

MASTERS THESIS

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2023

**Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Károly Róbert Campus**

**The Role of Place Marketing in Activating the
Tourism Movement in Damascus**

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Rural Development and

Sustainable Economy

Tourism Management

Full-time education

2023

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1. Introduction

The success of any type of business is largely depended on marketing. For a business, effective marketing can work wonders. It is capable of recognizing trends, altering public opinion, and generating demand for a given good or service. Companies, now, use marketing to promote various things in addition to selling their products. In order to draw residents, businesses and resources, for instance, a location competes with other locations. So, over the past few years, spatial marketing has become increasingly important.

Place marketing entails creating a space that meets the requirements of your target markets. It succeeds when locals and businesses are content with their surroundings and when visitors' and investors' expectations are fulfilled (Kotler et al. 2002a: 183). As "customers of place", producers of goods and services, corporate headquarters and regional offices, foreign investment and export markets, tourism and hospitality and new residents are all potential target markets for spatial marketing in this study (Kotler et al. 2002a). Place marketing serves a variety of functions, including enhancing a location's reputation and luring businesses, visitors, organizations, events, etc. Today's locations need to develop strategic marketing management tools and conscious brands in order to draw in tourists, businesses, factories, and talented workers, as well as research their export markets.

Tourism is one of the most important industries in Syria and contributes significantly to the country's economy. According to the Syrian Ministry of Tourism's website, over 1.8 million tourists visited Syria in 2022, which represents an increase of 141% over 2021. There are 87% Arab tourists and 13% foreign tourists. It accounted for 9% of GDP and generated \$1.7 billion in revenue. Therefore, the government is becoming more interested and making efforts to promote tourism with new marketing strategies.

The purpose of this study is to present the application of the principles of place marketing in the case of a Syrian city, Damascus, which is the capital of the Syrian Arab Republic and one of the largest cities in the country with an estimated population of 1,771,000. Damascus is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world and a major cultural center for the Levant and Arabic

world. It is located in the southwestern corner of the country and was founded by Alexander the Great after the fall of the Roman Empire.

This study is organized as follows: First, it will review the literature in order to clarify the concept of place marketing, its importance, strategy and relevance to the field of tourism, as seen by many researchers. Secondly, the research will continue by defining the importance of Damascus historically and touristically, including why Damascus was chosen in particular as well as the rest of the Syrian cities. Thirdly, the steps already taken will be analyzed and then evaluated: how different are the tools used in Damascus from those used in other cities in Syria, and what are the positive and negative features of the marketing activity in Damascus? Finally, the last considerations and future research directions will be discussed.

1.1 Research Purpose:

This research follows three objectives:

The main objective of the study is to expand the idea of place marketing and branding the city, emphasize the significance of its application in the modern era, and demonstrate how it affects both the city and the surrounding area.

The second objective is to represent the city of Damascus, which is one of the most culturally rich cities in the world, with its various civilizations, archaeological sites and varied landscapes that range from desert to mountains, plains, lakes, and rivers.

The third objective derives from Damascus's significance on a global scale and its crucial importance to the stability and prosperity of society. It establishes a high value for the city's educational and formative systems, while the tourism industry works to enhance its goods and services in order to capitalize on peak tourist seasons. Therefore, the goal of this dissertation is to ascertain the significance of Damascus in terms of cultural tourism as well as to identify potential investment development plans and the reasons behind them. The thesis is supported by development and investment plans and projects being carried out in Damascus, which highlight the revival of tourism over the previous two years. To achieve the purpose, we shall:

- Emphasize the importance of one of the most crucial ideas of our time, namely, city marketing.
- Emphasize the most significant and well-known historical and religious sites in Damascus.
- Highlighting infrastructure, development, and investment while assessing the city's current state.
- Examine the cultural tourism situation in Damascus.

1.2 Research Hypothesis:

Based on previous research and articles in this field, I believe the following hypotheses are appropriate for the research that I am conducting:

- Damascus has the tools required for effective city marketing.
- City marketing helps attract tourists.
- The existence of a brand for Damascus will aid in enhancing the economic standing of those who live there.
- There are no foreign investors; rather, the majority of investors are locals and Arabs.

1.3 Research Methodology:

The study is based on:

Secondary research, which is a research method that employs previously collected data, Existing data is summarized and compared to improve the overall effectiveness of the research. This type of research is distinguished by the fact that it allows the researcher to gain insights and draw conclusions without the need for new data collection. It also saves time and resources while allowing the researcher to build on prior knowledge and experience.

Primary research, which is a methodology used by researchers to collect data directly rather than relying on data collected from previous research, Primary research is conducted solely to address a specific problem that necessitates in-depth investigation. The methods used in this research are, first, quantitative research, which is a method of learning about a specific group of people known

as a sample population. Quantitative research employs scientific inquiry to examine questions about the sample population by using data that is observed or measured. Second, the questionnaire, which was used in this study to collect data from respondents about their attitudes, experiences, or opinions. Third, the SWOT analysis was used to develop strategic planning by analyzing the competitive situation of the city of Damascus using the framework. SWOT analysis analyzes the current and potential future situations along with internal and external factors.

1.4 Significance of the Study:

For developing nations, tourism is now crucial to boosting economic growth. One of the main pillars on which the economies of the Middle East and North Africa are based is tourism. As a result of initiatives to diversify its oil-based economies, the tourism industry has gained prominence. The MENA region is a popular destination for business, leisure, health and wellness, religious and cultural travel and shopping. Given that the Middle East is the cradle of civilizations, the statistics are extremely contradictory.

Syria is a case in point. It has received 1.8 million tourists in 2022, according to the website of the Syrian Ministry of Tourism. The tourism business in Syria alone brought in \$1.74 billion. This represents around 1.9 % of all international tourism receipts in Western Asia and 9 % of the country's GDP (Internet 1). Syria's tourism industry is still in its infancy in terms of development, especially after a decade of war, and the development of cultural tourism is essential. The study will discuss the tourism potential of Damascus with the aim of increasing international tourism arrivals and producing more income for the economy.

2. Literature Review

This chapter introduces the idea of city marketing and its application strategy, identifies potential application barriers, lists the key elements that ensure city marketing success and provides some concrete examples. Following that, it provides background information on Damascus' history as a significant cultural and touristic city before evaluating the city's current state.

2.1 General Overview of City Marketing:

Cities are regarded as the most significant tourist attractions in every nation because they serve as the framework for all tourism-related business operations. Given the cultural, economic and human values the cities uphold and the significance of attention and marketing for them to substantially develop a successful tourism strategy, it has become necessary to concentrate on them. On the one hand, they draw investors and project owners, which aid in the development of the city, and on the other, they draw tourists. Instead, the Italian researcher Dr. Bernardo, one of the experts in the field of marketing, stated: "The city is a brand like the rest of the brands; it must be built and marketed". According to Kavaratzis Mihalis, the idea of urban marketing first surfaced in 1975 (Kavaratzis, M. 2007). Since then, it has undergone significant theoretical and practical development. It all started with the marketing of cities as being productive, which is a traditional viewpoint. Through it, they sought to develop a particular urban sector, land, neighborhood, or region in order to increase its price only when it was being sold. However, *Selling the City* by the American researchers, Ashworth and Voogd, which was published in the 1990s, helped to broaden and crystallize the concept (Ashworth-Voogd, 1990). As a result, it was marketed as a destination for consumption as a part of a crucial continuity-seeking strategy. It focuses on developing the mental image and identity of a city or region, with the intention of promoting certain activities that take place there, such as promoting tourism, drawing in residents from outside the area, or luring in investment and business. Before entering the investment market, by understanding and knowing the behavior of investors and their needs in reality to meet them, based on the capabilities available to it, the nature of the activities in it, and its natural, cultural, economic, and social structures, etc.,

which are developed and displayed in an attractive way and supported by the necessary infrastructure development, one must know the incentives they have, etc. Because of globalization and the rise in international travel, marketing of cities has become more widely accepted as a philosophy and an idea. The purpose of this is to caution that urban marketing is based on developing a brand for the city based on creating an image and reputation for it, linked to a feature or set of features that pertain to it in a specific aspect, whether historically or culturally; like a long history or tourist attractions, or a natural geography; like coastal or mountainous cities, or humanly; like providing a type of educational or health service, or efforts which are being made to spread and cement it in people's minds so that urban marketing becomes a permanent mental image and a component of their shared imagination. To get closer to that, it is sufficient to mention the names of some cities, such as Paris, the city of fashion, New York, the city of finance, Dubai or even Arab cities like Damascus, the subject of our research, and Cairo, Fez, or Casablanca, Hammamet, Istanbul or Beirut, etc. Until a set of associations and images, or even just one, are formed in your mind, regardless of how realistic or unreal they may be, they serve as a representation of your mental perceptions of the city or a particular area of it. These perceptions will follow you if you engage in tourism in one of these cities, or even if you merely visit them for that reason. Whether you like it or not, the perceptions that people have of cities, nations, and regions influence how they interact with them in real life. This is true from the moment a person decides to travel until they interpret and assign meaning to every aspect of their experience there, including the events, culture, people, and fashion. Although we have cities with wonderful cultural and historical dimensions, and they possess the qualities that enable them to stand out and distinguish themselves greatly, we find this completely or partially absent from the Syrian mentality at a time when many cities are engaged in a war of urban tourism competition on a global and even regional level. To give cities a chance to contribute in the growth of tourism on the one hand and to gradually raise the standard of living there by luring investment and marketing them in all currently available ways in terms of technologies, communicative capabilities, and visual abilities, attention must be paid to creating brands for cities. Even tourism directorates must take that seriously and develop strategies to build the identities of cities.

2.2 The Concept of City Marketing:

The term "city marketing" emerged as a phenomenon that is not new with the development processes that the world has reached, inventing new methods to enhance knowledge and bring interest, investment, and tourism to a city and putting it in the spotlight. Selling places became a distinctive feature of drawing settlers to new frontier areas, and place marketing, like many marketing concepts, has its roots in the United States as early as the 1850s. Early in the 20th century, there was a lot of advertising for beach resorts as well. When Kotler et al, published their work, it was around this time that place marketing's broad interpretation also reached the United States (Kotler et al, 1993). One of its greatest advantages is that it goes into great detail about the product development stages, showing that marketing activity can only be successful if it depends on an appealing location in a number of different ways. Prior to place marketing, the primary method of place promotion was selling a location. Selling, as the name suggests, is a more pragmatic form of promotion that heavily relies on various forms of advertising. Recently, marketing by location has taken center stage in plans for local economic growth and community improvement.

Countries are vying to strategically market their cities, exploit their various resources, and move and rotate the local economy between cities, which helps to develop cities. In order to attract tourists and those interested in all types of tourism and draw their attention to the capabilities of countries, the diversity of their civilization and culture, and the resources of their various cities, not just their capitals, big cities People all over the world now have the means, convenience, and options to visit other countries thanks to the growth of the aviation, travel, and tourism industries. This has sped up the development of the travel and tourism industry's ability to draw tourists and work to expand the shopping sector, which has helped the World Tourism Organization categorize the world's tourism market. The interests of travelers are changing; some are drawn to the business world, while others are interested in health, education, sports, entertainment, marketing, and other types of tourism, including exhibitions and conferences.

Choosing a marketing brand for the city entails selecting a vision and message that will give it a distinctive image. This brand is derived from the city's assets, which will increase its allure. We discover that there is currently something that represents a city, but this mark is either not

independent in the right way or it may only be used as a landmark to denote the city. It only lacks the method for creating and utilizing the resources we refer to as "marketing cities", utilizing them to define and market the various regions that are thought to be their sources.

City marketing follows a similar process to commercial marketing; after all, "it is a marketing world." not like in the world of trade and business, where there is advertising and promotion for cities and nations. Instead, we should establish a line of demarcation between cities and their rivals so that they can always be in the lead. We should also be familiar with the city's mission and goals, as well as its resources and key players. Finally, we should conduct the necessary research and studies to identify the city's advantages and disadvantages and define what I once referred to as the "map of civilizational dimensions," which includes knowledge gained through education and research, practices and traditions, industries, character traits, resources found in nature, cultures and their diversity, history, economies, geographical dimensions of cities, the arts, and other factors that we can add to each city, all of which aid in developing the best plan for producing goods and services. The marketing of cities is a factor in the long-term growth of each one, along with the planning of events for that city, deciding on the best method for promoting it, and identifying the target market.

Commercial businesses set budgets and invest heavily in "R&D" to maintain their services and products because city marketing does not involve media promotional campaigns. As a result, countries must set budgets for this in order to maintain their ability to draw tourists of all types. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the different types of global tourism as well as the strengths of each city. These plans must also take into account the harmony and lack of conflict between them and other programs to attract the targeted tourist groups, in cooperation with the Council of Economic and Development Affairs and the emirates of regions or the central special committees in each city.

2.3 City Marketing Strategy:

Integrated marketing communication is a consistent strategy to place the city on the map of national and international cities with a reputation and a brand. At the outset, we must ask the following question: Why is a brand-building strategy needed by the city? Second, how can we use

a city's unique identity to create a brand for it? How can the relevant authorities be included in the branding of the city? How can we market the brand? Finally, how do we manage the brand?

