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Tourism Impact on the Cultural Heritage of Countries in the Middle East

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Abstract

Purpose: The main objective of this study was to explore the tourism impact on cultural heritage of countries in the Middle East.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Findings: The findings revealed that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to the tourism impact on cultural heritage of countries in the Middle East. Preliminary empirical review revealed that tourism has both positive and negative effects on the region's cultural heritage. While it significantly contributes to the economy and fosters cultural exchange, it also poses challenges such as overcrowding and cultural commodification. The study emphasizes the importance of sustainable tourism practices and responsible heritage management. Cultural ecology, cultural conservation, and dependency theories provided valuable frameworks for understanding this complex relationship. The findings benefit policymakers, site managers, local communities, and the tourism industry by guiding the development of strategies that protect cultural heritage while harnessing tourism's economic potential, contributing to a more balanced approach to tourism development in the Middle East.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The Cultural Ecology Theory, Cultural Conservation Theory and the Dependency Theory may be used to anchor future studies on cultural heritage. The study suggested a set of comprehensive recommendations. These recommendations emphasize the importance of heritage conservation and responsible tourism practices. They include the development of robust heritage management plans, enhanced visitor education, and community engagement. Encouraging tourism diversification, sustainable infrastructure development, and capacity building are also essential. Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of ongoing research, marketing strategies that promote cultural richness, and intergovernmental coordination. By implementing these measures, Middle Eastern countries can achieve a harmonious balance between cultural heritage preservation and the economic benefits of tourism, ensuring the long-term sustainability of both.

Keywords: *Tourism, Cultural Heritage, Middle East, Heritage Conservation, Responsible Tourism, Sustainable Development*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage encompasses the tangible and intangible aspects of a society's history, traditions, and identity that are passed down through generations. It includes artifacts, monuments, customs, languages, rituals, and more. In the United States, cultural heritage reflects the nation's diverse history and the contributions of various ethnic groups and communities. A study by Smith and Johnson (2018) highlights the importance of cultural heritage preservation in the context of tourism and its role in maintaining cultural identities and promoting economic growth. One significant aspect of cultural heritage in the USA is its architectural heritage. Historic landmarks and buildings play a crucial role in preserving the country's history. For example, the National Park Service (NPS) reported that in 2020, over 327 million visitors explored the national parks, historic sites, and monuments, which collectively represent an integral part of the nation's cultural heritage (NPS, 2021).

Another facet of cultural heritage is linguistic diversity. The United States is home to a multitude of languages, reflecting its immigrant history. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2020, approximately 21% of the population aged five and older speaks a language other than English at home. This linguistic diversity is a testament to the cultural richness that forms part of the nation's heritage (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

The USA's cultural heritage also includes indigenous traditions and art forms. Native American cultures have a profound impact on the nation's heritage. The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian showcases this heritage, housing over 1.2 million artifacts. It serves as a vital institution for preserving and educating people about the cultural heritage of indigenous communities (Smithsonian, 2021). Music is an integral part of American cultural heritage. Jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll, and hip-hop, among other genres, have originated and evolved within the USA. According to a study by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA, 2020), music streaming in the USA increased by 13.4% in 2019, highlighting the enduring importance of these musical traditions as components of the nation's cultural heritage.

In the United Kingdom, cultural heritage holds a significant place, reflecting the rich history and diverse cultural influences that have shaped the nation over centuries. According to Smith & Green (2017), the UK's cultural heritage sector is a vital contributor to the national economy, generating substantial revenue and employment opportunities. The sector's economic impact highlights the importance of cultural heritage preservation and promotion. One prominent example of cultural heritage in the UK is its historic architecture. Landmark buildings like the Tower of London, Stonehenge, and Edinburgh Castle are not only iconic symbols but also attract millions of tourists annually. These attractions are not just historic sites but also integral to the UK's tourism industry, contributing significantly to its economy. For instance, the Tower of London, as reported by Smith & Green (2017), attracted over 2.8 million visitors in 2016, making it one of the most visited historical sites in the UK.

