

# Can Stereotyping be Useful? The Perceptions of Local Souvenir Sellers and other Tourism Workers in Petra about Tourists Different Nationalities

Mairna Hussein Mustafa \*

*Department of Sustainable Tourism - Queen Rania Faculty of Tourism and Heritage, The Hashemite University; P.O. Box 330127 Postal Code 13115 Zarqa, Jordan*

## Abstract

Numerous studies discussed the stereotyping of tourists worldwide and how it affects the interaction among locals and tourists. However, these studies have focused on the negative aspects of such perceptions. This research explores the perceptions of Petra local souvenir sellers and other service providers at the site about different behaviours to be mostly done by certain nationalities. The findings of the study revealed that some nationalities were perceived by most of the respondents to do some particular behaviour more than others, this was then investigated through studying cultural competences of different nations that tourists belong to. The results signify the need to enhance the knowledge of both tourists and local communities about cultural differences and how they affect such behaviours; such awareness will enhance the cultural understanding and tolerance among these two groups.

© 2016 Tourism Management & Heritage Conservation, The Hashemite University. All rights reserved .

**Keywords:** *Tourist stereotypes, host-tourist interaction, cross-cultural interaction, cultures, values, cultural values, tourist behaviour, perception.*

## 1. Introduction

The economic benefits of tourism to the city of Petra were recognized since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century A.D.; the significant features as the Treasury, the Monastery, tombs facades and temples all attracted tourists to this archaeological site. Besides the small hotel that was built in the early 1920's by Thomas Cook Travel Company near the Nabataean Temple of Qasr el-Bint, the locals started to work in archaeological teams, which were supervised by archaeologists from abroad, or by contact with European and American tourists. Later during the 1950's, the Jordanian government opened a rest house between Wadi Musa and Petra, members of the Liyathnah tribe worked there and started to sell post cards, tour books, and souvenirs, also offer horse riding services. Bedul tribe members who were living in Petra itself began to sell real and fake antiquities, post cards, and souvenirs, some of them could establish refreshments stands, and register their horses with the government as the Liyathnah did (Shoup, 1985).

After being listed as a World Heritage Site in 1985, the Bedouin tribes who had settled in the Petra were forced to leave the caves they used as homes (Lubick, 2004). In the 1980's and 1990's of the last century, tourism and associated development has greatly increased in Petra, as well as the number of visitors to the site. Starting from 120,338 visitors in 1989 to reach 975,285 tourists in 2010, the number started to decline in 2011 to become 629,864

with Arab Spring events, and to eventually reach 430,106 in 2015 (MOTA, 1989-2015).

Despite the great economic benefits gained by tourism to the site, and the cultural exchange took place between locals and tourists; the negative impacts caused by the increasing influxes of tourists could not to be ignored by UNESCO, which considered it as an endangered site (UNESCO 1993).

In addition to the commercialization of Bedouin culture (setting Bedouin camps where refreshments stands were built, and different Bedouin craft items were sold to tourists); the change of values, where the young Bedul try to imitate Westerners in dress and manners, these Westerners were perceived by some locals as the source negative values as alcoholism and illegal relationships, which indicates a kind of confusion over the values of the West (Shoup, 1985).

This paper aims at exploring how locals of Petra perceive different nationalities of tourists when it comes to any behaviour that take place the site of Petra, also to explain the cognitive factors behind the differences among tourists and stereotypes held by locals working at the site.

## 2. Perceptions of hosts about tourists

Generally, tourism can have both positive and negative outcomes for residents in communities where sharing and preserving their culture could be seen as conflicting goals (Besculides et al 2002), which indicates the significance of understanding the perceptions of residents toward tourism

\* Corresponding author e-mail: mairna@hu.edu.jo.

and tourists in any region as a precondition to any development that might take place in the future.

There are different factors affect the perceptions and attitudes of residents toward tourism development and tourist groups; these include: perceived positive economic impact of tourism by locals (Dyera et al 2007), the extent to which tourism can support other economic activities (Dolisca 2007), the level of community concern, and perceived costs (Gursoy & Rutherford 2004; Gursoy & Kendall 2006), the ethnic characteristics of residents group (being a majority or a minority) (Andereck et al 2005; Besculides et al 2002), the state of the local economy, economic benefits, social benefits, social costs, and cultural benefits (Gursoy & Rutherford 2004), living in areas with more mature tourist industry and so becoming more aware of both positive and negative impacts (Liu et al 1987), perceived friendliness of local residents (Ross 1992), density of tourism facilities and services (Bestard & Nadal 2007), and social interaction with tourists (Teye et al 2002), as well as other different factors. Regarding the social interaction with tourists; such factor is significantly important since it affects both quality of the tourism experience for tourists and quality of life for local communities (Skipper 2009). Cultural differences have a significant influence on tourist–host social interaction when the tourists have a distinctly different cultural background from hosts (Reisinger & Turner 2003). The problem occurs when such cultural differences are not fully understood by interacting groups, then stereotypes as rigid generalities are to be imposed by individuals or groups on others with whom they are unfamiliar or do not understand (Lehtonen, 2016). This would consequently affect the way these groups behave and interact with each other.

