



## International Student's Perception toward Educational Tourism at Yarmouk University

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### Abstract

This study examines international student's perception toward educational tourism at Yarmouk university through investigate the relationship between student's perception and tourism attributes namely, infrastructure, facilities, people traits and cost and bank services. After that, literature and previous studies that relevant to site background, educational tourism, students perception, international student were reviewed. In order to achieve the research objective, qualitative method was used through designing more than 30 statements of semi structured (in-depth interviews). In addition, the content of interviews was analyzed by Tesch approach which had categorized interviews content into main four themes, categories and sub-categories. Moreover, the majority of international students perception have been influenced positively by infrastructure, Facilities, people trait and "cost and bank service".

**Keywords:** Educational tourism; Student perception; Yarmouk University

### Introduction

Educational tourism is one of the rapid growing products of the travel and tourism. In the recent decades, the growth of education and tourism as industries, this has led to raising recognition of both social and economic perspectives. Tourism and education have many changes that been showed huge growth in these both activities in the last two decades [1]. According to (organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) the percentage of international students have been increased by 22% distributed as almost 3.7 million [2] and more than 4.5 million [3] tertiary students were attended to study outside their country. So that, Smith and Jenner have stated that the tourism and education are related together because all tourism experiences may consider as education.

Furthermore, International students were considered as kind of tourists' in 1963 [4]. In general, International students are people who have purpose to achieve educational academic degrees before return to their home [5]. Moreover, International students are especially recognized as educational tourists because have experience in both forms of this type of tourism as student (Educational) and tourist (Tourism), and their lives are complicated at host country [1,4]. These experiences influence of individual's perspectives, attitudes toward destination, university and create an image in their mind [6]. This image has an important role for tourist's to choose and differentiate their destination [7].

In this highly multidisciplinary competitive market, Developing Successful marketing strategies is essential to understand tourists' destination image clearly [8]. In fact, perceived image of destination is very important because it consider as main factor of attracting international students [1]. In the case of identify destination image, Hunt has defined it as "Perceptions held by potential visitors about an area" [9].

Finally, destination image plays an important role to increasing international students and motivate their desires to choice certain destination.

### Literature Review

This part of the study provides a literature related to site background, educational tourism, international students, destination attributes, and students perceptions.

According to EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) higher education in Jordan was started with the second half of twentieth centuries, especially in the nineteen sixties, with several college teachers. In the recent years Jordan higher education is very important sector that's clear, in the academic year 2009/ 2010, the higher education system enrollment almost 218,900 students distributed in 10 public universities and 16 private universities.

Yarmouk university one of the Jordanian public universities and recognized by Lonely Planet website as one of the most exclusive centers of learning in middle east, located on the north of Jordan at Irbid city which considered as the second largest city. In addition, it is founded 1976 by royal decree, the university currently has 31514 bachelor students, 2991 master students, and 626 PhD students. Moreover more than 3414 international students were enrolled in multi programs according to last reports of admission and registration department at Yarmouk university. Furthermore, Yarmouk university has 936 faculty members, and 1740 administrative and technical staff distributed on 13 faculties that offer 56 bachelor degree programs, 63 master degree programs, and 19 PhD programs in a variety of specializations. In addition, it has 11 centers for research and career.

International students are considered as rather exceptional category of tourists. Moreover, there are many authors and international organizations have defined international students in different ways, International students are those who non-residents of their country of study or those who gained their higher education in another country [10].

Travel for general learning or academic education it is not new experience it was started from centuries ago. Furthermore, in the 17th, 18th and 19th century, Grand Tour was first vocation for learning

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undertaken initially by aristocratic British scholar as part of their education program [11], tourism perhaps considered as education due to it is broaden mind as stated by Jenner and Smith. In addition, Education tourism is defined as any “program in which participants travel to a location as a group with the primary purpose of engaging in learning experience”. The crucial purpose of this category of tourism is to know about country culture, society and market followed by study tours, work and professional learning skills in different environment [12]. Educational tourism includes two main activities such as tourism and education (Figure 1).

