

## **Estimating the Impact of the Effective Resource Valorization on Enhancing Tourism Activities in Lebanon**

**By**

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### **Abstrac**

The main topic of this study was to assess the current situation of tourism in Lebanon and to identify and interpret the actual case of how the tourism industry can benefit from economic development projects in Lebanon. The main problem is that Lebanon is incapable of properly using natural and cultural assets despite its very rich potential. To analyze the situation, we conducted a study by surveying data collection methods since we want to propose a solution for an existing problem through action research. This mode of inquiry required interviews, reaching out to 28 experts in the field of tourism and other complementary sectors. As such, the research was cross-sectional since the investigation was conducted for one time only, with purposive sampling. Results showed that sustainable tourism development in Lebanon is contingent on the presence of all necessary resources that allow the proper valorization of resources allowing for effective tourism management.

**Index Terms**— Economic development, Lebanon, Sustainable Tourism, Valorizing cultural and natural resources.

### **Introduction**

Since Tourism contributes directly to a country's GDP just like any other industry, its components should be well valorized and conserved for an effective development. The resource valorization means to add value to something, as assets being fructified. From tourism point of view, this suggests efficient resources usage reaching optimal economic profits with minimal negative impacts. It is important that the tourism industry utilizes the field of economic development to properly valorize its archeological resources. Hence, all major Lebanese costal sites like Tyre, Sidon, Beirut and Byblos are abundant with necessary resources for tourism development. However, this can only happen when the factors of developments are studied, managed, organized and used in the proper way [1-29].

#### **A. Aims and objectives**

This paper aims to address how Lebanon plans to review its resource management for improving tourism activities through effective resource valorization. This comes into play after students in schools learning about tourism education see the benefits of valorizing heritage sites [14]. The main objective of this study is to find out how the Lebanese people perceive tourism and if they really want to effectively valorize the country's resources or not. [1, 2]. This cannot be done without thoroughly examining Lebanon's rich ancient history to demonstrate the importance of its contribution to the tourism sector. This will be done, by respectively looking at cases in Tyre and Beirut, as reference investigations for reviewing tourism best practices,

and which actions are to be avoided altogether [1, 2].

Today, any coastal Lebanese City, including Tyre or Beirut faces a problem in properly managing its natural or cultural resources. Particularly, cities like Tyre, Saida, Beirut, and Jbeil have not been optimally utilizing their scarce resources

(irrespective of natural, cultural, or touristic), and have had records of possessing incorrect and deeply rooted values and setbacks in human capital. This necessitates to discuss the following *question* if urban or main sites are successful in valorizing their localities for tourism, then *why local, and rural ones are unable to do so?*

This question was recently posed in terms of curricula and tourism education [3]. One of the recommended future studies which is the aim of this papers to study how Lebanon plans to review its resource management for improving tourism, since it was established that, curricula, the implementation of tourism education courses, and resource valorization, were all three cyclically linked with each other [3]. In other words tourism education is related to effective resource valorisation and enhancing tourism activities.

### ***B. Problem statement***

The success or failure of tourism in Lebanon relies greatly on the conception and utilization of tourism players of local resources, as well as their attempts to development of tourism activities. We need to realize that, without proper education and awareness, people will never be inclined to valorize their resources. What is meant by failure or success is that; if students fail to learn about the concepts of valorization and proper tourism education, they simply will not valorize their treasures and tourism will ultimately fail (resources vaporize). This study helps in assessing the current situation of tourism Lebanon, and in highlighting the weaknesses as well as providing alternatives to make better use of resources. It addresses *if there were relationships established between implementing outdated curricula and implementing tourism education courses, what will be the effects on enhancing tourism activities* [3]. The main issue to investigate is to find out if students don't learn about the importance of valorization at school, how they will practice it later on in life, which in itself contributes negatively to tourism activities.

The reasons why the study was conducted, emanated from tangential and parallel studies on the issues of appropriate resource valorization in properly enhancing tourism activities, which were rarely approached through a tourism education perspective. The objectives, issues, and contexts involved in investigating the current study's concerns need a curriculum design approach as well. Therefore, once investigating the role of Lebanon's effective resource valorization in enhancing tourism activities, one does realize that valuating touristic sites imply to enhance their value, and being treated as assets, which can only be done through using proper tourism education curricula. This requires the active involvement of all academic stakeholders in the overall educational process.

### ***C. Research questions***

The study necessitates addressing the following two main research questions (RQs) which will be used to answer the research problem.

(1)*Is there a link between effective resource valorization and enhancing tourism activities in Lebanon?*

(2)*If so, will the valorization of those resources aid in the development of tourism in*

Lebanon?

Since the research problem sought to address whether or not *there were relationships between employing obsolete curricula and delivering tourism education courses*, and *what will the effects on resources valorisation to ultimately improve tourism activities*, therefore these two questions should address ways to respond to this problem.