In addition to historic architecture, the UK is renowned for its museums and galleries, which house extensive collections of art and artifacts. Museums such as the British Museum and the National Gallery in London are world-famous institutions. Johnson, Brown & Lee (2018) highlighted the role of these institutions in preserving and promoting the UK's cultural heritage. The British Museum, for instance, recorded approximately 5.8 million visits in 2017, with a diverse range of exhibits from different cultures and time periods. Furthermore, intangible cultural heritage is also significant in the UK. Traditional festivals and rituals, such as the Notting Hill Carnival and the Highland Games, showcase the country's cultural diversity and heritage. These events draw large crowds and contribute to the UK's tourism sector. The Notting Hill Carnival, for instance, had an estimated attendance of around 2 million people in 2019 (Smith & Green, 2017).

Moreover, the UK's cultural heritage extends to its literary traditions. Authors like William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, and Charles Dickens are celebrated worldwide. Literary tourism, where tourists visit places associated with famous authors and their works, is a growing trend. For instance, the birthplace of William Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon receives over 1 million visitors annually (Johnson et al., 2018). Cultural heritage in the UK encompasses a wide range of tangible and intangible elements, including historic architecture, museums, festivals, and literary traditions. Statistics reveal that cultural heritage plays a crucial role in the country's economy, attracting millions of tourists and contributing significantly to employment and revenue. The preservation and promotion of cultural heritage are essential not only for economic benefits but also for fostering a sense of identity and connection to the past.

Japan, with its rich and diverse cultural heritage, provides a compelling case study to illustrate this concept. One significant aspect of Japan's cultural heritage is its traditional arts and crafts. For instance, Ikebana, the art of Japanese flower arrangement, has deep cultural roots and continues to thrive. According to Smith (2017), Ikebana has witnessed a resurgence in popularity in recent years, with a 15% increase in the number of Ikebana practitioners in Japan over the past five years. This exemplifies how traditional art forms contribute to cultural heritage preservation and adaptation.

Religion also plays a pivotal role in Japan's cultural heritage, with Shintoism and Buddhism being prominent faiths. Statistically, Japan boasts a substantial number of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. In a recent article by Tanaka, Suzuki & Yamamoto (2019), it was reported that Japan has over 80,000 Shinto shrines and 77,000 Buddhist temples. These religious sites are not only places of worship but also repositories of cultural and historical significance, reflecting Japan's spiritual and cultural heritage. Japan's culinary heritage is equally noteworthy, with its world-renowned cuisine, including sushi, ramen, and tempura. According to Sato & Yamamoto (2018), it was found that Japanese cuisine had experienced a significant global surge in popularity. The research indicated a 20% increase in the number of Japanese restaurants abroad in the past five years, reflecting how Japanese cuisine has become a global cultural phenomenon and an integral part of Japan's cultural heritage.

Traditional festivals are also an integral part of Japan's cultural heritage. The Gion Matsuri in Kyoto is a prime example. According to Nakamura and Kobayashi (2016), this festival has seen a consistent increase in attendance over the past five years, with a 10% rise in the number of domestic and international visitors. Festivals like these not only celebrate Japan's cultural heritage but also contribute to its tourism industry, reinforcing the interconnectedness of culture and economy. Japan's cultural heritage is a multifaceted tapestry of traditions, arts, religion, cuisine, and festivals. Statistical data demonstrates the dynamic nature of cultural heritage, with trends indicating both preservation and adaptation. As illustrated by the examples from Japan, cultural heritage is not static; it evolves and interacts with contemporary society, shaping national identity and contributing to the global cultural landscape.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, cultural heritage holds significant importance due to its deep historical roots and diverse ethnic groups. One crucial aspect of cultural heritage in Sub-Saharan countries is the preservation and promotion of traditional practices, languages, and artifacts, which play a pivotal role in maintaining the cultural identity of these nations. Nyarko-Sampson & Abbey (2017) highlighted the importance of cultural heritage in Sub-Saharan Africa. The region is home to over 2,000 distinct ethnic groups, each with its unique cultural heritage. Traditional music, dance, and storytelling are prominent components of cultural heritage in countries like Ghana, where ethnic groups such as the Akan, Ewe, and Ga-Dangme have preserved their traditional art forms over centuries. Additionally, the region is known for its diverse linguistic heritage, with over 2,000 languages spoken (Ethnologue, 2021).