Most of the previous studies have investigated student's perceptions of tourism destination that conducted in Malaysian, UK, USA, Turkey, Albania and Lithuania. In addition, previous studies have been examined student's perception of tourism destination based on following attributes: Value, interest, experience, environment, knowledge and awareness, policy, Initiatives, culture, learning outcome, festivals and event, enjoyable and activity, destinations atmosphere, faculty, People trait, Monetary system, food and beverage, social life, social relation, freedom and human rights, forest conservation and sustainable tourism development.

Samah et al. [13] have explored residents perception towards educational tourism based on many variables as follow: governmental policies, governmental initiatives, culture and learning outcomes in addition, the results of study has viewed that there is a significance differences between attitudes of local residents toward educational tourism in Malaysia.

Shan et al. [14] have examined international student's perception for tertiary Hospitality and tourism education by investigate the influential factors on their decisions are: value, interest, experience, environmental, knowledge and awareness. Furthermore, all above factors have a positive indicators that influences on international student's perception. Whereas, Asgari and Borzooei [1] have investigated the Iranian student's perception toward Malaysian as host

country through following themes: Festival, event, enjoyable activity, destination atmosphere, Facility, People trait, Monetary price, food and beverage. Under those themes, the result viewed that the Festival, event, enjoyable activity, destination atmosphere, Facility, People trait, Monetary price, food and beverage have impact on international students in Malaysia.

According to OECD has been increased by 22% from almost 3.7 million in 2009 and more than 4.5 million in 2012.

Haung [4] has evaluated the international student's as tourist through understanding student's experiences and the results indicate a high level of student's satisfaction. While, Asgari and Borzooei [1] have examined learning outcomes of international students as educational tourists by proposed theoretical framework which consists: overall image, satisfaction, learning outcomes and demographic. In summary, the study identify the relationship among of the above mentioned variables by description.

Bhuiyan et al. [15] have investigated the relationship between educational tourism and forest conservation based on following attributes namely, planning team, develop educational materials, exhibition and visiting activities, local community involvement, tour operator activities, media, school curriculum, teacher, local and international organization, nature protection, preservation of biodiversity, level of ecological awareness. Thus, the result of this study showed that teachers, local government and community, tour operators, local and international organization and over all media can play significant role in this matter. In contrast, Olberkyte and Prakapiene [12] have presented the structure terms and seeks into the opportunities for utilizing educational tourism in geographical education, and results of study confirmed that there are opportunities for the integration of educational tourism and geography in the Lithuanian national and regional park.

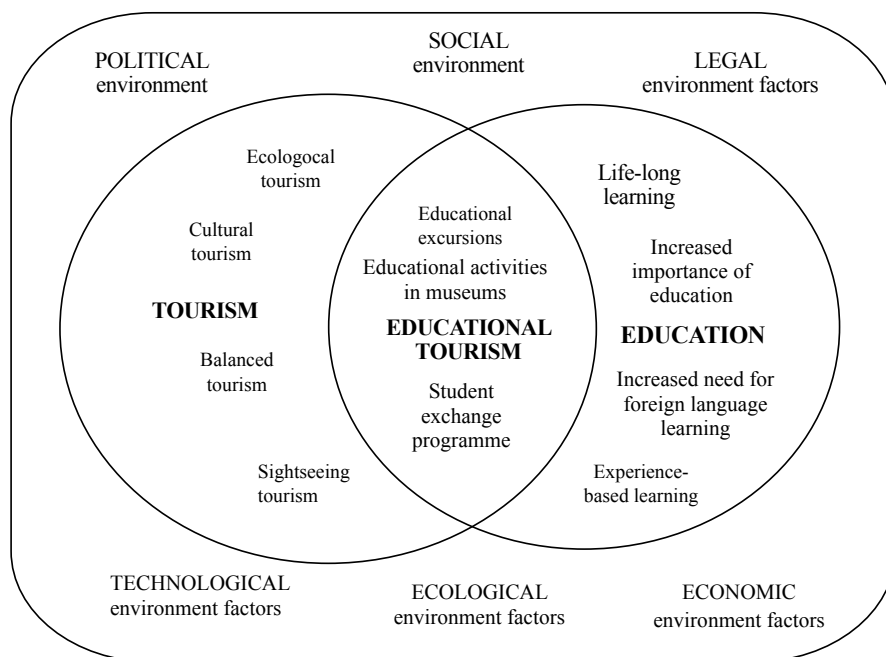


Figure 1: Structure of educational tourism concept.

