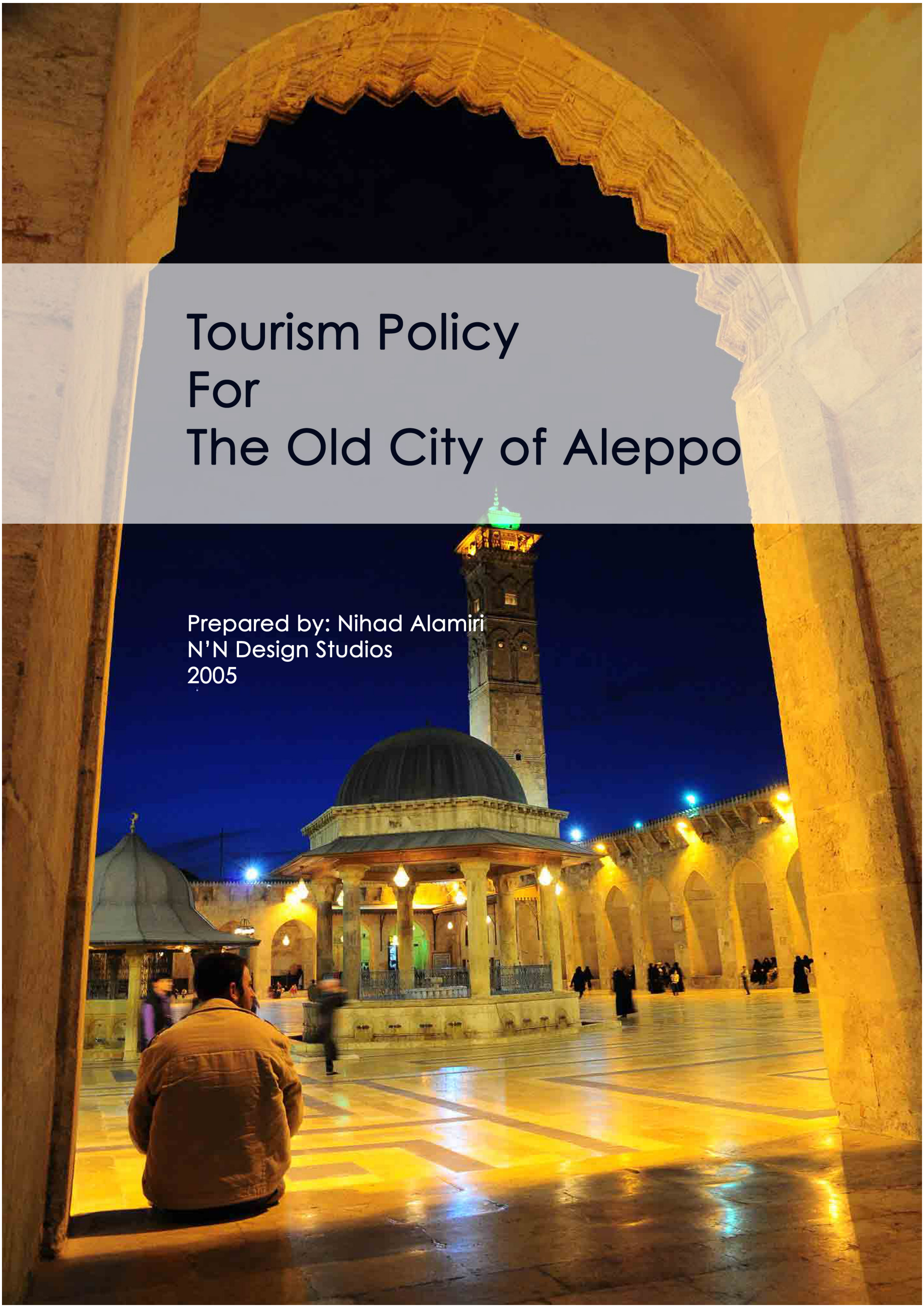
Tourism Policy For The Old City of Aleppo



Prepared by: Nihad Alamiri
N'N Design Studios
2005

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Preface

Mission

At its workshop on September 29 & 30 2003, the Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo ("REHAB") and the City of Aleppo started a consultation process to lead to a policy to develop tourism in the Old City of Aleppo ("OCA"). This reflected the City's belief that its focus on the tourism sector would assist in providing the leadership and attention needed to integrate the development of this industry with the rehabilitation efforts.

Nihad Alamiri ("the Consultant") is the local tourism expert at the German Agency for Technical Cooperation ("GTZ"). He was retained to develop this policy. This work commenced in May, 2005.

The workshop of September 2003 produced the overall goals for tourism development in OCA, which served as a blueprint for this initiative. The overall goals adopted at that time were:

- Maintaining the identity of the Old City and its life styles
- Advancing the local economy
- Combining the interests of the citizens with those of the tourists

The Consultant believes that these goals provide a sound platform on which to build today's Tourism Policy.

Approach

The approach in preparing this document is:

- Goal oriented
- Integrative: Incorporating tourism planning into the mainstream of planning for the economy, conservation, heritage, land use, and infrastructure.
- Market driven: Planning for development that trades successfully in a competitive marketplace.
- Resource driven: Developing assets, which build on the destination’s inherent strengths whilst protecting and enhancing the attributes and experiences of tourism sites.
- Consultative: Incorporating community attitudes, needs and wants to determine what is acceptable to the local population.
- Systematic: Drawing on, primary or secondary research to provide conceptual or predictive support for planners including the experiences of other tourism destinations.

Theoretical Frameworks

This policy adopts two theoretical frameworks:

- Main framework: strategic place marketing (derived from the work of Philip Kotler)
- Secondary framework: competitive advantage (derived from the work of Michael porter)

Main Theoretical framework

The overall structure of this policy is derived from the work produced by Philip Kotler on Strategic Place Marketing, which presents a fresh approach for the revitalization of towns, cities, regions, and nations. Strategic marketing calls for designing a community to satisfy the needs of its key constituencies. Place marketing succeeds when stakeholders such as citizens, workers and business firms derive satisfaction from their community, and when visitors, new businesses and investors find their expectations met. Place marketing, at its core, embraces four activities:

- designing the right mix of community features and services
- setting attractive incentives for the current and potential buyers and users of its goods and services
- delivering a place's products and services in an efficient, accessible way
- promoting the place's values and image so that potential users are fully aware of the place's distinctive advantages"

Place marketing comprises six generic strategies that communities and regions can use to improve their competitive positions:

- attracting tourist and business visitors
- attracting businesses from elsewhere
- retaining and expanding existing businesses
- promoting small business expansion and fostering new business start-ups
- expanding exports and outside investments
- expanding the population or changing the mix of residents

But before a community can embrace some or all of these strategies, it must 'do its homework' in terms of understanding its own competitive advantages and disadvantages; identifying who its target markets are; improving the products and services that it can offer to these target markets; and determining how it can communicate its message to them.

There are six fundamental tasks that needs to be carried out (these tasks are the essence of strategic place marketing, which this policy have adhered to):

- interpreting what is happening in the broad environment
- understanding the needs, wants, and behavior choices of specific internal and external constituencies
- building a realistic vision of what the place can be
- creating an actionable plan to complement the vision
- building internal consensus and effective organization
- evaluating at each stage the progress being achieved with the action plan

Secondary Theoretical framework

We will analyze tourism in Aleppo using a methodology spearheaded by the work of Michael Porter (1989, 1992, 1997) who writes on the requirements for a nation or industry to be internationally competitive.

The diagnostic tool utilized is known as the 'competitiveness diamond' and requires that the economic conditions within which an industry compete be tested against four dimensions which have been found to be strong predictors of competitiveness and success.

Looking at the international competitiveness of the tourism industry is particularly important, as the industry is entirely demand driven. The four dimensions to analyze are:

1. FACTOR CONDITIONS
   These are the basic capital requirements for industry and include natural & cultural resources, people, finance, knowledge, infrastructure and institutions.
2. RELATED AND SUPPORTING INDUSTRIES
   This dimension looks at the value chain of a given industry looking at the existence and strength and proximity of upstream and downstream linkages.
3. DEMAND CONDITIONS
   This dimension looks at local and foreign demand and consumption and questions whether it is supportive of international competitiveness or not.
4. FIRM STRUCTURE, STRATEGY AND RIVALRY
   This dimension looks at the firm level to see the levels of competition, type of management and strategies, amount of innovation and positioning.

