

Analyzing Outbound Tourism as a Form of Economic Leakage: A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract

This paper aims to understand and analyse the concept, impacts and factors causing outbound tourism leakage, as well as to guide decision-makers and tourism entrepreneurs on how to reduce outbound tourism leakage and mitigate its impacts. This study used stakeholder theory as a theoretical base for analysing the perspectives of the stakeholders of the tourism and hospitality (T&H) sector. Qualitative research method was used in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Thematic analysis was used. Interview quotes were categorized into themes. The findings revealed that outbound tourism leakage resulted in lost tourism revenues, investor reluctance, a balance-of-payments deficit, a reduction in the economic multiplier effect, and inflationary pressures on the economy. The main causes of outbound tourism leakage were the high prices, high constructional and operational costs, lower quality of infrastructure and superstructure services, limited marketing, and lack of participation and collaboration. There is a lack of conceptual and qualitative research that analysed the phenomenon of outbound tourism leakage. Therefore, this study was developed to fill a knowledge gap and qualitatively analyse the concept, impacts and factors causing outbound tourism leakage.

Keywords: Outbound tourism; economic leakage; economic sustainability; tourism economics; stakeholder theory

Introduction

Economic, environmental, and socio-cultural factors all play a role in sustainable tourism development. Economic sustainability is the most impacted by economic leakage, which is critical for national and local economies, particularly in developing countries (Lejárraga & Walkenhorst, 2010; Wiranatha et al., 2017). Economic leakage contributes significantly to the worsening of the trade deficit. It occurs when payments for imported goods and services rise or when money is transferred outside of the country by international firms and/or international employees (Harrison, 2008; Pérez & Cuello, 2001; Suryawardani, 2015). T&H are among the industries that are considered an economic leakage gate (Supradist, 2004). This industry is based on travellers and their money traveling outside of their home countries, and it occasionally requires products and services that are only available in other countries. Therefore, the price of these products and services will leave the host country (mostly smaller developing countries) and end up somewhere else.

Tourism leakage increases when the local economy is unable to supply a consistent, reliable, and competitively priced supply of the required goods and services (Round, 1989), or when tourists travel outside their home countries (outbound tourism). According to

Sathiendrakumar and Watson (1997), outbound tourism as a form of economic leakage is caused by a variety of factors, including increased disposable income, local currency strength, and support for incentive tourism activities. As a result, it is regarded as a challenge for national strategic planning and tourism management because it partially neutralizes the money generated by tourism (Supradist, 2004).

Tourism is the second largest private sector employer and second highest producer of foreign exchange in Jordan (Aldehayyat & Al Khattab, 2013). In addition, it contributes to Jordan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 12.4 % (CBJ, 2018). Tourism generates more than 3,528 JOD billion in revenue for Jordan's economy (MOTA, 2017). The number of overnight visitors was 4.150.173 tourists and the number of sightseers for one day was 771.996 visitors (MOTA, 2018). The aforementioned numbers demonstrated the vital significance of the tourism sector to Jordan's economy. However, a large proportion of Jordanians travel abroad for tourism purposes, which will have a negative impact on domestic tourism, resulting in a decrease in Jordan's tourism sector revenues. According to MOTA (2019), the number of Jordanians who travelled abroad reached 1.501.000 in 2018, and it increased to 1.537.338 in 2019. While outbound tourism benefits Jordan's economy, its spillover has a negative impact on the local economic multiplier effect of locally owned T&H establishments. As a result, the primary goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of outbound tourism as a form of leakage in Jordan from the perspectives of stakeholders. Furthermore, the current study seeks to: identify the main causes of outbound tourism leakage; understand the impacts of outbound tourism leakage on Jordan's economy and local income; and propose recommendations and managerial implications that could mitigate the negative impacts of outbound tourism leakage.

Literature review

Economic leakage types

Economic leakage in the T&H industry varies depending on its nature. It is divided into three main types including: Firstly, external leakage or export refers to tourism expenditures that arise outside the tourism destination and associated domestic industries (UNWTO, 2001). Secondly, internal/import leakage refers to losses due to tourism activities that originate in the economic space of the tourism service provider and are paid and accounted for domestically (Cernat & Gourdon, 2011). This is known as the 'import content' or 'import coefficient' of tourism, or the proportion of imported goods required to provide the service (Smith & Jenner, 1992; Pérez & Cuello, 2001). Thirdly, invisible leakage is defined as "foreign exchange costs or losses originating in the economic space of the tourism service provider but not documented or properly accounted for as a tourism sector cost" (Pérez & Cuello, 2001: 126).

