

Assessment of Visitor Management at the Archaeological Site of Umm Qais: Condition and Problems

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Umm Qais is one of the most significant archaeological tourist attractions in Jordan besides Petra and Jerash. It is also popular with locals due to its rich diversity of natural history features and landscapes. However, there has been no detailed study of approaches to visitor management at the site. This paper investigates the visitor management pressures on the site of Umm Qais, seeking to develop an understanding of the approaches that direct the process of visitor management in an archaeological site. The specific objective of this study is to identify and analyse the current visitor management measures and tools at the site. It explores issues of hard and soft visitor management through monitoring, visitor guidance, and interpretation. The study has been conducted as a qualitative case study, and its results are based on direct personal observation and discussions with the personnel that have been conducted on-site by the Jordanian authors.

Despite the visitor management applied approaches, results reveal important and continuing challenges for Umm Qais due to limited visitor monitoring, weak information, and poor restriction measures. Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations are made in order to permit the local heritage managers to develop the site and its visitor management appropriately. This is an essential process in aiding this potential World Heritage Site to update approaches and adapt to the changing circumstances related to the visitor needs for the site. This will contribute to heritage and tourism literature and practice by enhancing the knowledge of visitor management at a national level.

KEYWORDS visitor management, visitor monitoring, visitor guidance, visitor restriction, Umm Qais, Jordan

Introduction

Umm Qais (ancient *Gadara*) is an archaeological destination 110 km north of the Jordanian capital Amman that is an increasingly popular attraction for day visitors. Currently ranked third among the top five tourist attractions in Jordan, it lies within the governorate of Irbid. The site is nationally recognized as a historic site located in an outstanding landscape. In addition to its archaeological monuments, the site offers a spectacular location that has a wider appeal for visitors. Situated in northern Jordan it lies on a plateau some 570 m above sea level, defined to the north by the Yarmouk valley and the Golan Heights beyond, and to the west by the Jordan rift valley and Lake Tiberias (Figure 1). The site covers an area of more than eight hectares. As a result of its historical and archaeological richness, it is considered to have the potential to be a World Heritage Site (<<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1558/>>).

Tourism has been a part of Umm Qais's history and identity for more than a century. Tourists coming to Umm Qais increased markedly in the new millennium rising from

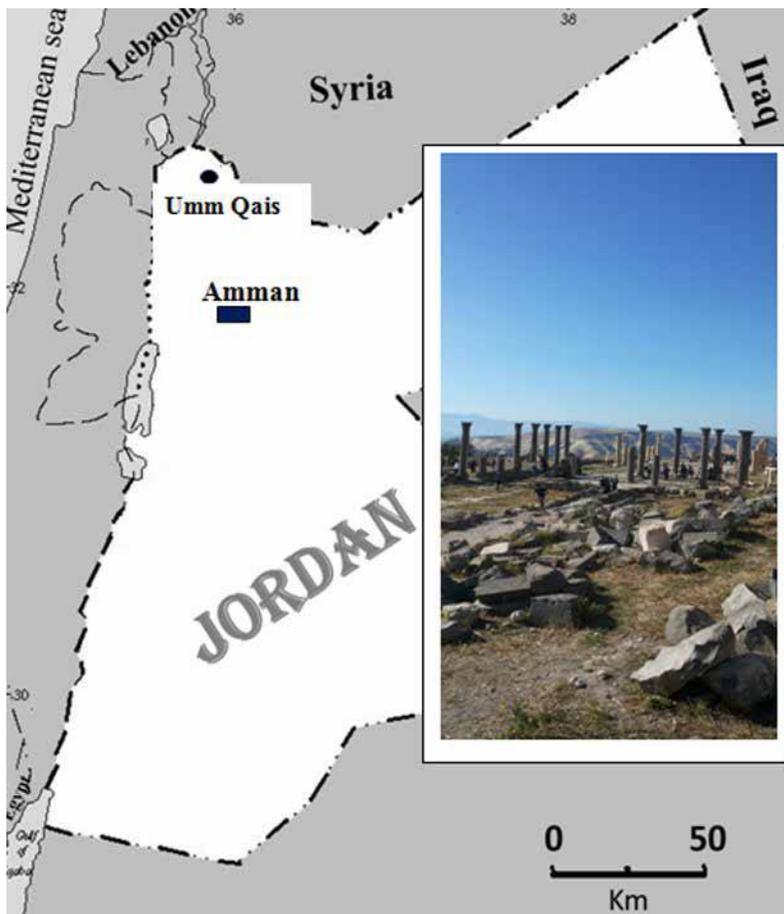


FIGURE 1 Location of the site of Umm Qais with (inset to right) the view of the Golan Heights from Umm Qais and its theatre.