#### **D. Context of the study**

As tourism contributes directly to 20% of Lebanon's GDP, all sectors directly or indirectly involved in the tourism industry need to be well valorized and conserved for effective development [4]. This implies effective use of natural, cultural, and touristic resources to enhance the country's touristic activities, while minimizing negative effects on the environment and society [1, 4]. This will only occur once the resources are effectively allocated, used, and correctly managed. This should improve tourism activities.

## **Literature Review**

Aside from a few studies dealing with the effective valorization of Lebanon's resources, and tourism activities, correlations were demonstrated to exist between the two variables (site valorization and enhanced tourism activities) [5]. The knowledge gap was bridged once the cited research demonstrated that the researches focusing on Tyre, and Beirut were analyzed. After that we were able to come up with tangible examples of how resource management in Lebanon was practiced [1, 2]. Yet, various experts denoted that neither of the Lebanese cities that were investigated in researches of similar resolution before, were effective in valorizing their heritage sites, irrespective of natural, cultural, or touristic [14]. Many sites were noted to have had poor destination management organization (DMO) strategies, overlooked the human capital and hardly were able to effectively manage their resources [21].

Some studies even argued why would tourists visit ill-kept sites in a country with defunct bureaucratic systems lacking the basic logistical infrastructures when they can go for the same cost or cheaper to the Cote d'Azur in France, to the Maldives, Seychelles, the Mauritius Islands, Ibiza in Spain or any other resort offering similar attributes to Lebanon, and have been better off in valorizing their sites. The main idea behind all this is to investigate what exactly is successful in the West in terms of tourism education and how effectively implementing such courses trigger people in valorizing their resources, irrespective of being natural, cultural, or touristic. Yet, why in Lebanon this is still not done optimally, despite several recommendations from experts to focus on one of the most productive industries. Thus, this section begins to discuss issues of resource valorization and then discusses concerns about enhancing tourist activities to finally summarize it [21].

#### **E. Resource valorization**

Several studies were proposed a few years ago, discussing the relationship between resource valorization on tourism development as an important subject of debate. Few research project theses at university level and recent literature surveys on economic development and enhancing tourism activities, showed a relationship between these two variables. A 2018 project thesis focused on Tyre, while another 2019 one focused on Beirut [1, 2, 5]. In 2020, two articles discussing how poorly Beirut valorized its heritage sites add evidence to Lebanon's incompetence about this issue altogether, as the cited articles point out to the Bey 194 vestiges of Minet el Hosn [3, 6, 7, 8, 9]. While few experts praised positive valorization cases such as Tyre, and others were satisfied with the case of how Saida and Jbeil valorized their resources, many others disagreed and denoted that Lebanon has miserably failed, citing the fact that trash

was reported on one of the sites; Hadrian's Gate in Tyre [1, 2, 5]. This is a typical case of devalorizing sites, and a major issue affecting the success of tourism in an area, where visitors naturally prefer to visit a clean place and not one filled with rubbish. Rarely do the authorities (DGA, or others) consider maintaining these sites or fining the culprits.

With the importance of economic development and tourism in Tyre demonstrated, Jbeil and Saida also followed suit, and experts denote that despite the preservation of sites in such important ancient cities, still, monuments, like the Eshmoun temple are in danger of erosion. Thus, there is NO sign of valorization here. Besides, Lebanon is plagued with mismanagement, corruption, and ineffective resource management. The link and the role archeologists, geologists, and other specialists can play as consultants to the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) when it comes to valorizing sites to improve tourism activities, can play in economic development and tourism can be showcased [10]. The authorities go to extra lengths to hide the negative cases like Beirut and the Aadloun Grotto, through masking the truth behind it [5, 6, 7, 30]. The purpose of this study is not to point fingers at anyone but to see that if one is properly educated about valuing one's resources, such things won't happen. Plus, all heritage sites would be preserved, upkept, and valorized to encourage tourism, and not abandoned like Tell Umm el Aamed (near Naqoura), or ignored like Qasr Qleiat (near Akkar) and Qasr Abou Hassan (near Saida) [14, 21].

Such failures are mainly due to the absence of coordination amongst official governmental institutions, and the lack of willingness to enhance resources via managing archeology, natural and touristic sites, or via economic development. It is obvious that when development demolishes an archeological site for the benefits of the Beirut Souks and other urban projects, ultimately, this doesn't valorize it for the advantage of tourism, instead, it is destroying the heritage. Similar setbacks are evident in cases when each official institution works unilaterally, and where bilateral or multilateral collaborations are not imposed. In Beirut, as the Directorate General of Urbanism (DGU) and the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA) worked unilaterally, we had cases like BEY 194<sup>1</sup>, or the Minet El-Hosn (Plot 1398) site where the structure was located. Yet, we also had evidence of sites that were valorized [7]. The same thing happened in Aadloun when the Ministry of Public Works (MOPW) threatened to dismantle the Phoenician harbor or maritime archeology remains, to favor a development project, or deny the existence of the Phoenician era [5]. This definitely will be avoided if the youths become better aware and educated on the importance to valorize and not destroy or squander heritage sites.