Tourism leakage vs outbound tourism leakage

The concept of tourism leakage has attracted the attention of several scholars (e.g., Davidson, 1993; Harrison, 2008; Hudman & Hawkins, 1989; Pérez & Cuello, 2001; Supradist, 2004; Suryawardani, 2015). Tourism leakage occurs when revenue generated by tourism activities in a host country is not available for the circulation or consumption of goods and services (Suryawardani, 2015). Tourism leakage, according to Davidson (1993), is the transfer of tourism profits from the host country's local economy to other countries. Harrison (2008) agrees with Davidson's definition of leakage as the outflow of tourism revenues from the country. Pérez and Cuello (2001: 125) provide an elaborative definition: "the loss of foreign exchange and other hidden costs deriving from tourism-related activities." More comprehensively, Hudman and Hawkins (1989) defined tourism leakage as importing services and goods, money paid to foreign trip organizers, spending on advertising and external promotion, spending on foreign training courses, commissions paid to banks, foreign

businessmen's savings, and taxes paid to the government. The aforementioned definitions range from simple to more comprehensive, such as the last two, which are more detailed and cover the majority of this phenomenon's aspects.

After an extensive survey of literature, it was discovered that there is no definition of outbound tourism leakage. Some researchers referred to outbound tourism as a form of economic leakage as potential term (Allan, 2013; Dudokh, 2008; Sathiendrakumar & Watson, 1997), but without conducting a conceptual study or even defining it. Therefore, this study is the first to define it as “the outflow of tourists and their spending out of the country of origin for tourists”.

Impacts of outbound tourism leakage

Tourism is viewed as a viable option for assisting local communities by encouraging the protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage while also creating direct and indirect job opportunities in areas where local communities' income is low (Al-Saad et al., 2018; Chirenje et al., 2013; Sadi & Henderson, 2005). In contrast, tourism can negatively influence the local economy due to its economic leakage. Loss of foreign exchange in favour of other countries hinders the local economy and its ability to compete with other tourism destinations (Smith & Jenner, 1992; Supradist, 2004), particularly when T&H enterprises import goods and services required to sustain their operations (Lejárraga & Walkenhorst, 2010). Several economic sectors, including construction, agriculture, industry, handicrafts, and services, will suffer significantly in this case. Furthermore, when locals travel outside their countries, the host country's economy suffers financial losses as they spend their savings abroad.

On the other hand, tourism leakage reduces the participation of local communities, diminishes their chance of getting a job in the T&H industry (Chirenje et al., 2013; Rylance & Spenceley, 2017; Suryawardani et al., 2014; Terzioglu & Gokovali, 2016), and drives down wages for local people (Alzboun et al., 2017; Sadi & Henderson, 2005). This occurs when T&H firms hire foreign workers from impoverished countries and pay them less than equivalent local workers.

Contributory factors of outbound tourism leakage

Economic leakage can be attributed to a number of factors, including but not limited to development level, economic diversification, government policy, business power integration, ownership status, time and economic evolution, and tourism scale (Supradist, 2004). First, the level of economic development, which includes the quality of services and facilities provided to tourists, is critical in determining whether the leakage rate is decreasing or increasing. For example, less advanced economic development like the developing countries rely heavily on foreign capital goods (internal/import leakage), and once foreign exporting firms receive their money, they transfer it back to their home countries (external/export leakage) (Supradist, 2004). Second, economic diversification affects the level of tourism leakage significantly. When destinations rely heavily on various local economic sectors, goods, and services, economic leakage decreases. Third, government policies play a significant role in the development of economic, tourism, and investment legislation and laws. Finance, banking, taxes, imports, customs, and ownership are all affected directly by these laws (Supradist, 2004). Fourth, foreign ownership of real estate, properties, and T&H enterprises may have an impact on the foreign exchange of the local economy. For example, foreign ownership may cause the majority of tourism revenues to be diverted from the host country's local economy and directed to other countries (Supradist, 2004). Fifth, the scale of tourism, which refers to the size of the T&H businesses (small, medium, and large), influences the rate of economic leakage. In terms

of employment size, for example, larger hotels and restaurants employ more people than smaller ones. Small businesses, on the other hand, tend to employ more locals than medium and large businesses (Charles et al., 2015). Sixth, T&H enterprises which have vertical and horizontal integration, are abler to increase their market share more than others (Aziri & Nedelea, 2013). Such integrations enable businesses to achieve greater economies of scale and sell their products and services internally, cutting off different costs from their expenditure list and resulting in increased profitability. Finally, tourism and economic development have a symbiotic relationship in which economic development can aid in the development of a destination's tourism and vice versa. The leakage level increases considerably when launching tourism development projects due to the need for foreign debts and import of goods and services from foreign firms. As a result, economic leakage is a dynamic phenomenon that increases and decreases with the country's economic development over time (Suryawardani et al., 2016). All of the aforementioned factors clearly have varying effects on leakage. Depending on the nature of the country and region, leakage can decrease or increase over time.