Source: based on Jordan Tourist Board and modified by the authors, 2013

186,228 in 2005 to 201,893 in 2011 (<www.mota.gov.jo 2011>). However, in recent years the constant growth of the tourism market of Umm Qais has changed the vision and planning process at the heritage site. This has its impacts on visitor management concerns and the experience of the users of the site. Currently, in common with other heritage sites in Jordan, there are two opposing views of Umm Qais' heritage tourism. First are the conservationists, who are trying to minimize the impact of tourism activity, and second are the tourism managers who want to welcome more tourists in order to increase the economic benefits accruing from greater footfall. In order to meet the needs of both protagonists, heritage site managers have to take serious actions in order to monitor and manage visitors. As stated by McKercher and Du Cros (2002: 171) the great challenge in heritage tourism management is to establish a balance of needs for the advocates of the heritage sites. However, to date there has been little formal published research on how visitor management approaches have been developed and applied at the site by the responsible actors. Previous research has focused more generally on the wider conservation and archaeological process at tourist sites in Jordan (Al-Bashaireh, 2011; Daher, 1999). This study aims to discuss the obstacles facing the visitor management processes at this specific site. It is an attempt to define a better understanding of what positive and effective visitor management can offer, and also to describe the problems that lie behind on-site visitor-based management approaches. Above all, it is hoped that this study will contribute to more efficient visitor management. Although the actual study research focuses on Umm Qais archaeological site, it is anticipated that the findings will reveal broader relevance to any site in a similar context.

Visitor management strategies

For many years, heritage site managers have been calling for some level of control over visitor use and visitor management approaches (Feilden & Jokilehto, 1998; Hall & McArthur, 1998; Timothy & Boyd, 2003; Masters, et al., 2002). As Kuo observes, 'successful tourism development requires management to be focused upon not only tourism resources but also visitors' (2002: 87–88). There is substantial literature available on visitor management practice which concludes that heritage management and visitor management should seek to operate in an integrated and complimentary manner (Leask, et al., 2002; McArthur, 1994; Shackley, 2000; Eagles, et al., 2002; World Tourism Organization, 2004). There is also recognition of the negative impacts by visitors on aspects of sites, such as their setting (Cole, 2001; Hall & McArthur, 1996; Shackley, 2000), which can be improved through good visitor management practice (Cooper, et al., 1998; Imon & Ong, 2007; McCool, 2002). The success of heritage site management thus depends largely on the success of approaches to visitor management (MacLennan, 2000). The management of heritage sites calls for great care and experience to achieve successful heritage management where the needs of both site protection and visitor aspirations could be satisfied. Visitor management has as much to do with people and with activities and facilities at heritage sites as it has with the way that visitors arrive at and move around the site. According to Eagles et al. (2002: 75) 'the practice of ensuring visitors achieve a quality experience; it is the management of visitors in a manner which maximizes the quality of the visitor experience while assisting the achievement of the area's overall management objectives', and they state that visitor

management seeks to meet the needs of visitors, and according to them visitor management refers to a 'client-oriented approach to planning and service delivery that considers the visitors' needs, expectations and satisfaction' (loc. cit.). For Shackley (2000) major concerns in visitor management are entry charges, local business development, and potential damage to the heritage resource, congestion, reduction of visitors in peak times, and dealing with segments of visitors aside from direct visitor flow management.

A few studies have focused on visitor management operations (Cooper, et al., 1998; Hall & McArthur, 1998; Kuo, 2002; Mason, 2005a; Orams, 1996a). In his study, Kuo (2002) recognized the approaches to enhance the use of visitors and site management. He suggests that there are two approaches to visitor management, namely hard visitor management and soft visitor management. Hard visitor management approaches aim to regulate visitor activity as well as minimize their negative impact. The aim of hard regulatory policies is to ensure the protection of the environment and reduction of the conflicts between tourists and traffic congestion, while soft visitor management approaches aim to deliver information so as to provide an enjoyable experience for visitors. In this way the hard approach entails restrictions on access, site security (including personnel), and implementation of rules and fees. A soft approach entails education of visitors including directorial, administrative/managerial and interpretive information, visitor codes, and visitor research and monitoring. Pearson and Sullivan (1995) and Timothy and Boyd (2002) show that in visitor management special attention is given to specific techniques and tools which are at the disposal of managers. For the most part they deal with protective measures (pathways, visitor books), use management (entry prices, regulation of groups' numbers), and education measures (on-site information). Broadly speaking, both types of visitor management put an emphasis on measures that could be grouped in three categories which can be used by heritage site managers in concrete planning, these categories comprise monitoring instruments, visitor guidance and interpretation instruments, and visitor restriction methods (Cooper, et al., 1998; Hall & McArthur, 1996).