The chapter entitled Context: Tourism in Aleppo, will test the Aleppo's tourism industry against these four conditions, as well as the role of government, to assess where the City exhibits competitive and comparative advantages and where its weaknesses and opportunities lie. This will create the basis for the formulation of a City Tourism Policy and an OCA Tourism Policy .

Data Issues

Data collection and information is crucial in such an analysis yet data sources and information are still highly inadequate both with respect to accessibility and reliability.

The data used in this policy originates from three sources: first and largely from the Statistical Abstract of Syria, second from specific consultant reports such as the JICA Studies on the National Tourism Policy, and third from interviews.

Data used exhibits two difficulties, firstly large discrepancies exist between the reporting of the various sources, secondly the data is usually presented at a national level and no reporting mechanism exists for dis-aggregation to a city level.

While such a crude approach is contestable, it is argued that while the resultant data may not absolutely reflect the current status of tourism in Aleppo it is sufficient to be considered indicative of the general status quo, major trends and directions within the city's industry.

As will be seen later, one of the crucial strategies to be undertaken in OCA will be the creation of better data services to overcome this crude approach to statistical analysis.

Significance of Tourism for OCA

This chapter explains why the case of tourism in OCA is important. It covers the following:

- The case of tourism: global growth, recent trends, what others are doing
- The case of OCA: its potential, its problems, how can tourism make things worse, fear of loss of identity and authenticity, role of tourism in constructing/deconstructing identity,
- What REHAB wants

The Case of Tourism

Global Tourism Growth

Across the world, tourism is growing strongly after 3 years of low growth caused by 9/11 and SARS. International arrivals in 2004 were up 10% on 2003, and outward travel from the US and Canada is growing again. The World Tourism Organization is forecasting 4-5% growth until 2020. People are working harder for longer; are wealthier; place increased importance on leisure, health and well being, and continuing education; and are more able to take holidays and travel more frequently than in the past. The internet is increasingly the method of choice to book a holiday. There is sustained growth in domestic and intra-regional travel to a massively greater choice of destinations.

Recent Tourism Trends

Significant tourism trends identified in recent years include:

- The early nineties saw a shift away from 'old tourism' (mass tourism) to 'new' tourism.
    - The four Ss can describe this shift. For mass tourists these four Ss were Sun, Sand, Surf and Sex. For new tourists they became Specialisation, Sophistication, Satisfaction and Segmentation;
    - The acronym `REAL' (Rewarding, Enriching, Adventuresome and Learning) has also been used to describe this change.
- A significant piece of Australian market research conducted for See Australia in 2000 found:
    - "The fundamental stance from which one makes a holiday purchase appears to have changed in the past 15 years. In the mid-eighties, a gap existed between an `acquisitive' mindset and an `experiential' one. The acquisitive traveller collected destinations, souvenirs and status. The main point was to have been there. The experiential travellers, rather, opted for `immersion' in a single destination." (Colmar Brunton, 2000);

In other words, the `experience' has become more important in many respects than the `place'.

What others are doing

There are now over 200 countries offering a tourism product. Our research shows that the world's leading tourism destinations:

- offer a wide product base and a good variety of holiday experiences which are well marketed and offer discovery and experience as key themes
- target growing consumer interest in outdoor activities, cities, culture, well being and business tourism;
- use native / traditional culture and heritage to differentiate themselves from other destinations, and use special events to boost profile and visitor numbers;
- make heavy use of the internet to promote themselves;
- use private/public partnerships to deliver key roles;
- depend on domestic tourism as well as the international market, and campaign to convince local people of the benefits of tourism and to encourage tourist-friendly attitudes.

The Case of OCA

OCA's Potentail

Punch line: OCA is a unique "place" which can offer REAL (Rewarding, Enriching, Adventuresome and Learning) "experiences"

Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. It may have been settled as early as the 7th millennium BC. Its historic center, OCA, covers over 350 hectares and contains over ten thousand traditional courtyard houses, hundreds of historical monuments, and the worlds largest covered souks. One of the best-preserved Islamic cities and a center for tourism in Syria, Old Aleppo was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.

OCA offer many practical advantages to the tourism industry as it possess many elements that create a successful tourism products and attractions. World Heritage listing is one element that offers a clear and recognizable brand with an international profile, while also reinforces ideas of authenticity.

OCA's Problem

Due to changing demographics of Syrian society and changes in living preferences of today's Syrians, the OCA had seen an exodus of middle and upper classes laving much of the housing to abandonment or for use by migrating low income families. the result is an acutely depressed place that has lost its vitality and that is loosing its stock of old buildings many of which are distinctive in character and have historic value.

The tourism stakeholders, on the city level, are concerned that tourism can make things worse for OCA. The following impacts of tourism on OCA were identified by participants in the first tourism policy workshop on November 2003.

Socio-cultural impacts

Globalization

One requirement of today's international tourism is diversity of its product. However, this diversity is under constant threat by the power of globalization to bring everything to the same level, and tourism is one globalizing influence which might initiate dramatic and irreversible changes towards values that are alien to the culture of our local communities.

Disneyfication

Tourists increasingly seek exotic and often unique cultural spectacles and experiences, and are willing to pay a premium to do so. But the very presence of tourists can chip away at local culture and essentially re-invent it to fit the exigencies of the tourism industry. The result is that host communities find culture and traditions under threat from the purchasing power of the tourism industry. Neither are tourists better off from the cultural viewpoint. Instead of getting rich and authentic cultural insights and experiences, tourists get "staged authenticity"; instead of getting exotic culture, they get kitsch.

Citizens versus tourists

Perhaps the most obvious conflict is between tourist and host. This is in part engendered by the fundamental difference in goals: while the tourist is engaged in leisure, the host is engaged in work. While the tourist arrives with loads of expectations, many of the local stakeholders often have no idea of what to expect. Some cultures adopt positively to external influences while others cannot.

Inconsiderate neighboring-related behavior

Typical problems include inconsiderate behavior. For example, opening up the night life and ensuring tourists that they get all the freedom they want can generate income but can also cause resentment from neighboring residential population.

Economic Impacts

Globalization

Local services might be forced out to make way for the often persuasive and economically powerful developers and operators of the international - mainly first world - tourism services; this includes everything from fast food restaurants to airlines, hotels, tour operators… etc. Hence, most tourist spending on services will benefit foreign companies.

Gentrification

When certain areas attract tourism, land values increase and infrastructure developments begin. Outsiders begin buying land and establishing their own operations on a larger scale than the locals. Local people might still benefit economically by working as employees, however, the bulk of the income goes to a small number of people outside the local community.

Touristification of artisans

The increase of crafts sales by tourism can be accompanied by a deterioration of products. Shops will start to sell expensive low quality products, which no longer take into account local characteristics, excellence, and design.

Impacts on the built & natural environments

Tourism can add to the traffic congestion, crowding, sanitation, pollution and other environmental problems in the old city.

Insensitive reuse of monuments and old buildings

Excessive exploitation of heritage sites by tourism is regarded as a major risk, especially for physically fragile sites which attract flocks of tourists, and sites where tourist facilities are few or inadequate. Excessive use of monuments has been criticized on the grounds that it may rob the Old City of its traditional cultural landmarks and destroy the authenticity and significance of the local heritage.

Insensitive transformation of the old urban fabric

The rush to providing tourist facilities when not matched with good planning and financial ability can lead to building facilities with poor locations and mediocre design, which in turn can seriously harm the quality and authenticity of the urban landscapes.

Difficult service

The absence of minimum services for attraction points may do tourism a disservice. The most popular architectural sites can do much better by being fitted out with clean toilets and at least basic refreshment facilities. Access roads to sites are not always easy to use. Lack of sign and information aids does not help independent tourists.

No.1 fear: loss of identity and authenticity of OCA

Significance of the Identity of OCA

Improved knowledge of the identity of OCA can contribute to the maintenance and advancement of existing places and the creation of new places. To do so requires that the OCA be understood, not only in terms of physical and functional attractiveness, but more importantly as a phenomenon of personal experience.