#### ***F. Cases of valorization***

*Firstly*, we see of a positive case in Lebanon through Tyre, Saida and Jbeil as measured by how the DGA succeeded in somehow preserving the heritage sites for tourism [14, 21]. The importance of economic development and tourism in Tyre, Saida and Byblos was demonstrated, especially through the successes of the DGA in preserving the unique vestiges at those sites. While these cities were somewhat successful in preserving and valorizing their heritage sites, Lebanon is still plagued with mismanagement, corruption, and ineffective resources management. The formed panels of experts in the fields of archeology, geology, environment, and education, were instrumental in the expansion of tourism and economic development in those cities. The other successes of the DGA, aside from revamping the National Museum, were the bilateral and multilateral collaboration it had with the other stakeholders in preserving the costal heritage sites like Tyre, Saida, and Byblos [2, 3, 5, 21]. While, in Beirut, its success was limited to few sites like Saifi 616 (Crowne Plaza), which were

<sup>1</sup>Bey 194 was referred to as the "so-called Phoenician Harbour", or as Dry Dock structures, and resembled those of Carthage.

preserved to show the ancient vestiges left from our ancestors, were indeed valorized [14, 21].

*Secondly*, we see the failures of the DGA, namely with Beirut and other heritage and archeology sites that failed to be preserved. In this case, BEY 003, 018, 032, (the sites from the ancient citadel of Beirut), BEY 045 (The roman Baths, facing the current Beirut Souks), while the other sites, within the souks (like BEY 006 and 009), and BEY 194 (the ancient harbor structure at Minet el Hosn), SFI 1075 (District//S) and other sites were either destroyed or abandoned in favor of development. Noting that the Landmark Site (BEY 166) was preserved, after it had been worked on by private developers 5 years with a cost of millions of USD, to later on finding out that it contained an important Byzantine Basilica [5, 14, 21]. These examples of the lack of communication between the developers and the DGA, or vice versa are showing a failure of the monitoring and evaluation process crucial for the effective protection of heritage sites.

*Finally*, Tell Hizzin is another important site that the DGA failed to preserve since it is now privately having no control over it. These failures ought to be documented and showcased [8. While among the other sites, the Aadloun Grotto, Tell Umm el Aamed, and sites like Qasr Qleiat and Qasr Abou Hassan were either mismanaged by the authorities, ignored touristically, or unsupervised [21, 30].

### **G. Enhancing tourism activities**

Being a major component of the tertiary or services sector in Lebanon, tourism is an active industry contributing a sizable share to Lebanese budget, thus rendering it imperatively essential for the authorities to invest in and develop. However, nowadays, the authorities are not concerned with Lebanon's tourism sector, or revamping the country's economy. Instead, they have other agendas while still managing the remaining depleting resources with non-existing long-term strategies [21]. While tourism needs proper marketing approaches, and profiling the right tourists to visit the right areas through proposing the tourism packages that best satisfy their needs, marketing becomes a large part of the strategic destination plan. This helps in properly conducting research and identifying target markets, as well as designing the marketing mix and the proper way to reach out to them, like focusing on domestic tourism, or reaching out to locals, something the authorities never did [5, 11]. This is of prime importance for countries dependent on tourism. Many countries, such as Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain and Morocco already have governmental tourism strategies that have long term visions and actually benefited from resource valorization.

These days, with universal issues like global warming, pollution, and sustainable development facing all of us, we need to focus on educating the public through spreading awareness [1, 12]. Again, proper tourism education on proper valorization of touristic sites will address those concerns too. So, building cultural, natural, or touristic awareness is the foundation for an effective tourism destination management organization (DMO) that the industry should focus on, through multilateral collaborations in improving education, public awareness, and involvement [5, 13]. Although tourism education (as a catalyst to improve effective valorization), spreads the awareness of preserving all sites, they should be taken as assets, and not as liabilities. Rather, liabilities are defunct bureaucratic systems, outdated educational systems, corruption, embezzlement, fraud, and all illicit activities like money laundering, fueling the abyssal Lebanese public debt.), and this is what people need to be made aware of through tourism education awareness programs [21].