All site managers are encouraged to carefully monitor the way the visitors interact with the cultural heritage resource, and also to control and plan for further investment and improvement when appropriate (WTO, 2004). Monitoring instruments are a necessary and integral part of total site management whose primary purpose is to regulate visitor movement. Muhar et al. (2002) distinguish two different techniques, namely direct (interviews, observation, counting of access permits, counting devices, self-registration) and indirect techniques (mapping of traces of use). The former technique allows researchers to expand the concept of visitor experiences and view their complex and dynamic nature; the latter studies and analyses the impacts generated by visitors during their visit and use of the site.

Among the measures that should be available for the visitor management are guidance for visitors and provision of information about the site. Information provision has been seen as a major tool in managing sites considering that visitors generate negative impact on different sites, and therefore visitor strategies should adopt different forms of guidance, such as visitor centres and signs, in order to minimize this negative impact. In reviewing different studies of heritage interpretation a number of benefits were identified. According to Moscardo (1998), one way to enhance visitor experience and manage their impact is to offer information about the site and monuments that

should or should not be visited. In many cases there is a direct relation between the reduction of visitor problems and provision of interpretation facilities. Aplin (2002: 42–47) suggested signs, guides, visitor centres, and printed material as practical media for the use of interpretation. The availability of these media can affect the behaviour attitude of the visitor and dissuade their harmful activity (Orams, 1996b). Along with providing interpretation, there could be some other opportunities to improve the sites. According to Eagles et al. (2002), visitor restriction methods at a given tourist destination can have a positive impact on the tourism experience. Restrictive measures include: (1) seasonal or temporal limits on usage levels, (2) group number limits, (3) restrictions on group uses and activities, (4) accessibility control and zoning. Providing sufficient visitor restriction measures would provide managers with more flexibility to channel visitor flows, protecting monuments of high sensitivity, and ensuring their sustainability. Well-planned services, facilities, and infrastructure ensure a positive experience and inspire an appreciation of the visited sites, making people feel welcome and encouraging them to return.

Tourism services and facilities in many heritage sites involve two major groups with different interventions, the private operators and the heritage site managers. Private operators provide services in accommodation and tour guides, while heritage site managers control the site and provide visitor centres, restaurants, parking lots, pathways, signs, ticket booths, toilets, entry gates, and tour guiding services (ICOMOS, 1993). According to Eagles et al. (2001), collaboration is important for both groups to ensure quality visitor management and sustainability of the local resources. Imon and Ong (2007) discuss several issues related to operational challenges when seeking to manage facilities at heritage resources. First, the partnership between the public and private sector; for example, public-private partnerships for cultural tourism sites should be private-sector led, but public-sector regulated. Second, the cyclical nature of visitation highlights the role of site managers in assuring and increasing the potential facilities and services, in order to meet the demands of the increasing visitors during the high visitation period, and aids sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism has become a popular concept in the field of tourism (Tubb, 2003). It is considered a very significant concept because it has shared common characteristics with effective and sustainable management planning of all aspects of a site's development. Sustainable tourism makes both direct and indirect contributions to the site since it ensures the importance of protecting and preserving natural, cultural and historic fabric. The concept of sustainability in the context of tourism refers to the balance between the environmental, economic, social, and cultural aspects of the site, and the balance with desires of the visitors (Moscardo & Woods, 1998; Kuo, 2002). Cooper et al. (1998) considered that visitor management can lead to the achievement of the objectives of sustainable tourism development because it requires the fostering of appropriate behaviour.

Mason (2005b) examined both soft and hard approaches to visitor management in the context of natural protected areas in Antarctica and the Arctic region; the study specifically focused on interpretation and self-regulation using code of conduct. The paper indicated that, under the current political and economic conditions in the Arctic, key players in visitor management in protected areas such as national parks have to rely largely on tour operators and tourists acting ethically and honestly and tourists responding positively to advice and instructions contained in codes

of conduct and information provided via interpretation. In the absence of external regulations or a monitoring force, those concerned with Arctic tourism management find themselves relying on tried and tested tools deployed in Antarctica, but where the scale of tourism activity is far larger, the impacts of tourism are more significant and the rise in visitor numbers far higher. The study concluded after examining two soft approaches that both sites put emphasis on experience rather than on the impacts generated by visitors. It is found that interpretation was used as an educational tool and both sites adopted an adequate form of self-regulation of visitors. The report made by Masters et al. (2002: 16) on visitor management approaches in the countryside of Scotland finds a number of the key constraints to implementing sustainable visitor management systems as follows:

- No perceived problem;
- Existing approaches perceived as adequate;
- Workload/resource issues;
- Costs of monitoring;
- No management forum or stakeholder input;
- Concerns about a structured appraisal;
- Lack of proven application;
- No common language for site planning and management.

