



# Developing tourism through sports events to assist in the rejuvenation of the strategic position of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA)

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## Abstract

The Study aimed at having a general recognition of the value of tourism by the local community in Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) and their views towards a relocation process of the tourism product based on a sought sporting events portfolio. This paper studied the local society of Aqaba, situated on the South of Jordan, and the possibility to relocate its tourism strategy by concentrating on a portfolio of specially selected sports occasions. With roughly 160,000 people, Aqaba's economy depends on the port of Aqaba and the options that tourism brings. The tourism industry is very seasonal with the maximum visitation season being summer which promotes beach tourism in all its shapes and forms. Such opportunities need to be vigorously explored so as to derive maximum benefit and bolster the local fiscus. Sport tourism events have clearly been found to give exciting opportunities to market cities and areas as favorite tourist destinations, and to offer growth prospects for their corresponding local economies. There is much work that needs to be undertaken in order to meet the gap in the literature on Aqaba as a sustainable sport tourism destination, and this article is only one small step in that direction.

**Keywords:** Sports tourism, Social exchange theory (EST), Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), Ipsative approach.

## Introduction

The creation of new sport tourism events and the attraction of famous events has become a serious element of the Destination Management Strategies (DMS) all over the world. The contribution to crucial aspects such as tourism promotion, branding and generating publicity, improving occupancy, encouraging to repeat visits and overcoming them are the concerns when hosting sport events, but these are also vital



(Nicolaides, 2014; Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Tourism and sports events can lead to the society's welfare through upsurges in employment, income growth, production of local goods, speculation by investors and additional services as well as new sources of entertainment and improvements in quality of life (Abuhjeeleh et al, 2019; Hemmonsbey & Knott, 2016). At the same time, it can cost a community large financial burdens including increased litter and security issues, congestion, pollution, and security problems. Aqaba has a limit of around 4,000 beds and the number of guests is around 278,423 every year (Aqaba Office of Tourism, 2017). The main area, the proximity to essential markets, and the arrangement of the tourism industry, have implied that after some time Aqaba can eventually get to appreciate advantages from tourism. In 2002, The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) received an exhaustive administrative arrangement covering improvement exercises in the area at the level of the tourism drive, commercial, industrial and coordination's divisions, and other speculative parts. The broad system now covers five areas: Aqaba City, Aqaba Port Area, Southern Coastal Zone, Southern Heavy Industries Area and Northern Airport Area. This paper emphasizes the examination of sport events' which is a category of events that have had rapid growth in recent years. This paper tries to shed light on the importance of ensuring that sport tourism researches can remain relevant in dealing with changing global trends and issues. Incidentally, the important position of sport and the position of sports events in general, for the attractiveness of tourism generation are also partly highlighted.

The World Tourism Organization (2012) has admitted sport tourism's huge value and mentioned this in the South Africa Global Conference for Tourism, Sports and Massive Events as follow "At a time when some traditional tourist destinations are suffering from the effects of the recession, sport tourism is expected to continue to grow." In spite of the common use of sport events in urban development, the degree of resident community interest is indispensable in the city's growth-supporting agenda.

The host community is the place where most of the influences created by sports events will be felt (Hossain & Islam, 2019; Joubert, 2016; Marumo et al, 2015; Mofokeng & Ndlovu, 2018; Nicolaides, 2014; Mpotaringa & Hattingh, 2019). The relationship with the sport community will determine the nature and extent of these influences. Many studies have focused on the community effects of certain events most of which are large. Others have studied the perceptions of the residents and the social, economic and environmental impacts of the special events in the tourist destination. So far, there have been some researches on the connection between residents and their attitudes toward sports events and community perceptions towards them (Mxunyelwa & Mangisa, 2018; Othy & Swart, 2016; Saayman & Merwe, 2018; Siyabulela, 2016; Somphong et al, 2019; Spencer, 2015; Nicolaides, 2015; Spencer & Steyn, 2017; Tichaawa & Bob, 2016). The development of society is inevitable as a result of natural, psychological and vital factors that work in an integrated way in an evolutionary process called the "evolution over the organic" (Carneiro & Perrin, 2002) and that specialization is the goal of every evolution and also the evolution of creatures. In other words, the more complex the organism becomes, the greater the competence and uniqueness. The more individual the members, the more independent the competence. The process of growth - evolution - is evidenced by the increase in the size of society and organic organism. There is no continuous evolution but its end is utter annihilation. So, Spencer's view of evolution is pessimistic as is the case with some tourism development. However, as with tourism, after some public criticism, ideas can become highly and influenced the direction of the theory through unanimity of acceptance.