Integrated marketing communication employs a variety of advanced marketing techniques, relies on public relations, techniques and strategies, builds and develops an image for the city to put the city on the national and international tourism map, working to establish a brand for it, and then managing its reputation once this reputation has been established on the ground. The model's primary pillars include general advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, public relations and online communication.

2.3.1 Stages of the City's Marketing Strategy:

According to Dr. Talal Al-Maghrabi, he determined in his article on “State Marketing” that the city marketing strategy goes through the following stages (Al-Maghrab, 2011):

The first stage: Research is the foundation of the strategy and the main factor in the success of the strategy and achieving the set goals. What is meant by "research" in this context is to investigate the reality and the strengths of the city that we want to market, and this is done by analyzing the situation and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

The second stage: It is a market study in which the target audience is identified and studied from various perspectives (sociodemographic, material, psychological, cultural, etc.).

The third stage: Following that is the process of researching the city's competitive field at the local and international levels, as well as its market position, which allows for comparison and study of what others use in this field in terms of means, strategies, methods, and approaches.

The fourth stage: the stage of defining the integrated marketing communication program's goals and the criteria for measuring progress toward these goals.

The fifth stage: After establishing objectives, the process of defining various marketing tactics and strategies is derived from media, public relations, and advertising activities, depending on the findings of the numerous studies carried out in the process' early stages. The process of creating a budget is the next stage, and after the campaign or marketing strategy has been put into action, that process is evaluated to determine its strengths and weaknesses.

The process of marketing the city should be noted as not being dependent on a single entity, such as the Department of Public Relations or the Department of Marketing and Relations with the Public, for example. Instead, numerous social groups must be involved, including the government, tourism and travel agencies, commercial centers, academic institutions, cultural and scientific clubs, civil society associations, the media, and those who care about culture, history, and heritage. Additionally, associations of merchants and craftsmen, etc.

2.3.2 The Benefits of City Marketing:

The process of developing the city's marketing brand is novel and has numerous advantages for both the city and its citizens. The most notable of which, according to Dr. Talal Al-Maghribi in his article "State Marketing," (Al-Maghrab, 2011) are:

1. The process of introducing and becoming acquainted with the city becomes simple and quick, making it accessible to all. When a city is mentioned, its marketing brand, which may include a cultural or social heritage as well as an economic resource, comes to mind.
2. The association of the marketing brand with the identity of the city makes it a unique city. The cultural and ethnic diversity makes the ethnic differences that make up the urban community a catalyst for creating a distinctive marketing brand.
3. By organizing activities and events, one can enhance the community movement. For instance, when developing a brand for a city that is connected to its cultural heritage and can be used to distinguish it, as well as when assisting in the development of an activator for the area, this process supports the city's community first and promotes movement within it.
4. Raising interest in it, improving its infrastructure, and attracting investments—how is that done? by directing the attention of responsible authorities to services that support the available resources rather than focusing solely on a landmark.
5. Developing a new idea from and for the city. This thought comes from the person who works to promote his city by inventing and introducing activities and events, as well as those from outside who desire to visit the city, get to know it, and even interact with its culture.

2.3.3 The Biggest Challenges of City Marketing:

One of the biggest challenges facing urban centers and cities around the world is marketing cities, creating their brand, and managing their reputation. How do we promote a city, create its identity, and maintain its reputation? What are the best methods for accomplishing this goal? Who are the necessary parties to be involved in such a process? What are the methods that ought to be trusted? Are they traditional media, new media, marketing, public relations, etc., or a combination of all these strategies and tools? What aims does the marketing process pursue? Are they supporting and promoting tourism, luring investors, bringing in new residents, or swaying the neighborhood to enhance the city and spread its fame, history, and civilization?

In order to highlight a city, create a marketing brand for it, define it, and inspire others to change its path (the goal), author Hedley Smyth focused on several axes and worked on them in his book "Marketing the City" (Smyth, 2015), including:

1. The marketing-branding industry initiative must be adopted by the community formation of the city (its people, bodies, and institutions).
2. Realizing that it is a lengthy process that depends on continuity (investment in the future).
3. The capacity to fiercely compete both domestically and internationally.
4. Everyone should make an effort to develop new introduction and promotion programs for the city.
5. Accessibility of various media and publications.
6. A marketing strategy that entails engaging with others and accepting their entry into the community.
7. Understanding the makeup of the city's communities is crucial to the development of the brand and their acceptance of it.

2.3.4 International Examples in City Marketing:

1. **New York:** The city's marketing significantly contributed in changing people's perceptions of the city from one dominated by crime and drugs to one that is vibrant, alive all day, and a city of money and business. It also gave rise to the well-known sign, "I love New York," which is now found on t-shirts and other gifts.



Figure 1 The logo of New York City

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/rDnUfKtJuYCmmtc88>

2. **London:** Relying on multiculturalism, integration, history, traditions, money, business, innovation, and entrepreneurship, the city is vibrant and attractive to people of all ages.

3. **Africa** has other experiences as well. After the success of the city of **Johannesburg** in its bid to host the 2010 World Cup, the state of South Africa established a marketing committee to market the state and change the people's perceptions of it from one of civil war and racist crimes to one of a multiethnic, religious and multicultural nation, thus attracting development investments and building infrastructures to complete the World Cup facilities, which helped millions of people attend this international event, drew more tourists, and altered people's perceptions of it.

4. **Helsinki**, Finland's capital city, promotes itself as a place where technical innovations and simple solutions are offered in a variety of industries, including energy, education, health, and others.

5. According to studies, **Sydney's** experience in Australia drew strength from its diversity of cultures and based its strategy on the multiracial makeup of its population.

6. Debrecen: The city's marketing efforts were crucial in transforming Debrecen from a destination only for Hungarians to one that attracts tourists from all over the world. The city's infrastructure was also improved as a result, and by hosting some sporting events, it gained more fame on a global scale.

7. Dubai has successfully marketed itself as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Dubai was selected as the first nation in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia to host the World Expo 2020 because of the charming attractions it offers and the cultural diversity that it is known for.



2The logo of Dubai City Figure

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/KGyPCtjBjDQKR8Wm9>

2.3.5 The Role of Drama in City Marketing:

Cinematic films and music have become a new form of tourism and are able to influence the tourist's decision and destination. Saeed Al-Amoudi, a specialist in creative cities, said, "The impact of all kinds of artistic production, such as the movie "The Lord of the Rings," motivated tourists to visit New Zealand." Scotland also thrived in tourism after filming the movie "Brave Heart" in its lands, as did Morocco, Jordan, Dubai, Italy, and other examples of cities that have become attractive for film producers and tourists. Additionally, celebrities' routine trips to specific cities have a significant influence, particularly when they post photos of their excursions on social media. Take, for instance, Will Smith, Shahrukh Khan, and Cristiano Ronaldo's sporadic trips to

Dubai, which had a significant impact on the world due to the numerous events that accompanied them.

2.3.6 The Role of Individual in City Marketing:

Knowing the city's strategy, plan, and long-term objectives helps making it more effective because it acknowledges that each person is a vital component of the societal fabric of every city, which is represented by every resident and citizen. These people, with their diverse sects, races, and cultures, are the driving force behind marketing cities as the mirror of their civilization and culture and the guarantors of the growth and continuity of their glow. It strives to realize its vision and serves as a reflection of the city's civilization, culture, and future on a national and international level. For instance, when we travel to any country, we try to avoid the major cities and capitals and instead visit its small towns and rural areas to learn about its history and its most valuable exports. In small towns, we are frequently closer to the local population and can learn about their character and long-standing customs. This person is the one who will create and improve the visitor and tourist experience, which is one of the most crucial components of marketing. The more a person understands his or her city's vision and its cultural component, the easier it will be to share that mental picture with visitors.

2.4 The Concept of City-Branding:

The city's identity, values, and distinguishing traits are closely related to its brand and are reflected in those traits. The city's benefits and distinctive qualities, which set it apart from other cities, serve as the foundation for the brand. The best exploitation and use of the city's distinctive qualities and values is through branding. According to national and international data, the city's brand industry's success is largely based on investing in the past to build the future, especially given that we know that creating the city's brand is a long-term process and an investment in the future. The city should consider developing a brand for itself and lay out its marketing plan, including key messages, objectives, and target markets. Building a brand can be done using a variety of tactics. Among

others, but not exclusively, adopting a distinctive logo with a clear, precise meaning will help create an image and increase recall. The city itself may be the slogan, and in this case, the work combines fostering a positive mental image of the city with convincing the audience to shed misconceptions and unfavorable stereotypes about it. Regarding the tactics used to develop and manufacture the brand, there is the umbrella strategy, which offers a flexible mark that incorporates the various facets of the city, such as its economy, tourism, and culture. Additionally, there is the global-local strategy, which is based on universal catchphrases combined with local context and concentrated on the unique qualities and advantages of the city. There is also a global strategy involved in the branding process, and in this instance the emphasis is on marketing the city as a global reference, including its name, values, superiority, and international distinction in one or more fields.

Creating and sustaining a city's brand depends to a large extent on the involvement of representatives from government, the private sector, tourism, culture, the media, and civil society. The success of the participation of relevant parties in the brand-building process requires partnership, that is, giving these parties the opportunity to voice their opinions and take part in the various stages of the process. Strong and effective leadership is necessary to overcome internal conflicts, ensure development, and ensure sound decision-making. Partnership and leadership require continuity to ensure a long-term strategy and a sustainable brand. Additionally, in order for the brand building strategy to be understood by everyone, clear to all parties, and devoid of any kind of ambiguity, there should be a shared future vision shared by the relevant authorities and the entity in charge of building the brand. The relevant authorities should also take part in the essential activities at each stage of implementing the brand strategy

Due to the intense competition and challenges, cities need to adopt a specific strategy to build their brand in order to be positioned locally and internationally on the city map to attract residents, investors, businessmen, visitors, and tourists. The city's brand strategy is an essential tool for success, competition, and differentiation. Building a brand successfully results in:

- Growing of competition which leads to a favorable impact on residents, visitors, activities, and events.

- Achieving significant returns on investment, infrastructure, events, and a unified development of the city in all facets of its physical, social, economic, cultural, and sporting life, which would support the city's brand.
- Contributing in strengthening and developing loyalty and pride in the city among residents, institutions, and the business sector, and spreading a sense of vision, strategy, and effectiveness. The city brand also supports the city's identity, image, and vision for the future by enhancing its advantages and addressing its flaws and weaknesses.
- Adopting a long-term vision that outlines the city's current position and desired future state, as well as how to get there.

2.5 The Beginning of Damascus:

Excavations conducted nearby at the site of Tal al-Ramad show that Damascus first appeared around 9000 BC or earlier. According to researchers, it is the oldest capital and city in human history. Since the beginning of time, it has served as the center of many civilizations during various eras of history. There are many different stories about the city's name. There are many different accounts of how it got its name, but the most likely one is that it's an old Assyrian word that means prosperous land. This account differs in how it defines the meaning of its name. Its literal meaning is "watered earth". The Arabs retained the name Damascus, while the Greeks and Romans gave the city the name Darmascus. Due to its beauty and picturesque surroundings, it has earned the nicknames Al-Fayhaa, Jalaq, Dorat al-Sharq, Shamah al-Dunya, Sham Sharif, Kinana Allah, Damaska, al-Fayhaa, Timashki, Dimas, Yamaskos, Dar al-Masqiah, Mad, Paradise of the Earth, and Al-Rawd Al-Ghani. The oldest mention of Damascus was in the documents of the Syrian Kingdom of Mary. Damascus was regarded as one of the top tourist destinations worldwide in 2010. However, the Syrian crisis, which started in 2011, has had a significant impact on the city in terms of its social, political, and economic spheres.

According to historical records, it has held a prestigious position in the fields of science, culture, politics, arts, and literature since the third millennium BC, making it the cultural capital as well as the most illustrious and ancient historical city in the world. The city, which is regarded as the

center of the Damascus governorate and is surrounded by the orchards of Ghouta, Mount Qasioun, and Rabwa Damascus, is partially located on the slopes of Mount Qasioun, and there is the old part of it on the southern bank of Barada River. Modern neighborhoods are dispersed on the northern and western sides of the city.

2.6 Stages of the History of Damascus:

The significant historical stages that Damascus experienced:

2.6.1. Damascus under the Roman Rule:

After Alexander the Great died, Damascus became a hotbed of conflict between numerous empires, and as a result, control of the city changed hands several times until it came under Roman rule in 64 BC. The Romans recognized the city's great significance and made it one of the ten cities, or, as it is known today, the Decapolis. The Romans formed this alliance for ten cities in the Levant so that they would be close to one another in terms of architecture, culture, etc. As a result, these cities still have a strong Roman influence on their architecture and were crucial for the Roman Empire's defense.

2.6.2. Conquests by the Muslims in Damascus:

Following the passing of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, the Islamic conquests in the Levant began. Khaled bin Al-Walid conquered Damascus in the year 635 AD. The Byzantines began to feel a loss of control over their territories with the growth of Islamic influence. As a result, the two armies prepared for the Battle of Yarmouk, which was in 636 AD and ended with the victory of Muslims. After that, the governors and Muslims under Khalid bin Al-Walid's leadership made their homes there.