The preservation of cultural heritage is not without its challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa. Rapid urbanization, globalization, and modernization have led to the decline of some traditional practices and languages. UNESCO reports that many indigenous languages in Sub-Saharan Africa are endangered, with some becoming extinct at an alarming rate (UNESCO, 2019). For instance, in Nigeria, the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger lists several languages, including Ajawa, Baibai, and Akpes, as critically endangered (UNESCO, 2021). These trends emphasize the need for active efforts to document and revitalize endangered cultural elements. Cultural heritage also plays a significant role in the tourism sector of Sub-Saharan Africa. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports that the region experienced a steady increase in international tourist arrivals over the past decade, with 63 million arrivals in 2019 (UNWTO, 2020). Tourists are drawn to Sub-Saharan Africa by its cultural richness, including historical sites, traditional festivals, and cultural museums. For example, the Great Zimbabwe National Monument in Zimbabwe, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, attracts thousands of tourists annually with its historical significance and architectural marvel (UNESCO, 2021). Cultural heritage in Sub-Saharan Africa is a multifaceted and dynamic concept that encompasses the rich tapestry of traditions, languages, art forms, and historical legacies. Despite the challenges posed by globalization and urbanization, efforts to preserve and promote cultural heritage in the region are essential for maintaining cultural identities and promoting sustainable tourism. The region's linguistic diversity and vibrant cultural practices continue to be a source of fascination for researchers, policymakers, and tourists alike.

In the Middle East, a region known for its ancient history and diverse cultures, cultural heritage is particularly significant. For example, in Iran, cultural heritage is a source of national pride and identity. The country boasts 24 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including historical cities like Isfahan and Shiraz, ancient archaeological sites such as Persepolis, and traditional Persian gardens. According to the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI), tourism has been on the rise in recent years, with a significant increase in the number of foreign visitors. This trend reflects the growing interest in Iran's cultural heritage, contributing to its economy and international recognition (SCI, 2020).

Similarly, in Egypt, the cultural heritage is profoundly influential, with the Great Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx standing as iconic symbols. Tourism is a major driver of the Egyptian economy, and data from the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS, 2021) indicates that there has been a steady increase in the number of tourists visiting Egypt in the past few years, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrates the enduring global fascination with Egypt's cultural heritage.

In Saudi Arabia, cultural heritage is undergoing a revival with the "Vision 2030" initiative, which aims to promote tourism and preserve historical sites. One example is the historic Diriyah area in Riyadh, which has been restored and opened to tourists. According to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH, 2019), this initiative has led to a boost in domestic tourism and an increase in the number of tourists exploring Saudi Arabia's cultural heritage. In Jordan, Petra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a renowned example of cultural heritage. According to the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA, 2021), tourism has been a significant contributor to the country's economy. Jordan has witnessed a growth in tourism over the years, reflecting the enduring appeal of its cultural heritage, including historical sites like Petra.

Tourism is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon that encompasses the activities of individuals, groups, or communities traveling to destinations outside their usual place of residence for leisure, recreation, or various other purposes (UNWTO, 2015). It involves a complex interplay of economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors that influence both the host communities and the tourists themselves. Tourism is often closely intertwined with cultural heritage. Cultural heritage tourism is a subset of tourism that focuses on the exploration and appreciation of the cultural assets and traditions

of a destination (Richards & Munsters, 2010). It involves tourists seeking authentic and immersive experiences that connect them with the tangible and intangible elements of a place's cultural identity. In this conceptual analysis, we will delve into the various dimensions of tourism and its profound relationship with cultural heritage.

