that it is able to meet these needs and stimulate economic growth from tourism again post COVID-19. In 2018 and 2019, the tourism sector in Jordan received approximately 200,000 American tourists annually (MoTA, 2020), and this number is expected to increase in light of the demand for global tourism after Corona. No studies have previously been conducted to investigate the factors affecting the tourism demand for Jordan by American tourists, this study specifically examined the perceptions Americans had of traveling to Jordan. Americans contribute greatly to the tourism industry, with Americans taking about 93 million

international trips a year, 73.8% of which were for leisure, and spending roughly \$153.6 billion overseas (Condor, 2021). By gaining insight into American perceptions about traveling to Jordan, this study aims to provide valuable information to stakeholders of tourism in Jordan so that they can better understand American tourist demands and foster American tourist growth within the country.

All previous studies dealt with tourists' opinion about destinations in terms of degree of satisfaction, or the factors affecting their decision to visit a destination, all of these studies dealt with the opinion of tourists during their presence in the site or a destination. What makes this study distinct from previous studies is that it surveys the opinion of potential customers before they decide to visit the destination. This makes the expected consumer give his opinion based on his knowledge and image before choosing a destination.

## Literature Review

Studying the tourist's perception about destinations has been universally acknowledged in the tourism literature (Stylidis, Woosnam, & Kim, 2022), (Buzova, Blas, & Taulet, 2021) that interaction with "more knowledgeable other" has a positive impact on tourist's perception and satisfaction. The attractions of the place have an impact on the satisfaction of tourists and their desire to return for another visit (Reitsamer & Sperdin, 2017), also knowledge sharing, activity sharing, and host interaction are positively impacted tourists' satisfaction and their perception of a destination (Shi, Gursoy, & Chen, 2019), one of the previous studies that were conducted in Jordan was in 1999 (Schneider & SoKnmez, 1999), the sample interviewed in Jordan during their visit to the Jerash Festival. The study indicated that there is a positive image from tourists about Jordan in terms of safety, culture, with some concern regarding the services provided.

a study by (Woodside, Caldwell, & Miller, 2008) stated that "there needs to be broader studies of tourism, such as acquiring knowledge of how consumers think consciously and unconsciously about alternative leisure destinations, hospitality options, leisure activities, whether or not to travel, stay home or forego leisure time as much as possible". The study highlighted several articles that showcased broadening the study of tourism, such as one by Woodside, MacDonald, and Burford that urged the development of a grounded theory of leisure travel behavior and called for a shift in marketing actions to cause tourism behaviors that would not otherwise take place. Overall, this paper is similar to this study in that it did not follow the typical research on tourism in Jordan such as examining word of mouth and tourist satisfaction. Instead, this study broadened the study of tourism in Jordan by studying consumer behavior when determining on whether to travel to Jordan or not.

There have been several similar studies on tourism in Jordan, primarily with a focus on the satisfaction of tourists after they visit Jordan (Abuamoud, Alrousan, & Ibrahim, 2018). One of these studies examined European tourist perspectives on destination satisfaction in Jordan's industries and was published back in 2014 (Araslı & Baradarani, 2014). This study concluded that lodging and transportation dimensions had an insignificant effect on destination satisfaction while food, local cuisine, shopping, tourist attractions, environment and safety all had a significant effect on destination satisfaction. Other important research (Al Rousan et al., 2020) examined the customer satisfaction of American tourists after they visited Petra and Mount Nebo in Jordan. Through the use of specific questionnaires, they examined the satisfaction of American tourists through three main factors: facilities at destination, accommodation services, and traveling agency. Each factor also had a list of sub-factors, such as town cleanliness, hotel safety, agency expertise, etc. The study found that all these sub-factors were important in determining the satisfaction level of American

tourists visiting these destinations. Through the analysis of the satisfaction ratings of these sub-factors, it was found that Americans were generally satisfied except for cleanliness at the nearby towns and sites. They found that American tourists have a preference for novelty and variety seeking, where the American tourists love to observe historical and cultural values as they visit the historical locations of Petra and Mount Nebo. Additionally, it was concluded that Americans probably have more regards for interests such as artifacts than local people.