Certainly, the perception among local people that they live in a distinctive landscape is essential to their creation of community and a well-defined sense of place, (Caneday and Zeiger 1991; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995). This social milieu supplies the contextual framework for collective acts of spatial organization and behavioral experience, whereby residents establish a place of their own making and acquire a localized "way of life" and a "way of seeing" (Yeoh and Kong 1996: 53).

Tourism, perhaps more than any other business, is based on the production, re-production and re-enforcement of images (Oakes 1993). These images serve to project the attractiveness and uniqueness of the place into the lives of consumers and, if successful, assist in the construction of a network of attractions referred to as a destination. OCA offer many practical advantages to the tourism industry as it possess many elements that create a successful tourism products and attractions. World Heritage listing is one element that offers a clear and recognizable brand with an international profile, while also reinforces ideas of authenticity. There are other elements, of course. This section is dedicated to exploring these elements.

Authenticity of OCA

The notion of space being not real is perhaps easiest to understand in the context of heritage, where the appeal of nostalgia dictates that what is offered to the tourist is authentically restricted.

What can be classified as authentic in OCA? What's authentic is what's real, true, and original. Using this simple definition as a lens; we can note the followings:

- The majority of heritage in OCA have changed. Building use and land use have changed, and heritage objects have acquired new meanings and functions, which "overwrite" their original significance.
- OCA changed from being a model of an affluent Islamic society into the opposite. The original resident population was drawn to the modern and comfortable housing outside OCA, leaving the building stock to the poor immigrants from the country side. A cycle of deterioration started as low return on investment discouraged landlords and/or the new poor population from undertaking repairs so that the standard of housing declined even further. That was also accompanied by a considerable fall in the population of OCA well below its state at the beginning of the 20th century. In general, OCA is now occupied by the poor, with the exception of some gentrified parts; i.e. Jdeideh. Gentrified areas are limited and discrete and generally involve the renovation of old houses to restaurants and hotels (again new functions and meanings).
- The population mindset has changed. The original population had its highly respectable values, plus fro them OCA was the "home" they cared about. The current population doesn't have any memory or pride associated with OCA, they are new here, they don't share the same value system, and they are over occupied with survival.

- The complexities of social life are washed out and replaced with promotional gestures that fuse with the evocative expectations of the visitor.
- The OCA as a place to live and visit, which is of World Heritage status, must be safe, clean and pleasing. In fulfilling such conditions, each artifact has to be displaced from its historical landing stage and will effectively become different.
- Judgmentally, the reality of OCA is likely to be evaluated aesthetically rather than scientifically or morally. As a priority it must "look right" irrespective of historical verisimilitude, cultural validity or moral probity. It must be "pretty as a picture."
- Reproduction of the past, in the way that is taking place in Jdeideh, has no historical authenticity and it evokes a sense of a past that never was. These are spaces that are self-evidently real but, in being faithful to no antecedent circumstances, exhibit a heightened reality framed by the systematic collection, in one place, of aesthetically evocative stimuli.
- Two things have remained real in OCA. The first is the building stock, thanks to the UNESCO protection. The second is the souqs.

In attempting to maintain what is left of tangible authentic heritage, the OCA, like any other similar place, should engage in programs of "clean up", renovation, and adaptive reuse.

For local economic development (including tourism); reconstruction is the password to survival. It seems now obligatory, if high income residents and visitors expectations are to be met, then OCA must embark on aesthetic reconstruction and ultra modern reuse.

Role of tourism in constructing/deconstructing identity

Tourism has an active role in creating a place's identity and reconstructing its history, and sometimes eliminating that history. This is achieved through the medium of place representation.

Tourism differentiates space in a perpetual attempt to attract and keep its market share. In the face of growing global cultural homogenization, local tourist agencies strive to assert their spatial distinctiveness and cultural particularities in a bid to market each place as an attractive tourist destination. This is achieved:

- intentionally, by commercialization of the "products" of the local culture in the form of souvenirs, postcards, brochures, advertisements, press releases, travel agent promotions and education… etc,
- unintentionally, as an effect of autonomous events such as the locational shooting of a film or television soap operas .

These objects are not necessarily products of real or functional cultures or communities but are imaginary and grounded in myth. As is common in the tourist industry, space and time are produced and reproduced through stretching and mixing.

The socio-spatial portrayals of reality produced by the tourism industry can be problematic from the viewpoint of the local inhabitants, as the images often express the values of a non-local tourism industry.

What REHAB Wants?

REHAB wants the kind of tourism development that helps improve the OCA’s currency as a place to live, work, invest, and visit.

Context: Tourism in Aleppo

This chapter uses the theory on competitive advantage as a diagnostic tool to analyze tourism in Aleppo. The following issues are investigated:

- Demand conditions
- Factor conditions
- Structure of the tourism industry
- Strategies
- Related and supporting industries
- Role of government
- Domestic rivalry
- International competition
- Spread effect of package tourist spending

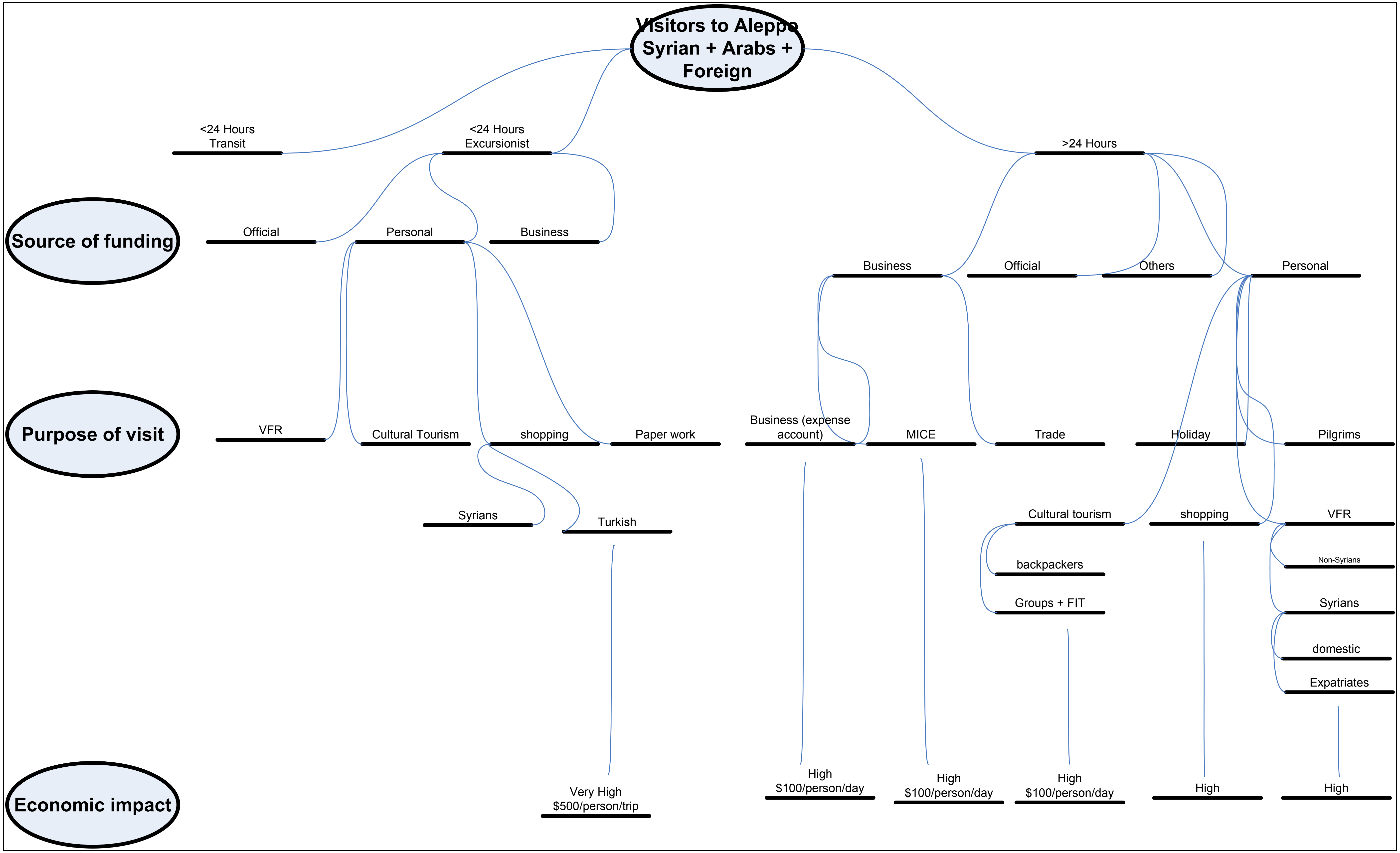
Demand Conditions

This section presents a comparison of Aleppo's s segments of visitors according to their purpose of visit, and the economic potential each holds for the city. Unfortunately, up-to-date and accurate statistics on numbers of visitors, hotel guests, and hotel nights for each segment are not available.