Debra and Oelfke [16] have explored students perceptions through understanding three main dimensions of tourism impacts namely, economic, social-cultural and environmental impacts relevant to sustainable tourism development, the findings showed that the social-cultural dimension has a positive impacts on developing sustainable tourism and all dimensions have a contribution for setting up a policy of sustainable tourism development in Albanian. In the same matter, Arici et al. [17] have investigated impacts of educational tourism through measure the perception of local turkish students toward impacts of foreign students by foreign languages, positive sciences, role of women in the social life, social relation, dressing styles of people, human rights and individual freedom and the effects of religion in social life at the northern Cyprus [18].

### Methodology

The main purpose of this research is to measure the perception of international student toward educational tourism at yarmouk university through investigate of the relationship between student's perception and tourism attributes namely, infrastructure, facilities, people traits and cost. Furthermore, discovering needs and desires of foreign students led to develop strategies of university that assist to increase the educational tourism demand.

In order to achieve the above mentioned goal, the researcher will examine relationship between students perception and tourism attributes (infrastructure, facilities, people trait and cost), two hypotheses drawn as follows:

Hypothesis 1: there is a positive relationship between (people trait and cost) and students perception.

Hypothesis 2: there is a positive relationship between "infrastructure and facilities" and student perception.

In order to accomplish research objectives, two types of data collection were used primary and secondary. On the one hand, secondary data were collected from books, articles and websites related to statistics, perception, international students, educational tourism and destination attributes. These data assist researcher to

design study model as seen in Figure 2, study hypotheses and interview questions. On the other hand, primary data were assembled through utilized qualitative method which has getting a deep understanding for participant's opinions and identifies in-depth insights [18]. In addition, Yin stated that the qualitative method can be performed through perceptual and attitudinal aspects [19]. Furthermore, for the sake of "improving knowledge" [20-22] semi structured (in-depth interview) was designed by developed more than 30 statements of open -end questions were distributed under A series four main domains as follow "infrastructure, facilities, people traits and cost" relevant to destination attributes to measure students perceptions. Additionally, the interview has been conducted by face to face technique in 2016 during two weeks at the period of 5th March until 19th March. Furthermore, the sample of this study was international students at Yarmouk University were chosen randomly from several faculties, and from multi nationalities such as: Turkish, Malaysian, Canadian, Russian, Chinese, and Indonesian. Moreover, to identify participants, names, educational degrees, e-mails and host country student's information were collected from student foreign department. These information will be used in the case of insufficient of sample and makes contact with them by researcher to arrange meets and time of these interviews. In addition, students interviewed were enrolled at Yarmouk University among academic years 2012-2015 or have graduated from university and who complete higher studies.

Before conducting interviews, researcher makes inventory of infrastructure, facilities, people trait and costs at university. These data were collected by observation, student guide book, admission and registration department, student's affairs department and online data. Self-developed interviews statements that relevant to investigate international student's perspectives toward Yarmouk University. In the beginning of interview, research welcomed to interviewee and introduce himself to interviewee and present an introduction about research purposes, followed by discussing four domains "infrastructure, facilities and people trait and cost". Finally, thanked to interviewee to accept researcher's invitation, in the matter of discussion that Arabic and English Languages were used in the interview and two-