According to Hogwood et al. (1984), there are two types of failure during visitor management process: the first is non-implementation, and the second type is unsuccessful implementation. The absence of cooperation between stakeholders may lead to non-implementation of visitor management policy, and the failure to match the intended results may also lead again to a sort of unsuccessful visitor management performance. Various reasons were suggested for implementation failure, including poor policy framework, non-compliance among stakeholders, poor task definition, and inadequate information and resources.

Methods

This study focuses on how archaeological sites provide services to visitors in a way that guarantees an enjoyable experience in accordance with the sites' management objectives. The core of the problem that this paper seeks to address is that visitor management approaches at Umm Qais are poorly linked to visitor profile, site values, and also to the oral visitor management approaches claimed by local actors. It seeks to understand the ways that Umm Qais' heritage authority manages visitors at the archaeological site itself through examination of visitor management methods employed at the site. It describes and analyses on-site visitor management to build a critical overview of the nature of the approaches in addressing the following questions: what type of visitor management did site managers introduce to deal with visitors' expectations? To what extent is the site's physical environment adapted for its various visitors? Then three different issues in relation to visitor management are investigated: instruments for monitoring visitors' on-site movements; guidance and interpretation instruments provided for visitors; and methods for regulating visitor traffic through hard or soft measures.

The purpose of this study is mainly explorative, therefore the researchers have employed the so-called 'mixed' approach in order to achieve its objectives. A qualitative case study research approach is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how local stakeholders and institutions manage visitors at the site and it has been used to tackle the research problem in different ways (Stake, 2005). The study pursues secondary and primary data sources to maximize the outcomes. To undertake this study, open discussion was used with participants including the on-site tourism director, museum site curator, and seven tour guides to understand their approaches to on-site visitor management or movement of tourists around the site. These samples were purposive rather than random (Lazarsfeld, 1993). By using open-ended questions, the researchers had the opportunity to develop the questions in a way that participants felt at ease with responding. It was anticipated that there would be significant differences between their views. Participants from the public sector will seek to manage visitors in accord with their set policies, whereas the tour guides represent agents who are in constant contact with applied visitor management policies, and as such they play an important role in providing significant information about the actualities of visitor management procedures.

In order to understand these perspectives, two methods were adopted. First, interviews were conducted with the tourism director and the personnel at the visitor centre, and discussions were held with tour guides during their tours. This was then followed up by the second method, which was observation. On-site observation allows the researcher to gain information about facilities and measurements actually taken for visitor management at the site. The Jordanian researchers took part in seven separate tours through the archaeological site with a list of predetermined criteria of what was to be observed. These criteria focused on what policies were put in practice, such as route layout and the characteristics of visitor monitoring instruments, provision for visitor guidance, and interpretation tools and methods used to restrict visitor access. The predetermined list focused on the physical (colour, size, type), spatial (place, location, distance), and content (themes, measures, texts) description of visitor management procedures and tools. This study will look at the strengths and weaknesses of visitor management policies drawing on the data collected through these methods. Observation was carried out directly at the site of Umm Qais at different times between January 2012 and December 2012 at six different locations including the parking area, ticket office, rest house, viewing point, museum, and visitor centre. The focus of the direct observation was on how the site was used and what activities were offered to visitors. As a secondary means of data capture, various sources were researched to find data relating to visitor and interpretation management which was gathered from earlier documents, maps, and information about the site held in local institutions. However, the formal analysis began after data collection had been completed. The analytical process was divided into various steps to classify and understand the data gathered from the discussions and the observation. First, the data generated from the interviews were transcribed and translated into English. Second, data were summarized and categorized under similar themes taking in consideration special attention to the meaning of comments and quotes of informants. Lastly, data generated from the observation process were put together and compared and contrasted with the previous data. While the focus of this paper is on the archaeological

site of Umm Qais, such insights are evidently relevant to the heritage management of tourist attractions in other sites in Jordan and beyond. The originality of this paper is that since the initial phases of this paper there has been no public or academic document produced in the development of visitor management at Umm Qais, therefore, this study provides critical analysis to all of stakeholders interested in visitor management work and the evidence gained from this study may assist in supporting and professionalizing the importance of visitor management application at the national level.