Segment structure of demand

The diagram on the next page displays the structure of demand

Diagram of Aleppo Visitors' segments



Day trippers (less than 24 hours trip)

Transit

Transit traffic is assigned a low economic potential because of the brief length of stay and minimal expenditure.

Excursionists

- Official
- Business
- Personal
    - Shopping
    - Paper work
    - Cultural tourists:
    - Shopping
        - Syrians
        - Turkish

          Number of visitors from turkey is growing rapidly, and the majority are arriving by land, see the tables below. Aleppo is the closest major city to Turkey and it is the number one choice for business and shopping. Again, the main driver is the affordability of everyday goods.

Turkish arrivals to Syria 1999 - 2003

Nationality	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Turkish	470,900	467,648	281,459	182,801	186,770

Turkish arrivals to Syria by means of transport, 2003

Nationality	Means of Transport			
	Total	By Air	By Sea	By Land
Turkish	470,900	5,355	436	465,109

Arab & foreign arrivals from Turkish boarders by centers & months , 2003

Boarder Centers	Arrivals	estimated No of Turkish Visitors	estimated Turkish shoppers who visit Aleppo
Bab Al-Hawa	291,529	233,223	163,256
Al-Salameh	221,673	177,338	124,137
Kasab	19,864	15,891	
Al-Kamishly	123,910	99,128	
Tal Abyad	23,685	18,948	
Jarablos	25,639	20,511	
total	706,300	565,040	287,393

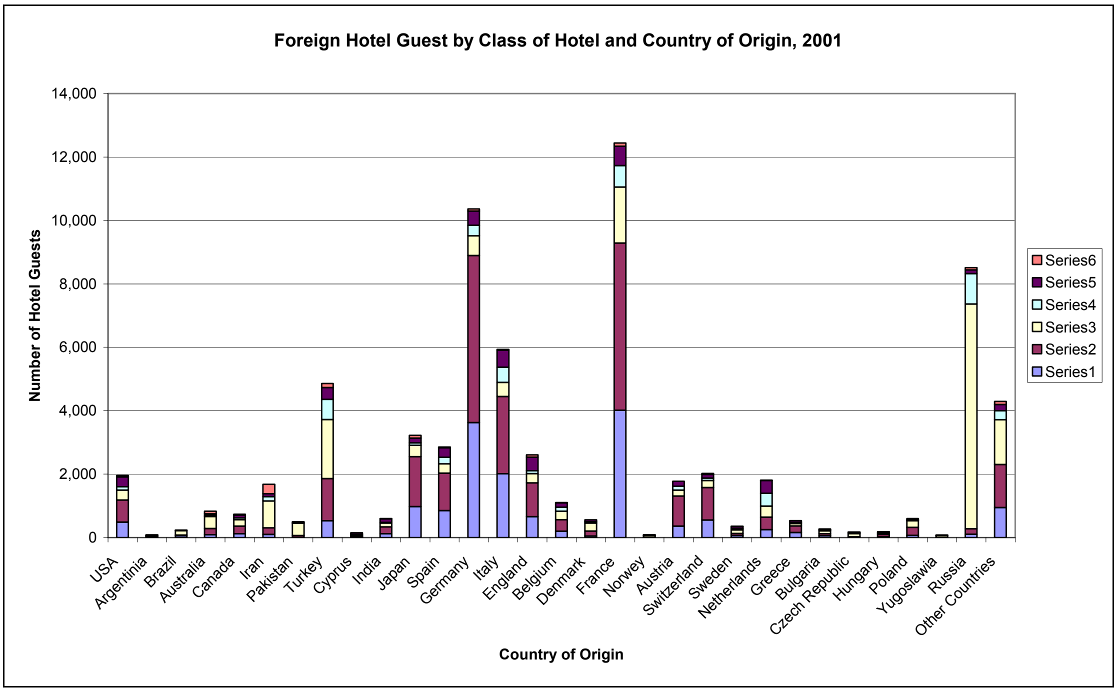
Source: Statistical Abstract 2004, N'N calculations.

Tourists (more than 24 hours trip)

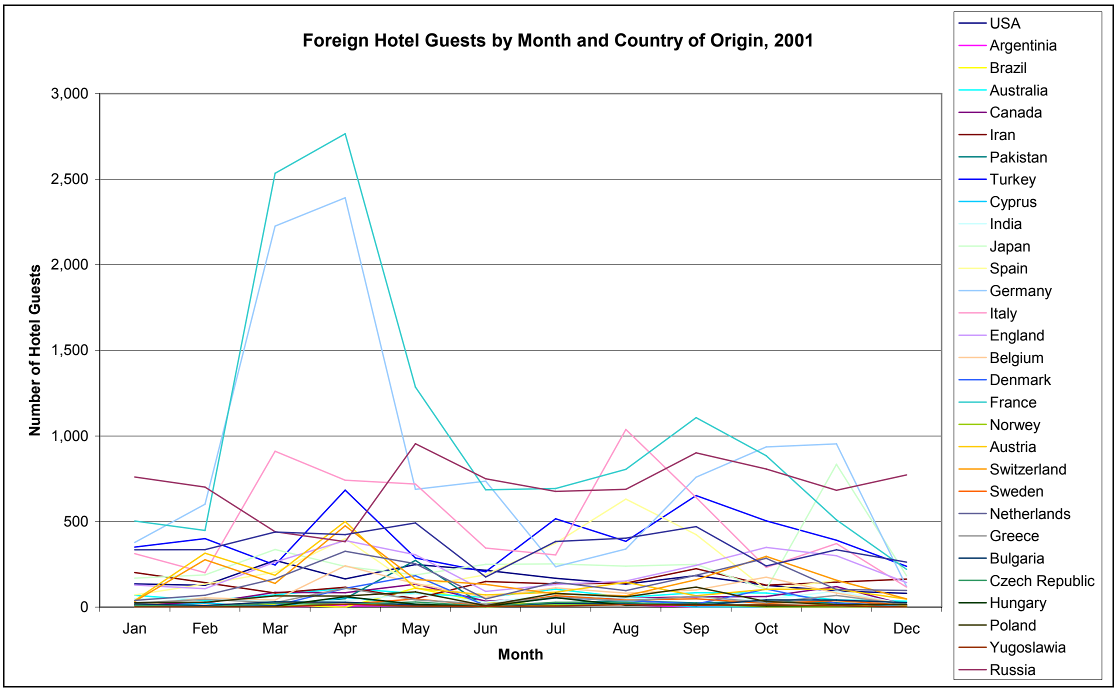
Cultural Tourists

Originating in the high income **OECD** countries, the volume of these visitors was rising substantially during the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, their numbers started to drop at the turn of the century, mainly due to world and regional disturbances; i.e. 9-11 terror attacks, the 2nd gulf war, the Palestinian intifada …etc. Tourists comprise two general classifications:

- Backpackers or Independent travelers: they travel alone or in small groups of friends. Many independent travelers are young, adventurous, willing to use rustic accommodations, eat traditional foods, and take public transport. They get much of their information either from friends who have visited the area or through guidebooks, newspaper and magazine articles, or, increasingly, from the Internet. Many in the tourism industry discount these tourists because they tend to travel cheaply, falling into the category of the budget-conscious "backpacking crowd". In reality, independent travelers are "explorers" who are often responsible for popularizing a destination. Their financial input is often enough to enable local businesses to expand and improve rustic accommodations for more demanding tourist groups.
- The general package-holiday groups and FIT: These tourists tend to be interested in general sightseeing and cultural attractions such as the citadel, the museum, and the souqs. Tourists in this market tend to want the standard services and amenities offered by most general tours. They want comfort, ease of access, security and more upscale accommodations and food. Package tours from France, Italy, and Germany dominate the market. Package tour accounts for around 75% of tourists from OECD countries. Most of them arrive on scheduled flights from Europe to Damascus or alternatively by tours from Lebanon or Jordan. This segment has two peak seasons: the spring and the fall. The current economic impact of the package tourists is not high in Aleppo since they spend 1.5 nights and 2 days on average. However, their potential is high due to their high spending power.