Management of outbound tourism leakage

The country's economy is jeopardized due to its reliance on foreign capital and imported goods and services. Consequently, various tourism strategies and activities, such as domestic tourism, tourism marketing, and linkage, could help to reduce tourism leakage (Alzboun et al., 2016; Gu, 2000; Iamsiraroj, 2016; Rylance & Spenceley, 2017). Domestic tourism is regarded as extremely important due to the significant economic benefits it generates, such as employment, foreign currency, local income, and tax revenues (Nowak et al., 2003). It contributes to increased tourism investment, lower unemployment, and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage sites. Domestic tourism is important for reducing economic leakage because of its ability to support the local community and small local businesses by focusing on authentic local products, services, and facilities (Gu, 2000; Shah et al., 2002). Domestic tourism growth benefits a variety of other local industries (for example, agriculture and handicraft) (Baatweng, 2014; Mbaiwa, 2011). As a result, it is worth noting that domestic tourism is critical to the country's production, trade movement of goods and services, and financial flows within the country.

Tourism marketing is considered a key component of destination management (Morrison, 2013; Pearce & Schänzel, 2013; Sheehan et al., 2016). It draws tourists' attention and interest to a specific destination or product. It piques tourists' interest in a specific destination or product. It also encourages tourists to plan their vacations, make travel decisions, and engage in appropriate behaviour. Tourism marketing's primary goal is to improve a destination's image and thus increase its global market share (Kozak & Baloglu, 2010; Avraham & Ketter, 2016). To reduce economic leakage, tourism marketing strategies could be used. Marketing certain types of tourism (for example, ecotourism) that cause less leakage could help to mitigate the leakage impacts on local communities (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2020; Ünlüönen et al., 2011). Furthermore, they promote local products such as food and beverages, souvenirs, and authentic handmade crafts (McFarlane et al., 2016), thereby boosting the local economy and increasing participation in tourism activities among locals.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the types, impacts, causes, and strategies for reducing economic leakage in the T&H industries (Allan, 2014; Alzboun et al., 2017; Gu, 2000; Supradist, 2004; Ünlüönen et al., 2011). For example, Terzioglu and Gokovali (2016) discovered that ownership characteristics of hotel owners, travel agents, and tour operators, as well as foreign imports, are the main causes of leakage in Marmaris, Turkey. As national or local ownership and production increase, leakage tends to decrease. Higher levels of local tourism production, as well as improved cross-sectoral linkages between local suppliers

and intermediaries, resulting in a higher percentage of international tourism receipts remaining in the country's local economy (Rylance & Spenceley, 2017).

To further validate this notion, Lacher and Nepal (2010) proposed some strategies to reduce tourism leakages in the Huay Pu Keng village, Thailand including (i) villagers should create a “village- wide-co-operative” as villagers can set a standard wage for everyone, (ii) Charge a substantially essential fee as it would ensure that entrance revenue will be directly given to the villages without any external interferences and, (iii) Sell locally manufactured products as it will also support the local labours to generate good income. While there has been a lot of research on the different types, impacts, and causes of economic leakage in the tourism industry, there hasn't been a lot of conceptual and qualitative research on the phenomenon of outbound tourism as a form of economic leakage (Allan, 2013; Dudokh, 2008). Allan (2013), for example, analysed quantitatively the motivations of Jordanian female outbound tourists. Tourists were found to be drawn to travel abroad for shopping and visiting natural and cultural heritage sites. Jordanians typically travel to Turkey for shopping because the prices and taxes are lower than in Jordan. As a result, the majority of developing countries regard outbound tourism as a form of economic leakage of foreign exchange reserves (Dudokh, 2008).

According to previous research, stakeholder analysis based on stakeholder theory is the main research approach used to analyse the impacts, causes, and strategies to reduce tourism leakage (e.g., Alzboun et al., 2016; Alzboun et al., 2017; Allan, 2014; Alzboun et al., 2017; Gu, 2000; Lacher & Nepal, 2010; Rylance & Spenceley, 2017; Supradist, 2004; Terzioglu & Gokovali, 2016; Ünlüönen et al., 2011). The stakeholder theory is well-grounded theoretically for analysing the economic leakage of tourism. Stakeholder theory is “*managerial*” in the sense that it addresses how managers perform their tasks and is closely related to business, value-added, and commercial practice (Laplume et al., 2008). Furthermore, it expressly acknowledges that stakeholders are important players, but they are only one of myriad incumbents (Theodoulidis, 2017). Therefore, the current study attempted to conceptualize our argument by employing stakeholder theory as a theoretical basis for understanding outbound tourism as a form of economic leakage. Consequently, drawing on stakeholder theory as a theoretical base, the study focuses on analysing qualitatively the impacts and factors triggering outbound tourism leakage in Jordan from the perspectives of the stakeholders of the T&H sector.