2.6.3 The Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus:

During the Umayyad era, which was characterized by Damascus' flourishing as the center of the Umayyad caliphate, particularly during the reign of Abd al-Malik bin Marwan and his progeny, Damascus was the best location in the entire world. The Umayyad Mosque, which is one of the most well-known landmarks of Damascus, was built during that era because the city was prosperous in all economic, administrative, commercial, urban, and many other aspects.

2.6.4 The Abbasid Caliphate in Damascus:

After a month and a half of siege, the Abbasids finally took over the caliphate. After the Abbasids overran this city and carried out numerous massacres, the city developed into a stronghold for numerous uprisings against the Abbasid caliphate. After that, numerous kingdoms and states, including the Tulunids, the Ikhshidids, the Fatimids, and finally the Seljuk state, followed due to the atrocities being committed against its citizens, until these nations were divided into several states, including the Seljuk Damascus. During the Crusades, this city was also constantly at risk of invasion, but it wasn't until Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi defeated the Crusaders that his state followed and, after his death, became an independent Ayyubid one.

2.6.5 The Mamluks in Damascus:

Damascus was the second-most significant city during the Mamluk era, behind Cairo. Due to its strategic location and wealth of land, the Mongols made numerous attempts to conquer it before Tamerlane led them to success. As a result, they burned the city, including the Umayyad Mosque, killed many of the inhabitants, and captured others. During the Mamluk era, Damascus was also one of the cities that experienced famine and plague. Each neighborhood took care of defending itself and arming its residents as a result of the Mamluks' disregard for agriculture and security, and significant economic growth resulted in the emergence of numerous markets like Sarouja Market. Damascus was a significant center for Sufism at the end of the Mamluk era as well, producing a number of thinkers, scholars, and other figures.

2.6.6 The Ottoman Caliphate in Damascus:

Due to the importance of Damascus to the Ottoman Empire, the Sulaymaniyah Hospice was built, as were the Salihiya neighborhood and other Umayyad Mosque-related structures. The best governors of the Ottoman era who passed through Damascus, where the Azem Palace was constructed, included Ismail Pasha, who ruled during a time when the city was a hub for commercial convoys and at a high level of luxury. In 1860, Damascus also experienced massacres that were a continuation of the events in Lebanon. During this time, many Christians were killed there, and Druze groups working with the Ottomans destroyed the Christian Quarter, other old churches, and missionary schools. However, many Muslims provided shelter to Christians like Abdul Qadir Al- Jazaery. Damascus grew during his rule, when some monuments, like the University of Damascus, were established by order of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, in addition to the Hijaz Railway and the emergence of many Arab newspapers and magazines in it, among other things. Until the Ottoman forces withdrew from it, the forces of the Great Arab Revolt entered, and Faisal bin Hussein, the king of the Arab Kingdom of Syria, declared his rule over the city.

2.7 The Capital of Arab Culture:

One of the Arab world's most significant hubs for Arab and Islamic culture is Damascus. As well as kings, leaders, princes, and sultans, it was home to some of the most notable figures in history in literature, poetry, thought, culture, astronomy, clerics, jurisprudence, Islamic and Christian religious sciences, medicine, pharmacy, and other fields. Its ancient history is replete with some of the most significant literary, scientific, and jurisprudential references in Arab and Islamic history. In addition to international cultural centers like the French Cultural Center, the Spanish Cultural Center, the Russian Cultural Center, and the German Cultural Center, the city also has local cultural centers spread out throughout it. It also has the first Arabic language complex in the Arab world, historical schools, the National Museum, the University of Damascus in general, Al-Assad National Library, the Virtual Library, in addition to numerous theaters, movie theaters, specialized museums like the Museum of Arabic Calligraphy, and other cultural landmarks like the Syrian Opera House and Al-Assad House of Culture, the city is a home to a number of other cultural attractions. Thanks to its long and inventive history, which is evident in the numerous

cultural events and activities that are held there and elsewhere, Damascus was selected in 2008 as a center of Arab culture.



Figure 3 The logo of the Arab Capital of Culture 2008

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/WyGbN7B57VTf8AVM9>

2.8 Damascus as a Tourist Destination:

Damascus is the capital of the Syrian Arab Republic, the second largest city in Syria after Aleppo, and the world's oldest continuously inhabited capital. Damascus was named as one of the world's top tourist destinations in 2010. Today, it is known for its cultural diversity, as it is inhabited by Arabs, Kurds, Turks, Armenians, Assyrians, and Circassians. As a result of the abundance of its historical, cultural, natural, and archaeological landmarks, Damascus draws a sizable number of tourists each year who come to relax, have fun, see the city's historic structures, and learn more about its most distinctive characteristics. The Old City is regarded as Damascus' historical core, and it is where visitors can find the most significant ancient tourist sites and attractions, including: The historical castle, Al-Azem Palace, Al-Khadra Palace, the Umayyad Mosque, and a number of popular old markets and Arab homes. They are among the most significant major tourist attractions

in Damascus and Syria, and have been recognized as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO since 1979. Then, we come to the region of the foothills of Mount Qasioun, which is notable for its tall peak, and the Ghouta orchards, which surround Damascus with their splendor. After that, we come to Damascus' countryside and the magnificence and beauty of it, which draws many tourists seeking leisure, comfort, and tranquility. Around 9 million foreign tourists visited Syria in 2010, and they found comfort and enjoyment in the old city's traditional Arab hotels as well as in other luxurious modern hotels with first-rate amenities like the Four Seasons Hotel, Al Sham Hotel, Blue Tower Hotel, Al Sharq Hotel, and others. Damascus Gate is the most well-known of several well-known restaurants that serve the best Syrian food. Damascus also has recreational areas, including sports arenas and an ice skating rink called Ski Land. It also has 790 private gardens attached to homes in addition to 172 public parks, the most significant of which are Tishreen Park, the Trade Park, and the Sobky Garden.

2.9 Historical and Religious Sites in Damascus:

2.9.1 Mariamite Cathedral of Damascus:

"Mary's Cathedral" is the oldest archaeological church in Damascus. It dates back to when Christianity first started to spread in the area. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East has its headquarters in the church. The cathedral is situated to the left of the direct road leading to Bab Sharqi. It has undergone numerous renovations and acts of vandalism throughout its history, with the most recent occurring in 1949, and continues to be a place of worship and travel destination, as well as one of the most renowned churches in the world. Within the cathedral, there are five churches with a combined interior space of 1,000 square meters. The Church of Lady Mary and the Church of Mar Takla are the first churches, followed by the secondary churches. The Antiochian Patriarchal Chair of the Greek Orthodox Church, the Church of St. Catherine, and the Mariamian Church itself are all housed in this building, which was connected to it during the restoration. There is a museum with clothing, decorations, and icons that belonged to patriarchs and monks in addition to the church yards of Saints Cyprian and Justina and the church of Saint Nicholas, which were annexed to the Mariamian Church. (Figure 4)



Figure 4 Mariamite Cathedral of Damascus

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/z8K8XenK2AhMXdjZ8>

2.9.2 The Umayyad Mosque:

The Umayyad Mosque is the most significant Islamic monument in the world after the Great Mosque of Mecca, the Prophet's Mosque, and Al-Aqsa Mosque due to its historical, archaeological, architectural, artistic, and religious advantages and characteristics. It dates back to almost 1200 BC. Aramaic, Roman, and Byzantine monuments were discovered beneath its stones because its architectural features and Umayyad style did not change, preserving the traces of Roman decorations and writings. The Roman temple's rectangular walls, which have wall supports and measure 158 x 100 m, make up the mosque's exterior walls. The mosque has three minarets: the southeast one is known as the minaret of Isa, and the one which is in the middle of the northern wall is known as the minaret of the bride. Both of these minarets date to the early fifth or eleventh century. Its façade, which looks out onto the heavenly sphere, is distinguished by a grand entrance with a pointed roof in the middle that evokes Byzantine palace architecture.



Figure 5 The Umayyad Mosque

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/DRFacmHZ6AV8binV9>

2.9.3 Shrine of Sayyida Zaynab:

The shrine of Sayyida Zainab, the daughter of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib, peace be upon them both, is one of Syria's most significant religious tourist destinations with distinguished architectural and historical value. It is located in the Levant. Seven kilometers east of Damascus, in the Sayyidah Zainab neighborhood, is where the shrine can be found. The shrine is one of the most significant Islamic shrines and receives hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The date of the first structure on Sayyida Zainab's tomb is unknown, but it is mentioned that a Qarqubi man from Aleppo built a mosque nearby in 500 AH and named it in honor of Sayyida Zainab. Hussein al-Musawi donated his orchards and land to the shrine in 768 AH, and he also renovated the structure.



Figure 6 Shrine of Sayyida Zaynab

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/N15tfGeZZu1bgA3v5>

2.9.4 Mausoleum of Saladin:

Mausoleum of Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyubi', which is close to the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, is where Sultan Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyubi was buried. Three years after the Sultan's death, in 1196 AD, the mausoleum, which is a part of the Old City of Damascus, was built. It was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 1979. Saladin's son constructed this mausoleum in the Ayyubid architectural style, and at the end of the twelfth century, after his father's remains had been discovered in Damascus Citadel, he moved them there. There are two caskets located inside the mausoleum. Saladin's remains are in the one which is made of wood. The second is made of pricey marble because German Emperor William II donated it. He wanted this great leader's sarcophagus to be made of the finest types of marble.



Figure 7 Mausoleum of Saladin

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/Ctcghq3bzHmtgEJV9>

2.9.5 The Sulaymaniyah Hospice:

Sulayman the Magnificent, the Ottoman Sultan, founded the Sulaymaniyah Hospice in Damascus and had built it there in 1554 on the site of Al-Zahir Baybars palace. It was founded with the intention of establishing the necessary worships and rituals. The Sulaymaniyah Hospice consists of two structures, the western and eastern, with a combined area of about 11,000 square meters. Since 1974, it has evolved into a military museum with a variety of halls and a market for antique handicrafts in Damascus. The hospice has significant tourist appeal because it regularly hosts events and exhibitions like the international children's art exhibition and the bathroom exhibition.

2.9.6 Nur Al-Din Bimaristan:

Al-Bimaristan Al-Nuri, built between the sixth and twelfth centuries AH/AD, is one of Damascus' best-known structures. Al-Bimaristan served as both a medical school and a home for sick people. A museum of Arabic medicine and science is currently housed in Al-Bimaristan Al-Nuri. It educated some of history's most influential doctors, including Aladdin bin Abi Al-Hazm Al-Qurashi, also known as Ibn Al-Nafis Al-Dimashqi, who discovered minor blood circulation four centuries before the English scientist, Harvey, discovered it. The General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums renovated and outfitted it in 1978 AD, so that it could serve as the main location for the Arab Museum of Medicine and Science.

2.9.7 Al -Azem Palace:

Al-Azem Palace, which was constructed at the start of the eighteenth century and serves as a distinctive example of Islamic architecture, is regarded as one of the most significant and stunning palaces from the Ottoman era. It is situated in center of the Old City of Damascus between the Umayyad Mosque in the north and Midhat Pasha Market (Al-Mustaqim Street) in the south, close to Al-Bazuriyeh. It has a total area of 5,500 square meters. With its colored stones, sections, halls, internal gardens, and water fountains, it is also among the best examples of an ancient Levantine-Damascene building.



Figure 8 Al-Azem Palace

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/6YHNAKE3vBmfzzyT7>

2.9.8 Damascus Citadel:

Damascus Citadel is a fortified castle that was built by one of the Turkmen warlords, Prince Atsiz bin Oq, during the Seljuk era. It is regarded as one of the most significant examples of military and Islamic architecture from the Ayyubid era in Syria and the Arab region. In 1979 AD, it was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. Damascus Citadel is situated between Bab Al-Faradis and Bab Al-Jabiya in the northwest corner of Damascus, the capital of Syria. It has four doors—two main and the other two secret—that lead to the trench that surrounded the castle's main entrance, open to the present-day Al-Asrounieh market, and lead to the Old City of Damascus. The castle has 12 towers, and its stones are large and pointed, with rectangular and square towers. From 1982 to 1985, the castle's surroundings were cleared of the stores and businesses, and some excavations were done inside the structure. Damascus Citadel became a popular tourist destination for people traveling to the Levant after some of its components underwent restoration as well.



Figure 9 Damascus Citadel

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/bqnJU5fcW8FdiV2w7>

2.9.9 Khan As'ad_Pasha Al-Azem:

Khan As'ad Pasha Al-Azem is situated inside the Old City of Damascus. About 2500 square meters of surface area make up its western façade, which looks out over the Al-Buzuriyya Market, and it is 47 meters long. The large Khan gate, a small mosque, shops, and businesses are all included in this façade. Khan Al-Riz Market, which has a length of about 52 meters and is divided into shops, is visible from the building's southern façade. The eastern façade looks out onto a nearby neighborhood's alley. Its 25-meter-long northern façade is hidden by structures, though. Khan Al-Riz is a popular tourist attraction and location for holding conferences internationally as well as hosting cultural and artistic events in Syria.



Figure 10 Khan As'ad Pasha Al-Azem

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/GfpwHt4rzGgLiUoj9>

2.9.10 The National Museum of Syria:

The National Museum in Damascus, the dean of Syrian museums and one of the most significant Arab museums, is the largest, oldest, and most well-known of all of them. With its expansive sections and gardens, it creates many museums within a single institution and houses the most notable Syrian antiquities found in the twentieth century. As a result, it is a significant documentarian, historical, and cultural reference in the Middle East and throughout the world.

The National Museum in Damascus is divided into five main sections, each of which is an integrated museum organized according to its historical eras:

- The prehistoric section of the museum is the first area to be explored, and it contains significant artifacts dating from roughly a million years BC to the invention of writing.
- The second section contains the ancient eastern Syrian antiquities, which date to the time from the start of writing's development to Alexander the Macedonian's arrival in the Levant.
- The third section contains local antiquities from Syria that date to the times of the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines. This section also contains artifacts from Palmyra. Additionally, it exhibits collections of coins from various civilizations that once lived in Syria.

- Exquisite Arabic manuscripts are on display. The most significant of these are the manuscripts of Abu Al-Qasim al-Zahrawi, which date back to the eleventh century AD, "Al-Qanun" by Ibn Sina, and a manuscript related to the eye diseases and the Holy Qur'an.
- The most exquisite paintings and sculptures produced by modern artists can be found in the department of Modern Art. There are statues of Al-Jahiz, Abbas Ibn Firnas, and Ibn Rushd.



Figure 11 The National Museum of Syria

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/VmtdXzkiVyDEo4RS6>

2.9.11 Al-Na'asan Palace:

With an area of more than 4,000 square meters, Al-Na'asan Palace is the second-oldest Damascene home after Al-Azem Palace. It is situated in an ancient historical area in the Old City of Damascus, specifically in Bab Sharqi. Salim Na'asan built the palace in the late eighteenth century. Liwans, iwans, and priceless antique decorations can be found throughout the palace. The palace has gained worldwide recognition as a result of the kings, celebrities, and world leaders who have visited it and left their remarks in the palace register, which can be found at the building's entrance.



Figure 12 Al-Na'asan Palace

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/qFwnEbMQT7sHwR5a8>

2.9.12 Al-Zahiriyya Library:

Al-Zahiriya Library is regarded as one of the historical structures that still has a significant number of writings and inscriptions on its walls and doors. Three halls—Prince Mustafa Al-Shihabi Hall, Sheikh Taher Al-Jazaery Hall, and Khalil Mardam Hall—are parts of the library. The library housed nearly 85000 magazines, which were divided into originals and branches based on their relationship to the original, and a total of 72,000 books. Approximately, 45,000 students visit the library on average each year, and 30,000 books are typically lent out. An average of 5,000 tourists from the Arab world and abroad visit it each year.



Figure 13 Al-Zahiriyya Library

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/6pd7hPL6xmxSRgMN6>

2.9.13 The Seven Gates of Damascus:

The wall of Damascus has seven gates that date back to the Roman era. As the city cannot be accessed outside of these gates, they were built in the first century to serve as a defense against invaders and thieves. The number of gates fluctuated over time according to the conditions at that time, increasing and decreasing as needed. Currently, these doors are very significant because they protect the history of Damascus, which simulates the migration of numerous civilizations from Damascus and reflects the deep roots of civilization in the oldest inhabited city in the world. The doors are:

- Bab Al-Salam is a door built in the sixth century AH. by Nur Al-Din Al-Shaheed. Bab Al-Salamah, Bab Al-Sharif, or Bab Al-Faradis Al-Saghir are some of its names.
- Bab Sharqi is one of Damascus' principal and best-known gates. It was renovated in 559 AH, and is known as Bab Al-Shams on its eastern side in reference to the sun.
- Kisan dates to the Umayyad era and has portions that are still visible. It is situated close to the airport roundabout and Bilal Al-Habashi Mosque, with St. Paul's Church directly east of it.
- Bab Touma, to the north of the wall, is one of the well-known gates in Damascus. It was constructed in the Roman era and attributed to Venus. Then, it was named after Thomas, a follower of Christ.

- Bab Al-Saghir can be found on the Old City's southern edge, close to Al-Shaghour neighborhood. Because it is the smallest of the city's gates, the gate received its given name.
- Jabiya Gate is one of the original seven gates and is situated on the western side of the Old City. It was built by the Romans and credited to the planet Mars.
- Amarah Gate is situated on the Old City's northern side. It was constructed by the Romans and credited to Mercury. In 1241 AD, it was restored and renovated.

2.9.14 Al-Nawfara Coffee Shop:

It is the oldest café in Damascus which still follows its long-standing customs today. Antara, Al-Hilali, and other storytellers entertain visitors at the café, which is one of the intangible cultural heritage sites and has an indoor hall with a 60-square-meter area that can accommodate 24 tables and an outdoor hall with a 30-square-meter area that can accommodate 12 tables. Visitors can also enjoy coffee and hubble-bubble in both the indoor and outdoor halls. In addition to the unique view it offers, the café is distinguished by its ancient architecture. The square's floor is also paved with black basalt stones, and its special location makes it a must-see station.



Figure 14 Al-Nawfara Coffee Shop

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/NQyffDw5VrSoPryM6>

2.10 The Ancient Markets of Damascus:

For hundreds of years, Damascus has been renowned for its covered markets, which allow people and tourists to walk through the markets despite the intense winter rains and the city's scorching summer sun. The most renowned markets are:

- Al-Hamidiyeh Market: One of the most renowned, exquisite, and beautiful markets in Damascus, Syria, and the Middle East. It was described by historians as a large, magnificent structure that was located in the center of ancient Damascus. According to researchers, it is the most beautiful and the jewel of the markets; it is entirely covered by an iron roof with tiny holes through which the sun gives out a bright light. It is paved with black basalt stone during the day and serves as a gathering spot for travelers from all over the world.
- Midhat Pasha Market is one of the oldest and most significant eastern markets. It is located in ancient Damascus. Additionally, it is known as the "long market". When Damascus governor, Midhat Pasha was in charge, the market was founded in 1878 AD. Ancient Damascus Street runs parallel to the renowned Hamidiya Market.
- Al-Hariqa Market is located to the south of Al-Hamidiyeh Market, to the north of Midhat Pasha Market, to the west of Al-Darwishiyah Avenue, and to the east of Al-Khayatin Market. When French forces bombed Damascus in 1925, a fire broke out there, earning the area the name "Al-Hariqa". In Damascus, Al-Hariqa is the first neighborhood with intersecting straight streets.
- Al-Bazuriyeh Market is a historic marketplace in Damascus that is south of the Umayyad Mosque. The market is made up of numerous old caravanserais, structures, and stores that sell ingredients for making perfume, Levantine flowers, and herbs used in Arab folk medicine. This market has a long history of notoriety.
- Al-Manakhiliya Market is the only market in the capital that sells goods useful to carpenters, blacksmiths, builders, and architects. It receives thousands of visitors every day. The market has more than 200 stores and is more than 500 meters long.

2.11 Infrastructure in Damascus:

2.11.1 Airports:

Damascus International Airport is the largest international airport in Syria. It is about 32 kilometers east of Damascus. The airport was first built in 1970 after Mezzeh Airport, which is west of Damascus and was once known as the "Air Gate of Damascus". Today, this airport is known as the country's business airport, and it is represented internationally by the symbol "DAM". It is one of the busiest airports in Syria; it receives an average of 4.5 million travelers each year from the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Additionally, there are two passenger terminals at the airport: the arrivals station and the departures station. Regular flights are scheduled from it to significant regional and international cities by a number of airlines. Syrian airlines has its primary hub at the airport.

2.11.2 Transportations:

There are many low-cost options for getting around Damascus, including buses, taxis, trains, and even domestic flights that typically run on time. A visitor may join a Syrian tour in and around the area of their choice, or they may rent a car and travel independently through the city or town. Here are a few of Damascus' most popular modes of transportation:

- Yellow taxis are a reliable form of urban transportation. However, since most drivers are not fluent in English, you will need to know a little bit of Arabic if you're a tourist. The taxi drivers are courteous and look after you while you are traveling.
- Microbuses, also known as "serves" or "meecros" in the local dialect, are minibuses or vans that carry 10–12 passengers on set routes inside and outside of cities. To get around the city, use this practical mode of transportation.
- Buses are comfortable, affordable, and quick options that are air-conditioned. They are mostly used for transportation within Syrian cities.
- Trains: Syria has a modern and efficient rail network. It is reasonably priced and runs on regular schedules that don't deviate unless absolutely necessary.

- Bicycles: It can be enjoyable to rent a bicycle and tour the Syrian cities. This is a practical and simple way to reach locations where other vehicles might not be able to maneuver through its narrow lanes.

2.11.3 Hotels and Restaurants:

Hotel investment and tourist villages attract the largest share of local and Arab capital, among other investment fields. A large number of Arab and foreign businessmen began flocking to Syria to carefully examine the investment climate after a number of decrees and decisions were recently issued to encourage the bringing in of capital by providing benefits and facilities that were not included in earlier laws and legislation. However, these investments started to fall off at the beginning of 2011, and many hotels stopped operating as a result of the war that Syria was exposed to. However, at the beginning of 2018, the hotel industry started to pick up again, and Damascus saw the opening of many hotels and tourist facilities in response to the rise in tourism. Damascus currently has 93 hotels, which are distributed as follows: 51 two-star hotels, 17 three-star hotels, 12 four-star hotels, and 13 five-star hotels.

At the end of 2021, there were 600 restaurants in Damascus. Due to the high caliber and flavor of Syrian cuisine, visitors, particularly Arabs, are in great demand for Syrian restaurants. Other than serving Arabic food, some restaurants also serve Western cuisine, making them a good choice with foreign tourists. The most well-known achievement by a Syrian restaurant was probably in 2009, when the "Damascus Gate" restaurant entered the Guinness Book of Records as the largest restaurant in the world at the time.

2.11.4 Travel Agencies and Tourism Educational Institutions:

Due to the significance of tourism in Syria and its role in reviving the nation's economic engine, the Syrian government, represented by the Ministry of Tourism, has placed a high priority on the sector of tourism education in Syria. As the nation's cultural capital, Damascus has the most training and rehabilitation facilities for the industry, with five total. These include the Hotel Institute and the Faculty of Tourism at Damascus University. There are 95 travel agencies in

Damascus, and they are expanding as a result of the tourism industry's recovery and the growing number of the Syrians living abroad.

2.12 International Exhibitions and Festivals in Damascus:

2.12.1 Damascus International Fair:

Damascus International Fair is the oldest and most prestigious fair in the area. On the 1st of September 1954, Damascus hosted the first fair, which ran for an entire month. It was constructed on a 250 000 square meter area, and it received more than one million visitors from various nations.

One of the most significant exhibitions' cities in the Middle East and the region is known as Exhibitions' City. On the road to Damascus International Airport on the city's southeast side, it is close to the Conference Palace. As it offers all services for business needs, including visitors, exhibitors, and entrepreneurs, it has a total area of 1,200,000 square meters and was designed in accordance with the best international standards. In addition to showrooms, meeting and seminar rooms, administration buildings, warehouses, workshops, customs, two businessmen's and journalists' centers, restaurants, cafeterias, and parking lots with an area of 11,000 square meters that can hold 1,800 cars, it consists of facilities devoted to exhibitions and services of all kinds. There are 60,000 square meters of green space, 83,000 square meters of built-up display space, and 150,000 square meters of open display space. There are ten internal gates for visitors and five external gates for cars to enter the exhibitions' city. The city has hosted dozens of specialized exhibitions every year since its founding, in addition to Damascus International Fair, the Dora of the Fairs of the East, and numerous investments. It is capable of hosting multiple exhibitions at once.

2.12.2 Damascus International Film Festival:

Damascus International Film Festival is an international film festival held annually in Damascus, Syria. It is considered one of the most important Arab and international film festivals. It includes

participation from Arab and foreign nations from various continents. The war caused the festival to end in 2012, but plans are in motion to restart it.

2.12.3 International Flower Show:

International Flower Show is a yearly celebration that takes place in one of Damascus' most stunning gardens, Tishreen Garden. With the start of the summer tourism season, it has become one of the yearly traditions. Several Arab and non-Arab nations take part in it. In 1973, it was held for the first time. It highlights the value of flowers in general and the Damascene rose in particular through the presentation of plants, flowers, and some flower industry-related complementary industries. This serves as a kind of invitation to travelers to visit Syria in order to see the world-famous rose in its natural habitat as well as to maintain the ongoing presence of flowers, which adds to the overall value of the Syrian tourism. Among the activities included in the exhibition: children's plays, children's activities, science experiments, opening and closing ceremonies.

2.12.4 Damascus Festival for Culture and Heritage:

Damascus Festival for Culture and Heritage, which is an annual festival, held at the end of each summer. The festival features notable events and activities that take place in the ancient houses and palaces of Old Damascus as well as in its lanes, alleys, and markets, especially Al-Azem Palace, the palace of culture and arts which was the permanent headquarters of the Committee for the Protection of Old Damascus, and Nizam Al-Din, one of the old houses of Damascus in the art of Islamic Damascene architecture. The event offers a glimpse into Damascene customs and traditions, as well as the traditional Levantine cuisine for which Damascus is known and celebrates annually. Tourists and visitors of the festival are given information about Levantine cuisine. The Food Festival features a variety of traditional Levantine drinks, including tamarind and liquor rice, as well as light and heavy Levantine sweets. It also includes a display of Damascene handicrafts like glass, ceramics, and the Shami sword, for which Damascus is best known,)set apart from other Syrian cities and even put on par with the capitals of the Arab and Islamic world.

3. Material and Method

3.1 Data Source:

This chapter's goal is to thoroughly discuss the research techniques and methodology applied in this study. Research goals and hypotheses were created in accordance with the study's theoretical underpinnings after a thorough analysis of the literature in the preceding section.

In this section, the research agenda is put into practice. Concepts and measurements are explained in detail throughout the section. The success and quality of the study are influenced by the accuracy of the research strategy, the choice of pertinent variables and the appropriate methods and tools for obtaining pertinent data. All of the data processing methodologies used are covered later in the chapter. Given that the relationship between numerous different variables must be established through interpretation, a quantitative research strategy is especially well suited to achieve the goals of this study. The main features of this method include structured research methods for data collection, a sizable sample size, high dependability that enables research to be repeated, and tools like questionnaires or computer software were used to obtain numerical data. A quantitative research study's main objective is to categorize traits, quantify them, and create statistical models to attempt to explain what is observed.

3.2 Sample and Data Collecting:

A statistical population is defined as a collection of people who share common features and can be distinguished from other groups. The statistical population is determined based on the research area and objectives (Banerjee A, Chaudhury S, 2010). The members of this group are surveyed by the researcher. As a basis, Syrians and others who are interested in cultural tourism, as well as those who have visited Damascus, are included in the study's target population.

There are three things to take into account in this situation:

1. The first is the current state of tourism in Syria following a decade of conflict, which has resulted in a decrease in tourists, as well as recent changes to tourism plans and strategies in developed nations, along with tourism services and goods. However, the majority of tourists travel to Damascus for religious purposes, while the others, adventurers and cultural tourists, travel there in search of exploration and adventure. The last-mentioned tourists can be included in the study's statistical group mentioned above.
2. The second is to study the marketing plan applied in the city and its impact on the local community and the city as a whole; is it commensurate with global developments in the field of tourism and travel?, and evaluate the future tourism plans that the Syrian government is working on in light of the current situation in the city.
3. The third is the goods and services that visitors purchase while visiting the city. Booking hotels and restaurants is an example of a less complicated tourism business, whereas tours and guides are more confusing. This can affect visitors' intentions to purchase tourism-related goods and services from city attractions.

As a result, we can choose an appropriate statistical population to solve the problem by using this issue as a control variable. It should be noted that purchasing intricate products, as well as online shopping and more complex package deals, are no longer available in Syria. There are restrictions on the investigation of this subject as a mere function, which results in a less intricate analysis of the product.

4. Results and Evaluation

4.1 Analysis of Collected Data:

A questionnaire to collect data was constructed using previous research on the role of city marketing in stimulating tourism in Damascus. Four sections make up the questionnaire. The first section addressed travelers interested in cultural tourism, the second addressed cultural tourism and Damascus' heritage sites, the third addressed the city's marketing plan and the promotional

methods employed in Damascus, and the fourth one addressed an assessment of the city's current tourism situation.

The survey is self-administered, simple to use, and reasonably priced. It was given online to social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram and was conducted in English with 19 questions. Since all of the questions are uniform, they are all asked in the same language. The survey contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions, ordinal variables with a number of subcategories that can be classified, and Likert-style questions to gather ordinal data on a five-point scale.

The survey has been tested with a variety of people, including employees, freelancers, business owners, experts in the field of tourism, and others. The total number of answers received is 110. The survey was published in February 2023 and was open to receive answers until March 2023. The respondents were 48.1% male, 48.1% female, and 3.8% said they did not want to answer.

The vast majority of respondents (85.4%) were from Syria. Inside Syria, the majority of responses came from residents of Homs, the third-largest city in Syria, with a rate of 25.5%. 24.5% of the answers came from people from different parts of Syria, this includes cities such as Latakia, Tartous, Hama, and others. This rate was followed by 20.9% of the answers from Aleppo, which has the largest population in Syria. 14.5% of the answers came from the capital of the Syrian Republic, Damascus. In addition, only 12.7% of the respondents were from other countries. Finally, the response 'I don't want to answer' came with 1.9%.

The respondents were from different generation group as shown in the figure 15. (Figure 15)

Which generation group are "You" in?

110 responses

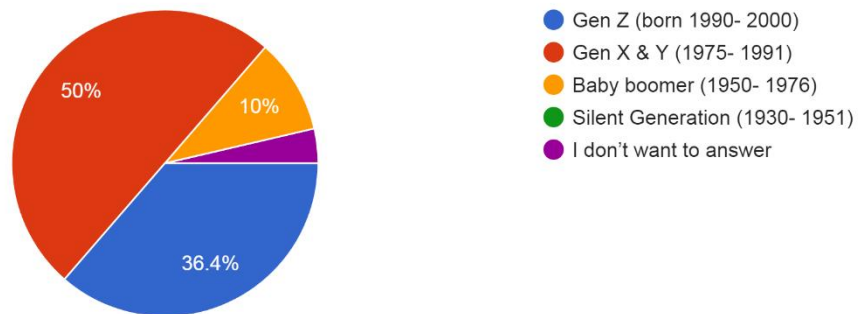


Figure 15 Generation Group of respondents

Source: Own research

4.1.1 The Interest in Cultural Tourism:

The first question was whether people go to Damascus on a regular basis. With a percentage of 41.8%, the most popular response was that tourists travel to Damascus frequently. 35.5% of respondents said they visit Damascus once a year, followed by 17.3% of those who said they reside there, and 5.4% who said anything from I don't go there to I don't want to answer. (Figure 16)

Do you visit Damascus regularly?

110 responses

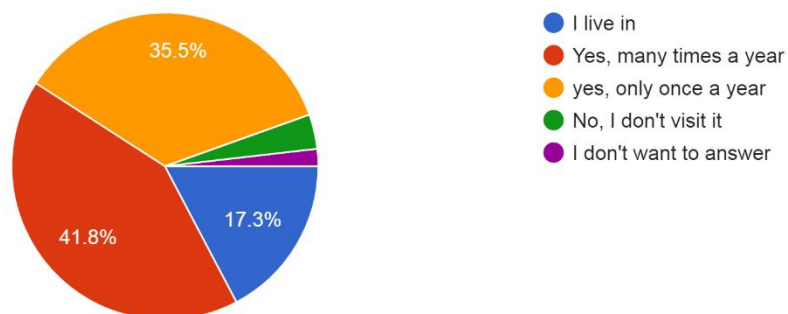


Figure 16 Percentage of people who visited Damascus

Source: Own research

A checkbox option was available when the respondents were asked about the main reason for their visit to a heritage site, and the figure 17 below illustrates the results in percentages. (Figure 17)

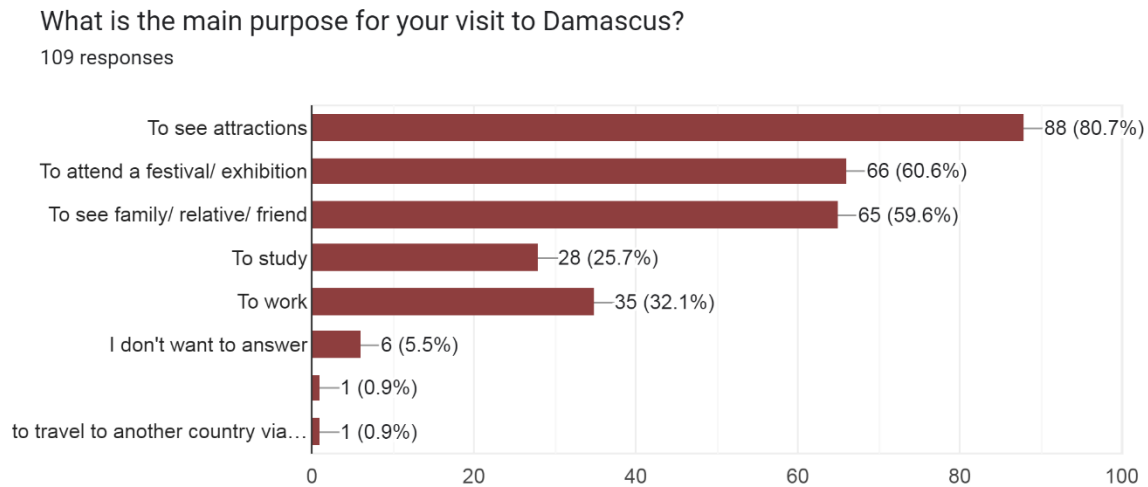


Figure 17 Purpose of visiting Damascus

Source: Own research

According to the figure 17, 80.7% of participants travel to Damascus to experience the city's attractions and learn about its culture. For these individuals, the heritage value of the historical site is what makes the site significant. There are various meanings and values that people associate with the website. The authenticity of Damascus and its historical significance even today are thus confirmed. It's interesting that 32.1% of participants indicated that they were there for work, which is a sign that the city's economy is improving and that life is starting to return to it.

Moving on to the idea of travel, through which individuals can develop personal connections while discovering new cultures, foods, locations, music, and ways of life throughout the world. When respondents were asked who they preferred to visit Damascus with, the responses varied, but the

majority of respondents (25.5%) indicated that they travel with their families. A sizable portion also indicated that they prefer to take organized trips (23.6%), followed by trips with friends (22.7%), and at a lower rate—13.6%—that they travel with a partner. 11.8% of respondents say they prefer to travel alone, and 2.8% of them say they didn't want to answer. (Figure 18).

When did you travel to Damascus, who did you travel with?

110 responses

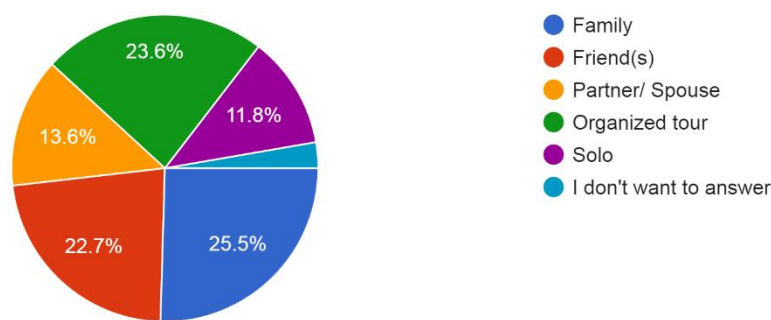


Figure 18 Type of travelling to Damascus according to the travel mates

Source: Own research

4.1.2 Cultural Tourism and the Heritage Sites in Damascus:

Next, we come to the answer of the question, "Pick any applicable facilities that apply based on your previous visits to Damascus that you have specified" as follows:

Restaurants were selected at a rate of 58.2%, which clearly demonstrates their significance given that they are one of the manifestations of the Syrian popular culture and have developed into a brand that draws both tourists and locals. Despite the fact that the restaurant doesn't require many employees, the abundance of eateries helps to secure a variety of job opportunities, including cashiers, chefs, and caterers. Along with other service providers like those who deliver orders and

others. The facility of a tour guide was selected by 49.48% because heritage sites in the country require a tour guide not only to explain but also to provide useful information and assist tourists in dealing with locals. Otherwise, tour guides in Syria should be well trained, have a high education, and have excellent communication skills; however, many of them speak two or three languages in addition to their mother tongue, Arabic. The souvenir shops show that 50.6% of those surveyed visited them, and the residents who live near historic places in Syria benefit from visitors and offer products and services to them. Hotels were ranked third, with a rate of 42.7%, indicating that they are the primary means of habitation, an important factor in the development of any nation, and have always been crucial to the hotel industry. At the moment, there are many hotels available that increase value and provide more options for visitors to choose from. The presence of a hotel among them, based on the region's options, does not, by itself, raise the level of entertainment in the area, but it does so by virtue of all the services it offers. According to 41.8% of those surveyed, souvenir shops are present in every area of the city. They serve two purposes: first, to allow visitors to purchase souvenirs, and second, to aid the local economy. Additionally, the respondents emphasized that the city has information windows and screens. According to the research participants, a sizable portion of them received health care during their visit, at a rate of 33.6%, and this is considered a good indicator that increases the motivation of tourists to visit the city. Medical care in times of emergency is one of the critical components that every tourist needs when traveling. 4.5% of respondents refused to respond to this question. (Figure 19)

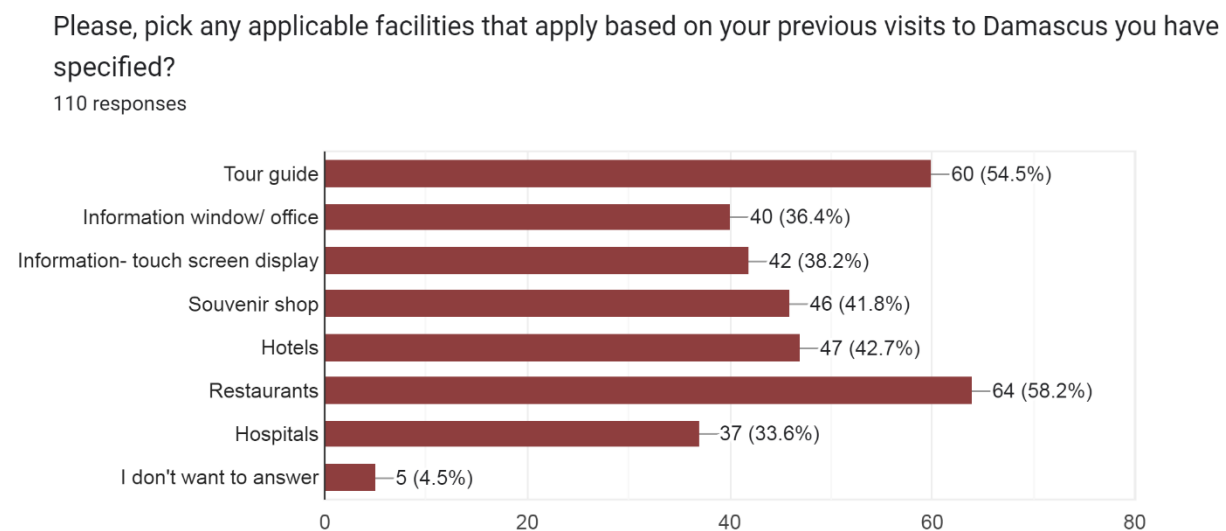


Figure 19 The Applicable Facilities in the Heritage Sites in Syria

Source: Own research

Syrian heritage can reveal a lot about the country's history and evolution. It aids in the examination of the Syrian history and traditions, as well as the development of self-awareness. It assists us in comprehending and explaining why we are the way we are. Many questions about cultural tourism and heritage sites in Damascus were asked to the participants in this section; however, not all archaeological sites were mentioned due to the large number of historical buildings. (Figure 20)

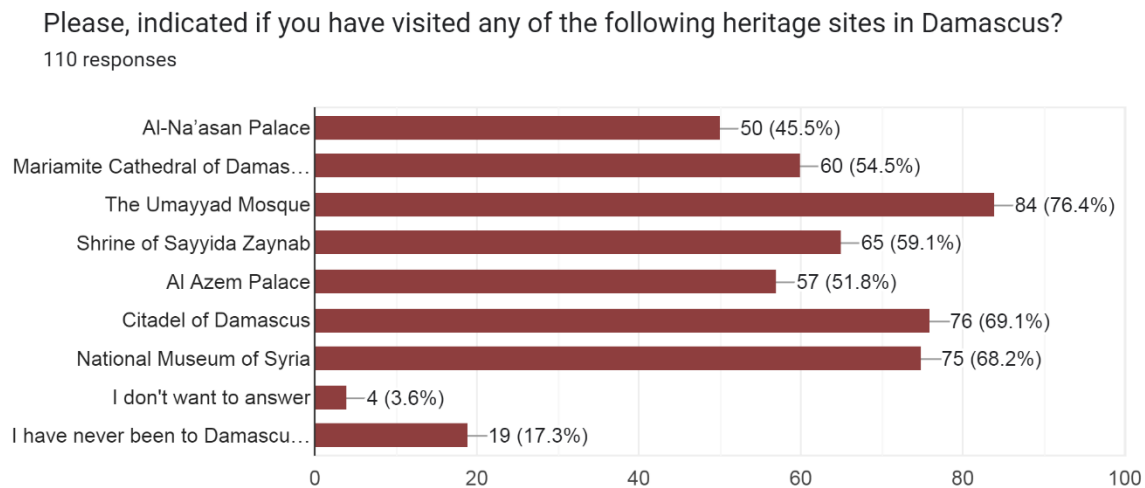


Figure 20 The Top Archaeological Sites in Damascus

Source: Own research

The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus received the most responses, with a rate of 76.4%, making it the most visited heritage site overall. This result reflects the Umayyad Mosque's significance as one of the most significant Islamic monuments in the world due to its historical, archaeological, architectural, artistic, and religious advantages and characteristics. With percentages of 69.1% and 68.2%, respectively, Damascus Citadel and the National Museum in Syria came in second and third, confirming the historical and cultural significance of these monuments, which serve as important documentary, historical, and cultural references in the Middle East and around the globe.

The Shrine of Sayyida Zainab came in fourth place with a percentage of 59.1%. The Maryamian Church in Damascus was visited by 54.5% of the visitors who visited Damascus, and the Al-Na'asan Palace and Al-Azem Palace came in fifth and sixth place, respectively, with percentages of 51.8% and 45.5%, according to the answers we got. Additionally, 17.3% of those polled said they've never been to Damascus but would like to go there someday. 3.6% of respondents refused to answer.

4.1.3 Assessment of the situation of Damascus:

In response to the question "Please pick any tool you normally use to keep up with Damascus tourism activities?", it was revealed that 96.4% of visitors use the Internet as their primary source of marketing information. This statistic highlights the Internet's significant influence on promotion and marketing efforts, as well as its significant contribution to give tourists the information they need about their chosen destination. Television and radio came second with a rate of 41.8%. Both printed marketing materials like newspapers and magazines and educational resources like colleges and universities had the same percentage, 42.7%. Conferences and seminars, which had a lower rate of 23.6%, placed third. 3.6% of respondents refused to answer this question. (Table 1)

Table 1 percentage of visitors who view Damascus tourism activities through marketing tools)

Marketing Tool	Percentages
Internet	96.4%
Television/Radio	41.8%
Newspapers/Magazines	42.7%
Universities/Institutions	42.7%
Conferences/Seminars	23.6%
No answer	3.6%

Source: Own research

The next question was, "Have you ever been to Damascus International Fair?" The majority of respondents said they visited the exhibition just once, at a rate of 35.8%. Another large section said that they visit the exhibition annually at a rate of 31.2%, and this data confirms the importance of the exhibition in attracting tourists to the city. Some respondents have not visited the exhibition yet, with a rate of 13.8%. Some of the respondents said that they would visit the exhibition this year, which will be held in August. Another section of them indicated that they will go this year at

a rate of 11.9%, and 7.3% of respondents indicated that they had no interest in going to exhibitions or that they were unwilling to answer the question. (Figure 21)

Have you ever been to the Damascus International Fair?

109 responses



Figure 21 Percentage of Visitors to Damascus International Fair

Source: Own research

The next question was about the means of transportation that visitors usually use when they visit Damascus. The answers were as follows: The bus came in first place as the most popular mode of transportation for tourists visiting the city with a percentage of 62.4%, followed by the microbus with a percentage of 56.9%. The private car came third with a percentage of 45.9%, and another group chose the taxi with a percentage of 39.4% as their preferred mode of transportation. The train arrived with a 28.3% rate, and the bicycles with a rate of 17.4%. We received some responses with a rate of 3.7% from people who did not want to answer the question. (Figure 22)

Please select any mode of transportation you normally use when visiting Damascus?

109 responses

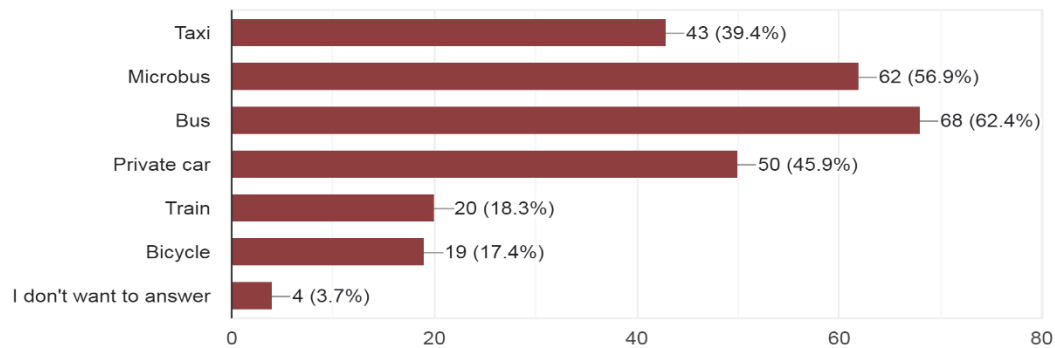


Figure 22 The Mode of Transportation Tourists use in Damascus

Source: Own research

After that, a question was asked to find out people's opinions about the means of transportation used in Damascus. The majority of people (47.3%) believe that transportation in Damascus is good. And 29.1% of them believe them to be fair (OK). Only 13.6% of them believe these transportations are excellent, and 9.1% of people disagree, believing they are not strong enough. Additionally, 0.9% of people refused to answer. (Table 2)

Table 2 Visitors' opinions of the transportation options in Damascus

Rating of Damascus's transportation	Percentages
Excellent	13.6%
Good	47.3%
Fair (just ok)	29.1%
Not good	9.1%
I don't want to answer	0,9%

Source: Own research

The next question was: "Choose any marketing tool that you were familiar with or encountered while visiting Damascus?". The responses we received from people were as follows: 70% of the respondents said that road signs and billboards were cited as being present in the city when they visited it, followed by social media marketing at a rate of 65.5%. Radio and television had a rate of 49.1%. Written advertisements in publications like newspapers and magazines came after it, with a percentage of 47.3. Event marketing, text message marketing, and marketing through festivals and exhibitions all appeared one after the other. The figure 23, allow us to draw the conclusion that the marketing strategies employed by the city are successful and help to effectively promote it. (Figure 23)

Please, choose any marketing tool that you were familiar with or encountered while visiting Damascus?

110 responses

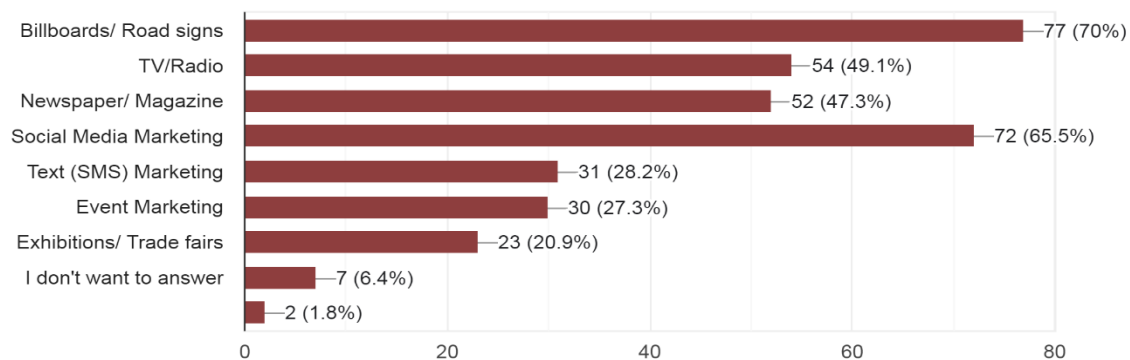


Figure 23 Marketing Tools in Damascus

Source: Own research

The eleventh question was, "Do you believe that having a marketing plan for the city increases the number of visitors?" The answers were as follows: 43.1% of respondents are unsure enough to say that the city's marketing strategy brings in more visitors. Only 14.7% of them did not think that the existence of such a plan would improve the number of tourists who visited the city, compared to 37.6% who did. 4.6% of people did not want to answer this question. (Figure 24)

For your opinion, having a marketing plan for the city that boosts the number of visitors?

109 responses

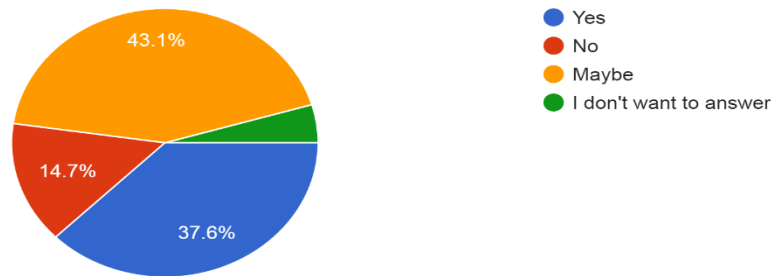


Figure 24 Analyzing the Effect of the City's Marketing Strategy on the Number of Visitors

Source: Own research

The following question is connected to the one before and is only for those who agreed that having a marketing strategy for the city increases the number of visitors; the question is, "How is this possible from their point of view?" The majority of the answers were as follows:

- By developing a city website to give tourists enough details about the city's attractions.
- If a website dedicated to Damascus attractions is developed, it will allow tourists to learn about the real-world attractions and priceless historical landmarks that the city has to offer.
- The use of effective marketing techniques can increase the number of tourists who visit the city.
- By entering into agreements with groups whose goals are similar to those of the government in an effort to foster trust and acquire new resources. These collaborations may involve lodging facilities, dining establishments, tour companies, travel agencies, entertainment venues, or even national or regional government bodies.
- This can be accomplished by establishing a strong brand for the city. In order to help visitors get to know the city well and decide which areas they want to visit, we can also develop a website that is specifically dedicated to the city and provides all the necessary information about the city's attractions.

- Real tourism marketing efforts will aid in the infrastructure development of the area, and effective regional marketing will entice tourists to travel there.
- The strategic plan will become more effective as a marketing tool as the infrastructure of the area is developed, and tourism will be successfully promoted.

After examining the results, it became clear that the majority of responses emphasized the value of having a website that contains all the details a tourist would want to know before traveling to his intended destination. The city's position in the tourism and economic sectors will be improved by a brand. The need for collaboration between the public and private sectors, on the other hand, was emphasized by another group of people. This would benefit both groups' interests and the region as a whole.

The following question was: "By 2022, had the percentage of tourists visiting Damascus increased significantly. What effect did this have on Damascus?", and the answers were as follows: The majority of respondents (66.4%) believe that a rise in the number of tourists visiting Damascus would result in the opening of more new hotels and eateries in the city. The infrastructure of the city will then reportedly improve by 60%, according to people. 57.3% of them also think it will contribute to the city's job growth. And according to 12.7% of the population, this will help revitalize the city's economic engine. (Figure 25)

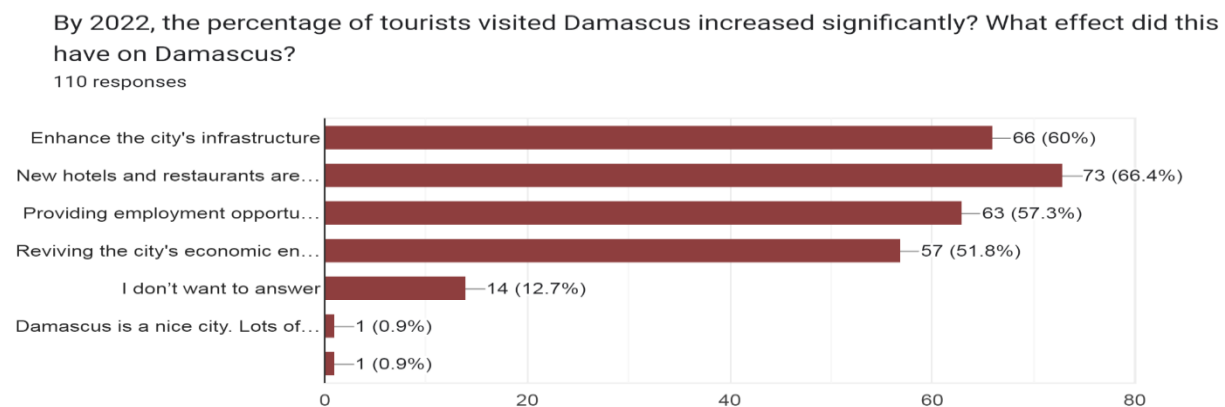


Figure 25 The Effects of More Visitors on Damascus

Source: Own research

The following question was asked: According to the data gathered, the majority of investors in Damascus are locals and Arabs; clearly, there are no foreign investors. "What is the reason, in your opinion?" The majority of answers were as follows:

- The media shows that Damascus is still a frightening place.
- Due to the war's adverse economic effects, price volatility, and possibly a lack of incentives or proof of the project's profitability in a nation that hasn't fully recovered from the war.
- The legalization and the absence of security stability.
- Because of the war, the region was no longer as safe as it had been for investors to place their money.
- Foreign investors were discouraged from investing due to conflict and economic sanctions.
- Due to Syria's investment-related laws and regulations, which make it difficult to attract foreign investors.
- Due to the conflict and the nation's economic sanctions.
- I do not know the percentage!

After examining the results, it became clear that the majority of the responses to the question what prevents foreign investors from investing in Syria were essentially the same. Some of them acknowledged that the ten years of war in Syria and the resulting lack of security in the area contributed to the lack of investors. Additionally, they are unable to invest in Syria due to the economic sanctions. Additionally, there are laws and regulations in Syria that make it difficult for foreigners to invest. (Figure 26)

If you have visited Damascus city please rate attraction from 1 (poor) - 5 (Excellent) or click on (I don't want)

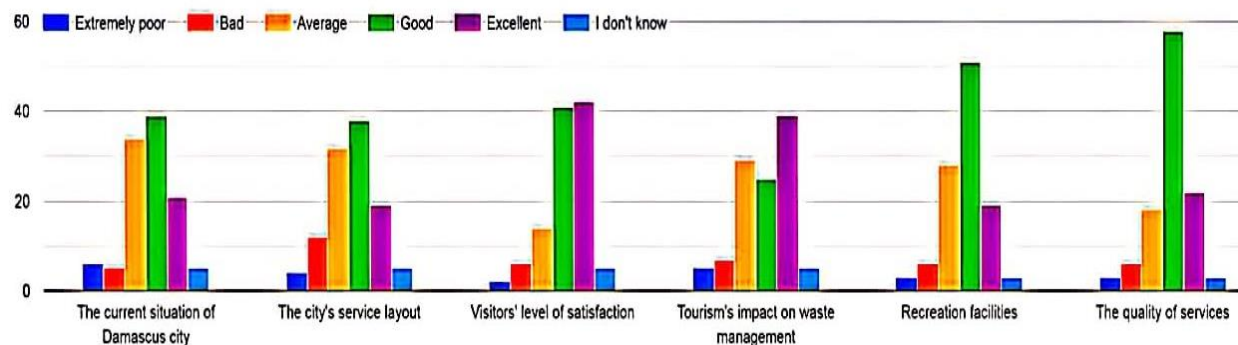


Figure 26 Assessment in Term of the Visitors to Damascus

Source: Own research

We can understand from figures 26 that this column graph shows the findings of the survey to investigate the situation of Damascus in the eyes of the tourists who have had an experience there.

The horizontal axis represents the various responses, while the vertical axis shows the number of visitors among the surveyed people.

The findings are indicated by dark blue, red, orange, green, purple, and blue, respectively.

According to the vast majority of people who visited Damascus, the answers to the first statement, which is "The current situation in Damascus, "are shown in the table below. (Table 3)

Table 3 Visitors' opinions about the current situation in Damascus

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	20	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%
Good	39	35.5%	35.5%	53.7%
Average	35	31.8%	31.8%	85.5%

Bad	5	4.5%	4.5%	90%
Extremely poor	6	5.5%	5.5%	95.5%
I don't know	5	4.5%	4.5%	100%
Total	110	100%	100%	

Source: Own research

In accordance with the data in the table above, 18.2% of participants indicated that the city's current situation is excellent, 35.5% said it was good, 31.8% said it was average, 4.5% had a bad impression of the city, 5.5% said it is extremely poor, and 45.3% had no idea.

As a result, some of the participants think that the city's current state is favorable for tourism, while others think that it requires more improvement and development to live up to visitors' expectations and fulfill their needs.

The answers to the second statement, "The site's service layout," are examined in the table below. As a consequence, the most significant aspect of managing the services is to stay up with all of the new service layout trends, as the majority of the responders' answers emphasized. (Table 4)

Table 4 Visitors' opinions about city's service layout in Damascus

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	19	17.3%	17.3%	17.3%
Good	38	34.5%	34.5%	51.8%
Average	32	29.1%	29.1%	80.9%
Bad	12	11%	11%	91.9%
Extremely poor	4	3.6%	3.6%	95.5%
I don't know	5	4.5%	4.5%	100%
Total	110	100%	100%	

Source: Own research

The answer to the third statement, "Visitor's level of satisfaction," is as shown in the table below. 37.3% of the respondents said their level of satisfaction is excellent; 36.4% said it's good; 14.5% claimed it is average; 5.5% said the site is bad; 1.8% said it is extremely poor; and 4.5% among them had no clue. The results are that the most of the participants who visited Damascus have a good level of satisfaction among the others who visited the city, but they have a lower level of satisfaction, which means the city enriches the visitors from its historical importance. (Table 5)

Table 5 Percentage of visitors' satisfaction with their trip to Damascus

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	41	37.3%	37.3%	37.3%
Good	40	36.4%	36.4%	73.7%
Average	16	14.5%	14.5%	88.2%
Bad	6	5.5%	5.5%	93.7%
Extremely poor	2	1.8%	1.8%	95.5%
I don't know	5	4.5%	4.5%	100%
Total	110	100%	100%	

Source: Own research

The answers to the fourth statement, "Tourism's impact on waste management," are discussed in the table below. 84.6% of the respondents who visited the city answered above an average level to the tourism's waste management; 6.4% answered the site is bad; 4.5% said it is extremely poor; and 4.51% among them had no idea as they had not been there. As a result, visitors generate a significant amount of waste and pollution. The site's waste management team is working to maintain it to industry standards. (Table 6)

Table 6 Visitors' opinions on how tourism affects waste management in Damascus

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	39	35.5%	35.5%	35.5%
Good	25	22.7%	22.7%	58.2%
Average	29	26.4%	26.4%	84.6%
Bad	7	6.4%	6.4%	91%
Extremely poor	5	4.5%	4.5%	95.5%
I don't know	5	4.5%	4.5%	100%
Total	110	100%	100%	

Source: Own research

The responses to the fifth statement, "Recreational facilities," are as in the table below. 17.3% of the respondents said the recreational facilities at the site are excellent; 46.3% claimed they are good; 25.5% claimed they are average; 5.5% said the site is bad; 2.7% said it is extremely poor; and 2.7% said they do not know. As a result, the vast majority of visitors have very positive impressions of Damascus' recreational amenities. (Table 7)

Table 7 Visitors' opinions of Damascus's recreational facilities

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	19	17,3%	17.3%	17.3%
Good	51	46.3%	46.3%	63.6%
Average	28	25.5%	25.5%	89.1%
Bad	6	5.5%	5.5%	94.6%
Extremely poor	3	2.7%	2.7%	97.3%

I don't know	3	2.7%	2.7%	100%
Total	110	100%	100%	

Source: Own research

This section's final statement is "The quality of services". According to the table below, 20 percent of the participants said the quality of services at the archaeological site is excellent; 52.7% said it is good; 16.4% said it is average; 5.5 % had a bad opinion about the services; 2.7% said it is extremely poor; and 2.7% had no notion. This shows that they consider the level of service in Damascus to be adequate for the majority of visitors. (Table 8)

Table 8 Visitors' opinions on the level of service quality in Damascus

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	22	20%	20%	20%
Good	58	52.7%	52.7%	72.7%
Average	18	16.4%	16.4%	89.1%
Bad	6	5.5%	5.5%	94.6%
Extremely poor	3	2.7%	2.7%	97.3%
I don't know	3	2.7%	2.7%	100%
Total	110	100%	100%	

Source: Own research

4.2 SWOT Analysis for Damascus:

In light of this, the SWOT analysis is a coordinated strategy for assessing Damascus' internal and external environments, as well as potentials and obstacles, helping to produce fact-based information about possible plans and actions, thus providing a good basis to define the marketing strategy for the city. The strengths may be represented in the ability to improve and develop the city's general performance and the advantages it possesses, such as its geographical location, infrastructure, etc., while the weaknesses may affect efficiency, profitability, and competitive advantage, such as a bad reputation, lack of revenue, or absence of plans. Threats present challenges and hinder the development and successful execution of any strategy, while opportunities present the potential to enhance strengths or give cities new ones. Furthermore, while SWOT analysis can assist in the precise identification of critical components in the study, it does not provide any analytical method or algorithm to determine the relative importance of these factors in the decision-making process, as the results are provided in qualitative terms.

4.2.1 The Strength of Damascus as a City Marketing:

Damascus is located on a plateau at an elevation of 690 meters above sea level, and it has a strategic location with views of Lebanon in the west and Palestine and Jordan in the south. In addition, having an abundance of water in the form of springs and rivers made its soil fertile and suitable for agriculture and promoted urbanization. It is also known for having a wonderful and generally stable climate. Because it has been inhabited by Arabs, Kurds, Turks, Armenians, Assyrians, and Circassians for hundreds of years, Damascus is significant both as the oldest capital in the world and as a city famous for its diversity and cultures. Because of its wealth of historical, cultural, natural, and archaeological attractions, Damascus attracts a sizable number of visitors each year who come to unwind, enjoy themselves, observe the city's historical buildings, and learn more about its unique characteristics. In addition, the entertaining events such as annual festivals, exhibitions, and competitions, the presence of markets, malls, and bars, as well as small shops that sell foodstuffs and local products that the city is famous for, and restaurants serving delicious Syrian food, all of this makes it an unforgettable experience for visitors, which will undoubtedly benefit the local population and enhance their income.

4.2.2 The Weakness of Damascus as a City Marketing:

Because of the war that Syria was exposed to during the previous years, the city suffers from a shortage of electricity, the Internet, and public transportation, in addition to the scarcity of efforts and measures taken by the government in the field of restoration and maintenance of monuments and archaeological sites that were damaged and affected by the crisis that the city went through due to the limited budget as a result of the lack of revenues from tourists and visitors.