Source: MOT data, N'N chart.



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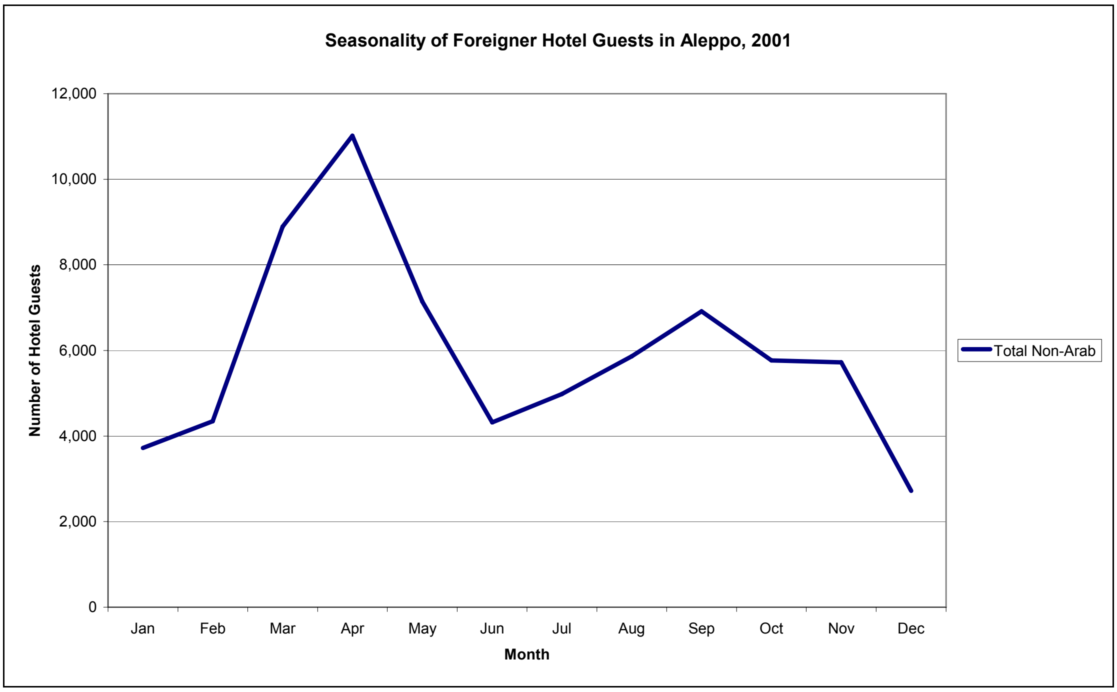


Source: MOT data, N'N chart.

Business

This segment responds to factors largely beyond the control of MOT or REHAB. The strength of the business segment is generally related to the openness of Syria's economy and her overall business environment; it is not related to tourist attractions.

The lucrative MICE market is currently quite limited, but can be actively promoted as the Syrian economy develops more business links with foreign companies and international agencies. It is assigned a high economic potential.

The trade sub-segment is represented by traders from Russia and Eastern Europe. Tradesmen from these countries buy merchandise and apparel for export abroad. Despite their relatively large numbers, this segment is of great importance to Aleppo's international trade but not to its travel industry. Aleppo's tourist industry complains of the minimal expenditure of this segment, hence, its outlook is designated as only fair and future economic potential low.

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)

The segment of friends & relatives is a function of the wealth of Syria's Diaspora and the strength of family ties. It is assigned fair economic potential.

Holiday

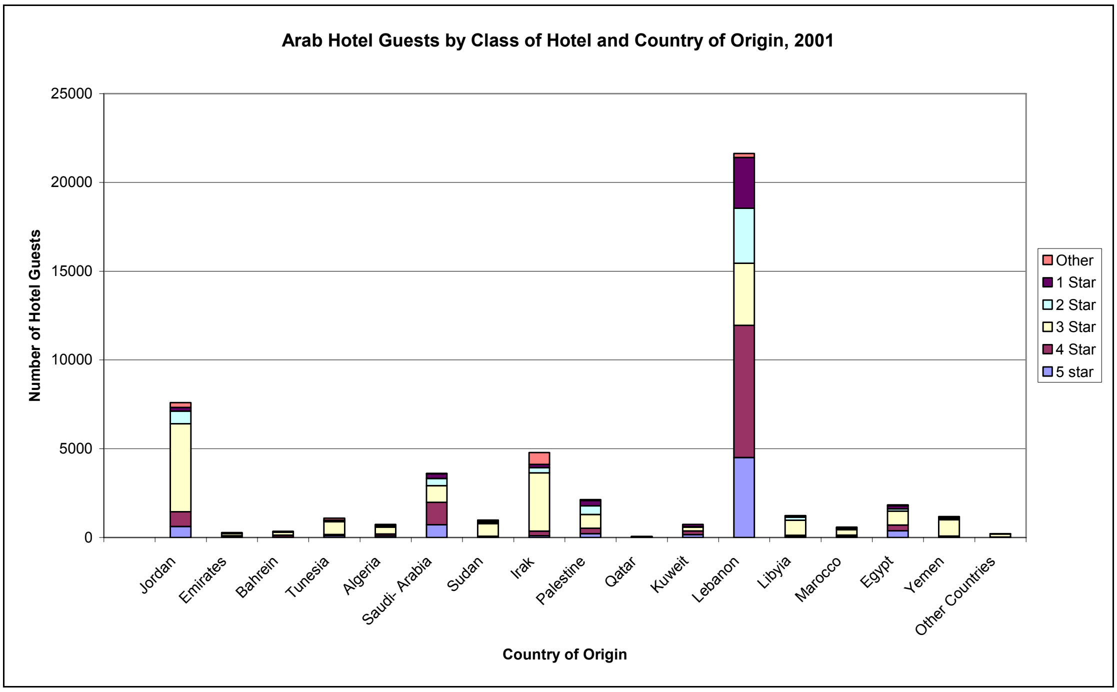
The Arab holiday segment from the GCC countries does not visit Aleppo in general. This segment favors the resorts of the sea side and the mountains, of which Aleppo has none to offer. While representing substantial economic earnings for Syria, has an uncertain outlook because of the competitive effect of Lebanon which has re-established its position as a tourist destination.