The goal of this study was to figure out the concept of using population or a combination of events to help revitalize or redefine the planned position of the tourist



destination of Aqaba. The study examines the attitudes the local population towards a selection of amusement events and identifies dissimilar groups of residents with similar ideas. The study focused on an extensive approach of the event 'briefcase' that views multiple events as key attractions (bundles of resources) with synergies that can be harnessed through a diverse events and events strategy. An essential part of this strategy must recognize the existence of innumerable interrelations, not only among different events but also among various stakeholders that require initiatives and a facilitation of collaboration among different interests in the field (Nicolaidis, 2015; Ziakas & Costa, 2010). The goal is to ultimately rise to a common recognition of the local community's expectations and modify an approach towards the position of the tourism product based on a group of sport events. To get to know the views of the local people and their general interests in the destination strategy is very important for policy makers, especially when it comes to decision making as a turnaround strategy when there is evident stagnation of a destination in tourism where residents are more likely to show unfavorable feelings towards others in the local community and then also tourists (Sheldon & Abenija, 2001). The study was an endeavor to re-establish policies for sport events associated with tourism in the Aqaba Governorate.

### **Theoretical Background**

The perceptions of the population differ about tourism irrespective of country. Some realize that tourism has mainly a positive impact, while others consider it to have many negative impacts. The perceptions of residents about tourism are decisive in improving local tourism support. The test of many observations and attitudes of inhabitants can significantly notify decision-making procedures for communication and tourism organizations to achieve their major aim of growth (Ritchie et al., 2009). To resolve the observations of inhabitants, researchers often depend upon the Social Exchange Theory (SET). Social attitude is the exchange of goods and materials, but also intangible materials, such as symbols of consent or respect. People who give much to others try to get much out of them in return. Social exchange theory has occurred in the review of tourism since the 1990s and today it is widely known as "the sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in the mode of interaction. It is expected that there will be a relationship that strengthens attitudes towards tourism and tourist support in the public which is affected by the actual and perceived results produced by tourism in a community. The theory of social exchange discusses the mutual relations between tourists and host communities through the extent to which these communities have some benefits and also the positive and negative effects of tourism (Nicolaidis, 2015). The theory of social exchange provides an important explanation that the workers in the tourism sector in host communities who receive more direct benefits from the tourism industry. tend to retain more positive attitudes towards tourists and tourism development in their areas. In the consideration of destination growth one must not only design the product, set a fee, find the place and promote it as a tourist destination, but also importantly ensure the quality of the environment and life is enhanced not degraded.

A society can be considered as a group of people at different social levels. The heterogeneity of group attitudes within communities indicates that common representations among different community groups are the consequence of agreement of social observations (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003). Within the town of Aqaba, it is accurate to assert that that the subjects of the tourism network must be 'unlocked' and available to understand the social capital gain, in order to actually comprehend the social influence of sports on communities as such. Recognition of the opinions of the population seems to be a rational requirement to allow for the prospect of a strategy



based on stewardship approach to sports events which will in the end prove successful.

Sports tourism is one of the main and fastest-growing parts of the travel and tourism industry – it is thus defined as all methods of efficient and unfavorable participation in sports movement, or participation in a casual or prearranged manner for the intention of making a profit and in having a commercial objective requiring that one can exodus from home-based and workplace activities and unwind somewhat. Sport tourism can thus, given the prior statement, contribute greatly to economic development and can activate the tourism movement in the city of Aqaba. There is a reservation that there is no specific way to determine the local population's awareness of the benefits of sport events (Gibson, 1998). Nicolaidis, (2015a) and Madichie, (2009) also question the extent to which economic benefits are provided to local communities. Sport tourism is concerned with specific travel, whether passive or active, where sports are the main motivator of travel (UNWTO; Klaus & Maklan, 2013) but benefits are needed irrespective.

