

MADABA'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Visit Madaba, where you can experience Christian and Islamic history, exhibits of ancient mosaics and a contemporary open-air exhibition, intimate urban and rural places, legends and folklore, traditional food making (and eating!), and adventure and landscapes.

Only a 30-minute drive from the capital, Amman, 40 min drive from Ma'in Hot Springs, and a starting point of the King's Highway (an ancient trading route), which takes you to more iconic locations: Fortress of Machaerus, the Dead Sea, Wadi Al Mujib, and Petra.



Top five tourist overnight and same-day visitors by nationality 2022¹

Nationality	Same Day Visitors	Tourist Overnight	Total
Israel	52,348	116,771	169,119
Egypt	82,929	91,014	173,943
Syria	98,494	211,103	309,596
Palestine	213,248	390,928	604,176
Saudi Arabia	122,412	777,002	899,414

Number of visitors to top touristic sites by locations January to December 2022¹

Location	Jordanian	Foreign	Total
Umm ar-Rasas ²	150	11,500	11,650
Madaba Museum ²	2,788	20,307	23,095
Kerak Castle	25,462	121,252	146,714
The Baptism site	17,889	138,490	156,379
Madaba visitors' center ²	18,334	203,529	221,863
Ajloun Castle	148,550	117,388	265,938
The citadel	128,076	168,524	296,600
St George's Church ²	58,002	249,863	307,865
Jerash	69,478	279,268	348,746
Mount Nebo ²	43,185	419,503	462,688
Wadi Rum	126,138	341,726	465,119
Petra	184,418	720,236	904,654

¹ Ministry of Tourism website. Accessed on June 11, 2023
² Madaba governorate

RECOMMENDATIONS

We present five actionable recommendations based on these collective insights that would enhance the tourist experience and bridge gaps in service quality.

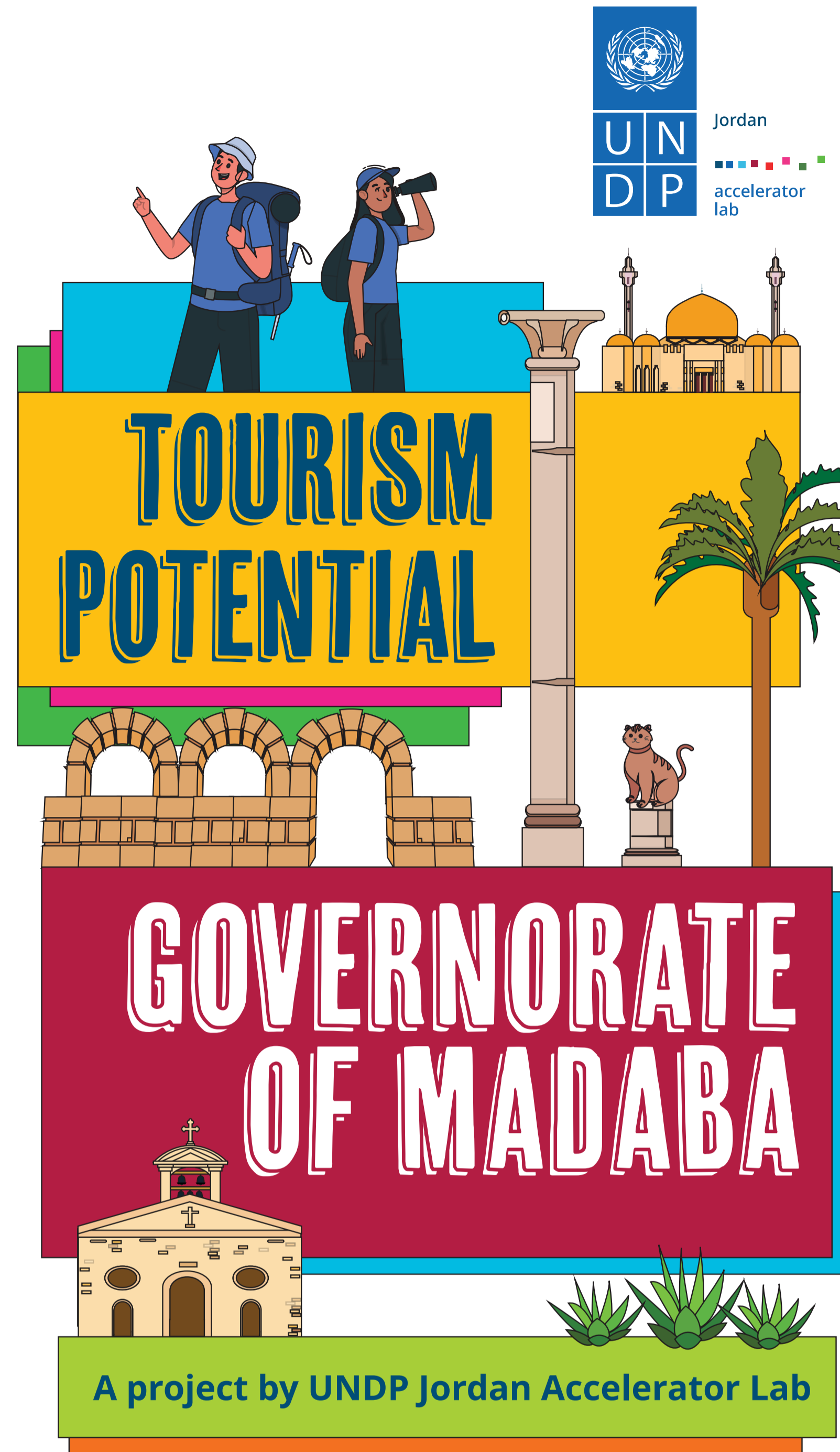
- Elevate the Tourist Experience:** Enhance tour guide skills and capabilities to create an engaging and immersive tourist experience through improved language, communication, storytelling, and content skills.
- Enhance Service Quality:** Bridge the gap between visitor expectations and the perceived quality standards of local establishments by assisting service providers in Madaba to align their offerings with the demands of tourists, ensuring a satisfying and memorable experience.
- Develop Comprehensive Tourism Offerings:** Address the underdeveloped state of tourism products and services in Madaba by supporting offline and online marketing, fostering skills and competencies in product design, and managing a robust digital presence, driving sustainable tourism growth.
- Enrich Destination Appeal:** Expand the range of available activities in Madaba beyond historical sites to attract individual travellers and tourist groups, encouraging them to spend more time in the city and contributing to the growth of the local tourism sector.
- Foster Domestic Exploration:** Increase awareness among residents about Jordan's cities and historical sites, mainly through educational initiatives, inspiring a sense of appreciation and encouraging domestic tourism, thereby bolstering the local tourism industry and supporting economic development.