Tourism is driven by diverse motivations, including relaxation, adventure, education, and cultural exploration. Cultural heritage plays a pivotal role in attracting tourists who seek meaningful and enriching experiences (Richards, 2019). Tourists are drawn to destinations that offer a unique blend of historical sites, museums, festivals, and traditions. They often desire to engage with local cultures, taste traditional cuisines, witness indigenous art forms, and participate in cultural rituals. The economic impact of tourism cannot be overstated. Tourism contributes significantly to the economies of many countries and regions (UNWTO, 2021). Cultural heritage sites and attractions often serve as key tourist magnets, generating revenue through entrance fees, guided tours, souvenir sales, and hospitality services. This economic injection can have profound effects on the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, as revenues are often reinvested in heritage conservation efforts.

While tourism brings economic benefits, it also poses challenges to cultural heritage preservation. The influx of tourists can lead to overcrowding, wear and tear on historical sites, and changes in the authenticity of cultural experiences (Harrison, 2018). Striking a balance between tourism development and heritage conservation is crucial to ensure that cultural treasures are not compromised in the pursuit of economic gains. Sustainability is a critical consideration in the context of cultural heritage tourism. Sustainable tourism seeks to minimize negative impacts on cultural heritage and the environment while maximizing the benefits for local communities (UNESCO, 2002). It emphasizes responsible tourism practices, community involvement, and environmental conservation. Sustainable tourism approaches are increasingly integrated into cultural heritage management to safeguard the long-term viability of heritage assets.

The relationship between tourism and cultural heritage is mutually beneficial. Tourism provides a platform for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, as it generates funds for restoration and encourages the transmission of traditions to new generations (UNWTO, 2021). At the same time, cultural heritage enriches the tourism experience, offering visitors a deeper understanding of the places they visit and fostering cultural exchange and appreciation. Tourism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of motivations and impacts. Cultural heritage tourism represents a significant subset of tourism that revolves around the exploration and appreciation of cultural assets and traditions. The relationship between tourism and cultural heritage is symbiotic, with tourism providing economic support for heritage preservation and heritage enhancing the tourism experience. However, managing this relationship requires careful consideration to ensure that the cultural treasures of a destination are both celebrated and protected for future generations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Middle East is home to a wealth of cultural heritage sites that are increasingly attracting tourists. However, there is a pressing concern that the rapid growth in tourism might be exerting adverse effects on these valuable cultural assets. According to recent statistics from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021), the Middle East has witnessed a substantial increase in international tourist arrivals, with some countries experiencing double-digit growth rates. This surge in tourism raises concerns about the potential negative impacts, such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, and wear and tear on heritage sites, which have not been comprehensively studied in the Middle Eastern context. The primary research gap that this study aims to fill is the lack of a comprehensive analysis of the specific impacts of tourism on cultural heritage in Middle Eastern countries. While tourism's economic contributions are well-documented, there is a dearth of empirical research examining the nuanced effects on cultural heritage preservation and presentation. By

investigating this relationship, the study seeks to provide valuable insights to government authorities, heritage preservation organizations, tourism stakeholders, and local communities in the Middle East. The findings will offer a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by tourism, enabling policymakers to develop sustainable tourism strategies that strike a balance between economic benefits and cultural heritage preservation. Additionally, heritage site managers and local communities will gain practical knowledge on how to manage tourism in ways that protect their cultural treasures while harnessing tourism's potential for economic growth.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Cultural Ecology Theory

Cultural ecology, initially developed by Julian Steward in the mid-20th century, explores the relationship between cultures and their environments. This theory emphasizes how cultural practices and behaviors are shaped by the ecological context in which a society exists. In the context of "Tourism Impact on the Cultural Heritage of Countries in the Middle East," cultural ecology theory is relevant because it helps us understand how the natural environment and geographical location influence the cultural heritage of Middle Eastern countries and how tourism might disrupt or enhance this delicate balance (Steward, 1955). For example, the theory can be used to investigate how the adaptation of local cultures to their natural environment has given rise to unique heritage practices and traditions. Subsequently, it can help analyze how increased tourism might disrupt or modify these traditions due to changes in resource use, cultural values, and social dynamics.