The essence from a theoretical background in the attitudes of residents is usually accepted recognition that more people benefit economically from tourism, and then they are more inclined to support it. Madrigal considers (1993) "Perhaps the most consistent result over the years is the positive relationship between tourism perceptions and economic dependence on the tourism industry". This robust experimental support is coupled with the impractical social exchange theory (SET). The population evaluates the price of tourism and the benefits of tourism on the basis of the application of a partnership through the theory of social change in tourism ( Muler Gonzalez et al., 2018). This is evident in the fundamental work which is generally undertaken by residents towards tourism ventures (Perdue et al., 1990). From the perspective of tourism, the theory of social exchange means that the population studies the costs and benefits of tourism and if their evaluation is positive, their attitude in the direction of this category of industry will be confident. Consequently, people who view tourism more favorably (the benefits) than the negative effects (costs) generated by tourism are likely to support exchange (King et al., 1993) and are likely to be inclined to participate in tourism. In general, this type of population presents confident attitudes and perceptions towards the tourism industry and thus encourages the development of local tourism in the future (Gursoy et al., 2002; Nicolaidis, 2015a). Based on this concept, we can define the population's support for tourism development as a function of personal aids, and the positive and negative effects of the tourism industry.

Theory proposes that persons or groups decide to exchange after assessing welfares and costs. From the tourist point of view, these values propose that people are ready to come into an interchange with tourists if they can accrue some benefits without incurring an unacceptable cost. If the local population believes that tourism is a valuable resource and the costs they earn do not exceed the benefits, the exchange will support tourism development. The theory of social exchange supports a lot of research evidence that speaks to the fact that the conversation scheme is useful in assessing the effects of tourism. It also points out that if a deeper investigation is conducted, there will be a more complex relationship which may develop.

## **Research Methodology**

Utilizing a snowball sampling method, initially with some residents of Aqaba, not only focusing on a section of it, it was possible to produce a list of 2000 emails for residents of Aqaba, who were subsequently sent an invitation to complete an online overview. This group of 1300 (65% reply rate) took an interest in the examination and finished a



two-section survey with ease. The initial segment comprised of inquiries in regards to respondents' statistic characteristics, for example, age, sex, and length of stay. Another part controlled eleven proclamations that were formerly used and ratified by King et al. (2011). Every announcement used a Five-point Likert scale, representing "strongly agree" 5, "strongly disagree", 1. Stats collected were examined in two different ways as indicated by the kind of the element, the variable. Data was reported from the structure of populations i.e, demographics, with occurrences and inferential statistics considered. The data was analyzed from residents' perceptions of tourism and sporting events by means of calculating methods and aggregating responses into three categories (disagreeing, neutral, consensual) to measure the importance of differences. An ipsative grouping technique was performed on the 11 pronunciations. This supported a similar approach to a more accurate and intuitive description of the various cluster segments. The examination distinguished regular examples of interest over the ideas listed in the examination. Each example distinguished a group of respondents (cluster) with a common level of understanding with respect to the data provided. This ipsative strategy is usually picked when variables are run at the interval level (Vaske, 1995; Beamam, 1995). Events portfolio management needs a destination for a sequence of interconnected recordings and events. The allocation of resources, marketing and strategic growth will require a group of targets in which the destination seeks to participate.

**Table 1.** Analysis demographic factor

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
Age	Less than 25	17.1
	35-26	51
	45-36	15.9
	55-46	8
	56	8
Gender	Male	74.1
	Female	25.9
Education	Diploma	33.9
	Baccalaureus	48
	High diploma	5.1
	Mister	13
Income	>300	19.9
	400-301	11
	500-401	24
	600-501	21
	700-601	17
	< 701	7
A participant in the events	Yes	81
	No	19



I work in a sector	Yes	89
	No	11

The above table shows that those in the age group 26-35 were at the highest rate, as 51% of the study sample and the age groups that obtained less than 25 obtained the second place and this was at 17.1% while the ages 36-45 in the third place were at 15.9% The percentage of males was higher than others in the sample of the study, where it obtained 74.1% of the study sample. For the educational level, the bachelor degreed respondents received the first rank with 48%, then the diplomats at 33.9, the masters degree candidates obtained 13% while the higher diploma group received 5.1%

The entry rate was between 401-500 at this was the highest rate of entry, and the 501-600 won the second place with 21% and the entry was less than 300 at 19.9%, while the entry was 601- 700 to 17% and the entry was 701 or more The percentage of participants in the study sample was 81% of the study sample working in this sector, with 89% of the study sample.