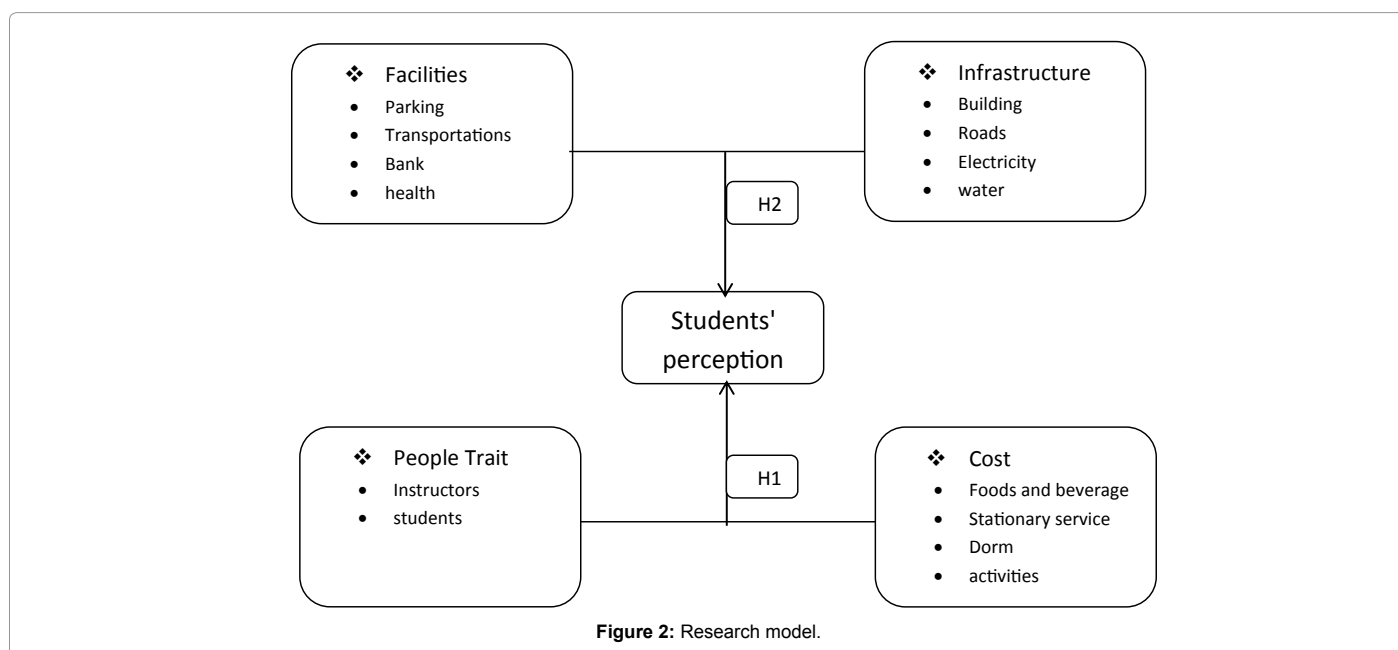


Figure 2: Research model.

way conversational technique. The time of interview and participants may arrange randomly or planned. The duration of each interview will take between 20-40 minutes and location of interview will be chosen it randomly. In the case of interview tools, the Galaxy prime cell phone used as recorder device add to writing directly technique. After the interviews completed with participants, the Tesch approach of open coding [23] approach will be utilized in content analysis (CA) of interview transcripts through classifying crucial research Domains into main themes, categories and subcategories. Furthermore, the patterns and common ideas will be emerged together from transcript.

### Findings and Results Discussion

Tech's approach were used to analysis the content of interviews through transcript the voice respondents track which was recorded by smart phone Galaxy prime(SM-G530H). In addition, IS (international students) this is the code was given for each respondent.

Furthermore, the content of interviews was divided into four main themes infrastructure, Facilities, people trait, "cost and bank services" and categories and sub-categories as shown in Table 1.

In order to achieve study objectives, the researcher was interviewed ten foreign undergraduate students. In addition, the majority of respondents were Malaysian 7 students, and 3were Thais, five respondents were female and five respondents were male, their ages were among 20-25, the interviews had been at the faculty of Sharia for two programs namely, Economics and Islamic banks and Jurisprudence and its origins.