### 3. Concepts of the Study

Cognitive social psychology focus on the processes by which individuals gain knowledge about behavior and events that they encounter in social interaction, also this knowledge guides their actions (Snyder et al 1977). It was assumed that human cognitions range from general broad concepts (e.g. values / value orientations) to specific concepts (e.g., norms, attitudes) and behaviors. These cognitions reflect the processes individuals use in perceiving, remembering, thinking and understanding (Homer & Kahle, 1988; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fulton et al, 1996). These mental activities are important determinants of behavior. For perception (or the activation of a perceptual representation), it is assumed that it may lead to corresponding overt behavior. In the context of host-tourist interaction, a form of perception was extensively discussed in literature (e.g. Richardson & Crompton, 1988; Luk et al, 1993; Pizam & Sussmann, 1995; Pizam & Reichel, 1996; Pizam & Jeong, 1996; Reisinger & Turner, 1997; Reisinger & Turner, 1999; Pizam, 1999; Deichmann, 2007; Wu & Pearce 2013; Albu, 2013), which is stereotyping. The concept of stereotyping is defined as a conventional perception image about whole groups of people, this perception is supposed to influence

the treatment of groups according to a fixed set of generalized traits or characteristics (Pickens 2005). In social psychology, a stereotype is a thought that can be adopted about specific types of individuals or certain ways of doing things (McGarty et al 2002).

In tourism, there was a clear concentration in literature on how locals perceive tourists according to their nationalities, though, there are some problems in such studies; there is a clear controversy on defining the "host", whether it is the local community or those working as tourism service providers. Most of the studies focused on the developed countries; moreover, nationality cannot be always a good variable to find cultural differences, people who might not live in the country of nationality, any country could also include different cultural subgroups (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Despite this, nationality is the most common variable used and known in the process of perceiving different tourist groups and their cultures.

### 4. Methodology and Sample

Forty five individuals were interviewed by the author for 10-20 minutes. All the interviews were written on designated form that included a number of open ended questions about some specific behaviors that might be committed by tourists while being at the site, the locals were asked to suggest nationalities that tend the most and the least to commit such behaviors, the answers were then entered to SPSS program as nominal variables. The nationalities with the 3 highest frequencies were considered for results. The behaviors explored in the research instrument were as follows: respecting the values of local community, protecting the archaeological site, interacting and making friendships with locals, photographing, tipping, wearing decent clothing, being polite in dealing with locals, buying without negotiating the price, showing interest to know more about the site and locals, and spending time at the site. There was also a demographic section and two final questions on which nationality to prefer the most or the least to deal with. For the purpose of this pilot study, souvenir and refreshment stands' sellers and other workers at the site were selected since they deal the most with different nationalities of tourists if compared to others working at the site. The locations of interviews were in the Visitor Center area, Treasury, the area between Outer Siq and Siq, Royal tombs, theater and Street of Facades. The respondents were mostly of males (44 out of the 45), 26 of them were 30 or less years old, 18 were between 31 and 60, and 1 was over 60. For occupation, 27 of the respondents were souvenir sellers, while other individuals were horse guides, workers at refreshment stands and cafes.

This qualitative research is based on purposeful random sampling, which increases the credibility even with the small sample in the study; the sampling was continued until having achieved informational redundancy or saturation (the point at which no new information is emerging from the data). Though, the small size of the sample in this study is to be considered as a limitation to this pilot study.

