



## **The Perceived Impacts of Tourism Development at Cultural Heritage Sites-Mardin Sample**

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Tourism is one of the most dynamic and fastest growing global industries and can have positive attributes for conservation and development in heritage places. However, heritage places are fragile and vulnerable to tourism if not managed. Managing tourism can have substantial inherent potential to underpin sustainable development and conservation. It has the potential to create more demand for conserving buildings including less valued monuments and overlooked traditional environments. It can also increase an appreciation for the historic environment, contributing to greater local and cross-cultural understanding.

A very important and visible part of heritage consists of the built environment, the context of urban living. Many countries have pursued conservation policies, as conserving the past offers a source for cultural identity and a basis of reference for the future. Conservation policy has usually been approached in an eclectic way focusing on the unique and outstanding. Recent attitudes towards conservation bring forward the issue of protecting more and more aspects of heritage.

For planners, the principal goal is to create a strategy for minimizing the adverse impacts and maximizing gains from tourism. This would have to include the management of the cultural resource and the quality of new development, the uses and activities the built environment sustains, and the integration of both these factors with the socio cultural needs of the local community.

In recent years, Mardin appeals to be as one of the most attractive cities that has unique cultural heritage and socio-cultural aspects. It has hosted many civilizations and is one of the rare cities with Venice and Jerusalem. Mardin is a candidate city for the World Heritage Sites List with its stone architecture and unique religious and traditional buildings. The city is defined as "cultural landscape area" with its medieval view. However, day to day, faced with a growing tourism phenomenon as the city deals with also faced with the threats of losing cultural heritage and urban transformation.

In this paper, the potential relationship between tourism, conservation, and planning within the sustainability discourse is examined. The study is focused on identifying the capacity issues facing the Site and assessing the threat posed by these issues (now or in the future) to the Site's Key Values. The Key Values are identified through an analysis of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Site and then graded as to whether they were critical, important or contributory in terms of their importance to the Site. Development of the study involved a staged process of survey, analysis and assessment which included public consultation. The aim of this paper is to present a practical method for urban sustainability policy analysis, with a particular view to finding a balance between the need for sustainable urban development (with a view to environmental and cultural goods) and tourism development.

**KEY WORDS:** Cultural heritage, urban transformation, tourism, sustainability, Mardin