**Table 2.** One sample T-test

T	df	Sig
168.839	899	0.000

The table shows that there is a relationship where the value of Sig 0.000 and T was 168.83

**Table 3.** Local community perceptions towards tourism

Items	Disagree (1-2)	Neutral 3	Agree 4-5	Mean	SD
The positive effects (economic) generated by tourism development outweigh the negative ones	10	10	80	3.85	0.96
The positive effects impact of human activity created by tourism expansion outbalance the negative ones	18	13	69	3.87	1.34
The positive, belonging socio-cultural create by tourism development outbalance the negative ones	18	0	82	4.13	1.23
I a feeling that Aqaba City can be developed furthermore for tourism	18	3	79	4.11	1.33
I listened to and implicated in the operation of tourism designing in Aqaba City	16	4	80	4.11	1.33
Sports events can be paramount factors for the frugality of the Aqaba city	24	13	63	3.72	1.30
Sports events can help make social life toward citizen	18	10	72	3.93	1.344
Sports can help original welfares for local community	8	19	72	4.10	1.06
Sports can share into, beneficent the environment	16	0	84	4.37	1.22
Sports can help inspire an affirmative portrait of the Aqaba city	10.1	0	89.9	4.45	1.07
developing in sports and provision for tourists has a positive consequence on local community	11.1	7	81	4.12	1.13



The table above shows that sports events helped to create a positive image for the city on an average of 4.45 and 89.9%. The initiative contributed to the improvement of the environment on the average of 4.37 and 84%. The positive effects (social and cultural) resulting from tourism development exceeded that of 4.13 and 82%. The average investment in sports and provision for tourists has a positive consequence on local community effect on the population of 81% and an average of 4.12. The study found that to the tourism planning operations in the city of Aqaba with an average of 4.11 and 80% respectively is in the rise. The sports events contribute to creating benefits for the residents with an average of 4.10 and 72%. It is hoped that the city of Aqaba will be further developed for tourism at an average of 4.11 and by 80% and 79% respectively. The finding contributes to the sports events growth idea to help make more sense to the community that sport has great role to play.

On the average of 3.93 and 72%, while the study obtained positive effects (environmental) resulting from the development of tourism above the negative 3.87 and 69% for the approvers and got the positive effects (economic) resulting from tourism development above the negative effects at an average of 3.85 and 80%. Sports events are considered to be important factors for the city's economy at an average of 3.72% and 63% for the approvers thereof.

## Conclusion

Aqaba's concern in the sporting tourism sector as well segments from the pronounced aim of the city to support marathons and cultural events is important. In this respect, the civil government began with the Aqaba Culture Project in 2011 to facilitate the expansion of this new tourism product. The fragmentation of the population, on the basis of their attitudes, means that the local society is not homogeneous but consists of a numbering of groups of persons with similar thinking. On the local attitudes and observations of the population towards tourism growth exposed three clusters (Williams, 2001; Lawson, 2001; Fredline & Faulkner, 2000). Tourism plays an important role in stimulating economic growth by creating jobs, providing foreign exchange, promoting technology, generating investment income for emerging countries and improving living standards in different countries (Nicolaidis, 2015). Amyan et al, (2011) points out that the tourism industry has the greatest value in the world's industry and is a more effective way of expanding business and increasing incoming and is agreed with by various scholars (Bason & Anagnostopoulos, 2015; Lan-Lan et al., 2014; Liu, 2016).