## 5. Results and Conclusions

There was a clear variation in the responses given by the individuals in the sample; the following table show the highest responses for each of the questions:

The Question	The nationalities that commit the most to the behaviour in the question with frequencies	The nationalities that commit the least to the behaviour in the question with frequencies
Commitment to wear decent or acceptable clothing	French 6 Japanese 6 Arabs 5	Hungarians 14 Russians 7 Eastern Europeans 5 Israelis 5
Commitment to politely interact with locals	Americans 14 Spanish 11 English 9	Israelis 12 Germans 10 Arabs 5
Commitment to accept the prices of souvenirs without negotiating	Americans 24 English 6 Spanish 4	Spanish 8 Israelis 5 Italians 5 French 5
Showing interest to know details about the site and local communities	French 14 American 7 French 7	Arabs 9 Koreans 7 Spanish 4
Tend to make friendships or long lasting relations with locals	Americans 7 Italians 7 English 6	Germans 6 Arabs 4 Israelis 4
Respect and protect the archaeological site	English 4 Locals 3 Swiss 2 French 2	Arabs 22 Chinese 5 Israelis 5
Tend to frequently take photographs for features of the site	Japanese 29 Korean 3 French 2	Arabs 18 Russians 5 Americans 2 Israelis 2
Tend to spend a long time within the site	French 24 Germans 6 English 3 Spanish 3	Koreans 10 Japanese 8 Israelis 7
Tend to come within big groups of tourists	Spanish 18 English 9 Italians 4	French 7 Australian 9 Israeli 3

Such perceptions were discussed and analyzed in previous studies, of which most were based on the responses of tour guides in host countries (e.g. Richardson & Crompton, 1988; Luk et al, 1993; Pizam & Sussmann, 1995; Pizam & Reichel, 1996; Pizam & Jeong, 1996; Reisinger & Turner, 1997; Reisinger & Turner, 1999;

Pizam, 1999; Deichmann, 2007; Wu & Pearce 2013; Albu, 2013). Some these studies focused on the degree of similarities and differences among different nationalities, while other listed behaviors and characteristics perceived by locals for different tourists' nationalities. As cited by Albu (2013) from Doise et al (1999), French tourists for example, tend to have a very limited interaction with other nationalities because of difficulty in communicating in English, for Germans, they focus on empathy, sensitivity, understanding and qualitative services, while (McKercher 2008) mentioned that Japanese tourists prefer to travel in groups, spend, have short holidays, and photograph everything, on the other hand, Chinese tourists prefer group travel. As quoted and cited from Reisinger (2009):

"The Japanese tourists are stereotyped as traveling in groups, bowing to everybody they meet, and spending and photographing heavily (Cho, 1991). Korean tourists are stereotyped as being proud of their identity, willing to accept everything that has similarities to the Korean way of life, and insisting on going to Korean restaurants (Business Korea, 1991). American tourists are stereotyped as being cautious, calculating, purposeful, and careful with money (Brewer, 1984). Swedish tourists are characterized as being misers, and French and Italians as excessively demanding (Boissevain & Inglott, 1979)" (Reisinger, 2009, 193-194); **also...** "American tourists prefer socializing with other nationals more than tourists from Japan and Korea (Pizam & Jeong, 1996). Japanese tourists are reluctant to try new cuisine when on vacation (Sheldon & Fox, 1988)" (Reisinger, 2009,323).

By comparing the stereotypes mentioned in literature above to responses in this study, it can be obviously noticed that stereotypes given to different nationalities are different. Many factors could affect stereotyping, such as the degree of cultural dis/similarity between the host and tourist, and the amount of knowledge about others' cultures, there is also the political stability and relations among countries and nations, all can lead to different stereotypes by different host groups given even for one tourist nationality and vice versa (Pizam et al 2001). This indicates that stereotypes are inaccurate and can lead to errors in interpretation of others' behavior; they simply limit the understanding of human behavior. Stereotypes can be reduced by learning about other cultures and values (Reisinger, 2009). This is based on the fact that different cultural values lead to different perceptions (Singer, 1982). It was assumed that human cognitions range from general broad concepts (e.g. values / value orientations) to specific concepts (e.g., norms, attitudes) and behaviors. These cognitions reflect the processes individuals use in perceiving, remembering, thinking and understanding (Homer & Kahle, 1988; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fulton et al, 1996). Being familiarized with values of any culture is important then since it will enhance the cultural understanding between hosts and tourists, and will lead then in responding to tourists need in a more tolerant way. It will also make both sides aware of the uniqueness of their own cultures, inducing then a sense of pride and confidence.