Other relevant literature includes (Mohammad, 2020) examined the effect of word of mouth and destination attributes on travel intention to Jordan, the study found that word of mouth, destination image attraction, tourism products, satisfaction, and price of tourism products had a positive impact on travel intention to Jordan. Tourists travel to fulfill their intrinsic desires, and their decisions on where to go are based on destination attributes and information that they gathered from their friends and relatives or from reference groups. Tourists that have a positive experience tend to share their experience with others, therefore encouraging travel to a destination through word of mouth.

Another study(Liu et al., 2016) entitled source market perceptions: How risky is Jordan to travel to? The study aimed to identify the factors affecting the decision of American tourists to travel to Jordan especially for safety and security of the country. Demographic factors, previous experience and impression were studied. The study found that the demographic factors have no impact on the decision of the tourist to visit Jordan, but study showed that the previous experience and knowledge about Jordan had a positive impact on perceptions of Jordan of the American tourist to travel to Jordan. This is to be expected, because a person who has never traveled to Jordan has a negative impression about safety because of the role of the media when talking about the Middle East and Jordan in particular.

In addition, the result of a sample of 339 European tourists to Jordan in 2018(Al Fandi, 2020) revealed that perceived financial risk and perceived performance risk had significant impact on tourist's behavioral intention, while perceived physical risk, perceived time risk , and perceived socio-psychological risk were not significant

Researchers and decision makers were interested in studying the motives of tourists to travel to some destinations in order to predict the tourism demand, future tourists' patterns, and to know the push and pull factors (Jang & Cai, 2009; Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2020). Some studies indicate a positive relationship between the travel motivation and tourists' attitude and behavior of the tourist(Pereira, Gupta, & Hussain, 2022). Several factors play a major role in tourists' decision of selecting a destination, such as their tastes, facilities provided, in addition to cultural and safety factors. Prices and distances also have a role in tourists' choice of a destinations, destination image also has a great impact on tourists' decision(Fard & Saberi 2015; Le-Klähn et al., 2015; Seyidov & Adomaitienė, 2016)

## **Research Methodology**

This study seeks to provide insights about Perceptions of Tourists from the United States about traveling to Jordan.socio-demographic and other attributes can affect the prospective travelers from the United State of America to travel to Jordan. Studying the factors that influence USA customers to visit Jordan helps to forecasting prospective travelers and estimating the volume of tourists that will travel to a certain site/sites

The study applied a survey technique to estimate the USA customers willing to travel to Jordan. The study hypothesizes that respondents understand that they will receive what will

reflect their preferences exactly. Also, respondents may answer the questions based on their feeling (positive or negative) at the time of the interview which might not be always right or might be based on understanding the question. To achieve the goal of this study, the field survey was conducted in Jordan on 430 a USA resident in the USA. respondents from different states were survived online to elicit their willingness to travel to Jordan. The survey included five demographic questions and 14 questions related to travel and Jordan. The survey was distributed via contacting people and spreading it on social media. It was shared on Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and GroupMe. Out of 510 questionnaires distributed, 430 were returned valid for analysis. It should be noted that the survey was primarily distributed among residents located in the southeast United States.

## Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the Perceptions of Tourists from the United States about traveling to Jordan. As previously mentioned, the core questions were used to examine overall USA tourists to travel to Jordan. The study was carried out using a quantitative method of collecting primary data; out of 510 questionnaires, 430 were analyzed using SPSS to administer this study. Table 1. shows the demographic profiles of the respondents. The majority of them were females ( 60.3percent), under 35 years of age (71.4 percent), had a high level of education (43.8 percent of respondents had attended college or had a bachelor’s degree or higher), and were white (73.3 percent). Around 21.6 percent have full time job, 15 percent part time job and 6.6 were retired. 47.1% were currently enrolled in college.

92.6% had traveled internationally before, this indicates the desire of Americans to travel outside America, and a high percentage has a tendency to travel compared to other countries. about 89.3% plan on travelling internationally after COVID-19. When asked to rank how important sustainable tourism was, 64.4% which was the majority gave it a ranking of 4 and 5, meaning it was the most important. Additionally, when asked to rank about how much they cared about the well-being of local people in Jordan, 92.6% also ranked this a important and very important. 95.9% of people had not been to Jordan before. When asked if they would visit Jordan if they were given the opportunity, 50.4% said they might visit and 39.7% said they would. The most important factor for consumers when deciding to visit Jordan or not was safety, followed by cost. The activities that American tourists would be