We can do this by inspiring local communities' involvement, spreading awareness in schools, and reaching out to all stakeholders involved in sustainable development and tourism

(through education and training programs) assume scholars propose. This is backed up by the fact that many universities and high school students were not interested in resource valorization as means to enhance tourism activities [10, 14]. Today, the lack of motivation or improper education not only impedes economic development but also poses challenges to raising awareness of the importance to valorize one's sites, as well as improper valuation of human capital [1, 13]. Through the awareness sessions that some consider proposing, we can not only provide tourists with facts about the area, but we can also communicate to the students about the importance of preserving this sector [14]. So, the significance of conservation and the ecological way to use our scarce resources in the light of sustainable development, issues that will surely mark future generations, are ways in which responsible cities need to act through smart and sustainable tourism [5, 13].

#### *H. Linking resource valorization to improving tourism activities*

Following several experts in the domain, it is believed that "natural resources necessarily play a central role in promoting sustainable development" [4, 15, 16]. On the other hand, throughout the world, developing countries, with a rich resource base of pristine natural and cultural treasures, hold significant comparative advantages in their potential to attract tourists in search of authentic new experiences [16]. Many studies were made not only on the importance of tourism but also on how proper management of resources effectively and efficiently, can aid in the development of the local community [4]. In this context, and following the studies that discussed similar issues, our study shed the light on the impact of an efficient valorization of coastal resources on the development (social and economic) of sites and surrounding community like Tyre, and many others along the Lebanese coast [1, 13]. Thus all sites are important in this regard.

Finally, the valorization of resources and local development involves many countries relying on tourism to develop their economy, whereas, others depend on other sectors to enhance their economy [4]. Tourism has become fundamental because tourist expenditure is being injected directly into the tourism business and thus developing the economy. At the same time, the country can share its culture and authenticity with visitors. In our search to determine the factors that may lead to tourism development in Tyre, based on coastal tourism, the best case to refer to in the literature is the case of Antalya, the largest coastal region of Turkey on the Mediterranean that shares several characteristics with Tyre [1, 17].

#### *I. Issues to resolve and proposed solutions*

First: *The lack of resources and funding*, is the first identified problem. As an immediate solution it is therefore recommended, de facto, to properly manage them and secure funding. In a recent interview on France 24 TV, the president of the Lebanese hotel association, Mr. Pierre El-Achkar recommended that either the government or the private sector, or both of them to subsidize funds and to reinvest in the vamping of the tourism industry since it is a very important contributor to Lebanon's GDP [114]. According to him, the reconstruction of the Beirut harbor, requiring about one billion Euros, will create a much needed impetus, and deserves attention, unlike the political leaders' ideas to change it into residential real-estate [10]. This, among others, the Lebanese state's lack of vision, and evidence of devalorized touristic sites across the country should be the base for a public awareness campaign to counter the destruction of our heritage at the time we need it the most. [14, 21]. This negatively affects tourism activities.

Second: *The political and economic instability*. Though this is harder to resolve, corruption and nepotism need to be eliminated, but this is not feasible within the next 2 generations (since to fully remove corruption, it easily takes 70 years), meanwhile, the willing

to do so is absent (Anaissi, personal communication, 2021). Studies in 2017 and 2018 confirm that corruption and terrorism, among other impediments to economic development and sustainability, must be eliminated before even considering investing time and effort in sustainable and economic development [26, 27]. Meanwhile, indeed it is necessary to eliminate the political hardships before focusing on revamping the tourism industry or proceeding with economic reforms. This long process will benefit in enhancing tourism in the long run.

Third: *The unproductive relations between the private sector and the public one.* This acts like a defunct helix model. So, the suggestion here is to design a model that works to apply it. One initiative in this direction was the central bank Circular 331 allowing for seed funding for startups needs. However, instead of its immediate activation, it was blocked by the Central Bank itself. Meanwhile, it is also recommended to instigate clear multilateral prerogatives for facilitating the collaboration with the Public Sector, the Industry and Academic institutions, through the Helix Approach, the much needed skill requirements from the tourism industry for ensuring the youths should follow-up with the skills demands, and be integrated in the revised curricula [28]. Thus, ensuring the 1997 CRDP program gets replaced with a more up to date version to promote this [8]. While this helps in the long run, an immediate solution is needed as well.

Fourth: *The absence of citizens' awareness and incentive to want to valorize our resources,* as well as *insufficient personal initiatives* comprise the fourth problem against an urgent solution. So here mass education comes in, and awareness sessions to all, open to the public, should be provided for free and for all people and particularly, stakeholders involved in such activities. Once the channels for multilateral communication are established between the government, academics, and the industry, the curricula could be modernized by updating current programs and integrating new courses and skills needed by today's competitive tourism industry, and very essential to raise the youths' awareness of the importance and the necessity to valorize one's resources, while advocating smart tourism and sustainable development [14, 21]. These will eventually be beneficial in improving the economy, through ameliorating tourism.

Fifth: *The lack of cooperation among citizens.* It is the last problem that hampers any positive change for revamping our tourism industry. Here again, the cooperation needs to be nurtured, and encouraged through public awareness. Volunteering opportunities and community service can help in raising awareness for the citizens to become more conscious of the issue at hand and encourage them to cooperate in order to revamp the industry.