Tourism attractions and activities

The national tourism strategy for Jordan (NTS) has set a high target for 2015, with 9.4 million visitors annually. Visitation has increased by 48% in 2010, and indications revealed that an overall trend of tourism growth will continue (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA), 2011). This growth, however, was impacted by unstable tourism activity during the last three years due to the uncertain outcome of the so called 'Arab Spring'. If Umm Qais is to provide a context for growth in the immediate future, it must be managed in such a way as to meet, and improve upon, the expectations of its visitors, both locally and internationally.

Modern tourists only began to visit the site in small and infrequent numbers in the late 1980s. By the end of the millennium, however, unusually high levels were being attracted by the proximity of the hot springs and to the scenic views of Lake Tiberias and the Golan Heights which form the focus of primary visitor activity for both locals and tourists alike (Figure 2). Promenading and admiring the sights is particularly popular with locals, while tourists from further afield focus on both the views and on the archaeological remains (Al Qeed, et al., 2012). Even for the most uninformed visitor, the diverse archaeological monuments of Umm Qais form an outstanding set of monuments dating back to the Classical Roman and Byzantine periods overlain by substantial standing ruins of houses of the Turkish Ottoman era (Figure 3). The five most well-known monuments of the site, and the most visited, are the western theatre, the forum, the paved street with its nymphaeum, the ruined church, and the museum. All but the last of these are close together, adjacent to the highest point of the site where the best views of the surroundings are to be found. The museum lies within the ruined village and is actually a rehabilitated old house of the late nineteenth century (local guide, pers. comm., 2012). Building on these assets, Umm Qais has attempted to diversify its tourist offer over the last decade as a way to enhance visitor experience.

The principal means of achieving this was through guided and self-guided tourist routes across the archaeological area. It is worth mentioning here that the designation and selection of these sites is the responsibility of the site management authority represented by the Ministry of Tourism (MOTA) and the Department of Antiquities (DoA) through the involvement of experts in the tourism industry and technical advisors, funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) who provide help in terms of financial resources and technical expertise. To facilitate tourist growth an improved infrastructure of roads, seven kilometres of trails and entrance gates have been provided outside the site, while inside the site the museum and visitor centre have been built. The site also encompasses some secondary attractions



FIGURE 2 Looking east towards the main archaeological zone of Umm Qais from the Colonnaded Paved Street. The Ottoman village overlying the site is visible to the right.
Photo: Roger White



FIGURE 3 View north across the church and its atrium towards the modern viewing point with, beyond, the Yarmouk Valley, Golan heights and Lake Tiberias. The local schoolchildren are evidently more interested in the view than the ruins.
Photo: Roger White

including three retail units and a gift card unit, in addition to one restaurant with a large dining terrace providing food and beverage services for up to 80 seats and two café outlets. These attractions are totally run by the private sector. The site also has a large parking area and numerous toilet services.

The tourism office has been collecting and analysing Umm Qais visitor data since 1989. According to a tourism office staff at the site three types of site visitors were identified at Umm Qais, whose needs have important implications for the management of the site. They can be summarized as follows:

- Frequent international visitors: they are characterized by quite high income and are very well informed about what the site has to offer;
- Frequent national visitors: they are people with middle income, living in towns and suburbs;
- Student visitors: they visit in tours organized by their schools or academic institutions for educational purposes.

The high season is during the spring and summer months. The site is open to visitors all year round with the months of April and October inclusive typically showing the highest number of visitors (MOTA Statistics, 2011). Generally speaking, many international tourists mainly travel with a tour operator and a tourist guide. They usually visit as part of a tour package, most of them choosing the popular one-day tour including an overnight in Amman and a trip to Jerash, Ajloun, and an excursion to Umm Qais either in the morning or the afternoon. Overall, local people are most likely to visit the site to enjoy a walk and to bring their children for either a morning or an afternoon out (local guide, pers. comm., 2012).

Current visitor management

The specific boundaries of the site follow the ancient line of the original wall and the ruins of the site, but its natural and archaeological setting extends beyond its boundary incorporating a number of vistas and extra-mural archaeological sites, notably ancient tombs. The site is divided roughly into three zones; the first is the archaeological zone, which lies between the western and northern theatre, the second zone is the Turkish Ottoman village which extends between the museum and the parking area, and the final one is the peripheral zone which surrounds the former zones.