Research methodology

The current study employed a qualitative research method to conduct an in-depth analysis of outbound tourism as a form of leakage in Jordan. Semi-structured interviews were used as a research tool. Based on previous research on outbound tourism and economic leakage (Allan, 2013; Alzboun et al., 2017; Lacher & Nepal, 2010; Rylance & Spenceley, 2017; Supradist, 2004; Terzioglu & Gokovali, 2016; Ünlüönen et al., 2011), this study developed a set of interview guidelines to represent the study's three main themes: impacts, causes, and strategies to reduce outbound economic leakage in Jordan.

The target population of this study was the main tourism stakeholders suggested by Goeldner and Ritchie (2011): government officials; employees who work at the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities which is the responsible body for the destination management, owners and managers of the local T&H enterprises in Jordan (travel agencies and hotels), tour guides who work in the tourism industry, and Jordanian tourists who are travelled abroad for tourism purposes. Snowball sampling was used to get a representative sample from each one of the four stakeholder groups.

To protect their privacy, the names of the stakeholders were coded. Coding the participants helps with transcript identification during content analysis. To assist the researchers in remembering the names and jobs of the participants coded, the real names of the participants were kept until the final stage of the analysis was completed (Tables 1 & 2).

Table 1: General information about the participants (stakeholders)

Acronym	Gender	Age	Workplace	Years of work experience
Stakeholder1	M	41	Tour Guiding Sector	11
Stakeholder2	F	36	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	7
Stakeholder3	M	34	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	8
Stakeholder4	M	44	Jordan Tourism Board	12
Stakeholder5	M	45	Tour Guiding Sector	14
Stakeholder6	M	42	Jordan Tourism Board	13
Stakeholder7	M	45	Tour Guiding Sector	13
Stakeholder8	M	33	Hotel	8
Stakeholder9	F	31	Travel Agency	6
Stakeholder10	M	37	Travel Agency	9
Stakeholder11	M	40	Tour Guiding Sector	12
Stakeholder12	M	30	Hotel	5
Stakeholder13	F	28	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	2
Stakeholder14	M	38	Tour Guiding Sector	10
Stakeholder15	M	28	Travel Agency	4
Stakeholder16	M	41	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder17	M	43	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder18	F	29	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder19	M	38	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder20	M	53	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder21	F	30	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder22	M	40	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder23	M	36	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder24	M	48	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder25	M	40	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder26	F	27	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder27	M	50	Jordanian Tourist	
Stakeholder28	M	31	Jordanian Tourist	

Table 1 illustrated the main characteristics of the participants, which included their number, gender, age, years of work experience, and workplace. The majority of the interviewees (22) were men, with only six females. Stakeholders range in age from 27 to 53 years old. The experience of government officials, T&H employees, and tour guides ranged from 2 to 14 years. In Table 2, the participant codes listed in the first column were used to ease the categorization of the stakeholders' responses.

Table 2: Codes of the participants (stakeholders)

Code	Full Name
ST1-28	Stakeholders Numbers (1-28)
M	Male
F	Female
Y#	Years of work experience
A#	Age
JT	Jordanian Tourist
MT	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
TG	Tour Guiding Sector
HT	Hotel
TA	Travel Agency
JTB	Jordan Tourism Board

Initially, a few interviews with some known participants were conducted to test the validity of the research tool, and then the sample was expanded to grow like a snowball rolling while the study was being carried out. The data collection process ended when the researchers reached a

saturation point of data collected. Participants were first contacted by email or phone to request their participation in the study and to provide general information about its objectives. Consent letters were later sent to them. After that, interviews were scheduled. Due to the current epidemiological situation in the world, 28 interviews were conducted over the phone or via Skype between 20 February 2021 and 20 March 2021. The entire interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. As they were conducted in Arabic, the transcripts were translated into English. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

Following the completion of data collection, content analysis (thematic) was performed. To discuss and interpret the quotes from the interviews, they were organized and placed within themes. MAXQDA software version 2020 was used to analyse them. It can sort, organize, and analyse large amounts of text or other data and facilitate the management of interpretations and findings (Udo & Stefan, 2019).

Results discussion

The current study investigated the perspectives of the tourism stakeholders regarding different issues related to outbound tourism leakage. Their responses were categorized, interpreted, and discussed in three main themes: impacts of outbound tourism leakage; causes of outbound tourism leakage; and management of outbound tourism leakage.