INTRODUCTION

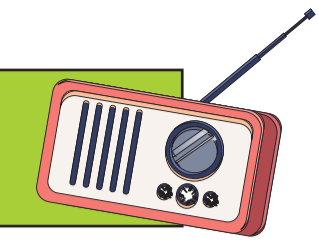
Through a series of innovative activities, the UNDP Jordan Accelerator Lab embarked on a journey to unlock the potential of the governorate of Madaba for sustainable tourism growth. Within these pages, we present the activities and insights which formed the foundation of our work.

Our activities emphasised the importance of collaboration with service providers from the public, civil society, private sectors, and the local community. We have worked together to craft an imagination for the future of Madaba's tourism industry through inclusive, participatory, and immersive processes.

- Radio Mining
- Explorative Discussions
- Local Solutions Mapping
- Travellers' Personas
- Immersion Visits
- Reveal Madaba: An Open-air Exhibition Experiment
- Sentiment Analysis of TripAdvisor
- A Day Around Jordan Experiment
- Mapping Tourism Services, Skills, Assets, and Stories
- Work and Self-reliance Insights
- Madaba Map Testing
- A Set of Recommendations and Interventions



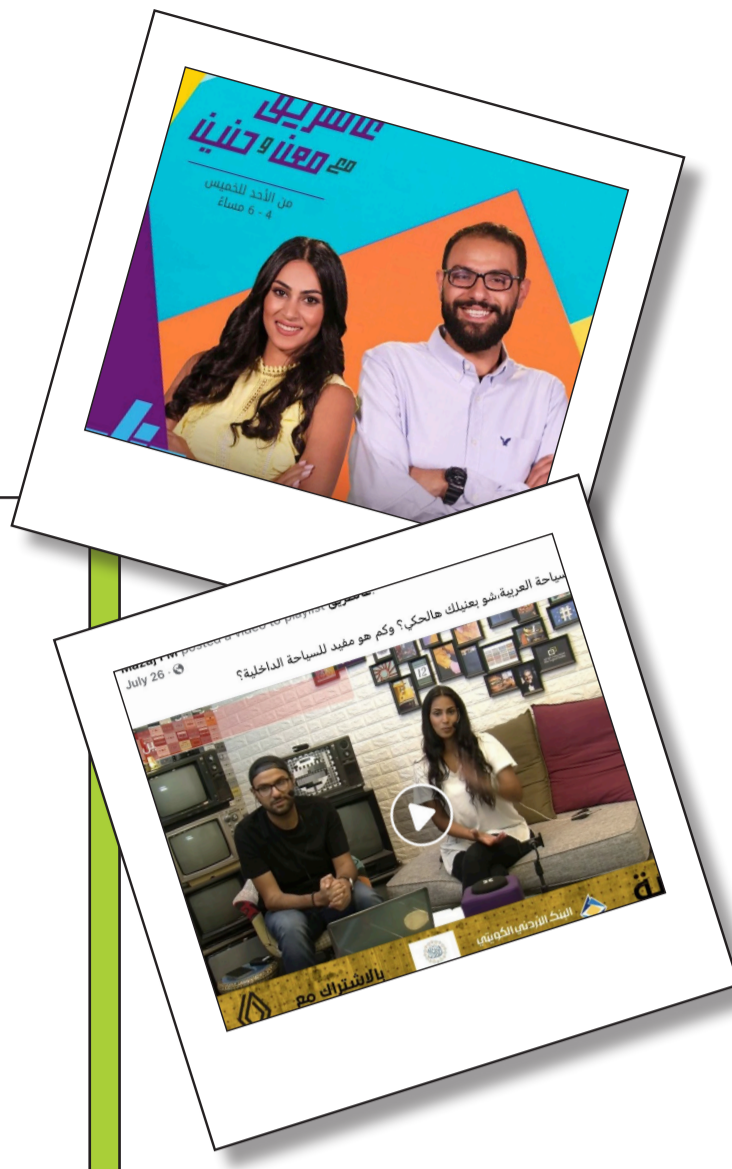
RADIO MINING



In a 20-minute airtime slot during Mazaj FM's talk show "Al Taree2" with Ma'en and Haneen, listeners engaged in discussions about local tourism and shared their perspectives on Madaba's tourism landscape.

What did we learn?

- Insufficient media coverage and promotional campaigns about Jordanian cities regionally or globally lead to a lack of awareness and recognition.
- Raising the people's awareness improves their sense of belonging and engagement with cities and historical sites.
- Improving cultural education in school curricula promotes a stronger connection to local heritage.
- Utilising digital marketing on social media platforms can effectively market local tourist experiences, reaching out to more people.
- High costs of local tourism compared to travelling abroad negatively impacts domestic tourism.



Links to activities: [Colorful squares]



EXPLORATIVE DISCUSSIONS

Engaging with individuals and entities within the tourism ecosystem, we aimed to foster partnerships and gain a comprehensive understanding of Madaba's tourism landscape. These discussions helped us identify collaborators and focus our efforts.



What did we learn?