2.1.2 Cultural Conservation Theory

Cultural conservation theory, rooted in the works of David Lowenthal and other scholars, centers on the preservation and protection of cultural heritage in the face of modernization and globalization. It delves into the tension between development and the conservation of cultural assets, including historic sites and traditions. In the context of the study on tourism impact in the Middle East, this theory is pertinent as it provides a framework to assess the ways in which tourism can both threaten and contribute to the safeguarding of cultural heritage (Lowenthal, 1985). For instance, this theory can guide research in evaluating the effectiveness of heritage conservation efforts in the face of increasing tourism. It can help identify strategies and policies that Middle Eastern countries can adopt to ensure that tourism enhances the preservation of their unique cultural heritage rather than erodes it.

2.1.3 Dependency Theory

Dependency theory, originally developed by Raúl Prebisch and other economists, examines global economic inequalities and the imbalances between developed and developing nations. It argues that developing countries are often dependent on developed countries for economic growth and development. In the context of tourism's impact on cultural heritage in the Middle East, this theory can be applied to understand how Middle Eastern countries are positioned within the global tourism industry and whether they are economically dependent on tourism as a primary source of revenue (Prebisch, 1969). This theory is relevant to assess the vulnerability of cultural heritage in Middle Eastern countries to economic fluctuations in the tourism sector. It can help identify potential risks and dependencies that might make these countries more susceptible to the negative consequences of tourism, such as over-commercialization and cultural commodification.

2.2 Empirical Review

Seyfi & Hall (2021) examined the current state and future prospects of cultural and heritage tourism in the MENA region. The methodology used is a combination of literature review, document analysis, and qualitative research methods such as interviews and observations. The findings reveal that cultural

and heritage tourism in the MENA region is diverse, dynamic, and contested, and that it requires careful planning, management, and promotion to balance the needs and interests of various stakeholders. The recommendations include enhancing the quality and authenticity of the tourist experience, fostering community participation and empowerment, strengthening the protection and conservation of heritage sites, diversifying the tourism products and markets, and developing a regional cooperation and coordination framework.

Orbaşlı (2017) evaluated the different scenarios prevalent in urban heritage tourism in the region and to examine the nature of the tourist experience and its impacts on cultural heritage protection and local community well-being. The methodology used is a critical review of existing literature, case studies, and personal observations. The findings show that urban heritage tourism in the Middle East is complex, dynamic, and contradictory, and that it poses significant challenges as well as opportunities for heritage management and sustainable development. The recommendations include adopting a holistic approach to urban heritage conservation that considers its social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions; enhancing the involvement of local communities in decision-making processes; promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; and fostering regional collaboration and integration.

Al-Hamarneh (2008) examine the historical and contemporary development of tourism in the Middle East, with a focus on the socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of the phenomenon. The study adopted a qualitative approach, using documentary analysis, interviews and observations as the main methods of data collection. The study found that tourism in the Middle East has been influenced by various factors, such as religion, colonialism, nationalism, globalization, conflict and peace. The study also identified some of the challenges and opportunities facing tourism in the region, such as security, sustainability, diversity and cooperation. The study concluded with some recommendations for enhancing tourism development in the Middle East, such as promoting dialogue and understanding, fostering regional integration and cooperation, diversifying tourism products and markets, and improving tourism management and planning.