Despite the five aforementioned negative points listed, some of the interviewees still believe that there is still hope in this country, and it is important to nurture it [1]. North, East, South and West, Lebanon has in its four corners, and within, unique sites that deserve protection for preservation in order to revamp tourism. While listing these five problems the intentions are not to discourage fellow Lebanese people but rather to shake them up so that *"they can wake up and smell the coffee"*. This is why, with the action research outlook, the researchers intend to provide stakeholders with a solution to get Lebanon out of this mess.

## **Methodology**

While the research required mixed methods, the selected data collection and research design point to the choice of qualitative methods seeking to conduct an action research study [18]. This explains the unstructured interviews distributed to various sampled participants conveniently, among other qualitative tools we selected. While the interpretivist's philosophy

was selected, for the nature of the study, that is to find a solution for an issue, action research was selected as a mode of collecting data, through surveying.

As such, and due to the nature and the scope of the study, we went for a cross-sectional time horizon, and convenient sampling to recruit the experts for the interviews. This account will necessitate interpretivist methods, through hypothetico inductive methods that allowed the researchers, through these approaches to design *a posteriori arguments* to later on, test them if needed. In examining the current student's attitudes towards protecting historical sites, our study demonstrates through our findings collected from the surveys that the overwhelming population wants us to preserve our heritage to enhance tourism activities.

The last step in our design was to develop a qualitative survey for the purpose of gathering information about the opinions and attitudes of the various stakeholders. We then interviewed key people from both public and private sectors in (academia, archeology, business, economics, education, journalism, philosophy, sustainable development, and tourism) to pursue further the investigation through observations and interpreting secondary data. This was followed by statistical analysis, using SPSS software package, to verify the validity and accuracy of our data. While we worked on comparing secondary data to formerly conducted surveys, also well correlated, we used similar variables in the current study.

While the data analysis required interpreting the surveying results we collected from the field and from secondary sources, we also relied on observation. Following Saunders's Onion [18], and through our selected data collection methods, study results provided a better understanding of how tourism can be sustainable in Lebanon, on the condition that all of the stakeholders get involved in the process. Thus, while interpreting the results, the secondary data results show to be reliable since the Cronbach's Alpha value, is very high (Table 1). The instruments, from the 28 expert interviews, were checked for consistency.

Table 1 shows the results of the initial survey taken in 2019, when the case of resource valorization in Lebanon, was first investigated, by looking at how the Beirut authorities dealt with economic development through enhancing touristic activities [5]. The high Cronbach Alpha showed that the survey was well correlated [5]. Hence this survey was used as a basis for the current investigation, in order to see the trend nationwide.

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Test from the secondary data.

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>0.964878</b>
Split-Half (odd-even) Correlation	1
Split-Half with Spearman-Brown Adjustment	1
Mean for Test	500
Standard Deviation for Test	315
KR21 (use only 0 and 1 to enter data for this)	1.38546
KR20 (use only 0 and 1 to enter data for this)	1.38546

## Results and Discussion

All of the below discussions emanate from the combined interpretations of the current responses of our 28 experts in synthesized form, and simultaneously interpreted against relevant literature, for discussing our data in comparison with the secondary data we investigated while doing the literature review. Our Results showed that sustainable tourism development in Lebanon is highly dependent on the presence of all necessary cultural, economic, financial, human and touristic resources. Tourism education has not been implemented through up-to-date curricula, which explains why there is a gap in the industry

now in terms of jobs being filled, or a shortage in graduates from tourism programs without the needed skills [3, 10].

Although tourism development through proper DMOs is needed, which can be related to the tourist profile types the city wishes to attract, the lack of vision of some local municipalities, relevant unions, ministries, and organizations could be to blame [1, 10]. While this research addressed the root causes of the mismanagement, it seeks to provide a long-term and tangible solution. It was evident from interviews that while the state, the academia (schools, students etc.), and the industry are unable to collaborate multilaterally, there will be no improvement even with an updated educational system. However, while Lebanon lacks proper administrative management and organization of its resources, its authorities also lack the vision and are unconcerned. Although as some experts pointed out, individual attempts do exist but are not widespread, and are unfortunately still rather localized [21].