- Madaba's high unemployment rate of 28.3% underscores the need for income-generating opportunities.
- Agritourism and alternative tourism have the potential to address unemployment by providing job opportunities.
- Madaba has untapped potential as a destination for domestic and Arab tourists.
- Licensing challenges and language skills requirements pose obstacles for local guides in Madaba.
- The interest of tourists in stories related to historical sites emphasises the value of incorporating storytelling elements into tourism experiences.

Know more:



Links to activities: [Colorful squares]

LOCAL SOLUTIONS MAPPING



We mapped 33 local tourism solutions in Jordan to understand the challenges faced in the sector and identify potential experiments. The solutions mapping involved online searches, media screening, and word-of-mouth references. These solutions included trips, food experiences, accommodation options, handicrafts, and activities.

What did we learn?

- Mapping local creative solutions builds a case for working with grassroots initiatives, supporting existing efforts and advocating for UNDP to look beyond the usual suspects.
- Many local solutions are related to tourism in Jordan, especially for alternative, experimental, and agri-tourism.
- Almost all solutions have an online presence (website, Lonely Planet, Booking.com, and social media channels).
- Most solutions were founded by women and/or youth.
- There are several informal tourism businesses or initiatives, signifying the importance of addressing the informal economy challenges.



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TRAVELLERS' PERSONAS



In our quest to understand the preferences and desires of tourists, we crafted eight unique travellers' personas through a combination of quantitative online surveys and qualitative interviews. By engaging participants from eight nationalities and stakeholders in the tourism sector in Jordan, we gained valuable insights into their travel expectations and motivations.

The travellers' personas serve as a valuable tool to design tourist products by understanding the target audience. For example, a persona representing active travellers can guide the development of hiking trails and outdoor activities to cater to their preferences and interests.