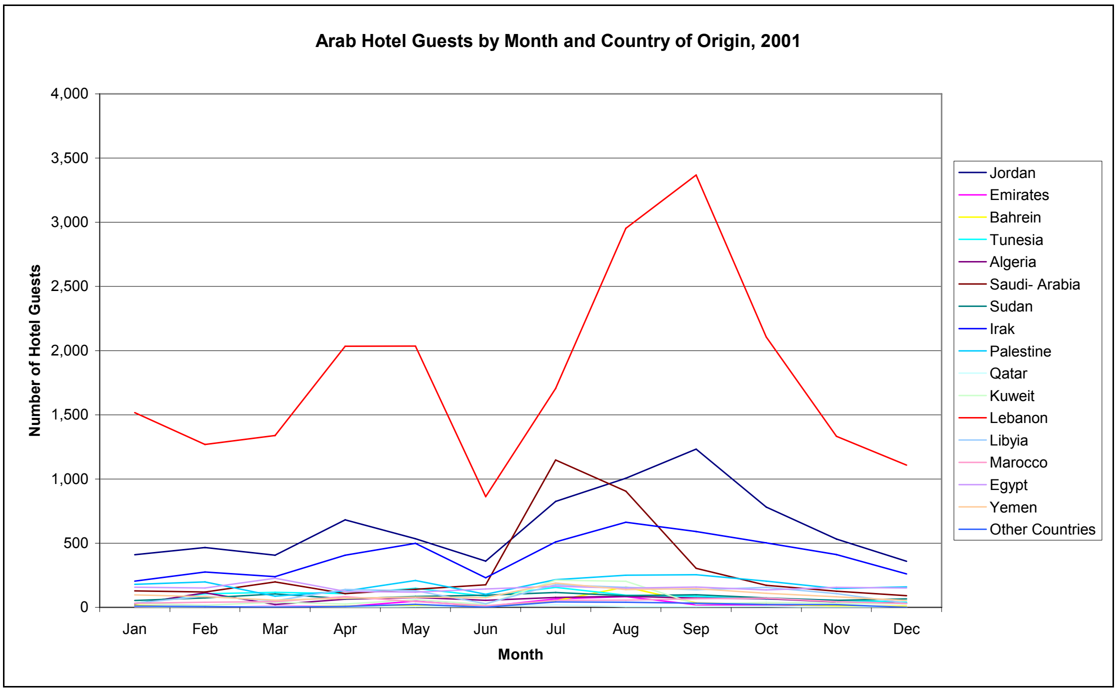
Pilgrims from Iran:

The segment of Muslim pilgrims consists of visitors from Iran. Average spending per day per pilgrim is reported to be quite low. It is assigned low economic potential since it represents a special form of religious tourism which in the case of Iranian pilgrims, is managed by government accords

Shopping (Turkish and Lebanese)

The number of hotel guests from Lebanon is heavily dominant (see the next graph). A considerable proportion of Lebanese visitors come to Aleppo for shopping, due to relative affordability of everyday goods in comparison with Lebanon. Still, Aleppo does not stand up well to Damascus which is becoming an increasingly popular weekend destination for Beirut and Amman, due to its unique privilege of being the only major city within easy reach of these national capitals.





Source: MOT data, N'N chart.

Home Demand Composition

Home demand is composed of two main segments:

- The Syrian Expatriates market: A substantial number of Syrians come from abroad (i.e. from the GCC) to spend the summer with their families. Because of their number and long period of stay the economic impact of this segment is high.
- Domestic Market: Major domestic tourism activities in Syria are recognized as follows:
  - Beach and mountain holidays in summer (Tartous, Latakia, Zabadani, Kassab, Suleifeh, etc.)
  - Visiting nearby holiday sites on weekends (Zabadani, Bludan, etc.).
  - Picnicking to the outskirts of cities on weekends (Zabadani, Bludan, Gouta, etc.);
  - Visiting cultural sites nearby (museums, theaters, cultural centers, etc.);
  - Visiting recreation or amusement parks.

Present situation of Syrian domestic tourists[1] in Aleppo is summarized below:

- The number of Syrian hotel guests who stayed at hotels and hostels in Aleppo was counted at 148,745 in 2003, while the number was 350,000 in 1988.
- The number of Syrian hotel tourist nights in Aleppo was 217,262 nights in 2003, which declined from 479,847 nights in 1988.
- Aleppo hosts over 20% of total number of Syrian domestic tourists in Syria.
- Peak season for Syrian domestic tourists in Aleppo is the summer.
- Syrian domestic tourists consist of three types, business, holiday and excursion purposes. Most of the travels to Aleppo are for business purpose.
- Syrian domestic cultural tourism is rather limited. In general, Aleppo does not receive a lot of attention from both Syrian cultural tourists and MOT.

It is argued that the number of actual Syrian's tourists increased during the same period, mentioned above, reflecting the economic growth and income increase. Main reasons for this discrepancy can be explained as follows:

- Hotel accommodation charges are set relatively expensive for Syrians.
- Business day travelers increased partly because of the improvement in transport infrastructures and they no longer need to stay overnight in hotels.

[1] See the tables on the next pages for comparison with other Syrian cities.

Syrian Hotel Guests by Months & Mohafazat, 2003

MOHAFAZAT	Total	December	November	October	September	August	July	June	May	April	March	February	January
Damascus	293673	26376	15815	25054	30629	31040	30171	23497	22017	19119	22666	20799	26490
Damascus Rural	1841	147	178	–	148	346	120	196	321	143	119	56	67
Aleppo	148745	13735	9122	16523	15877	16499	14653	10041	9531	9410	10522	9691	13141
Homs	28181	1803	1895	2469	3709	3172	3559	1782	2222	1685	1715	2171	1999
Hama	16391	1489	762	1309	1713	1780	1729	1032	2383	943	1285	874	1092
Latakia	99206	3962	4947	3995	17872	23958	11200	8095	6467	4411	3106	7205	3988
Deir - ez - zor	14330	610	878	807	1297	1130	1554	1384	1552	1492	1425	1010	1191
Idleb	1977	147	85	182	179	206	180	163	116	150	141	179	249
Al- Hasakeh	17596	2018	1123	1434	1676	1727	1595	1374	1021	1327	1393	1503	1405
Al-Rakkah	10601	1150	512	969	871	1132	1049	570	859	1475	779	534	701
Sweida	257	11	11	21	18	15	70	40	20	16	9	14	12
Dar'a	1051	16	24	120	314	119	76	116	39	57	39	53	78
Tartous	45027	2186	2112	3155	6240	8416	6421	3819	3411	3112	1845	2201	2109
Quneitra	0	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	678876	53650	37464	56038	80543	89540	72377	52109	49959	43340	45044	46290	52522

Nights Spent At Hotels by Syrian Guests, By Months & Mohafazat, 2003

	Total	December	November	October	September	August	July	June	May	April	March	February	January
Damascus	473023	41721	25933	40876	48472	48839	48565	37710	36649	32181	36192	33484	42401
Damascus Rural	3618	171	268	–	224	571	1288	220	383	196	174	56	67
Aleppo	217261	19107	14092	22936	22943	23100	20735	14982	13858	14163	16562	14854	19929
Homs	42474	2723	3123	3902	5692	5853	5511	2422	3017	2378	2361	2986	2506
Hama	25412	2163	1231	2169	2560	3065	1729	1722	3481	1709	2022	1621	1940
Latakia	161796	5118	6663	12945	28500	37421	19890	16837	9226	6196	3817	9311	5872
Deir - ez - zor	18285	765	1065	1810	1495	1401	1782	1568	1958	1669	2097	1208	1467
Idleb	2519	171	110	231	227	326	180	163	224	202	178	216	291
Al- Hasakeh	23975	2244	1658	2089	2191	2394	2039	1713	1839	1977	2014	1735	2082
Al-Rakkah	17821	1589	697	1612	1745	1896	1442	1074	1856	1475	1649	1331	1455
Sweida	344	18	14	33	26	27	78	45	25	18	13	27	20
Dar'a	1801	34	33	141	747	179	187	131	66	62	61	67	93
Tartous	63419	2824	2417	3753	8688	14854	10326	4777	4364	3712	2086	2970	2648
Quneitra	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	1051748	78648	57304	92497	123510	139926	113752	83364	76946	65938	69226	69866	80771

Nights Spent By Syrian Guests by Hotel's Class & Mohafazat, 2003

MOHAFAZAT/Hotel class	Total	Hostel	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Stars
Damascus	473023	25520	160812	120405	42198	77054	47034
Damascus Rural	3618	–	–	1231	139	1397	851
Aleppo	217261	7250	96111	30211	22732	37623	23334
Homs	42474	784	5045	7608	7677	13639	7721
Hama	25412	5448	5350	12546	–	–	2068
Latakia	161796	2522	12076	15865	9579	14122	107632
Deir - ez - zor	18285	–	8825	4145	2016	–	3299
Idleb	2519	–	–	1326	–	1193	–
Al- Hasakeh	23975	–	17910	6065	–	–	–
Al-Rakkah	17821	3573	2832	3552	7864	–	–
Sweida	344	–	–	344	–	–	–
Dar'a	1801	–	–	397	–	1404	–
Tartous	63419	10763	4516	8403	20074	19663	–
Quneitra	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	1051748	55860	313477	212098	112279	166095	191939