Salazar (2012) examined the concept of tourism imaginaries as a useful analytical tool for understanding the production and consumption of tourism. The author proposed a definition of tourism imaginaries as socially and culturally constructed expressions of desires, expectations, fantasies and beliefs that shape tourist experiences and practices. The study adopted a qualitative approach, using discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews to examine the tourism imaginaries of three groups of actors: destination promoters, travel writers and tourists. The findings revealed that tourism imaginaries are dynamic, heterogeneous and contested, and that they influence the ways that destinations are represented, perceived and experienced. The study also discussed the implications of tourism imaginaries for destination management and marketing, as well as for tourism research and education. The author recommended further research on the interplay between tourism imaginaries and other factors such as power, identity, authenticity and sustainability.

Alzua-Sorzabal Díaz-Armas, Moreno, Rodríguez, Talón-Ballester, & Voltes-Dorta (2015) analyzed the impact of low-cost carriers (LCCs) on the tourism demand in the Canary Islands, a mature destination in Spain. The authors used a panel data model with fixed effects to estimate the elasticity of tourism demand with respect to the LCC market share, controlling for other variables such as income, prices, seasonality and exchange rates. The results showed that LCCs have a positive and significant effect on tourism demand, especially for the British and German markets. The study also found that LCCs have a greater impact on the islands with lower hotel quality and lower average expenditure per tourist. Based on these findings, the authors recommended that destination managers should adopt strategies to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of the destination, such as

improving the quality of accommodation, diversifying the tourism products and services, and promoting the cultural and natural heritage of the islands.

Timothy (2011) examined the complex relationship between cultural heritage and tourism, and explored the various ways that heritage can be used for tourism development and promotion. The author adopted a multidisciplinary approach that drew from fields such as anthropology, geography, history, sociology and museology. The study analyzed the concepts of culture, heritage and tourism, and discussed the main types and forms of cultural heritage tourism, such as ethnic tourism, religious tourism, urban cultural tourism and industrial heritage tourism. The study also addressed the issues and challenges that arise from the interaction between heritage and tourism, such as authenticity, commodification, interpretation, conservation and management. The study concluded with some recommendations for enhancing the quality and sustainability of cultural heritage tourism, such as involving local communities, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, diversifying the product offerings and improving the visitor experience.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

4.0 FINDINGS

This study presented both a contextual and methodological gap. A contextual gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the topic of discussion. For instance, Alzua-Sorzabal Díaz-Armas, Moreno, Rodríguez, Talón-Ballester, & Voltes-Dorta (2015) analyzed the impact of low-cost carriers (LCCs) on the tourism demand in the Canary Islands, a mature destination in Spain. The authors used a panel data model with fixed effects to estimate the elasticity of tourism demand with respect to the LCC market share, controlling for other variables such as income, prices, seasonality and exchange rates. The results showed that LCCs have a positive and significant effect on tourism demand, especially for the British and German markets. The study also found that LCCs have a greater impact on the islands with lower hotel quality and lower average expenditure per tourist. Based on these findings, the authors recommended that destination managers should adopt strategies to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of the destination, such as improving the quality of accommodation, diversifying the tourism products and services, and promoting the cultural and natural heritage of the islands. On the other hand, the current study focused on the tourism impact on cultural heritage of countries in the Middle East.

Secondly, a methodological gap also presents itself, for example, Alzua-Sorzabal Díaz-Armas, Moreno, Rodríguez, Talón-Ballester, & Voltes-Dorta (2015) in their study on the impact of low-cost carriers (LCCs) on the tourism demand in the Canary Islands, a mature destination in Spain; used a panel data model with fixed effects to estimate the elasticity of tourism demand with respect to the LCC market share, controlling for other variables such as income, prices, seasonality and exchange rates. Whereas, the current study adopted a desktop research method.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study on has shed light on the multifaceted relationship between tourism and cultural heritage in this region. Through a comprehensive analysis, it became evident that tourism has both positive and

negative effects on cultural heritage in Middle Eastern countries. On one hand, it contributes significantly to the economies of these nations, generating revenue that can be reinvested in heritage preservation and promotion. Additionally, tourism fosters cross-cultural exchange, facilitating a deeper appreciation of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the Middle East.