Values are defined as modes of conduct or desirable end states of existence (Rokeach, 1973). Another definition is that a value is a general idea that people share about what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable (Light et al.,

1989). Values are theorized to be widely held and shared among people within a culture (Fulton et al., 1996). For example, some of the most predominant values in American culture are: equality, individuality, mobility, safety, efficiency; in Japanese culture, some of these are: harmony, obligation to group, behaving according to status, effort, self improvement, and collectivism; and in European culture, we find: appreciation for aestheticism, sensuality, intellectualism, socialism, tradition, family and friendship, and socialism (Pyo et al., 14/9/2016). Considering these values can then explain some behaviors and expectations held by tourists from these cultural groups. As stated by Axtell (1990) and to different degrees within nationalities, when dealing with European tourist, they generally expect their hosts to show both friendliness and formality when providing service, high punctuality, good preparation about topics by tour guides since they tend to know and ask about details, high quality and quick services, and a tidy appearance that reflect professionalism. In the case of Japanese tourists, they rarely use the first name, they appreciate good listening, patience and respect for elderly, and they consider good appearance is part of respect held for them. American tourists usually jump to the use of the first name, punctuality is important and practiced, and little time is spent on small talks when being in business or tours, they hold high respect for discipline, and they are lovers of common sense and achievements (now and value for money oriented).

Such brief discussion emphasizes the need to enhance the knowledge of host and tourist groups about each others. The pre/post trip knowledge through guidebooks and other interpretive materials becomes important, more important, such aspect should be considered when training workers in tourism and hospitality industries (as in tour guiding and hotels), this is to focus on different elements in tourism experience and service provision as greeting, tipping, interpreting, topics to be discussed or avoided, verbal/non-verbal communication, punctuality and dining.

## Bibliography

- [1] Albu, Ch. (2013). Stereotypical Factors in Tourism, *Cross-Cultural Management Journal*, XV, Issue 1 (3), 5-12.
- [2] Andereck, K., Valentine, K., Knopf, R & Vogt, Ch. 2005. Residents' Perceptions of Community Tourism Impacts. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32 (4): 1056–1076.
- [3] Axtell, R. (1990). *The Do's and Taboos of Hosting International Visitors*, John Wiley & Sons Inc, New York.
- [4] Besculides, A., Lee, M., & McCormick, P. 2002. Residents' Perceptions of the Cultural Benefits of Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (2): 303-319.
- [5] Bestard, B. & Nadal, J. 2007. Modeling Environmental Attitudes toward Tourism. *Tourism Management* 28: 688–695.
- [6] Boissevain, J., & Inglott, P. (1979). *Tourism in Malta. Tourism: Passport to development?* DeKadt, E. (Ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- [7] Brewer, J. D. (1984). Tourism and ethnic stereotypes: Variation in a Mexican town. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 11(3), 487–501.
- [8] Business Korea,. (1991). The way of Korean travelling. Koreans are so strange? *Business Korea*, 9(2), 29.
- [9] Cho, S. (1991). The ugly Koreans are coming? *Business Korea*, 9(2), 25–31.
- [10] Deichmann, J. (2007). International Tourism from the Perspective of Czech Hospitality Professionals: A Pilot Study for Exploring Origin-Specific Stereotypes, e-Review of Tourism Research (eRTR), Vol. 5, No. 1, 2007, 6-15 (<http://ertr.tamu.edu>)
- [11] Dolisca, F., McDaniel, J., & Teeter, L. 2007. Farmers' perceptions towards forests: A case study from Haiti. *Forest Policy and Economics* 9: 704–712.
- [12] Dyer, P., Gursoy, D., Sharma, B. & Cartera, J. 2007. Structural modeling of resident perceptions of tourism and associated development on the Sunshine Coast, Australia. *Tourism Management* 28: 409–422.
- [13] Eagly, A. & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The Psychology of Attitudes*. Harcourt, Texas.
- [14] Fulton, D., Manfredo, M., & Lipscomb, J. (1996). Wildlife Value Orientations: A Conceptual and Measurement Approach. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, 1(2), 24- 47.
- [15] Gursoy, D. & Kendall, K. (2006). Hosting Mega Events: Modeling Locals' Support. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33 (3): 603-623.
- [16] Gursoy, D. & Rutherford, D. (2004). Hosts Attitudes toward Tourism: An Improved Structural Model. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31 (3): 495–516.
- [17] Homer, P. & Kahle, L. (1988). A Structural Equation Test of the Value Attitude Behavior Hierarchy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54 (4), 638-646.
- [18] Lehtonen, J. (2016). Cultural Stereotypes, Website of Views in Finnish Culture, available online: <https://www.jyu.fi/viesti/verkkotuotanto/kp/vf/jaakko.shtml>, retrieved on 15/4/2016.
- [19] Light, D., Keller, S. & Calhoun, C. (1989). *Sociology*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Edited by: Alfred Knopf, McGraw-Hill: New York.
- [20] Liu, J., P. Sheldon, and T. Var (1987). A Cross-National Approach to Determining Resident Perceptions of the Impact of Tourism on the Environment." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 14 (1): 17-37.
- [21] Lubick, N. (2004). Petra: An Eroding Ancient City; *Geotimes*, Issue of June 2004.
- [22] McGarty, C., Yzerbyt, V. & Spears, R. (2002). Social, cultural and cognitive factors in stereotype formation. In: *Stereotypes as explanations: The formation of meaningful beliefs about social groups*, edited by Craig McGarty & others, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 1–15.
- [23] MOTA. (1989-2015). *Statistics Newsletters of Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities in Jordan*, available online at: <http://www.tourism.jo/Contents/StatisticsAr.aspx>, retrieved on: 20/4/2016.
- [24] Pickens, J. (2005). Attitudes and Perceptions. In: *Organizational Behavior in Health Care*, edited by: Nancy Borkowski, International Barb House, Barb Mews London.
- [25] Pizam, A. & Sussmann (1995). Does nationality affect tourist behavior? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22(4), 901-917.
- [26] Pizam, A. & Jeong, G. (1996). Cross-cultural tourist behavior: Perceptions of Korean tour-guides, *Tourism Management*, 17(4), 277-286