Links to activities:

TERESA AND MICHAEL
ELDERLY CHRISTIAN PILGRIMS

SOFIA
PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

MAHER
ENTERTAINMENT SEEKER

Meet the eight personas on the QR code! Which one are you?



IMMERSION VISITS

We immersed ourselves in the local ambience and tourism experiences by spending three days in Madaba as local tourists. Which unravelled the challenges and explored the opportunities and solutions. We sought to engage with local stakeholders to forge bonds with the community and build trust that could pave the way for impactful collaborations.

What did we learn?

- Overpriced, repetitive, and mostly imported products and souvenirs overshadow the local offerings. This disparity presents an opportunity to enhance and diversify local products and souvenirs.
- While restaurant prices remain affordable, the high food quality ensures a satisfying culinary experience for visitors.
- The limited options for night activities in Madaba City indicate an area for improvement, as confirmed by various stakeholders.
- Madaba City's hotels can improve their online presence for better visibility and reach to attract more guests.
- Non-Jordanian tourists were satisfied with their experiences in Madaba City, deliberately choosing as an offbeat destination.

Know more:



Links to activities:



REVEAL MADABA: AN OPEN-AIR EXHIBITION EXPERIMENT

Links to activities:

Partnering with Shababuna Ezweh, a local youth-led non-profit company, we created an open-air exhibition experiment, Reveal Madaba, showcasing Madaba's intangible cultural heritage through sensory pieces and interactive elements. The experiment aimed to observe tourist engagement with self-guided experiences.

The experiment included observation, short random interviews, and long interviews used to collect data. Observation data collected over 23 days recorded 388 visitors, with the highest footfall during the afternoon and morning. 19.3% of the visitors scanned a QR code leading them to the Reveal Madaba website. Visitors provided positive feedback about the Reveal Madaba exhibition, finding them engaging, interactive, and a valuable way to learn about Jordan's cultural heritage.

What did we learn?

- Strategic location selection is crucial for the sustainability and protection of heritage boxes. Incorporating interactive experiences at heritage sites can enhance visitor engagement and interest in the area's cultural heritage.
- Considering the design and materials used for the boxes to ensure their durability.
- Continuously evaluating and updating these experiences to remain relevant and practical.
- Providing multi-language support to cater to a diverse audience.
- Expanding the experiment to other heritage sites in Jordan.

Know more:



SENTIMENT ANALYSIS OF TRIPADVISOR

We used the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to analyse the sentiments within TripAdvisor's online data about visiting Jordan. Extracting knowledge from forum posts and comments, the AI system collected over 70,000 entries and analysed the text, unveiling the travellers' impressions and inquiries.

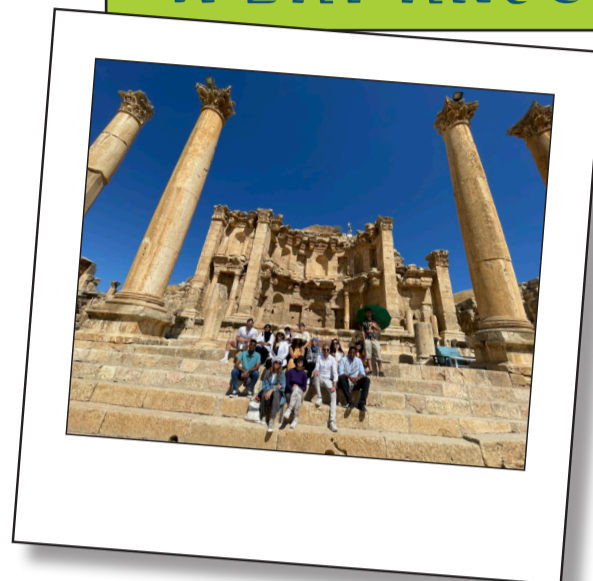
Surf through the *Sentiment Analysis of Tourism in Jordan on TripAdvisor* and see how it relates to your travel experience.

Links to activities:

Know more:



A DAY AROUND JORDAN EXPERIMENT



We capitalised on the presence of 13 Arab Accelerator Labs for a regional retreat in Jordan and invited them to visit and compare three of the top travel destinations in Jordan. The tour commenced with Jerash archaeological site and continued to Madaba. Finally, a few ventured to Petra, for a Bedouin dinner in the mountains and a tour in the ancient site. This experiment helped us compare the competitive advantage of each of the destinations. Our colleagues emphasised the importance of storytelling in creating touristic narrative and local experiences.

