

Merchants' Attitudes towards Tourism Development in Mahane Yehuda Market: A Case Study

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Abstract : In an age when a tourist's gaze is more focused on the daily lives of locals, it is evident that local food markets are being rediscovered. Traditional urban markets succeed in reinventing themselves as a space for consumption, recreation, and culture, enabling authentic experiences and interpersonal interactions with the local culture. Alongside this, the pressure of tourism development may result in commercialization and retail gentrification to the point of losing the sense of local identity. The issue of finding a balance between tourism development and the preservation of unique local features is at the heart of this study and is being tested using the case of the Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem. The research question—how merchants respond to tourism development in the Mahane Yehuda food market— focuses on local traders, a group of players who are usually absent from the research arenas, although they influence tourism development as well as influenced by it. Three main research methods were integrated into this study. The first two methods, a survey of articles survey and comparative mapping of the business mix, were used to characterize the changes in the Mahane Yehuda market both consciously and physically. The third research method, involving in-depth interviews with merchants, was used to examine the traders' attitudes and responses to tourism development. The findings indicate that there has been a turnaround in the market image over the past decade and a half. Additionally, there has been a significant physical change in the business mix, reflected by a decline of 15% in the number of stalls selling food products and delicacies. The data from the interviews on the traders' attitudes towards tourism development were inconclusive; there were disagreements among the traders about the economic contribution of tourism development in relation to their dependence on the tourism industry. However, there was a consensus on the need for authentic elements in the marketplace. The findings of the study also indicate a strong link between the merchants' response to tourism development and their stall ownership status as the merchant could exercise their position in various ways depending on the possession type.

Keywords : business mix, Jerusalem, local food markets, Mahane Yehuda market, merchants' attitude, ownership status, retail gentrification, tourism development, traditional urban markets

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