

The Quality of Tourism Education at the University of Jordan in Light of Quantitative Indicators and Qualitative Measures

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Abstract:

The tourism education program and its curriculum prioritise updates in response to the acceleration of the tourism industry and the rapid changes in the world. Referring to the quantitative indicators and qualitative measures of the Association of Arab Universities, this article presents the results of a survey conducted among 116 students at the third and fourth levels of the Tourism Management Department at the University of Jordan. The survey utilised a questionnaire that assessed their impressions of the University's quality of tourism education. Most surveyed students reported that the teaching curriculum and program quality were intermediate, regardless of the respondents' gender and academic level. These results demonstrate the need to improve the teaching program and curriculum at the Tourism Management Department by updating current curricula and collaborating with international programs to supplement the local tourism industry with a well-educated and skilled workforce.

Keywords: Curriculum, Qualitative measures, Quantitative indicators, Tourism Education.

1. Introduction:

Jordan is a country rich in historical and archaeological sites. Petra is one of the Seven Wonders of the World and has been designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Nonetheless, the success of a country's tourism sector depends on the quality of training and education. The tourism industry helps developing countries address unemployment and poverty issues by investing in the potential that arises from their natural and cultural heritage. Additionally, tourism has a multiplier effect on the economy, creating job opportunities, generating foreign currency income, and contributing to poverty alleviation, which is one of the most significant impacts of tourism on countries. However, the need for a qualified and skilled workforce remains unfulfilled and continues to face challenges. However, the need for a qualified and skilled workforce remains unfulfilled and continues to face challenges (Ruhanen & Bowles, 2020).

Tourism education is considered the backbone of the tourism industry worldwide. Teaching curricula are intended to provide students with modern and updated skills and knowledge needed to bear the responsibilities of the tourism industry (Renfors, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to monitor and adhere to quantitative and qualitative indicators, such as the standards approved by the Secretariat of the Association of Arab Universities. Tourism education studies are scarce worldwide. This research is intended to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism education in Jordan, which will ultimately reflect employment in the country's tourism sector (Kim & Jeong, 2018). Also, this study is significant because it addresses the quality of the teaching program and the curricula at the Tourism Management Department at the University of Jordan from students' perspectives.

2. Literature Review:

Tourism education is critical because the tourism industry workforce requires both practical skills and theoretical knowledge. Practical learning serves as a bridge between classrooms and real-world work. The effectiveness of practical learning can be gauged by students' acquisition of useful knowledge and the necessary skills demonstrated through their performance in the hospitality and tourism industry (Ahmad et al., 2018).

Tourism and hospitality service providers, such as travel agencies, airlines, hotels, and restaurants, utilise technology and training to prepare workers recruited from tourism educational institutions, enabling them to achieve their employers' goals and avoid hiring unqualified employees. This was emphasised by, who argued that tourism and hospitality staff who complete an academic degree and are professional in tourism activities can establish better relationships with clients and their teams, leading to greater job satisfaction. Hips with clients and their teams have better job satisfaction.

According to UNESCO (2009), a curriculum is planning learning sequences to produce particular, purposeful learning outcomes (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019). Hence, tourism curricula require comprehensive knowledge to build. As Stefanini et al. stated, present academic curricula must be improved to meet market needs. They must also be updated regularly to remain compatible with new technologies and human resources teaching and training techniques.

Also, the tourism and hospitality educator must be involved with the core units of industry management and highly focused on the automation of operations to be ready for work in the industry (Goh & King, 2020). Additionally, education is even more significant nowadays as employment prospects are becoming increasingly globalized. Thus, universities need to strengthen their current programs and employ integrated learning to emphasize their students' future

career development(Goh & King, 2020). Furthermore,(Lee et al., 2008) cited in (Vaduvu et al., 2020) If comprehensive and well-performed tourism education is provided, the overall quality of the services will be increased, and the customer experience will be improved. Therefore, improving the tourism education system is imperative for destinations that aspire to be prosperous in the tourism industry, especially since the tourism industry is personnel-intensive(Anderson & Sanga, 2019; Goh & King, 2020).