Impacts of outbound tourism leakage

The majority of Jordanian tourists are accustomed to traveling abroad, which means that their savings will be spent outside of Jordan. According to the participants, outbound tourism has a negative impact on the local economy. They specifically stated that it results in a loss of tourism revenues and a reluctance to invest in the sector. Leakage reduced tourism revenues that could have been reinvested in the sector (Chirenje et al., 2013; Lacher & Nepal, 2010; Rigós-Simón et al., 2015; Wiranatha et al., 2017). As a result, Jordan's tourism industry will suffer a significant downturn, negatively impacting employment in the T&H sector. An employee at the department of tourism sites management at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities stated:

People are not much interested in tourism in Jordan, and the majority prefer to travel outside of the country. Such behaviour will leak their money outside Jordan, which in turn will negatively influence the T&H enterprises. (ST3MA34Y8-MT)

This is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Daly and Farley (2011), which found that leaks comprise a variety of non-consumptive uses of income, including savings, taxes, and imports. Furthermore, they found that tourism leakage reduces employment opportunities, decreases the level of local income, and reduces the demand on the tourism markets like souvenirs markets and public markets. A high-level official heading a human resources department at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities stated:

Losing money abroad reduces financial returns, and many employees will lose their jobs, therefore, employers will be forced to fire some employees to keep the company from bankruptcy. (ST13FA28Y2-MT)

This was consistent with the findings of Alzboun (2016) study, which found that economic leakage has a negative impact on the economic ability of local communities to operate their businesses. According to the interviewed employees, tourism leakage has a negative impact on Jordan's image as a tourist destination by giving foreign tourists the impression that the tourist reality in Jordan is not good; as a result, Jordanian tourists travel abroad, reducing the number

of incoming foreign tourists. Outbound tourism, on the other hand, has had an impact on local pride in culture and heritage. Jordanians are proud of their cultural heritage due to the abundance of archaeological heritage sites in Jordan. Jordan, according to Kennedy and Bewley (2004:25), has approximately 100,000 archaeological sites containing valuable artefacts and monuments. Locals, on the other hand, prefer to travel outside of Jordan. This indicates a decrease in interest in visiting tourism sites in their own country. One of the interviewed tour guides stated:

“Local tourists leaving outside Jordan can reflect a negative stereotype about Jordan's tourism products and services, as well as natural and cultural heritage sites such as Petra and Wadi Rum.” (ST5MA45Y14-TG)

As a result of the unwillingness to engage in domestic tourism, the size of the economic multiplier effect in general, and the employment multiplier in particular, will be impacted (Nurov et al., 2021). Local residents in tourism areas will lose some of the revenues they used to get, while others will lose their jobs. More comprehensively, Horl and Betsche (2005) asserted that economic leakage has serious long-term consequences, including a decrease in investment spending, an increase in the balance of payments deficit, inflationary pressures on the national economy, exacerbating the unemployment problem, and an increase in the poverty rate.

Causes of outbound tourism leakage

The participants indicated that outbound tourism leakage is attributed to a variety of factors, including high prices; high constructional and operational costs of T&H enterprises; the weakness of T&H services; a lack of infrastructure and entertainment services; ineffective marketing and promotional activities; and ineffective collaboration among tourism stakeholders. The main reason for visiting outbound tourist destinations, according to some interviewed tourists, is the high prices of tourism products and services in Jordan, as well as a desire to explore new tourism destinations. A Jordanian tourist, the head of a large family, elaborated:

We decided to take a three-day family trip to the Dead Sea. When we compared the price of the Dead Sea trip to an outbound trip to Sharm El-Sheikh, we chose the Sharm El-Sheikh trip because it was cheaper, despite the fact that they both provide many of the same services. Furthermore, by traveling to a different country (Egypt), we will be able to experience new things (Egypt) (ST16JT-MA41)

Jordan, unlike some neighbouring countries, does not pursue a price-cutting policy that would increase sales and lower unit costs, attracting more investment in the T&H sector. As a result, some of them, such as Turkey, have gained a competitive advantage. The high prices of the T&H services are out of reach for the majority of Jordanians, influencing their travel behaviour and revisit intention. Some participants attribute this to the fact that there are numerous options outside of Jordan that cater to Jordanian tourists' various desires and tastes. When one of the tour guides was asked about Jordanians' purchasing power, he said: “In my opinion, some people prefer to visit neighbouring tourism destinations because the prices of their services are more suitable to Jordanians' purchasing power.” (ST7MA45Y13-TG)

According to the World Bank (2021), the purchasing power parity (PPP) of each person employed in Jordan is 47,344 USD in 2020. This figure is low when compared to neighbouring countries' PPPs, such as Turkey (86,051 USD) and Saudi Arabia (116,313 USD). When

compared to other countries, Jordan's T&H services were among the most expensive in the Middle East. This expensiveness may be attributed to Jordan's high tax and fee rates imposed on businesses. For example, Jordan's corporate tax rate increased from 14% in 2014 to 20% in 2015, while the personal income tax rate increased by one-third from 20% in 2018 to 30% in 2019. (Trading Economics, 2021).