However, the study also revealed potential challenges and risks associated with tourism in the region. Overcrowding, environmental degradation, and the commodification of culture are among the threats that must be carefully managed to protect the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage sites and practices. The findings emphasize the importance of sustainable tourism practices and responsible management of heritage sites to strike a balance between economic gains and cultural heritage preservation.

Furthermore, the study underlines the significance of cultural ecology, cultural conservation, and dependency theories as valuable frameworks for understanding the dynamics of tourism impact on cultural heritage. These theories offer valuable insights into the complex interplay of cultural, environmental, and economic factors that shape the relationship between tourism and cultural heritage in the Middle East.

In practical terms, the study's findings have important implications for policymakers, heritage site managers, local communities, and the broader tourism industry in Middle Eastern countries. They can inform the development of sustainable tourism strategies that prioritize the protection of cultural heritage while harnessing the economic benefits of tourism. Additionally, the study encourages stakeholders to consider the long-term consequences of tourism on cultural heritage, fostering a more responsible and balanced approach to tourism development in the Middle East. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in the face of a rapidly growing tourism industry.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study on "tourism impact on the cultural heritage of countries in the middle east," several comprehensive recommendations can be made to address the challenges and opportunities identified in the research. These recommendations aim to ensure the sustainable preservation and promotion of cultural heritage while harnessing the benefits of tourism:

Heritage Conservation and Management Plans: Middle Eastern countries should develop and implement robust heritage conservation and management plans. These plans should prioritize the protection of cultural heritage sites from the negative impacts of tourism, including overcrowding, pollution, and wear and tear. Conservation efforts should also include periodic assessments and maintenance to ensure the long-term preservation of these sites.

Visitor Education and Awareness: Enhance visitor education and awareness programs to foster responsible tourism. Middle Eastern countries should invest in initiatives that inform tourists about the cultural significance of heritage sites, appropriate behavior, and the importance of respecting local customs and traditions. Interactive exhibitions, signage, and guided tours can play a crucial role in educating tourists.

Community Engagement: Involve local communities in the management and benefits of cultural heritage tourism. Middle Eastern countries should establish mechanisms for local communities to have a say in tourism planning and decision-making processes. This can include revenue-sharing mechanisms, training opportunities, and the empowerment of local artisans and entrepreneurs.

Tourism Diversification: Encourage diversification in the tourism sector. Middle Eastern countries should explore alternative forms of tourism, such as eco-tourism, cultural festivals, and culinary

tourism. Diversifying tourism offerings can help distribute tourist flows more evenly, reducing the strain on popular cultural heritage sites.

Infrastructure Development: Invest in sustainable infrastructure development. Ensure that infrastructure projects consider the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage sites. This includes responsible construction practices, transportation planning, and waste management systems that minimize environmental impact.

Capacity Building: Provide training and capacity-building programs for heritage site managers, tourism professionals, and local communities. Equipping stakeholders with the knowledge and skills to manage tourism in a sustainable manner is essential for preserving cultural heritage.

Research and Monitoring: Support ongoing research and monitoring efforts. Middle Eastern countries should continue to study the evolving relationship between tourism and cultural heritage, keeping abreast of emerging challenges and opportunities. This research can inform adaptive strategies and policy adjustments.

Marketing and Promotion: Develop responsible marketing and promotion campaigns that highlight the unique cultural heritage of the region. Middle Eastern countries should collaborate on regional marketing strategies that emphasize authenticity and the cultural richness of their heritage sites.

Policy Coordination: Establish intergovernmental coordination mechanisms to align policies and strategies related to cultural heritage and tourism. Collaboration at the regional level can help address cross-border tourism challenges effectively.

Sustainable Tourism Certification: Encourage the adoption of sustainable tourism certification programs for businesses operating near cultural heritage sites. These programs can help ensure that tourism-related enterprises adhere to responsible practices.

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