As mentioned previously, both MOTA and the DoA are primarily responsible for the overall planning and formulation of regulatory functions. MOTA has authority over tourism-related activities whereas the management and conservation of archaeology are the responsibility of the DoA. Local tourism operators consider the year 1995 as the beginning of the real development of tourism projects at the site. In this year, the tourism office was set up with the responsibility for tourism management within the archaeological protected zone of Umm Qais. Since March 1995, MOTA has been working in collaboration with the different agencies to help the site managers to develop tourism experience at the site and from this the concept of managing visitors emerged. The tourism office manager reported a variety of actions employed by the office to support and develop visitor management capabilities and to assure quality tourism practices.



FIGURE 4 Former or existing trial routes established at Umm Qais overlain on a satellite base image.

Source: GoogleEarth™, modified [accessed March 2014]

As part of the monitoring instruments, the tourism office reconfigured the trails to ensure better viewing points and contribute to an overall better visitor experience (Figure 4). At the time of writing, the existing trail for visitors encompasses the parking and archaeological zone, a route roughly 2 km long with 1 to 2 hours' walking distance. The trail starts at the parking and souvenir kiosks then leads to the archaeological zone which comprises the most important monuments such as the Western Theatre and the Colonnaded Paved Street and then passes through the Turkish Village and on to the Museum. The site management has traditionally offered this trail to a wide variety of site visitors through daily guided walks. Currently, one full-time guide provides personal interpretive services year round. The existing trail replaced an old trail; this provided a short steep route from the old parking near the northern theatre to the basilica on the site. This trail was created before the tourism boom in Jordan and was not deemed suitable since it was not in line with management practice and conservation procedures as laid down by heritage management literature, not least because of issues of accessibility. The current trail is suitable for able-bodied walkers; further work is needed to manage disabled persons because the path surface is not even, while movement about the site for visitors and particularly for those with impaired mobility is difficult because of the steep natural terrain in some locations of the site. However, there may be some difficulties for site users when leaving the car park as there are no clear directions to obtain access to the gateway of the site and the trail pathway. The tourism office has recently (2010) invested in a new trail close to the historic village of the site. This route was

established after planning and consulting with interested groups then putting the trail and a visitor centre in place.

A visitor information centre was established at the site in 2011 to provide almost all necessary information through brochures, museum exhibitions, signs, and maps, in addition to services and facilities such as toilets and parking. The site also hosts a full-time guide service which was recently approved in the year 2012. The local guide provides information in both English and French. Since its opening, a new scheme of visitor management has been proposed which is projected to change visitors' circulation patterns, but this has not been reflected in the layout of the trail system itself. A primary visitor orientation station near the existing restroom and parking area provide some monitoring elements. This is where the visitors are oriented and provided with required information including the locations of the key features and places of visitors' services and facilities, in addition to ticketing services and recording registration for statistical purposes. The front desk at the visitor orientation station keeps all records on the visitors compiled, where they are categorized into several groups, mostly based on the nationality and number of participants in the tour. Also, there are more than fifteen signs along the trail route to display information about the key monuments of the site. This station is considered as the main gateway where visitors are welcomed and managed. The entry price was further evaluated in 2006; the site endorses a free entry scheme for different segments of locals and charges \$4.50 for foreigners. This policy covers admission to all attractions including the museum and the visitor centre, and is valid for one day. During the study period it was observed that the site experienced relatively high use levels concentrated in the peak spring and summer period from March to October (staff member, the site of Umm Qais, pers. comm., 2012). At the same time, this number of people was concentrated within a relatively small area of the site, between the western theatre and the museum, but elsewhere distributed unevenly within it. Consequently, visitor flows are high in the centre of the archaeological town and close to the major attractions within the site. This is a reflection of the number of visitors to the area as some key attractions currently suffer from congestion, either due to the pinch-points near the entrance and orientation station, or at the museum.

As might be anticipated, educational visits made by parties of school children are concentrated only during spring, ending in summer when their summer school vacation begins. Almost none of the tours are linked to a pre-booking system or other restrictions such as limits on the number of visitors. According to the staff of the site (pers. comm., 2012) it is possible to visit the site without advance reservation almost all year around. The main restrictions to visiting the site are those relating to the normal working day as it is only possible to access the visitor centre, monuments, and the museum during the normal opening hours. Another restriction is the avoidance of restricted zones; this is where excavation and conservation interventions occur. Access to these zones is granted only to professionals with prior arrangement.

In terms of protection, there are two protective measures applied at the site. First is the tourist police station near the museum building, and the second is the site guardians. Tourist police are responsible for the safety and security of tourists, locals, and personnel of the site, whereas the guardians are responsible for the security of the site and its monuments. It is worth mentioning here that visiting the site is potentially

hazardous for school children and disabled tourists because the current management does not provide safety guidelines or first-aid kits.