		Frequency	Percent	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Male	193	39.7	39.7
	Female	293	60.3	60.3
	Total	486	100.0	100.0
<b>Age</b>	18-24	311	64.0	64.0
	25-34	36	7.4	7.4
	35-44	46	9.5	9.5
	45-54	27	5.6	5.6
	55 and over	66	13.6	13.6
	Total	486	100.0	100.0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	White	356	73.3	73.3
	Hispanic-Latino	73	15.0	15.0
	South Asia	32	6.6	6.6
	Others	25	5.1	5.1
<b>Degree</b>	Total	486	100.0	100.0
	Student	229	47.1	47.1
	BA	161	33.1	33.1
	High School	44	9.1	9.1
	Ma	24	4.9	4.9
<b>employment status</b>	Ph.D	28	5.8	5.8
	Total	486	100.0	100.0
	Student	254	52.3	52.5
	Part time	73	15.0	15.1
	Full Time	105	21.6	21.7
	Retired	32	6.6	6.6
	Self Employed	20	4.1	4.1
	Total	484	99.6	100.0

Missing		System	2	4
	Total		486	100.0

most interested in when visiting Jordan were first cultural activities, then historical activities, and finally adventure activities. The factors that people were the most interested in learning more about regarding Jordan would be the culture, followed by the food and history. People said that the most important factor at any site visited would be activities, followed by information about the place, and then restaurants. 94.2% of American tourists would be interested in learning more about the local community, culture, and food. The top thing keeping American tourists from traveling to Jordan would be safety concerns, followed by personal constraints such as finances. There was a wide variety of answers when asked what would encourage someone to travel to Jordan, but the most common answers were safety reassurance and knowing more information about Jordan. All of the findings can be found in Appendix B.

## Is there anything that would encourage you to travel to Jordan?

More information, cheap flights, Petra, exploring different lands, a free trip, religious sites, knowing where Jordan is, more information about activities, some kind of assurance of safety, learning more about the culture, mission work, if my friends/family were also visiting, cultural experience, more information on why I should visit, safety, assistance paying, programs for young people/students at lower costs, new sites, if I were able to go with someone who has already been, it being safe, the beauty, increased information about tourism in Jordan, knowing women are treated fairly and are safe, new people/places, going on a well planned trip with an inclusive group, more knowledge, learning more about the country and reasons to travel there, travel security, thorough itineraries and reliable guides, access, traveling with people knowledgeable about the country.

## Regression analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to predict the factors that affecting the American tourists to visit Jordan. The study hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between the dependent variable (If you had the opportunity to visit Jordan, would you?) and the independent variables (Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Degree, employment status, have you traveled internationally before?) The analysis revealed that Age, Ethnicity, and traveled internationally before all have a significant impact on overall American desire to visit Jordan, with p-values of 0.013, 0.037, and 0.001, while Gender, Degree, and employment status show an insignificant value.

**Table 2** Output for a Pearson's correlation of overall American's desire to visit Jordan

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.302	.692		3.33	.001
Gender	.033	.099	.017	0.34	.737
Age	.097	.039	.150	2.48	.013
Ethnicity	-.104	.050	-.093	-2.09	.037
Degree	.028	.044	.032	0.62	.533
employment status	-.073	.047	-.091	-1.56	.120
Have you traveled internationally before?	.614	.176	.165	3.48	.001

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from this research conclude that American tourists are most concerned about the safety of traveling to Jordan and are uneducated about Jordan overall. In addition, this research also found that Americans do care about local communities as well as the local culture and would be interested in learning more about this. There are several ways to address these findings. First, travel marketing to American tourists should focus on informing Americans about Jordan. This can include geographic location, general information, and the travel opportunities Jordan has to offer. Next, since most American tourists are concerned about the safety of traveling to Jordan, there should be campaigns focused on informing American tourists about how safe it is to travel to Jordan and what they can do to ensure their safety as they travel. It is a common American perception that Jordan is unsafe to travel to, but if American tourists know more about it, they might be more inclined to travel to Jordan. Finally, since American tourists appear to be interested in learning about the local culture and communities, there is potential for programs that facilitate the interaction of local communities and tourists. Some Jordanian communities are marginalized in favor of tourist economic aspects and there is sometimes conflict between local communities and tourists, but with American tourists caring about the well-being of local communities this puts greater pressure to not marginalize them and instead focus on providing resources for sustainable development.

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