Tourism Education is increasingly recognized as an essential gadget that can be used to encourage sustainable action and change (Renfors et al., 2020; Ruhanen & Bowles, 2020).Tourism academia is changing to follow national economic objectives, fill employment gaps, boost innovation, and enhance competitiveness (Slocum et al., 2019).In this regard, the function of universities is to prepare candidates for the labor force (Slocum et al., 2019).On the other hand, insufficient learning in tourism education results in low-quality touristic services and product representation(Ramis & Angel, 2020).

In Jordan, the number of international tourists exceeded 4.2 million by the end of 2017 and reached 5.3 million in 2019 (www.mota.gov.jo). These numbers reflect the significance of tourism education in Jordan, which emerges from the importance of the tourism industry and its revenue. The tourism industry is one of the largest employers globally; it provides 10% of Jobs worldwide (Al-Tarawneh & Osam, 2019; Renfors et al., 2020), and the number rises to 17.7% in Jordan (wtcc.org). The government should encourage tourism education if it desires to support the tourism sector with a talented and educated workforce(Al-Tarawneh & Osam, 2019).

This research investigates the quality of tourism education in general and the quality of the Tourism Management Program at the University of Jordan in particular. The TTCI (World Economic Forum, 2019) reported that Jordan ranked 75thamong 140 countries, which indicates the presence of specific weaknesses in the sub-index Human Resources and Labor Market (www3.weforum.org).

3. Data and Methods:

This field survey took place between March and May of 2018. In total, 116 third- and fourth-year students from the University of Jordan Tourism Management Department filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from the quantitative indicators and qualitative measures approved by the Secretariat of the Association of Arab Universities. The questionnaire aimed to measure the quality of the Tourism Management Program at the University of Jordan from the students' perspectives. It contained 31 questions that were classified into two parts. Questions in the first part focused on the program

syllabus, whether students planned field visits or an internship to gain practical experience, and whether the program encouraged students to utilise the internet and specific websites for their studies. The second part addressed the tourism administration curriculum. Questions asked whether or not students believed that the curriculum balanced tourism issues with other public topics and encouraged critical scientific thinking and self-learning. Also, students were asked if the curriculum promoted their sense of loyalty and belonging to the country and its religious values. Additionally, students were asked if they compared the curriculum with materials from other universities, whether the curriculum followed the global updates in tourism education, and if the department offered them a list of the books approved as a source of information with each course.

4. Results and Discussion:

Simple descriptive statistics were used to report the data obtained from this survey. The results showed that the Tourism Management Department applied the quantitative indicators and qualitative measures approved by the Secretariat of the Association of Arab Universities. **Table (1)** illustrates sample demographics.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Variables

Demographic variables	F	%
Gender	46	39.7%
Male	70	60.3%
Female		
Academic level	70	60.3%
Third year	46	39.7%
Fourth Year		

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Results of the Stability of Quality Tourism Education at the University of Jordan.

Areas	Questions	α
Programs	22	0.932
Curricula	9	0.846
Total	31	0.950

Table (2) shows that the survey had excellent internal consistency values, reaching (0.950) for the whole questionnaire. In contrast, Cronbach's alpha value for the program domain (0.932) was excellent, and the value for the curriculum domain was (0.846), which is very good. All values were appropriate and sufficient, and they indicated high suitability and stability values since they were all greater than 0.60 and close to the highest value of this type of stability, which is the correct one.

Table (3): Mean and Standard Deviations of the Quality of Tourism Education Domain at The University of Jordan, Arranged in Descending Order

No.	Domains	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative importance	Level	Rank
1	Programs	3.08	0.82	61.60	Moderate	1
2	Curricula	2.89	0.85	57.80	Moderate	2
	Total	2.99	0.81	59.80	Moderate	

It is noted from **Table (3)** that the quality of tourism education at The University of Jordan (to reach the best level of educational and administrative aspects, scientific research, academic achievement and practical training) was average, as the value of the arithmetic mean of the total score was (2.99) with relative importance (59.80). The highest rank was for the program domain, with a mean score (of 3.08) and a relative importance (of 61.60), while the curriculum domain was lower, with a mean score (of 2.89) and a relative importance (of 57.80).