Comparison of Selected Market Segments

Segment	Cultural Tourists	GCC holiday	Expatriates holiday	MICE + Business Expense Account	Russian Tradesmen	Lebanese shoppers	Turkish shoppers	Moslem Pilgrims
Typical length of stay in Aleppo	1 -2 days On tours	Not known	30 – 60 days	3 – 5 days	Not known	Not known	1 day	Not known
Estimate size	50,000	3,000	Not available	Not available	<10,000	30,000	> 250,000	Not available
Aleppo's key attractions	Antiquities, Arab culture, Shopping	None	Family ties in Aleppo of overseas Syrians	Business opportunities	Aleppo's variety-affordability of merchandise	Business ties, entertainment, shopping, family ties	Aleppo's variety-affordability of merchandise	Holy spot in Aleppo, near the broadcasting tower
Competing nations	Jordan, Turkey, Egypt	Lebanon. Jordan, Egypt	Not relevant	Middle East nations	Istanbul, Dubai	None	None	None
Competitive strengths	The Citadel, souqs, OCA	None	Not relevant	Ancient sites. OCA, Shopping	Low cost of doing business in Aleppo	Good shopping, affordably priced goods	Good shopping, affordably priced goods	None
Competitive weaknesses	Poor image of Syria in OECD	No attractive resort areas,	Dull entertainment life	Limited local market for meetings & events	Growing regional competition	Long drive to the boarders		Iraq
Segment's spending power (high / fair / low)	High per usage of hotel tour services (often $ 100 / day)	High per usage of hotel	High per long stay, big spenders, like to dine out.	High per usage of lodging, meeting services (typically $ 100 per day)	Low to moderate	All levels	All levels + very high per trip ($500 per trip)	Low
Key recent factors	Increased flows 200% increase 2004-2005	Reopening of Lebanon to tourism		Growing participation of Syria in regional, world agencies	Visa restrictions on young female visitors		Growing numbers are life in Turkey is getting more expensive	Shrine upgrading opening of Iran
Outlook (good / fair / uncertain)	Good	Uncertain per rising Lebanese competition + limited potential of Aleppo		Fair	Fair	Uncertain per escalating relations with Lebanon	Good	Uncertain
Economic potential	High	Low	Fair	High	Low	Fair	Very high	Low

Note: Estimates size of segments is inexact and shown for indicative purposes only.

Demand size and patterns of change

Hotel Guests

Aleppo is estimated to have had around 350,000 hotel guests[2] in 2004. The city's share of hotel guests is roughly estimated at about 17.8% of Syria's total (MOT, 2005). Exact statistics are not available at the time of preparing this document.

Guests by Hotel's Class, in Aleppo, 2003

Origin	Class of hotel						
	Total	Hostel	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 Stars
Arabs	77,311	1,291	39,367	8,647	6,953	16,277	4,776
Foreigners	57,708	2,107	26,062	3,985	6,948	11,454	7,152
Syrians	148,745	4,758	70,102	20,550	14,586	21,841	16,908
Total	283,764	8,156	135,531	33,182	28,487	49,572	28,836

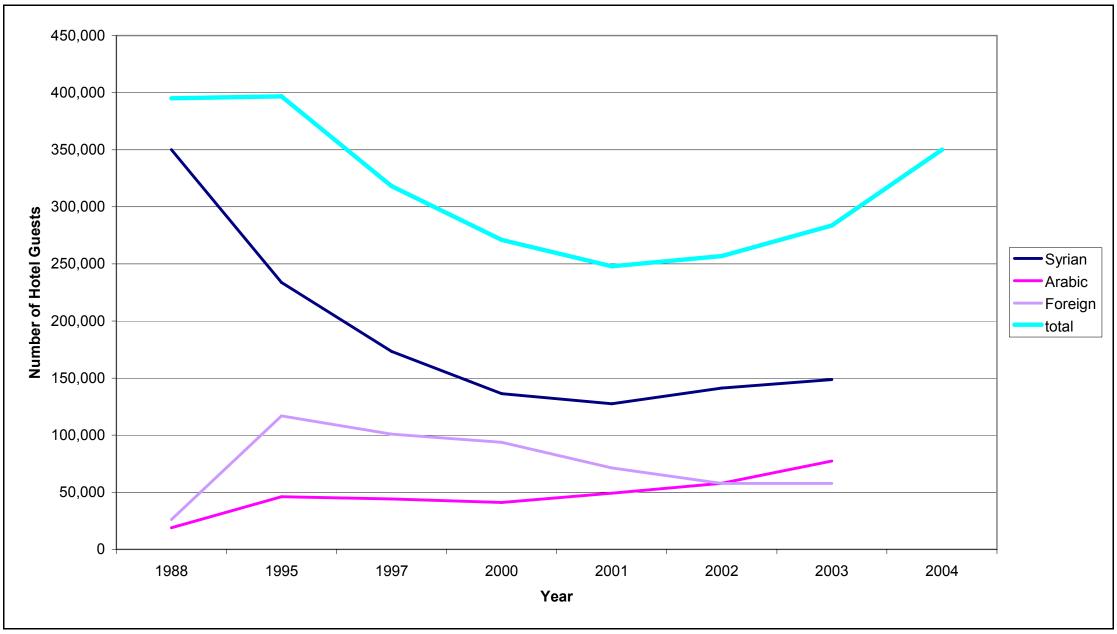
Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004.

Guests by Hotel's Class, in Aleppo, 2001

Origin	Class of hotel						
	Total	Other	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 star
Arabs	49,030	1,616	4,505	5,720	18,803	11,241	7,145
Foreigners	71,400	1,261	4,976	5,117	18,595	24,929	16,522
Syrians	127,598	6,816	13,636	18,929	55,457	20,440	12,320
Total	248,028	9,693	23,117	29,766	92,855	56,610	35,987

Source: MOT.

Hotel Guest in Aleppo 1988-2004



Source: varied sources, N'N graph

[2] Please note that the same guest may stay in more than one hotel, hence would be counted more than once and the number of hotel-tourists may be smaller than the number given above.

Hotel Nights

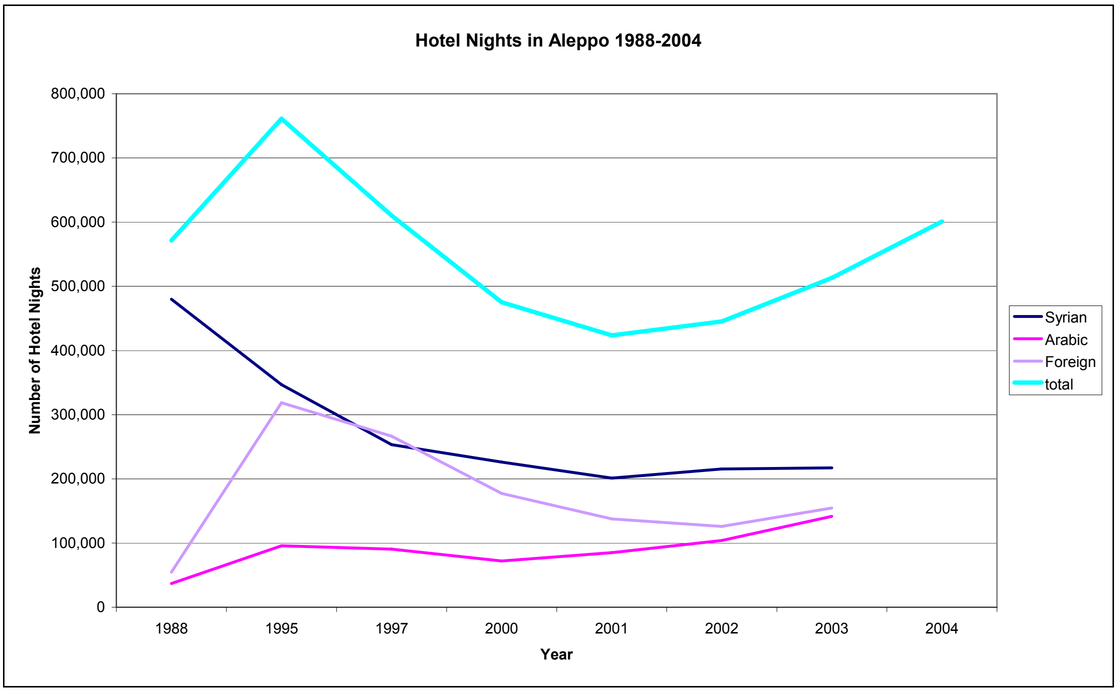
Aleppo is estimated to have had around 601,000 hotel nights in 2004. Aleppo's share of hotel nights is roughly around 6.54% of Syria's total (MOT, 2005). Exact statistics are not available to us at the moment.