In this part of study, researcher will interpret the results of interviews based on four main themes (infrastructure, facilities, people trait and cost and monetary system) with categories and sub-categories.

#### Infrastructure

In the begging, infrastructures which include (buildings, water and electricity) have differentiated impact (positive or negative) on student's perception, as one respondent stated that:

Buildings are cool but very old; the distance among faculties is appropriate and didn't need for a lot of time to transmit from one to another. Additionally, the garden surrounded of factuality is so beauty, if I have time I sit there with my friends. This participant has negative view related to toilets or wash room as said that: toilets are dirty, water flood on surface with bad smell (IS1).

In addition, other respondents agreed with pervious one and they said that:

Theme	Categories
Infrastructure	Building Water
Facilities	University department Accessibility E-services Class room
People trait	Instructor student
Cost and Bank services	Bank services Program price Stationary price Food price

Table 1: Themes and categories for students.

"Buildings are very beautiful. But, have old appearance. Also, the distance among faculties is closer. Moreover, the garden around faculty it's a quiet place, when I sit there I feel relax, rest and sometime I study there." (IS2).

The buildings at Yarmouk University are very appropriate in the case of form and space. In addition, the distance among faculties it is good and closer, I can arrive my class room in short time maybe 5-10 minutes, the location of faculties is appropriate. Moreover, toilets always dirty. (IS3).

"I think it is quiet nice building and classic, it is look like hospital (good and nice). For the related to toilet is very bad for me because it is dirty and unclean." (IS4).

"I think the buildings of Yarmouk University have an appropriate size and colors add to, good stair with good access for disabled students particularly, wheelchair users." (IS5).

Finally, all respondents have the same opinions related to infrastructure of Yarmouk University especially, the buildings are good and every things around it is acceptable such as garden (students break -out spaces). Also, distance among faculties is acceptable too. But the one thing has negative views is toilets and cleanness.

#### Facilities

In general, facilities (accessibility, university departments, E-service and classroom) have mixed views among respondents as follows:

"Generally, roads are good. But, there are several holes in many streets and it is dirty. In addition, I didn't see any sign or map that guide me to my college. On the other hand, the university departments such as: admission and registration department is very good and provide us all required documents papers but sometime the procedure take long-time in the period of payments and the staff are very friendly and helpful. Library, I think it is symbol of university, I like it and like to sit and study there, general environment is very quiet, every technical preparation (AC, lights, tables and chairs) are appropriate and staff are helpful E-service, the YU website is very good and fulfill all required information but I didn't use the wireless network because it has slowly and limited connection. Classroom, is very bad because there are many chairs were broken and a lot of cups of coffee and tea were throw down on chairs and surface I didn't see any technical service such as: projector or laptop." (IS1).

Furthermore, other respondents have the similar views toward facilities as follow:

"I didn't found any signs that guide me to faculties but all things are good that related to streets. Moreover, all procedures at admission and registration department are very good but it is taking sometime. Library, everything is very good particularly in the, index, space, tables, chairs and students and takes the books in easy way. Classroom is good but missed to projector and there are several broken chairs, scratches on wall, and I see a lot of rubbish on chairs and surface". (IS2).

"The buses are may be one or two, transmit students from education to economic faculty, there is masses inside buses and I waiting nearly 15 minutes or more for bus coming. Moreover, the majority of roads are good but there are many streets have many holes and unclean. Unfortunately, signs are not available, for first time, when I come to university I still asking students about the location of my faculty. Classroom is good. While, many chairs were broken, it is very dirty; recycle bin and projector are not available. Finally, sometime there are many scratches on walls". (IS3).

“Roads and walk trails are very good, I think there is not sign or map, I didn't found that. Also, the university departments have positive student's perceptions, the admission and administration department is very good, staff are really good and helpful, if I have any problem they help me directly. Library is very really, really good and stuff are very friendly and helpful and when I need certain book they help me to find it and I feel relax. In contrast, many students are loading and raising their voices at Library. Classroom, chair is not quite comfortable to sit down long-time for me, table is fine, and one more things the projector should be provided by university administration and the classroom are very dirty because coffee cups on chairs and no one clean those things”. (IS4).