The quality of tourism education at the University of Jordan was analysed according to its clauses as follows:

Table (4): Descriptive Statistics for the Program Domain

No.	Question	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative importance	Level	Rank
4	The syllabus in the department includes conditions for study attendance, warning and dismissal.	3.70	1.13	74.00	High	1
5	The syllabus in the department includes conditions for transferring from one major to another.	3.67	1.19	73.40	Moderate	2
21	The department provides its students with programs for field visits and observations within their preparation programs.	3.59	1.17	71.80	Moderate	3
6	The department fully introduces the components of each program in terms of (the following system: quarterly, annual and number of credit hours).	3.48	1.30	69.60	Moderate	4
20	The department adopts programs to train its students in their field of work during the study period.	3.33	1.36	66.60	Moderate	5
1	The programs and curricula of the Tourism Administration Department are in line with the general trends of the country.	3.30	1.29	66.00	Moderate	6
17	The department adopts a special system to evaluate the results of field training for students.	3.25	1.30	65.00	Moderate	7
19	The department adopts quarterly or annual syllabi to implement its curricula	3.22	1.34	64.40	Moderate	8
16	The department motivates students to use the Internet and identifies specific sites for their use in understanding the subject matter.	3.14	1.34	62.80	Moderate	9
7	The department adopts more than one academic system.	3.10	1.37	62.00	Moderate	10
8	The department's program gives the student the opportunity to choose some of the courses he wants to study.	3.03	1.35	60.60	Moderate	11
18	The department designs training programs for students according to the targeted learning outcomes.	3.03	1.21	60.60	Moderate	12
3	The plan includes a detailed study program and a clear definition of objectives.	3.02	1.28	60.40	Moderate	13
13	The department takes into account the design of its academic program, observations and opinions of specialists and practitioners.	2.96	1.31	59.20	Moderate	14

9	The department provides continuing education programs.	2.94	1.22	58.80	Moderate	15
12	The department is concerned with the suitability of the programs to the needs of society, the labour market, and the requirements of knowledge development.	2.82	1.24	56.40	Moderate	16
15	The department reviews the programs it implements periodically	2.82	1.15	56.40	Moderate	17
11	The department investigates the extent of dealing with advanced modern technology means and developments in the technology era.	2.80	1.25	56.00	Moderate	18
2	The department's programs meet the needs of students and the community.	2.78	1.32	55.60	Moderate	19
14	The department takes into account in designing its study program the observations of the beneficiaries.	2.68	1.27	53.60	Moderate	20
10	The department checks the suitability of the study programs to the requirements of preparing graduates.	2.64	1.28	52.80	Moderate	21
22	The department adopts other types of education (open education, distance learning, etc.)	2.50	1.33	50.00	Moderate	22
	Programs	3.08	0.82	61.60	Moderate	

It can be seen from **Table 4** that the average performance for questions in the program quality domain was intermediate, as the overall mean was **3.08 with a relative importance of 61.60**. The performance of individual questions in the domain was intermediate to high, as the mean ranged between 2.50 and 3.70. The highest score was for the first question (**Table 4**), “The syllabus in the department includes conditions for study attendance, warning and dismissal,” with a mean score (of 3.70) and relative importance (of 74.0). Meanwhile, question 22, “The department adopts other types of education (open education, distance learning, etc.),” ranked last with a mean (2.50) and relative importance (50.0).