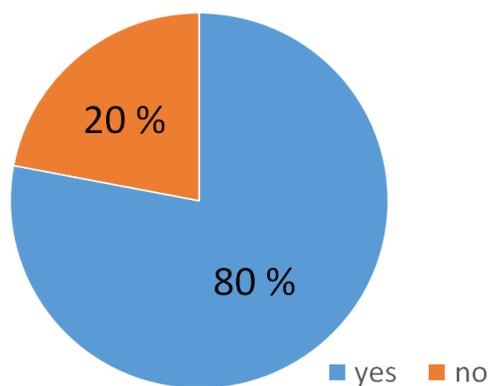
All results emphasized the importance of human capital in the development of any tourist destination. These findings certainly will hold in any other city in the region, or globally, especially in an industry that needs revamping post COVID and currently faces shortages of talented workers. And, to date, while Lebanon also has a deficient central administration unable to properly use national assets, the idea for it to restructure its asset management, seems to be a herculean task *i.e. is impossible*. That's where again proper education and proper awareness come into play. This will never be stressed enough: *without proper tourism education, people won't learn about effective resource valuation, and cyclically, the lack of valuation will hamper tourism activities*, which themselves will not be contributing to educating tourism best practices to future students majoring in tourism sciences [21].

Findings pertaining to the 1<sup>st</sup> research question show that *there is a link between effective resource valorization and enhancing tourism activities in Lebanon*. These sum up the arguments from the 28 interviewees concerning this issue. While the results from the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question, (*if so, will the valorization of those resources aid in the development of tourism in Lebanon*) are summarized from the data collection, through interpreting secondary data in comparison with the primary data collected from interviews.

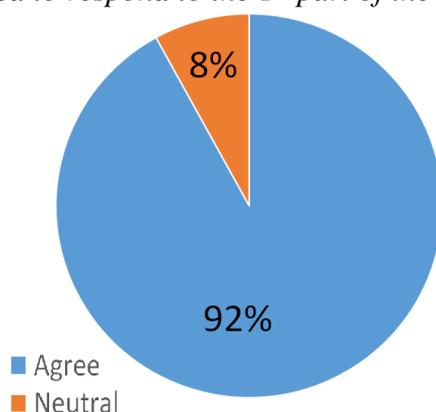
Besides, Figure 1 shows the results of the secondary data we collected to respond to the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question (*Will the valorization of resources aid in the development of tourism in Lebanon?*) while the secondary data utilized to respond to the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question (*You agree to valorize your heritage and you are aware that this actually is beneficial to the tourism industry?*) is shown in Figure 2 [5].

### J. Results

Question One of the interview showed that 90% of the interviewed experts agree on *the link between education and valorization*. While just 10% are not sure, or don't think there is a link. Yet, 50% of the respondents agreed that *the state is not concerned with such issues*. Whereas, 35% consider that they just need more education or raising awareness among other points. Here the experts stressed on the importance of education in enhancing valorization, itself improving tourism activities. These eventually, benefitting the economy.



**Figure 1:** Secondary data used to respond to the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question.



**Figure 2:** Secondary data used to respond to the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question.

For Question Two, in terms of curricula being updated, only 30% consider the syllabi to be up to date, while, the majority (70%) consider that they are outdated and need major reforms.

Question three shows that 30% consider that *introducing major SDGs (mainly SDG 4, 8, 11, and 17), help in making students more involved in society*. While, 15% think that *being better educated and more responsible citizens that they can get more involved*. Thus, 45% of the respondents agree somehow that SDGs contribute to making better citizens. While, 10% think that *internship opportunities provide this chance among other options that include skills building courses, new opportunities, scholarships, industry sponsored, or supported trainings* and so on. Yet, another 10% consider that *exposure to real life cases and including but not limited to workshops, guest lectures, skills building matches also help*. Whereas, another 10% believe that *exposure to more practical courses and providing classes through pragmatic approaches help*. We can rearrange by saying that these 30% agree on the techniques used, which will benefit students, ought to be pragmatic, include internships, among other modes of exposures, such as practical courses. Finally, the remaining 15% of the responses respectively show that the curricula could be updated in certain sectors, show disparities in others and could be even decentralized in terms of best practices.

Question four shows that 60% claim that *curricula don't respond to youth's needs or guide them properly*. While 10% of them think that providing training classes to students, or training teachers help. Yet, another 10% claim that giving increased opportunities like entrepreneurship trainings will be highly beneficial. Whereas, in some cases the curricula could be outdated or conservative and in others advanced, the bilateral collaboration among institutions can help and together cater for the remaining 20%.

Question five shows that 55% agree that curricula currently do not create impetus, but inserting tourism courses in programs can help, and as valorization is important, teachers will encourage students to preserve their resources. While 25% address the same issue as above but think that they're giving impetus for students to valorize resources in the future. Whereas the remaining 10% consider that some curricula provide impetus while others do not. However, 10% of the responses indicated that they were unsure.

Question Six shows that 85% consider *that as tourism education and resource valorization are linked, that ipso facto, valorization will be linked to the improvement of tourism activities*. This joins question one's findings on the link of the two variables. The remaining 15% show the same link, but note that aiming towards the SDGs shall be beneficial as well.