The high construction and operational costs of T&H enterprises are another factor contributing to outbound tourism leakage. High taxes, fees, customs, and charges, according to the majority of participants, are the primary causes of rising T&H service prices. A travel agency employee with extensive experience in pricing tour packages explained:

I believe that the high prices of the tourism products and services is an inevitable result, as the enterprises pay huge sums of money upon their establishment, including salaries, water, and electricity, in addition to the unjustified high taxes and fees. (ST5MA45Y14-TA)

The T&H enterprises with high operational costs gain a slight increase in operational profits with added outputs because such costs continue to be credited into the outputs (Shamaileh & Khanfar, 2014). Consequently, business owners in the T&H industries will employ any strategy available to gain control of and reduce operational costs while providing tourists with high-quality services and unique experiences (Bethapudi, 2013). The majority of the tourists interviewed believe that the prices they paid are not worth the local T&H products and services they purchased. They think that the weakness of T&H services, as well as a lack of infrastructure and entertainment services, are among the factors that contribute to their preference for outbound tourism. A Jordanian tourist who works as a marketing officer stated:

Before embarking on a trip, the majority of people conduct research on travel forums such as TripAdvisor. They organize T&H businesses based on the Best Value indicator and read online reviews to determine whether the services offered are worth the price or not. (ST22JT-MA40)

According to tourism stakeholders, the sites and services provided have been the same for years with no real development. Furthermore, tourism and archaeological site improvements are relatively simple and do not compete with neighbouring outbound tourism destinations in terms of entertainment services, infrastructure, and superstructure. According to Mansour and Mumuni (2019), the low quality of domestic tourism sites, a scarcity of entertainment services, a lack of tourism information, and unsatisfactory tourism enterprise services are among the factors that drive tourists to prefer vacationing abroad.

Effective marketing has a positive impact on both domestic and international tourism (Pearce & Schänzel, 2013; Sheehan et al., 2016). Domestic tourism, according to Takele (2020), has the potential to reduce inflation, reduce economic leakage, and create job opportunities. Internal marketing and word of mouth help to cognitively map domestic tourists' expectations. However, there is a weakness in Jordan's internal marketing of local tourism products and services. Besides, travel agencies tend to promote outbound tourism destinations due to the high rate of profits earned. The tourism stakeholders also believe that the most serious challenges confronting tourism marketing in Jordan are a limited tourism marketing budget, a lack of use of new high-tech in the tourism industry, and a lack of required practical experience. They claimed that the current marketing tools are out of date. An elderly Jordanian tourist compared the marketing tools used in Jordan to those used globally:

I have visited a number of outbound destinations. Some of them use cutting-edge information and communication technologies to entertain and provide them with new experiences. Augmented reality and holographic technologies, for example, were among the technologies I encountered in China and the United States. The situation is different in Jordan. (ST20JT-MA53)

Another cause of economic leakage is a lack of coordination and collaboration among the interested parties (Gössling & Hall, 2019). According to the stakeholders interviewed, coordination between all parties interested in the tourism sector (government and tourist associations, as well as T&H enterprises and local communities) is critical to its success because they complement each other. Nonetheless, there is a lack of coordination, consultation, and participation, as well as a lack of enterprise participation and public involvement in decision-making, particularly during the process of enacting the laws related to taxes, fees, customs, and investment. An experienced tour guide explained:

Lack of collaboration and marginalization of some stakeholders may stymie the national economy in general, and tourism investment in particular. A few decision makers set together and enact laws, legislations, and instructions without referring to the interested industries and people. Even if they do, it will be fictitious. (ST1MA41Y11-TG)

Management of outbound tourism leakage

Based on the foregoing discussion, it is clear that outbound tourism leakage reduces the country's gross national income, causing a downturn in all economic sectors. Outbound tourists and/or imported goods are sources of economic leakage because they contribute to the transfer of a country's generated earnings to another, resulting in an outflow from the local area (Chirenje et al., 2013; Supradist, 2004; Wiranatha et al., 2017). Creating an appealing investment environment; improving tourism products and services; supporting local investment; taxation reduction; cost reduction; adoption of new marketing tools; and competitiveness enhancement are some of the solutions proposed by tourism stakeholders to reduce economic leakage and mitigate its impacts.

Creating an appealing tourism environment for both local tourists and local entrepreneurs has the potential to boost profits for local businesses, ensuring their long-term viability. In the same context, Truong et al. (2014) indicated that in order to be economically sustainable, governmental organizations must demonstrate that their behaviour takes into account the interests of T&H enterprises as well as societal expectations. In the COVID-19 era, the public sector must inevitably support local businesses by creating a conducive environment for tourism recovery and entrepreneurship, as well as stimulating a wide range of economic incentives.