Table (5): Descriptive statistics for the curriculum domain

No.	Question	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative importance	Level	Rank
8	The curricula prescribed for the department develop the spirit of loyalty and belonging to the homeland and the religious values of its students	3.53	1.18	70.60	Moderate	1
1	The department's study plans balance between major and general topics.	3.16	1.10	63.20	Moderate	2
7	The curricula prescribed in the department develop scientific thinking and self-learning among students.	2.97	1.33	59.40	Moderate	3
4	The department compares what is taught in each course with its counterpart in distinguished universities.	2.87	1.28	57.40	Moderate	4
3	The department provides advanced curricula that keep pace with the touristic updates	2.84	1.21	56.80	Moderate	5
5	The department draws up a list of the books approved as a source for each course	2.84	1.30	56.80	Moderate	6
2	The department provides a documentary bag on the courses that includes (course descriptions, a copy of students 'homework, exercises, projects, tests, grades distribution ... and others)	2.82	1.39	56.40	Moderate	7
6	The department's curriculum and its contents achieve the skills required for the students' job field	2.77	1.21	55.40	Moderate	8
9	The department assigns students to prepare a graduation project at the end of the university level	2.18	1.41	43.60	Low	9
	Curricula	2.89	0.85	57.80	Moderate	

As demonstrated in **Table (5)**, the average score of the curriculum domain was also intermediate, as the mean score was (2.89) with relative importance (57.80). Additionally, performance of individual questions was low to medium. Mean scores for the questions ranged between (2.18-3.53). Question 8, "The curricula prescribed for the department develop the spirit of loyalty and belonging to the homeland and the religious values of its students," ranked the highest mean score with a mean of 3.53 and relative importance of 70.60. Meanwhile, question 9, "The department assigns students to prepare a graduation project at the end of the university level," ranked last, with a mean of 2.18 and relative importance of 43.60.

Table 6 presents the T-test results for the difference between the averages of the tourism education quality domains at the University of Jordan, comparing them against the gender variable.

Table (6): Interactions between the averages of the 2 domains of Tourism Education Quality Survey and Gender

Domain	Gender	F	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-Test	Sig.
Programs	Male	46	3.03	0.78	0.58	0.558
	Female	70	3.12	0.85		
Curricula	Male	46	2.89	0.86	0.02	0.980
	Female	70	2.89	0.85		
Total	Male	46	2.96	0.79	0.30	0.758
	Female	70	3.00	0.83		

The results in **Table (6)** indicate that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the averages of the different fields of the quality of tourism education at the University of Jordan survey due to the gender variable, based on the calculated value of (0.30), and with a significant level (0.758). The calculated value of t was (0.58) and the level of significance (0.558) for the program domain, while t reached (0.02) and the level of significance (0.980) for the curriculum domain. These values were not statistically significant at the predetermined alpha (0.05).

Table (7) T-test results for the differences between the averages of the fields of quality of tourism education at the University of Jordan due to the variable of academic level.

Table (7): Interactions between the averages of the 2 domains of tourism education quality survey and academic level

Domain	Academic Level	F	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-Test	Sig.
Programs	Third Year	70	3.08	0.79	0.04	0.966
	Fourth Year	46	3.09	0.86		
Curricula	Third Year	70	2.94	0.79	0.79	0.431
	Fourth Year	46	2.81	0.94		
Total	Third Year	70	3.01	0.77	0.39	0.695
	Fourth Year	46	2.95	0.88		

The results in **Table (7)** indicate that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the averages of the domains of quality of tourism education at the University of Jordan due to the academic level variable, based on the calculated t value of (0.39), and the level of significance (0.695). The estimated t value reached (0.04), with a significance level (0.966) for the program domain, while the t value was (0.79) and the significance level (0.431) for the curriculum domain.

5. Conclusion:

The study results indicate that students perceived the quality of the Tourism Management Program at the University of Jordan as intermediate. There were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the averages of the domains of quality of tourism education at Jordan University due to either the gender or the academic level variables.

Tourism education is a rapidly evolving field. Therefore, the tourism management department needs to continuously develop and improve its programs and curriculum, given the critical role tourism education plays in advancing the tourism sector at various workforce levels.

This paper proposes that the quality of tourism education can be enhanced by adopting an international tourism program that can gain accreditation from the world's best-known organizations, such as UNWTO and IATA, and build collaborativeties with prominent universities in the tourism field. As the research has demonstrated, tourism education at the University of Jordan needs to be updated to align with global tourism education standards.

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