Question Seven shows that While 85% agree that the Lebanese Sahel sites need to be preserved for enhancing tourism, 10% provide different responses. The remaining 5% claim that the preservation is unnecessary, another (5% joining with the above 85% to make 90%) confirms that it is so, yet proposes to focus on marine archeology vestiges. The last 5% were not sure of the Sahel's potential.

Question Eight shows that In terms of preserving archeology sites, 10% of the responses claim that the Phoenician or related artifacts are to be focused on, while 5% deem we need to focus on the Medieval. 5% of the responses were unsure. Most of the responses (80%) considered to preserve all periods of our history. While one response confirmed that it is the site dynamics of the ancient site, city or citadel that dictates which period is to be focused on the most. Since, for instance in Jbeil, as it was impossible to keep everything, the excavators decided to choose what to preserve and what not to. The temples and the theater demonstrate this example.

Question Nine shows that 75% of the responses approve that valorizing sites are important, and that the people would take a stance and protect their heritage in their areas and/or advocate their protection and preservation. While 5% agree to the above, but in spite of protecting their heritage either had no idea that this helps the economy or that if a site like BEY 194 gets threatened in their area that they will not take a firm stance. Yet, 10% of the responses concur with the preservation but note that as per the Bey 194 case it is the UNESCO protocols that guide the preservation of sites and that this may help in keeping them. Whereas, the last 10% of the responses including slightly different arguments, but basically agreeing to the above. While there were responses showing neutrality.

Question ten shows that 95% agree to the collaboration of the DGA and the DGU, while some responses (5%) consider dismantling them altogether for decentralizing the sector. This unanimously agrees in bilateral and multilateral collaboration among stakeholders, though the arguments stressing the decentralization of preserving and upkeeping heritage sites to be considered as the better option in our case.

Question Eleven shows that 55% of the responses see that the Lebanese authorities are unconcerned about the valorization issue, while agreeing on the relationship of the variables being positive, with reciprocal relations. While 45% of the responses agree that the state is unconcerned in valorization issues but did not specify if the variables were reciprocal or not. Yet, 10% consider that the state must subsidize the sector, or subcontract site management to the private sector (ex. Jeita Grotto). The remaining 5% of the responses think that NGO help are needed in revamping the sector (5%), as they replace the absence of the government.

## Discussion

Consequently, we as Lebanese must benefit from our rich human capital in the long-term, complete sustainable economic growth through, and improve the tourism industry by the valorization of our unique heritage, giving us a chance to attract tourists [14]. Again, it must be done smartly through proper DMOs, tourism destination strategies, and proper marketing to attract the right tourists [11, 21]. Given the currently dire economic situation, it is very important to promote domestic tourism through preferential rates for Lebanese citizens. While interviewing the 28 experts, the researchers underwent some field observations and reviewed secondary data to be discussed here. Although similar aspects of how resource valorization leads to improving tourism activities, experts discussed how such outlooks are related to economic development, and pedagogy, and how can this enhance valorization, via a curriculum design approach [1, 2, 3]. Eventually, this will benefit the enhancement of tourism activities since people will be made aware of the importance of valorizing natural, cultural and touristic resources,

While the data analysis required interpreting the results of both the surveys and the interviews we collected from the field, this permitted us to triangulate our data from multiple sources [18]. Despite the fact that some researchers promoted the Tyrian Municipality in its effective job in valorizing the city's vestiges to enhance its touristic activities, nowadays we realize that no Lebanese state institution is truly concerned in such issues, and if there are any, there are at best a handful of individual initiatives [1]. In this regard, valorization affects tourism, which all of our interviewees concede to. Most of our expert interviewees concede how the lack of motivation from the authorities will ultimately harm tourism activities in the country, as there is seldom any incentive from the government to improve issues of resource valorization.

This led some of our experts to propose the decentralization of the authorities in terms of tourism management and to encourage partnerships with the private sector instead of the public, or state involvement in maintaining and upkeeping Lebanon's heritage sites. One ought to consider before preserving and valorizing heritage sites, educating youths about this and its importance. While most of our interviewees proposed the DGA and the DGU collaborate through bilateral action, this will, allow for the inspection, transformation, and modeling of data to discover useful information, and suggest conclusions and supporting decision-making. While most interviewees mentioned the importance of cultural identity to some extent, no one delved into the definition of what makes a tourism destination remarkable.

Lebanon's culture, heritage, and cuisine are unique, while Tyre offers special entertainment, and beach activities and is known for its religious importance, like any other coastal city, or important cultic site which proposes religious, or cultural tours [1, 14, 21]. This alone is something all coastal sites share [1]. Although accurate statistics on tourist profiles were not part of the scope of this study, the primary motive for touristic site strategies is to define the types of potential tourists to target for their locality, such statistics lacked for the study conducted in Tyre [1]. The same thing applies to all Lebanese touristic sites as well, as this is highly important for the success of tourism activities. Knowing that tourists are interested in your country, will help you target this market and increase tourism in the desired area. Unfortunately, we lack statistics in most areas of Lebanon.

There is no study to identify what types of tourists attract them to most, if not all of the Lebanese coastal or rural sites, since most privately owned businesses or municipalities involved in this sector do not keep such records, as only a vague overview of who comes to the

touristic site(s), while sometimes only a vague idea of tourist profiles is sketched out in some cases [18]. While most privately owned businesses blamed the state for the current tourism situation in Lebanon, researchers like to believe that in such cases regardless of whether the situations have a positive or negative effect, people can contribute at the community level, without referring to the authorities [20]. This renders, the assessment of the tourism industry in the country necessary, and is a must for future studies to investigate this. While the respondents in the study claimed that the authorities or their representatives, in some cases, lack the power, policies, and operational plans to conduct the most suitable tourism development strategies for their destinations and are met with bureaucratic procedures that plague our country, as the state is visionless in this regard [1].

Tourism destination strategies operate with careful environmental scanning procedures, especially at the state level [4]. As in some cases, municipalities, as discussed, have hope for improvements, our study results show that there is no optimism for economic or touristic activities improvement in sight [1]. While research shows that the plans of Tyre (or any other major touristic destination, now on hold due to the COVID and other socio-economic crises) will evolve towards a more sustainable approach leading to capacity building and development. This is something that the other major cities have not focused on yet or have not invested in long-term sustainable destination strategies [4, 15, 18]. Tyre intended to target local development and enhance employment, while to date none of the other Lebanese cities had such initiatives, since there was not much literature available on this issue in Lebanon [1]. The researcher who investigated the case in Tyre and how its authorities were hopeful that the situation will improve, unfortunately were far from reality. Again, the need emanating from the proper tourism education programs establishment needs to be enforced in encouraging youths to not lose hope or to become responsible citizens and focus on their future. This was also discussed with respect to Tyre and how it considered sustainability as a future DMO strategy [1]. The Chouf area also has considered such approaches applied towards mainly promoting natural and cultural tourism [22, 23, 24, 25]. These enhance tourism nativities.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Here this section presents the conclusions, recommendations, and future studies. As all our conclusions stressed the importance of human capital in the development of any tourist destination in Lebanon, or the Eastern Mediterranean region, the current study outcomes, will undoubtedly hold in any other locality in the world.

### **A. Concluding Remarks**

As shown by the majority of the respondents, people accept or agree to do something about heritage protection [14]. Though in Lebanon, one begins to realize it is the minority (that shun resource valorization) that is dangerous and that must be educated to preserve the country's heritage and not destroy it [5, 14, 21]. Henceforth geologists, tourism experts, and, archeologists need to work together with the MOT to preserve sites in the best way possible to enhance tourism activities and contribute to economic development. This should as a result improve GDP. *Lebanon has these assets, so what is it waiting for?*

As noted, most of the respondents agree that protecting an archeology site, in the long run, can improve tourism, they agree that the DGA and the DGU should work together. This implies that they should not work against each other, as is the case. While a minority, still think they ought to work unilaterally, could be the ones who deny the importance of resource valuation [5].

We, therefore, understand the existence of the relationship between resource valorization and enhancing tourism activities in Lebanon and can relate this to properly raising youth's awareness through tourism education as showing cases in tourism best practices [5]. This confirms the *link between effective resource valorization and enhancing tourism activities in Lebanon*. And as a result, *the valorization of those resources indeed will aid in the development of tourism in Lebanon*.

The next argument to raise is that *the relationship between resource valorization and enhancing tourism activities in Lebanon* is found to be positive and reciprocally involved with tourism education. Provided it is worthwhile to show the youths in tourism sciences classes the tourism best practice, the researchers confirm that *it is beneficial for the future in terms of befitting tourism activity enhancement*. This is because the youths will be better educated and more aware of the importance of the role of the effective resources valorization on enhancing touristic activities, especially in a country of which 20% of its GDP solely on tourism [21].

### **B. Recommendation**

Some of the main tourism discouraging factors according to most, if not all, of the experts we interviewed were include, but not limited to: (1) the lack of resources, (2) economic and geopolitical instability, (3) poor or inexistent relations with the public and private sectors, (4) the lack of awareness for valorizing resources and (5) the uncooperative citizens. These five impediments natively impact resource valorization. Thus, these challenges must be resolved.

### **C. Future studies**

Since the research necessitates designing hypotheses following hypothetico-inductive methods, the below postulates were proposed by the researchers. And as abductive methods need to be used in the upcoming study, the deductive component will be needed to test these two theorems, which were designed through *a posteriori* means, to be tested bay *priori* methods as proposed by the below two hypotheses[18].

H0: *There is no relationship between valorization and enhancing tourism activities.*

Ha: *There is a relationship between valorization and enhancing tourism activities.*

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