Know more:



Links to activities:

MAPPING TOURISM SERVICES, SKILLS, ASSETS, AND STORIES

We delved deeper into existing tourism services in collaboration with 20 German Jordanian University (GJU) students. We explored the local skills, assets, and stories for collaborative experiments for enhanced tourism offerings. The students conducted 96 interviews in Madaba City, Dhiban, Libb, and Mleih, resulting in data showing suggestions for potential experiments.

What did we learn?

- Many skills fell under mosaics, food making (mainly cooking and baking), arts and design, photography and filmmaking, and languages.
- There is a wide range of skills, including theatre, fashion design and embroidery, poetry writing and recitation, calligraphy, music, baking and confectionery, wood carving, horseback riding, and interior design.
- There is potential for packages of themed place-based tourism experiences such as food, art, and history experiences, especially in rural areas. For example, in Libb and Mleih municipality, there is potential for a food experience that combines storytelling, traditional dishes, livestock, dairy, and baking.
- Local legends and folklore offer compelling story content for diverse tourism applications such as walking trails, immersive experiences, and marketing materials.

Know more:



Links to activities:



WORK AND SELF-RELIANCE INSIGHTS

We held focus group discussions to gather insights, beliefs, and perceptions from women, youth, and individuals with disabilities regarding their work, self-reliance capacities, challenges, and aspirations in Madaba governorate.

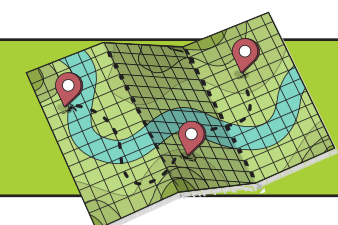


Links to activities:

What did we learn?

- Participants faced challenges maintaining employment due to low salaries, work-life balance, higher salaries, and safe environments.
- Balancing work and family commitments and limited access to public transportation posed challenges for women in the workforce.
- Short-term jobs were a common challenge faced by youth participants.
- Work preferences were driven by aspirations, career advancement opportunities, and continuous development.
- While they preferred launching a business in the tourism sector, participants found it was demanding due to the need for substantial funding and the industry's seasonal fluctuations.
- Participants emphasised the need for better-researched training courses that align with market needs, ensure employment opportunities, and include new technologies.

MADABA MAP TESTING



Through a collaboration between the Member of Parliament Majdi Al Yacoub and the American University in Madaba, a printed English language city tourist map was created and designed to enhance the visitors' experience navigating Madaba City. The Jordan Accelerator Lab conducted an experiment to test the map's functionality and user-friendliness. Fourteen participants from eight countries completed the testing.

What did we learn?

- The respondents predominantly favoured online maps for their convenience in providing directions, locations, transportation options, and reviews.
- The printed map received appreciation for its inclusion of activity details that are typically absent in online maps like Google Maps.
- Most respondents indicated they would be willing to pay for a printed map if it presented unique and detailed information about activities to do in Madaba.
- Suggestions for improvement included estimated walking times between locations, information about site tickets and opening hours, money exchange shops, detailed descriptions of places, and replacing banks locations with ATMs ones.



Links to activities:

A SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

Through a co-creation process involving stakeholders from the government, private sector, cooperatives, associations, and societies, we developed a set of recommendations and proposed interventions for improving tourism in Madaba. This collaborative effort empowered participants to contribute to developing meaningful and impactful strategies.

The co-creation workshops generated recommendations to enhance tourism at three levels: government, private sector, and community. These recommendations include making tourism-related data publicly available, improving marketing content, establishing training centres, and fostering community engagement. Examples of proposed interventions include creating a Souvenir Souq and implementing incubation programs for tourism MSMEs, highlighting the collaborative effort required for successful implementation.



What did we learn?

- Tranquility at sites, particularly Mount Nebo, was appreciated by many who expressed a potential to invest in well-being tourism products at Madaba.
- The desire for more social and night activities, diverse experiences, enriched tourism, captivating stories, and culinary delights was expressed.
- Some travellers preferred independent tours, indicating the need for an immersive and informative visitor experience that accommodates such explorers.
- Underdeveloped creativity in designing tourism products and experiences throughout Jordan results in a lack of unique visitor offerings.
- Overpricing of tourism products and experiences further diminishes their value and affordability for tourists.
- Co-creation opportunities in tourism are rare but highly valued, as participants expressed enthusiasm and engagement in collectively developing ideas, highlighting the need for more such initiatives.
- Most recommendations falling under the government level signifies its central role in driving tourism while acknowledging the private sector's and community's involvement.
- Proposed interventions align with Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision and Quality of Life Pillar and Framework.

Know more:



Links to activities: