

Title: “The role of the local community on developing tourism: A case study of Beit Jala city”

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Abstract:

The study was carried out in the period between December 2017 and June 2018 in Beit Jala city. The population of the study consists of Beit Jala Municipality, and the stakeholders of the tourism sector in Beit Jala city (hotels, restaurants, tour guides, NGOs, organizations etc). The random sample of the study consists of (48) people representing Beit Jala Municipality, the private sector and the local community organizations working in the field of tourism and tour guides.

The present study aimed to identify the development of the tourism sector in Beit Jala city, in addition to identify the efforts of Beit Jala Municipality, the private sector and local community organizations who work in the field of tourism. Furthermore, the study aimed to show if there is a partnership between the official authorities represented by Beit Jala municipality and the private sector for tourism development, and to find the most important obstacles against developing tourism, moreover to find out the impact of such obstacles and efforts on the city’s tourism development.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher used the descriptive analytical method due to its suitability to the nature of the research. The tool of the study consisted of a questionnaire regarding the variables of the study that is specially designed for this purpose based on the literature reviews and the previous studies, and to verify the validity of the questionnaire, it was shown to a number of experienced and competent arbitrators. Internal consistency of the questionnaire items was calculated by correlation coefficient and the reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by using Cronbach 'Alpha reliability coefficient. To test the hypotheses, necessary statistical operations were performed and included the calculation of the arithmetic averages, the standard deviations,

Kolmogorov **Smirnov** test (1 Sample K-S), Pearson coefficient, t-test and simple linear regression analysis. The data was analyzed and presented through the SPSS statistical program.

The study showed that there were obstacles in developing tourism and those obstacles included the political and security, economic, environmental, administrative and organizational ones. Furthermore, it revealed that there was a low level of approval by the respondents on the efforts made by (Beit Jala Municipality, the private sector, local community organizations, and the partnerships between the municipality and the private sector) on tourism development in the city. Moreover, the study showed a statistically significant impact of the political and security, economic and financial obstacles on tourism development, while statistically insignificant impact of administrative, organizational and environmental ones. Finally, the study did not find the efforts made by Beit Jala Municipality, the private sector and the local community organizations had an impact regarding tourism development.

According to the mentioned results, the researcher presented a number of recommendations that will be a first step on the track of developing tourism in the city, the most important recommendations were to overcome all the obstacles and to make more efforts on tourism development, this can be done by the official bodies represented by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquity and Beit Jala Municipality, moreover the municipality should develop a holistic tourism plan for the city to ensure tourism development, and a full cooperation with the private sector and local community organizations in order to develop the tourism sector.