CURATIVE TOURISM IN JORDAN AND ITS POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to find out the components and nature of curative tourism in Jordan by identifying demographic and economic characteristics of curative tourists to Jordan spas and resorts, the problems that the tourists face during their stay in the country, measuring the satisfactions of tourists about the services rendered to them and identifying the possibilities of developing this type of tourism in the kingdom through presenting suggestions and recommendations to the management of the tourist bodies in the country.

The population of the study was represented by a convenient sample of 210 tourists who were enjoying 6 Jordanian curative sites, namely, Al Hammah, Ashounah, the Dead Sea, Afra, Al Barbaitah and Ma’in. SPSS statistical programme version 10.1 was used to analyse the data that were collected for the purpose of this research. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of the main variables of the study were tabulated, in addition to cross tabulations and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were also analysed to test the research hypotheses and the main research questions. Alfa reliability coefficient was calculated to 93.15%.

The research revealed that the majority of curative tourists to Jordan spas and health resorts were men, who have the age of 50+ years old, live in spa hotels or chalets, stay between 21 and 30 days, have an income level of € 1000-3000, spend between € 141-220 and come (non-Jordanians) from the EU countries, mainly Germany and Austria. Generally speaking, the research results showed an acceptable satisfaction hold by tourists, despite the fact that there were some areas that they were not satisfied with. Major of them include public transportation, cleanliness, prices, accessibility (roads), spa services, entertainment and recreation facilities, etc. curative tourism is still in the introductory stage of product life cycle, where the infra and superstructures are incomplete, lack of clear development and marketing strategies, lack of data base on the sector, lack of attention given by the tourist bodies towards the value and impacts of curative tourism and others.

The research revealed that 20 curative sites of Jordan have been identified and classified according to technical and economic feasibility
for potential development: where 4 sites are classified as of high potential development, 10 of medium potential and 6 have low potential for development (Appendix 2).

Curative tourists to Jordan spas suffer from some problems during their stay in the country, major of them include lack of public transportation; cleanliness; accessibility (roads); modest number of accommodations and unavailability in some sites; treatment services not available in most of the sites; prices are very high in comparison with the services rendered; entertainment programmes and activities are missed; communication facilities are not available in some sites; etc.

Finally, the research suggests an acute strategy and plan to develop the curative sites and upgrade the infra and superstructures, planned and objective marketing campaigns, increase the level of awareness towards natural curative resources and integrate the curative therapy with the medical or clinical treatment through creating an association for spas and a board that can be called “Jordan Health Tourism Board” in that both types can be marketed in one package. The author also recommended further areas to be researched including human resource management of spas and health resorts in Jordan, market analysis and marketing research and .

Key words: Jordan, curative tourism, health tourism, spas, hot and mineral springs, wellness, marketing and the Dead Sea.