In general, the tourism and hospitality industries in Syria face a severe shortage of trained professionals. The country's tourism industry is still in its early stages. Despite the abundance of tourist attractions in the country, there is a severe lack of trained professionals in tourism, heritage archaeology, and other related sectors.

4.2.3 The Opportunities of Damascus as a City Marketing:

Syria has been able to recover from years of hardship in tourism over the last two years, thanks to the return of safety and stability to most parts of the country. Damascus had the largest portion because it serves as the country's media hub and is a popular tourist destination for many people, particularly Arabs, thanks to its historical and religious landmarks.

From 2020 to the present, more than 400 tourist facilities, including hotels, restaurants, tourist agencies, entertainment facilities, and others, have entered the framework of service in Damascus alone, with a clear return of Arab investors to invest in this field. It is also planning to attract a large number of investors and tourists through Damascus International Fair, which will be held on August 23, 2023.

Syria's prices are typically regarded as dynamic because they are not high in comparison to those of other nations and cities, making it possible for them to draw more visitors with tight budgets.

In Syria, tourism is frequently used as a financial incentive to preserve regional customs and the environment. In this strategy, long-term tourism promotion must include an element of economic sustainability. Since a large portion of the citizens in Damascus depend on jobs in tourism, such as working as local and foreign tour guides, tour and travel organizers, car rental companies, hotels,

cafes, and restaurants, attending traditional music events, participating in excursion activities, and serving guests by providing local food and drinks, the environment is safe and beneficial for them.

4.2.4 The Threats of Damascus as a City Marketing:

The tourism industry needs calm more than any other industry because it is a sensitive sector that is impacted by the nation's security and economic conditions. Some monuments and historical sites in Damascus are seriously at risk of being vandalized, stolen, or destroyed because there is no security oversight over them.

In some places in the nation where decisions are made that require qualified and experienced people, there are unqualified people present who are not specialists in the fields of tourism and marketing, which impedes development and delays the city's recovery and recovery process.

Lack of efficient marketing strategies poses a real risk to the preservation of Damascus' archaeological sites, which are the main draw for tourists due to their importance. This is because they require specialized knowledge and equipment to implement.

4.3 Proving the Hypotheses:

Based on my research with secondary and primary research, I have come to the following table observations concerning my hypothesis. (Table 9)

Table 9:

Table 9 Probing the hypotheses

Hypothesis	Confirmed	Not confirmed	Partially confirmed
Damascus has the tools required for effective city marketing.	×		

City marketing helps attract tourists.	×		
The existence of a brand for Damascus will aid in enhancing the economic standing of those who live there.	×		
There are no foreign investors; rather, the majority of investors are locals and Arabs.			×

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion:

Our research indicates that due to the diversity of Syria's historical attractions, participants in the study expressed interest in this tourism sector, as did foreign visitors. Additionally, Damascus is one of Syria's most significant and popular tourist destinations. It is obvious that the city's effective marketing plays a significant role in boosting its popularity and encouraging tourist traffic there.

According to the results about the city, tourists who are interested in culture also prefer other activities like enjoyment, fun, leisure, and entertainment.

People think that having a marketing strategy for Damascus, for instance, will result in an improvement in the city's infrastructure and more investment projects like restaurants, hotels, and other tourist facilities, which in turn will result in an increase in local income as more people travel to the city and more jobs are created. If properly managed and environmentally friendly services and products are offered, there will be a long-term viability of job opportunities, a reduction in the unemployment rate in the region, and a lengthening of the region.

The participants observe that the marketing strategies used in Damascus are fairly good, with a focus on the necessity of staying up to date with the most cutting-edge marketing strategies available today in order to boost the city's tourism industry. The majority of the visitors claimed to have had a wonderful and unforgettable experience while in Damascus, which was demonstrated by the percentage of them who were satisfied with their trip, and a sizable portion of them expressed a desire to visit the city once more.

The questionnaire also revealed some of the investment-related issues Damascus faces, which prevent foreign investors from investing in it. These issues include the city's lack of safety, Syria's protracted civil war, and the conditions and limitations imposed by the country's investment law. The participants emphasized the urgency with which these issues must be resolved because doing so will have a significant effect on tourism in the area.

The importance of the city stems from several factors, as Damascus is one of the most important hubs of the Arab world for Arab and Islamic culture. This makes it the cultural capital and the most famous and oldest historical city in the world due to its prestigious position in the fields of science, culture, politics, the arts, and literature since the third millennium BC.

Finally, this study discovered that cultural tourism is beneficial in terms of economic contribution to the destination as well as social and cultural contact with the local population. Cultural tourism is essential for the large number of tourists visiting this destination. The study in Damascus offers some information on cultural tourism and the traits of tourists who are interested in culture.

5.2 Recommendation:

1. As a first step, the research city needs to set up a tourism management board. The organization of the tourism infrastructure in accordance with visitor's needs will then be part of the second phase.
2. Offering a few amenities that make it easier for foreign investors to enter the Syrian investment market, including: ensuring equal treatment for Arab and foreign investors; ensuring that investments are protected in accordance with the Syrian government

regulations; offering investment incentives when necessary; and ensuring high transparency when granting.

3. Utilizing international exhibitions, festivals, and events held in Damascus to market them in a way that would draw sizable crowds on a global scale.
4. Additionally, the success of tourism depends on acquiring the cultural appeal of travel in line with the concept of developing travel as well as the trait of a travel product. This viewpoint also emphasizes the significance of transforming the rich cultural aspects into tourism experiences that are suitable for tourist consumption.
5. Creating a website with all the details about Damascus' tourist attractions so it can act as a guide for tourists and give them the details they need to know before they arrive.
6. Increasing collaboration between the public and private sectors will benefit the city greatly by expanding employment opportunities for the locals and reviving the local economy.
7. In order to connect with and draw both first-time visitors and markets from further away (both medium- and long-term), tour operators and providers should highlight the culturally distinctive features of a heritage site and offer a variety of travel information sources.
8. The Old City of Damascus should receive special attention from the government and official institutions in charge of cultural sites because, in addition to its monuments, it is a significant archaeological heritage site that will boost the economy of the nation. In order to draw in more visitors and show them what this is all about, more emphasis should also be put on internal and external promotion as well as the use of current market trends.

6. Summary

The study aimed to draw attention to the significance of tourism and its function in fostering economic development in developing nations, where the Middle East and North African economies are said to be supported in large part by tourism. The development of cultural tourism is crucial because the tourism sector in Syria is still in its infancy, especially after a decade of war. The study covered Damascus' tourism potential with the goal of boosting foreign tourism arrivals and generating more income for the local economy.

In this study, the topic of presenting the application of the principles of city marketing was examined in the case of Damascus, the capital of the Syrian Arab Republic and one of the largest cities in the country. Damascus is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world and a major cultural center for the Levant and the Arab world. The purpose of this thesis was to identify potential investment development plans and their justifications, as well as to confirm the significance of Damascus in terms of cultural tourism. In order to improve some of the activities that take place there, such as promoting tourism, luring residents from outside the area, or attracting investment and business, the study also focused on creating the mental image and identity of the city or region.

As previously mentioned, Syria's historical and cultural traits rank among the most significant tourist destinations, while traditional architecture, handicrafts, cuisine, language, and events are some of the factors that enable communities. This study is one of the first studies to demonstrate a connection between visitors' perceptions of the significance of heritage sites and their visits there.

This study makes an effort to highlight the most significant tourist destinations in Damascus, including mosques, churches, castles, fortresses, cafes, etc. Through which it is possible to pinpoint the most significant historical eras that Damascus experienced at that time. Furthermore, it is believed that such research can deepen our comprehension of the political, social, and historical circumstances that prevailed in the Near East during those periods and have persisted to the present. Most importantly, it can help us appreciate a situation that is entirely distinct and appropriately remote from our own.

In conclusion, having a strategic marketing plan for Damascus has the potential to be advantageous for the whole country as well as this area. If properly managed, Syria's heritage monuments, with its rich history and culture, could become among the world's most popular tourist attractions.

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DECLARATION

on authenticity and public assess of final mater's thesis

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Title of the document: The Role of Place Marketing in Activating the Tourism
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Year of publication: 2023
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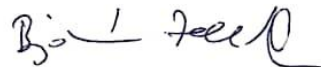
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¹ Please underline applicable.

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The questionnaire



The Role of City Marketing in Activating the Tourism Movement in Damascus

Hello there,

My name is
Hussein Issa, and I'm a tourism management graduate student.

This questionnaire
was created for academic purposes in connection with my MA research at the
MATE
university in Hungary. The purpose of this study is to determine how a city
marketing plan can stimulate Damascus' tourism industry. The study focuses on
people who live in or visit Damascus.

The responses
to this questionnaire will only be used for academic purposes. There are only
19 statements in the questionnaire.

The
questionnaire can be completed in no more than 10 minutes.

1. Do you visit Damascus regularly?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I live in
- ☐ Yes, many times a year
- ☐ yes, only once a year
- ☐ No, I don't visit it
- ☐ I don't want to answer

2. What is the main purpose for your visit to Damascus?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ To see attractions
- ☐ To attend a festival/ exhibition
- ☐ To see family/ relative/ friend
- ☐ To study
- ☐ To work
- ☐ I don't want to answer
- ☐ Other: _____

3. When did you travel to Damascus, who did you travel with?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Family
- ☐ Friend(s)
- ☐ Partner/ Spouse
- ☐ Organized tour
- ☐ Solo
- ☐ I don't want to answer

4. Please, pick any applicable facilities that apply based on your previous visits to Damascus you have specified? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Tour guide
- ☐ Information window/ office
- ☐ Information- touch screen display
- ☐ Souvenir shop
- ☐ Hotels
- ☐ Restaurants
- ☐ Hospitals
- ☐ I don't want to answer

5. Please, indicated if you have visited any of the following heritage sites in Damascus?

Tick all that apply.



☐ Al-Na'asan Palace



☐ Mariamite Cathedral of Damascus



☐ The Umayyad Mosque



☐ Shrine of Sayyida Zaynab



☐ Al Azem Palace



☐ Citadel of Damascus



☐ National Museum of Syria

☐ I don't want to answer

☐ I have never been to Damascus,
but I would like to visit it one day

6. Please, pick any tool you normally use to keep up with Damascus tourism activities?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Internet (social media)
- ☐ TV/ Radio
- ☐ Magazine/ Newspaper
- ☐ University/ Institution
- ☐ Conference/ Seminar
- ☐ I don't want to answer

7. Have you ever been to the Damascus International Fair?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes, just once.
- ☐ Yes, I go to the exhibition every time it's held.
- ☐ Not yet.
- ☐ I will visit it this year
- ☐ I have no interest in visiting exhibitions
- ☐ I don't want to answer

8. Please select any mode of transportation you normally use when visiting Damascus?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Taxi
- ☐ Microbus
- ☐ Bus
- ☐ Private car
- ☐ Train
- ☐ Bicycle
- ☐ I don't want to answer

9. Based on your response to the previous question, how do you rate Damascus's modes of transportation?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair (just ok)
- ☐ Not good
- ☐ I don't want to answer

10. Please, choose any marketing tool that you were familiar with or encountered while visiting Damascus? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Billboards/ Road signs
- ☐ TV/Radio
- ☐ Newspaper/ Magazine
- ☐ Social Media Marketing
- ☐ Text (SMS) Marketing
- ☐ Event Marketing
- ☐ Exhibitions/ Trade fairs
- ☐ I don't want to answer
- ☐ Other: _____

11. For your opinion, having a marketing plan for the city that boosts the number of visitors?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Maybe
☐ I don't want to answer

12. If yes, how?

13. By 2022, the percentage of tourists visited Damascus increased significantly? What effect did this have on Damascus? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Enhance the city's infrastructure
☐ New hotels and restaurants are being built
☐ Providing employment opportunities to the local community
☐ Reviving the city's economic engine
☐ I don't want to answer
☐ Other: _____

14. According to the data gathered, the majority of investors in Damascus are locals and Arabs; clearly, there are no foreign investors. What is the reason in your opinion?

15. If you have visited Damascus city please rate attraction from 1 (poor) - 5 (Excellent) or click on (I don't want) *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Extremely poor	Bad	Average	Good	Excellent	I don't know
The current situation of Damascus city	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The city's service layout	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visitors' level of satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tourism's impact on waste management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreation facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The quality of services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. What is your gender?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ I don't want to answer

17. Where are you from? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Syria, Damascus
- ☐ Syria, Aleppo
- ☐ Syria, Homs
- ☐ Syria, another city
- ☐ Another country
- ☐ I don't want to answer

18. Which generation group are "You" in? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Gen Z (born 1990- 2000)
- ☐ Gen X & Y (1975- 1991)
- ☐ Baby boomer (1950- 1976)
- ☐ Silent Generation (1930- 1951)
- ☐ I don't want to answer

19. What is your profession? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Freelancer
- ☐ Other.
- ☐ I don't want to answer
- ☐ Other: _____

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