To create an appealing tourism environment, tourism products and services must be improved and diversified at reasonable prices to meet the needs, desires, and budgets of various types of tourists. This would result in increased tourism revenues and income for both tourism businesses and local communities. The price competitiveness of tourism enterprises has a significant impact on a country's or destination's overall tourism competitiveness (Dwyer & Forsyth, 2011). A country's price comparative advantage over another is heavily influenced by its taxation and customs policy. As a result, whenever the government lowers taxes and customs duties, as well as provides investment incentives to tourism enterprises, it can help the economy grow (Akkemik, 2012; Huseynli, 2022). An employee at a five-star hotel who is familiar with hotel room pricing explained:

We (hospitality enterprises) continue to urge the government to implement more investment incentives, such as lowering taxes and fees levied on our businesses. The COVID-19 made it difficult for hotels to pay their employees' wages. Because of the high sales tax and fees, as well as the high operational costs, hotels were unable to lower their room rates (water, electricity, equipment, furniture, catering etc.). As a result, Jordanians prefer to visit cheaper neighbouring countries, such as Turkey. (ST8MA33Y8-HT)

Domestic tourism should be supported, costs should be reduced, incentives should be provided, and the quality of products and services should be improved, according to stakeholders, in order to maintain current local tourism growth. This would enable enterprises to lower the prices of their products and services, potentially increasing the rate of domestic tourism, especially given the current epidemiological situation. This is consistent with a recent study on the impacts of COVID-19 on T&H enterprises conducted by Alonso et al. (2020), which stated that domestic tourism should be supported because it is one of the main sub-sectors that contribute to the recovery of the global economy in general, and tourism industries worldwide in particular. According to Supradist (2004), governments can stimulate their economies by injecting cash into the tourism industry and supporting local tourism products and services.

Jordan has reached a watershed moment by launching domestic tourism programs such as the "*Ordonona Jannah*" program, which means "*Our Jordan is a paradise*" This national program allows Jordanians to visit the majority of Jordan's tourism sites at low cost because the government covers more than half of the total cost of domestic tour packages. A reservation officer at a travel agency mentioned:

The "*Ordonona Jannah*" is a success that has the potential to reduce outbound tourism leakage, but it is not the only reason. People are still hesitant to travel abroad due to concerns about COVID-19 and its new, mutated strains. True leakage reduction needs supporting the enterprises. (ST15MA28Y4-TA)

Tourism marketing can make a quantum leap in promoting domestic tourism in Jordan by reviewing existing marketing tools and focusing on new cost-effective marketing tools, such as social media marketing. Social media, according to De las Heras-Pedrosa et al. (2020), plays an important role in promoting tourism sites. A five-star hotel employee specified:

Given the world's technological advancements and the Jordan Tourism Board's limited budget, I prefer to use cost-effective marketing tools such as social networking, search engine optimization, email marketing, and content marketing, which can reach not only Jordanians but people from all over the world. (ST8MA33Y8-HT)

Some tourists argued that relying on promotional video clips by celebrities and content influencers on new social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and others could boost domestic tourism competitiveness and reduce tourism leakage. A marketing officer at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities avowed:

I believe that the best way to promote tourism sites now is to use celebrities and social media influencers, who are followed by millions of people and have access to the majority of Jordanians and international tourists. They were dubbed influencers

because of their ability to sway people's attitudes, behaviours, and decisions. (ST2FA36Y7-MT)

Finally, tourism stakeholders interviewed suggested that the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities prioritize comprehensive planning in collaboration with all interested parties in order to motivate them and increase market competition, resulting in better services and lower prices. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' Strategic Plan 2018-2020 aimed to maintain the economic sustainability of the tourism industry and reduce economic leakage through partnerships and coordination among all stakeholders (MOTA, 2020). An officer from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' Public Relations Department confirmed:

Work must be participatory and complementary in nature in order to reduce economic leakage and/or mitigate its impacts on both the national and local economies. Therefore, emphasis must be placed on involving and participating all stakeholders in Jordan's economy and tourism industry in decision-making, particularly the Jordan Investment Commission. (ST2FA36Y7-MT)

Without a doubt, effective collaboration and genuine participation from all tourism stakeholders are required for a comprehensive and in-depth discussion of the current situation and future solutions (Al-Saad, 2014). Collaboration, as defined by Wood and Gray (1991:11), is "a process of joint decision-making among key stakeholders in the same problem domain about the future of that domain." Stakeholders should participate to share and discuss the fundamental needs and interests of the T&H industries, as well as how the government can support enterprises and enhance their competitiveness compared with those in the competing destinations.