The site museum exhibits both indoor and outdoor artefacts representing the history of Umm Qais during antiquity and the classical periods. Based on observation, visitors can see numerous signs in different scales, colours, and sizes starting at the entrance from the ticket office inside the site and in front of the major monuments; most of the signs show the name of the place, and orientation to some facilities and services.

Analysis

It can be assumed here that the existing facilities at the site of Umm Qais are acknowledged to be of inadequate quality for a potential World Heritage Site. The current visitor facilities were built between 1970 and 1980 with the vision and capacities of this period. Nowadays they are both outdated and insufficient to accommodate the huge number of visitors. Visitor pressures are such that a systematic gathering of recreational uses and visitor flows is rarely carried out by the site management. Regarding the first part of the research question, which raised the issue of the type of visitor management introduced by the site managers to deal with visitors, various forms of visitor management have been introduced to limit negative impacts of visitors and improve their experience. MOTA, as cited, is currently planning to create an improved visitor experience focused on a new visitor centre to be situated at Al Malkawi house (200 m from the new gate). The provision of the new visitor centre and the projected new trail were made, however, without consultation between MOTA and the site tourism office, as commented by the tourism office director himself (pers. comm., 2012). According to him, the main problem facing visitor management is the fact that both the local sites' authority and the national authority (MOTA) have different, even opposite, objectives and views, particularly in regards to the visitor centre. Based on the field study, efforts appear to be directed towards limiting access to the more sensitive zones in the western part of the site to protect excavation areas whereas the eastern part of the site is designated as suitable for tourism visits.

Visitor management comprises different modes; on the one hand are the activities and endeavours to get knowledge about the visitors, and on the other hand are the services to meet the visitors' satisfaction and perspectives. Furthermore, some subtle on-site regulations were found, such as directional signs and tracks, in addition to access points and information material which testify to a hard management style. While the site does have different visitor management measures, some important areas of application are not dealt with. Generally speaking, some visitor-related restriction methods are neglected, especially when talking about seasonal or temporal limitation; the site management tends to focus more on the basic and traditional visitor monitoring and restriction methods.

Based on our findings, it would appear that the most important challenges facing Umm Qais are that the existing visitor management creates overcrowded hotspots (parking, ticketing booth, western theatre, viewing points) whilst leaving other areas less visited and relatively unknown (historic houses, the north theatre, tombs, colonnaded paved street) (Figure 5). Moreover, it is clear that all attention is focused



FIGURE 5 Differential use of the site by visitors: most frequented monuments are in dark / red text while less frequented ones are in white.

Source: GoogleEarth™, modified [accessed March 2014]

above all on the well-presented archaeological monuments located between the historic houses and the museum sector. While these ruins are the cornerstone of this area in terms of tourism, the natural attractions, such as the mountains and valleys, and local lifestyles, such as festivals, are also excellent attractions in their own right. The diversity of these attractions has the potential to make Umm Qais one of the best destinations in the region. However, as stated above, having one key component (archaeological ruins) without the other two (natural environment, cultural heritage) can hinder an area's tourism development. Relatively poor cultural and physical access and orientation need to be addressed through visitor management before Umm Qais truly becomes a World Heritage Site.

It could be argued that many of the current problems on the site have arisen from a lack of visitor management baseline data, expertise, and financial resources. While archaeological sites everywhere usually have legislation establishing their protection, such documents do not normally identify the specifics of a vision for visitor management. Financial resources are likely to be decreased in the very near future in light of the geopolitical context of the Middle East and the international financial crisis, but the issues highlighted here should be relatively easy, and cheap, to resolve.

Regarding the second part of the research question, which raised the issue regarding the way the physical environment of the site is adapted for the various types of visitors, an interesting finding throughout the research is that in no documents pertaining to the site is there a mention of the physical measures required to adapt the



FIGURE 6 Informal trails established by unregulated visitors to Umm Qais.

Source: GoogleEarth™, modified [accessed March 2014]

environment of the site to meet the desires and needs of visitors. A poorly managed physical environment can harm the resources and visitor perception, so the tourism industry must be sensitive to changes in environmental quality. The visitor management at the site is judged to fail in providing an adequate physical environment for visitors for two principal reasons: the availability of various informal, soft trails and some routes that are barely distinguishable; and the selection of the monuments during the visit that is determined by the guide during the tour (Figure 6). There are a number of options that can be used to adapt the physical environment to mitigate or eliminate the impacts of tourism. Most options fall into siting tourist facilities in environmentally appropriate locations and restricting development of, and access to, sensitive areas; and also enacting legislation to control the way that a site is accessed and used.