“ thank God, the roads are clean but many of them are not good, I think there are two maps were seen in the main and northern gates both are very good and present all department and units at Yarmouk university. There are no signs and I don't see any one that guides me to which I want to go to it. All website service is good but there is a problem, every semester it is ask us to change our password of registration. The wireless network is not good because it is very slowly; when I use it I need a long-time to open certain service. Classroom is good but there are many chairs are broken and many graphics on walls and there is no projector”. (IS5).

### People trait

In this part the students will evaluate the professors and students traits at university; the first group of respondents has positive indicators as follows:

“Professors are flexible, I can learn from them, welcoming us, show respect, smile, positive and I can join in the lecture with my colleagues. On the other hand, students are treating with us well, welcoming us, I can discuss with them, helpful, I can ask them if I didn't understand lecture, I learn good deeds such as: Doaa, Hadith, Azkar and Quran recitation”. (IS2).

“Professors are very helpful, patient, flexible but many of them are didn't encourage us to join in lectures or present a presentation. Additionally, students are friendly, have outgoing personality, helpful because if I don't understand certain issue I can ask them and I can deal with them well”. (IS3).

“Professors are good but some time the student's didn't understand what they said especially, foreign student's while, and the majority of students are good”. (IS5).

In contrast, the second group of respondents has positive perception toward professors or instructors. Whereas, have negative views toward local students as respondents said that:

“professors are cool, positive, humble, patient, enthusiastic and knowledgeable, if I don't understand anything I go to his office, ask him and he is gives me answers. While, students are good but many of them have negative attitudes such didn't show respect for their teachers. Also, I can't image that worst”. (IS1).

“The professors in this university are quiet good and they have good methods and techniques in teaching. I have another one thing I didn't like in the professor's attitudes is they are writing equations on the lecture or exam by their hands. In addition, students are quite helpful, but, just some of them and in some time I see many bad characteristics such as they didn't bring books and respect professors whereas I learn from them several positive things like Arabic language”. (IS4).

### Cost and Bank

This theme has mixed impact on perception of international student's as two respondents stated that:

“The programs of university are expensive but other services have reasonable prices such as: food, books, stationary, and kiosk prices. However, the bank provide good services and has good staff are helpful, friendly and organized well. In addition, I use it when I pay to registration course”. (IS1).

“Thefees of normal programs (Adai) are good and reasonable. Compared with, Double programs (Moazzi) are very expensive. While, the price of food at restaurant is reasonable and price of food is acceptable. In addition, I didn't use bank service but it is good just I use ATM”. (IS2).

“The price of everything at Yarmouk University is very expensive except the price of food at university restaurant but I just use ATM for the bank services”. (IS4).

Although, another respondent have positive view toward cost and bank services as said that:

“For me, all prices are good and reasonable. Also, the bank services are good and the staff are helpful and friendly”(IS3).

### Conclusion

Based on findings of evaluation the international student's perception toward Yarmouk University, The results have been shown that the international students have mixed (positive or negative) perceptions. But, the majority of perceptions were positive. On the other hand, the perceptions of international students have been almost influenced positively by infrastructure, Facilities, people trait and “cost and bank service”.

Furthermore, infrastructure has a positive impact on student's perceptions particularly, in the external appearance of buildings and gardens around it. Conversely, the washroom has negative impact on student perception because it is dirty and unclean. Moreover facilities have positive indicators on the student's perception especially, roads, university departments and library. In contrast, classrooms and signs have negative mental image of international students.

In addition, people trait has positive views on student's perception relevant to instructors and students. But some time the local students present negative indicators on international student's perceptions such as smoking and disrespect. Finally, cost and bank have positive views on student's perceptions specifically, fees of programs, foods, books, stationary kiosk and bank service, staff and ATM.

According to above facts, two hypotheses of this study almost confirmed. So that, the four main domains (Infrastructure, facilities, people trait and “cost and monetary system”) have a positive impact on perception of international students.

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