Conclusion and implications

This study demonstrated the use of the qualitative research approach as a tool for comprehensively understanding and obtaining in-depth information about outbound tourism as a form of economic leakage, as well as serving as rational guidance for official decision-makers and tourism entrepreneurs on how to reduce outbound tourism leakage and mitigate its negative economic impacts. The use of qualitative analysis of the impacts and causes of outbound tourism leakage in Jordan from the perspectives of tourism stakeholders contributed to the theoretical and practical goals of the study. The analysis of the impacts of outbound tourism leakage revealed that it resulted in a loss of tourism revenues, particularly for local businesses in tourism areas. It had a negative impact on their financial ability to operate their businesses. This has resulted in investor reluctance to invest in the T&H sector, increasing the balance of payments deficit, reducing the economic multiplier effect, inflating the national economy, exacerbating the unemployment problem, and increasing the poverty rate among local communities. Unemployment and poverty have the potential to reduce demand for local tourism products and services. Outbound tourism leakage, on the other hand, has harmed Jordanians' pride in their country's culture and heritage, as they have lost interest in visiting and staying overnight at least once in local tourism sites (cultural and natural heritage sites).

Outbound tourism leakage is caused by a variety of factors. First, there is a desire to travel to new places and encounter new cultures and natural wonders. Second, the high prices of the tourism products and services in Jordan considering the low purchasing power parity (PPP) of Jordanians, are attributed to the high construction and operational costs of the T&H enterprises (taxes, fees, charges, water, electricity, furniture, catering etc.). Third, Jordanian tourists think that the entertainment services, infrastructure, and superstructure in Jordan are of

lower quality than competing neighbouring destinations like Turkey. Fourth, due to the Jordan Tourism Board's limited budget, marketing and promotional campaigns are limited. Finally, there is a lack of collaboration and participation among tourism stakeholders. T&H enterprises are not effectively represented and involved in the process of developing national tourism strategies and enacting laws governing taxes, fees, customs, and investment.

As a result, the current study proposed a number of practical solutions and suggestions for reducing outbound tourism leakage and mitigating its negative economic impacts. The study advocates for domestic tourism, lowering the construction and operational costs of tourism and hotel businesses and creating an appealing tourism environment for both local tourists and local entrepreneurs. This would boost local businesses' profits while also providing tourists with high-quality products and services at reasonable prices affordable to the majority of Jordanians. Furthermore, in order to promote Jordan as a tourism destination on a local and international scale, new and cost-effective marketing tools such as web content influencers, celebrities, and social media platforms must be used. Finally, this study found that governmental stakeholders should pay more attention to genuine consultation and collaboration with stakeholders in Jordan's economy, tourism, and hospitality industries, particularly when enacting industry-related laws and regulations.

The current study's significance stems from its theoretical and managerial contributions. Theoretically, although a number of studies have been conducted on the types, impacts, causes, and strategies to reduce economic leakage in the T&H industries, there is a lack of conceptual and qualitative research that analysed and enabled an understanding of the concept of outbound tourism leakage. A thorough review of the literature revealed that there is no definition of outbound tourism leakage. As a result, this study is the first to define it. In addition, due to the lack of qualitative research that analysed the phenomenon of outbound tourism as a form of economic leakage, this study came up to fill a knowledge gap and qualitatively analyse the factors triggering outbound tourism leakage in Jordan from the perspectives of the T&H stakeholders. Based on stakeholder theory, the current study conceptualized its framework to obtain in-depth information about the impacts, causes, and strategies for reducing outbound tourism in the T&H industries. Managerially, the findings are regarded as suggesting managerial implications that could reduce outbound tourism leakage and mitigate its negative impacts on the economy. The findings can be rational guidance to decision-makers and planners to examine the potential conditions where leakage may occur, and how to deal with them in order to maintain local tourism growth and the country's economic sustainability.

This study has several limitations. For example, the low response rate of the governmental stakeholders. While some were unwilling or disagreed to be interviewed, others were not very helpful in providing insightful information. When the topic was sensitive, such as the role of the government in general, and the ministry in particular, in reducing outbound tourism leakage and/or mitigating its impacts on the national economy, it was somewhat daunting to get a clear response. One possible explanation for this is their fear of disclosing sensitive information that contradicts the general policy of the government or the ministry. Because of the low response rate, the contents of the interviews with officials were scrutinized with more prudence.

The researchers encountered a scarcity of research on outbound tourism as a form of economic leakage. A future study could analyse the relationships between outbound tourism leakage and tourism destination competitiveness, as well as the leakage and each competitiveness pillar and its indicators on one hand, and each competitiveness pillar and its indicators on the other. Furthermore, this research is qualitative in nature, with the goal of thoroughly understanding the phenomenon of outbound tourism as a form of economic leakage.

However, future conceptual research should discuss and analyse the concept of outbound tourism leakage, and quantitative work should further analyse the statistical relationships between outbound tourism leakage and each of the leakage causes to determine which is the most influential in increasing outbound tourism leakage.

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