Our observations demonstrate that the current site trail layout and design appear to be illegible, and do not succeed in redistributing visitors so as to reduce crowding, particularly during the periods of high visitation; nor do the facilities offered to visitors take into account all types of visitors. The visitor centre, restaurant, signs, toilets, maps, and the brochures did not enhance the visit's quality, either due to their location or to their design. One of the most crucial problems is that some visitors use the orientation gateway as their starting point to the site instead of the visitor centre. This could be an outcome of the poorly accessible location of the centre, a difficulty that was indicated by the site tourism director during the fieldwork.

According to the national tourism strategies for Jordan (NTSJ, 2004, 2011) both government and tourism businesses and attractions are still focusing on increasing

visitor numbers and financial economic profit, therefore it is normal that the actions of limiting visitor numbers and group sizes is unlikely to happen in heritage sites including Umm Qais. In terms of expertise, it is found that at present there are twenty-four full-time workers at Umm Qais, including the local guide and the staff of the museum, storekeepers, general operatives, and guardians. However, all site staff come from disciplinary backgrounds and training that did not consider visitor management practice. The lack of education and training especially for the staff is a crucial element. Together with the growth of tourism in Jordan, there has been an increasing theoretical awareness of the need to understand the dynamics of tourism and site management (Al Qeed, et al., 2012).

This study has identified a number of problems related to the visitor management context in the site. It is clear that, to a large extent, existing visitor management approaches (monitoring, restriction, and interpretation) are addressing very different target populations and audiences (foreigners, young audiences) whose contradictory needs mean that neither target is satisfactorily met. To sum up, the major issues identified in this study are that the applied measures have little influence on the overall visitor management system. It has been demonstrated that the site of Umm Qais is receiving greater use pressure than in the past years, that a wide range of recreation activities occurs at the site, and these include promenading, exploring, picnicking, sightseeing, nature, and the study of history. Different examples were observed and indicate the weak influence on visitors' behaviour such as many who take short cuts off the trail, who climb monuments, deposit litter, and vandalize the signs. There are localized and temporal issues relating to impacts on the visitor experience resulting from the current management of visitors. These impacts arise from the lack of the necessary infrastructure for visitors' information. The above-mentioned topics are due to the paucity of research, and relevant policy information. How to accommodate such activities within this small area and minimizing user conflicts should be addressed in the future planning for the site. The site authority might, then, be aware of these activities in order to manage both of their heritages (site values) and their visitors (visitor interests) in a smooth and applicable way.

Conclusions

Umm Qais is an interesting site to visit because of outstanding features and monuments, spectacular environmental context, and the associative value. This is the first paper of this kind undertaken about this archaeological site in Jordan. It offers a basis for the revision and improvement of heritage planning and in particular visitor management contexts, concluding that visitor management methods with facilities can influence visitor experience and therefore affect traffic flows in an area. These methods can also be used to attract new visitors to a given area. As such, additional measures might be necessary to ameliorate visitor experience levels. The study shows that facilities in conjunction with visitor management planning tools offer median possibilities to influence circulation patterns of a large number of visitors. Turning back to the case study, one of the main problems facing site operators is the fact that they are focusing on the clerical aspect of the tourism management and the duty of the Department of Antiquities (DoA) is to secure the preservation of the ancient

monuments and not on understanding the site values or the demand for the product. This includes the conservation of the paved street and the western theatre, and excludes the protection of the natural environment and the maintenance of the necessary infrastructure for visitors such as trails, pathways, visitor facilities and managing visitor access. Thus, the challenge that emerges here is that the sites' authority has failed to foster links through visitor policies between people (visitors) and the unique site that provides access for everyone to historic open spaces. The issues identified in this study indicate a need for coherent action and solutions for both visitors and site managers and additionally to provide technical assistance, training, and guidance on how to track changes in visitation levels. Therefore, any policy related to visitor management should recognize the users' patterns and their modes of visit. However, there exist many opportunities to improve the visitor experience and its management, which will be necessary to sustain the values of the site as a heritage resource for the future. The findings of this study suggest the following:

- The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) should provide additional practical training courses for its employees in order to improve their skills;
- The Department of Antiquities (DoA) should consider that the interpretation management is part of the visitor management framework for the site of Umm Qais;
- In order to improve policies relating to visitor management, both the MOTA and DoA could work together with tour guides who work directly with visitors and are aware of visitors' site-based experience;
- On-site, managers need to understand who are the real visitors to the site, so as to identify appropriate techniques to be set up at the site to identify visitor characteristics;
- Managers of the site need to be aware of the significance of the site and the desires of both the local people and the international visitors to ensure a sustainable experience.

In order to achieve this, visitor management should be designed to enhance the integrity of the heritage value of the site.

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