Thus, there are many reports that residents who see the benefits of tourism are more likely to support tourism (Nicolaidis, 2015). However, the perception of the host communities of the importance of tourism as it contributes to the creation of employment opportunities, as well as raising the standard of living and, improving the efficiency of services, contributing to the promotion of handicrafts, and of course all these have an effective effect in improving the living conditions and the psychological state of a large number of citizens and respect for cultural heritage in the society. Furthermore, the preservation of values, traditions and customs and contribute to the understanding of cultural relations and tolerance. Therefore, Jordanian attitudes towards the social and cultural impacts of tourism development may vary from previous studies from a western perspective. Despite the failure to formalize a written tourism strategy or plan, ASEZA (early 2011) announced its aim to invest in tourism, especially in the promotion of events, where sport plays an essential role.

The relationship between the tangible influences of tourism on their society and their attitudes towards the role of local government in the development of tourism was of interest in various studies (Madrigal, 1995; Krishna, 2001).



The economic factor has an impact on the society and that all that happens in the local community of phenomena and systems but due to the economic factors, as the economic strength is the basis of events and developments in social and moral development of sports events in the city of Aqaba, depends on the economic benefit of sporting events and the basis of economic development. This is because we do not understand the nature of the society unless we understand the economic pillars on which tourism is based, so that it has a positive role in society (Custódio et al., 2018; Jalilvand & Nasrolahi Vosta, 2015; Chiaki & Kazuo, 2016). Tourism is an important axis of the national economy in all countries and working with the stakeholders is essential throughout any project which is sport related (Nicolaidis, 2015).

In view of the movement of tourism and its relation to social change through economic theory, this can be explained by the impact of the economic activities associated with tourism activity, which often affect the life of the members of the society and their way of life, the methods of production and the level of income all this is reflected in the changing patterns of social construction as economic activity leads to change Social life of the population. The economic theory has a great impact on the society so that the economy is the basis of tourism development, which is affected by the movement of tourists coming from tourists and the recovery of trade and the movement of the local market. The development that took place in the city of Aqaba attracted the number of tourists and foreign investors.

The process of social change through culture and its spread in society is linked to the local reality of the population and through the tourism movement, which is one of the most important aspects of culture, traditional societies are often subjected to processes of transition to more open societies that are interchangeable with other cultures. To the ways of daily life and to acquire new concepts, and that customs, traditions and values may be subject to some changes through social mobility due to tourism activity (Hossain & Islam, 2019; Hemmonsbey & Knott, 2016). Tourism meets the needs of tourists as it works to preserve the tourist areas and increase the employment opportunities of the local community (Reza et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2018). It works to manage all available resources, whether economic, social, aesthetic or natural, in dealing with heritage and cultural data (Mpotaringa & Hattingh, 2019; Mxunyelwa, & Mangisa,, 2018).

The culture of the institution or the tourism community must be more responsive to the ethics of tourism, which means that the culture of the tourism institution must achieve a better balance between the objectives of the tourists and the objectives of the tourism institution, and between the objectives of the tourism institution and the objectives of the host community, and between considerations of efficiency and ethical considerations; All within the framework of the primary objective of preserving the values, culture and identity of the society and contributing to making it the one who presses on improving the ethics of tourism work. (E. Kunz, Elsässer & Santomier, 2016). Tourism action requires the involvement of all parties in the preparation of their policies and plans because multi-stakeholder representation works better for social responsibility in the balance of interests formula, limiting immoral practices, and because collective planning and leadership are less prone to individualism than to one interest because of their internal balance, (Saayman & van der Merwe, 2018; Tichaawa & Bob, 2016). However, with all of the above, we affirm that individualism and collectivity is not a good thing in itself, but rather a lesson in the ethics that govern each of them) Pranic, Petric, & Cetinic, 2012; Allameh et al., 2015).

The importance of tourism in economic terms, combating unemployment through it by providing different job opportunities, whether in the offices of tourist agents, hotels,





tourist buses, tourist guides, etc., ensures the improvement of the standard of living of the individual. Some 13% of the national income of 2018 and contributed to the creation of jobs largely as the sector employs more than (45000) employees directly. This means that tourism has significant economic potential and benefit in revitalizing the national economy in general, , Attracting diverse investments especially in the sector Which ensures greater job creation, improved infrastructure in communities, and other tangible developments in all aspects of life (Bazazo et al, 2017; Jawabreh & Al Sarayreh, 2017).

In the hierarchical model proposed by GATT on the issue of tourism strategy of events should be based on the approach to the functions of diverse actions and the promise that all can realize several economic and tourism objectives. After this announcement, in 2011 the city organized and hosted many events, mostly sports related. In addition to many small sporting events – for example marathons, marine sports events.

More precisely, as stated by Putnam (1993), social capital can be defined as "a set of foundations, trust, relationships and social networks that work for coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." It is to invest in social relations with the expected returns of that investment, and then the individual acquires social capital from participating in informal networks, registered organizations, joining social movements, and representing social capital the sum of all those activities, Through membership in various institutions and networks, individuals can then develop common interests and standards, which may in turn lead to greater confidence and understanding of diversity in culture, lifestyle and intellectual backgrounds. For Coleman, (1990) Social capital is the active participation of individuals in a deep network of formal and informal social relations. This results in individuals gaining some social resources - such as social and material support, information, ideas and social status - and a combination of shared human values, such as trust, solidarity, Altruism. Social capital is an important social tool in development and modernization. (Ford, 1999; Lin, 2001; Krishna, 2001; Pedlar, 2003; Pretty, 2003).

Social capital was adopted among the organizations involved in development issues. The sociological vision of the concept of social capital was removed. Instead, the concept was formulated within an economic behavioral framework. This vision was linked to the works of James Coleman and Robert Putnam "The first looked at the social capital as the balance that the individual possesses from relationships and values that enables him to establish relations within the social structure and to build his expectations and objectives. In contrast, Putnam looked at social capital by identifying the characteristics and attributes that are the balance within the social organization Such as trust, standards, and social networks; emphasizing that having the positive aspects of these characteristics enables the community to perform its functions more efficiently and efficiently, as it facilitates the coordination of various social actions.

In the background of the present political and sports policies, the description of social capital has expanded as "the product of connections that contribute to the social, the urban or economic prosperity of a mutual goal community, various aspects of the tender operation, acquisition, hosting, and the patrimony of sporting are linked to the evolution of social capital. Misener (2006) listed some of them: local government must esteem the values of society in an area and how the venue is specifically cooperative within the society as it supports it; the society needs the chance to stay and to participate in the general occasion of an event and its hosting; sport planners who have established formal constructions that permit for extensive society discussion and universalization are most likely to ease community development initiatives through their communications and by obtaining community buy-in. In an evolutionary sense



sport events have traditionally been carried out and restricted to only selected groups but this will gradually change so that more people are included in the events that unfold in Aqaba. Events, including sport tourism activity, are viewed by developing countries as important vehicles for refining the quality of life of host communities by attracting visitors, who then contribute to the economic well-being of the locals in the area where the event happens and even beyond (Swart & Bob, 2007). Sports tourism usually tends to integrate the physical, emotional, and social openings accessible by sports by combining them with cultural a range of cultural and heritage experiences, chances for knowledge gaining, and the unearthing of new things such as inter alia, cultures, cuisines and landscapes.

### Recommendation

This study concludes that building good relations and cooperation between tourists and local communities is vital. It also encourages the preservation of the main tourist resources in Jordan whether natural, historical or cultural resources, and the development of the cultural value of architecture. Hosting sport events must become a focus of destination marketers as a strategy to improve destination image. Communities are engrossed in hosting sport events to obtain much needed marketing benefits that will serve to contribute to the success of the destination by raising consciousness, improving the image of an area and hopefully attracting investment to augment societal needs and wants. Destination managers must detect the benefits of hosting sports events in Aqaba and take the opportunity to promote the destination further to the international market.

Furthermore, fueling the national spirit in improving the health conditions in the different regions of the country as well as trying to beautify and clean neighborhoods is vital. Tourism is a tool of development and upgrading the natural areas away from urbanization and it also creates opportunities for the people, and contributes to the promotion of tourist destinations in Jordan. We need to remember that resident attitudes towards tourism development are very strongly associated with their perceptions of their level of involvement in the crafting of strategy and the direction of any sport development initiatives. Sports tourism offers a huge opportunity for the development of tourism in the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA). Through the manipulation of local resources, people with tourism skills, the area can be used to promote itself in terms of its standing and tourism inflows.

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