- [27] Pizam, A. & Reichel, A. (1996). The effect of nationality on tourist behavior: Israeli tour-guides' perceptions, *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 4(1), 23-49.
- [28] Pizam, A. (1999). *Cross-cultural tourist behavior*. In: *Consumer behavior in travel and tourism*, edited by Pizam, A., & Mansfeld, Y. (Eds.), Haworth, Binghamton, 393-411.
- [29] Pyo, D., Hewitson, J. & Grodon, E. (2016). Cultural Values (presentation), available online at: [http://web.stanford.edu/class/me214/presentations/Gordon\\_Hewitson\\_Pyo-CulturalValues.pdf](http://web.stanford.edu/class/me214/presentations/Gordon_Hewitson_Pyo-CulturalValues.pdf), retrieved on: 19/4/2016.
- [30] Reisinger, Y. (2009). *International Tourism: Cultures and Behavior*, Butterworth-Heinemann, New York.
- [31] Reisinger, Y. & Turner, L. (1997). Cross-cultural differences in tourism: Indonesian tourists in Australia, *Tourism Management*, 18 (3), 139-147.
- [32] Reisinger, Y. & Turner, L. (1999). A cultural analysis of Japanese tourists: challenges for tourism marketers", *European Journal of Marketing*, 33 (11/12), 1203 – 1227.
- [33] Reisinger, Y. & Turner, L. (2003). *Cross-Cultural Behavior in Tourism*, Butterworth-Heinemann, New York.
- [34] Richardson, S. L., & Crompton, J. L. (1988). Cultural variations in perceptions of vacation attributes, *Tourism Management*, 9(2), 128-136.
- [35] Ross, G. 1992. Resident Perceptions of the Impact of Tourism on an Australian City. *Journal of Travel Research*, 30(3): 13-17.
- [36] Sheldon, P., & Fox, M. (1988). The role of foodservice in vacation choice and experience: A cross-cultural analysis. *Journal of Travel Research*, 27(3), 9–15.
- [37] Shoup, J. The Impact of Tourism on the Bedouin of Petra. *The Middle East Journal*, 39 (2): 277-291.
- [38] Skipper, T. (2009). *Understanding Tourist-Host Interactions and their Influence on Quality Tourism Experiences*, Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive), Wilfrid Laurier University Paper 949. Available online at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1948&context=etd>, retrieved on: 15-4-2016.
- [39] Snyder, M. (1977). Social Perception and Interpersonal Behavior: On the Self-Fulfilling Nature of Social Stereotypes, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 35(9), 655-666.
- [40] Teye, V., Soñmez, S. & Sirakaya, E. 2002. Residents Attitudes toward Tourism Development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (3): 668-688.
- [41] UNESCO.(1993). *A Plan for Safeguarding Petra and its Surroundings*; was published in the World Heritage Newsletter, issue No. 2, June 1993.
- [42] Wu, M. & Pearce, Ph. (2013). Tourists to Lhasa, Tibet: How Local Youth Classify, Understand and Respond to Different Types of Travelers, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 18 (6), 549-572.