Nights Spent By Guests by Hotel's Class, in Aleppo, 2003

Guest	Class of hotel						
	Total	Hostel	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5stars
Syrians	217,261	7,250	96,111	30,211	22,732	37,623	23,334
Foreigners	154,400	4,335	83,589	10,130	16,984	29,912	9,450
Arabs	141,401	2,234	77,943	14,094	12,420	27,882	6,828
Total	513,062	13,819	257,643	54,435	52,136	95,417	39,612

Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004.

Hotel Nights in Aleppo 1988-2004



Source: varied sources, N'N graph

Length of Stay

Estimated length of stay in Aleppo is 1.7 nights per hotel guest in 2004 while national average is 4.7 nights per hotel guest in 2004 (MOT, 2005)

Duration of Stay by Hotel Class in Aleppo 2003

Guest	Class Of Hotel						
	Total	Hostel	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5stars
Syrians	2.81	5.62	2.44	3.49	3.27	2.31	4.89
Foreigners	2.68	2.06	3.21	2.54	2.44	2.61	1.32
Arabs	0.95	0.47	1.11	0.69	0.85	1.28	0.40
Overall	1.81	1.69	1.90	1.64	1.83	1.92	1.37

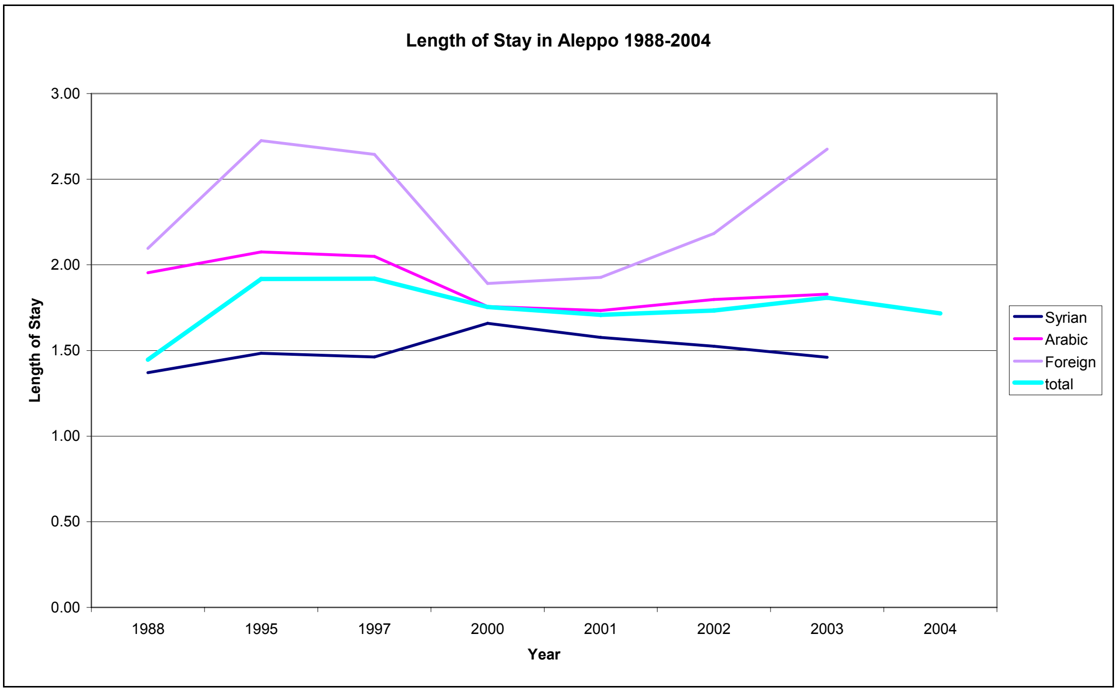
Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004.

Length of Stay in Aleppo 1988-2004

Guest	Year							
	1988	1995	1997	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Syrian	1.37	1.48	1.46	1.66	1.58	1.52	1.46	
Arabic	1.95	2.08	2.05	1.76	1.73	1.80	1.83	
Foreign	2.10	2.72	2.64	1.89	1.93	2.18	2.68	
Overall	1.45	1.92	1.92	1.75	1.71	1.73	1.81	1.72

Source: varied sources, N’N calculations

Length of Stay in Aleppo 1988-2004



Source: varied sources, N’N graph

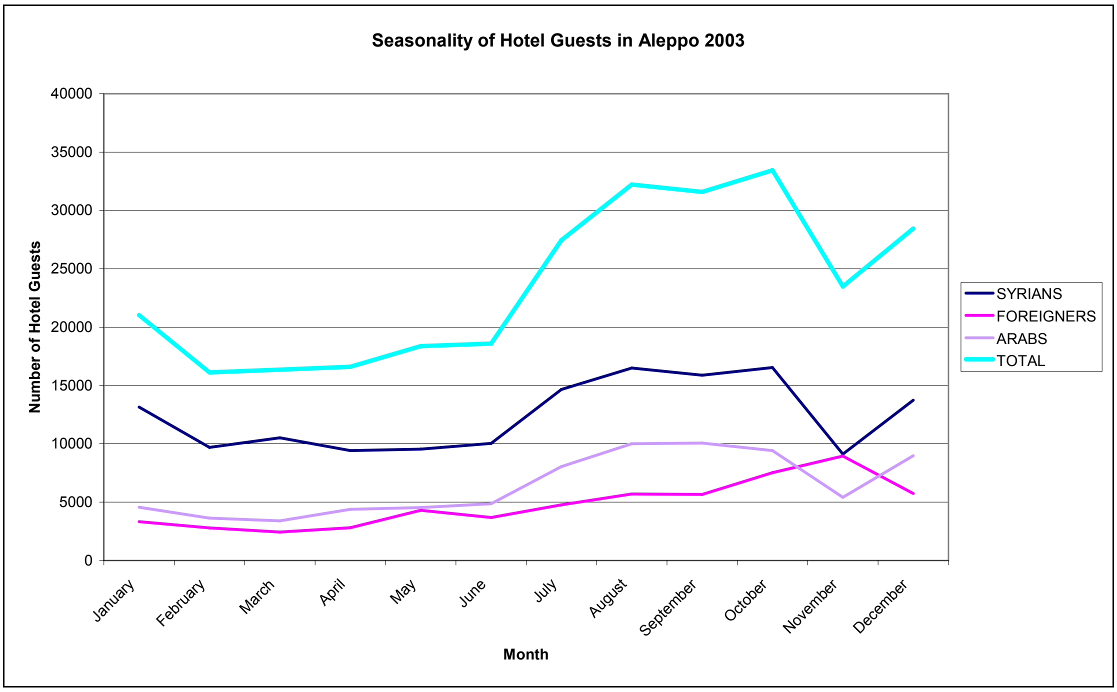
Seasonality

Hotel Guests in Aleppo, By Month, 2003

	SYRIANS	FOREIGNERS	ARABS	TOTAL
January	13141	3325	4570	21036
February	9691	2803	3636	16130
March	10522	2437	3405	16364
April	9410	2814	4388	16612
May	9531	4301	4541	18373
June	10041	3687	4862	18590
July	14653	4763	8039	27455
August	16499	5708	10005	32212
September	15877	5647	10073	31597
October	16523	7521	9407	33451
November	9122	8952	5409	23483
December	13735	5750	8976	28461
TOTAL	148745	57708	77311	283764

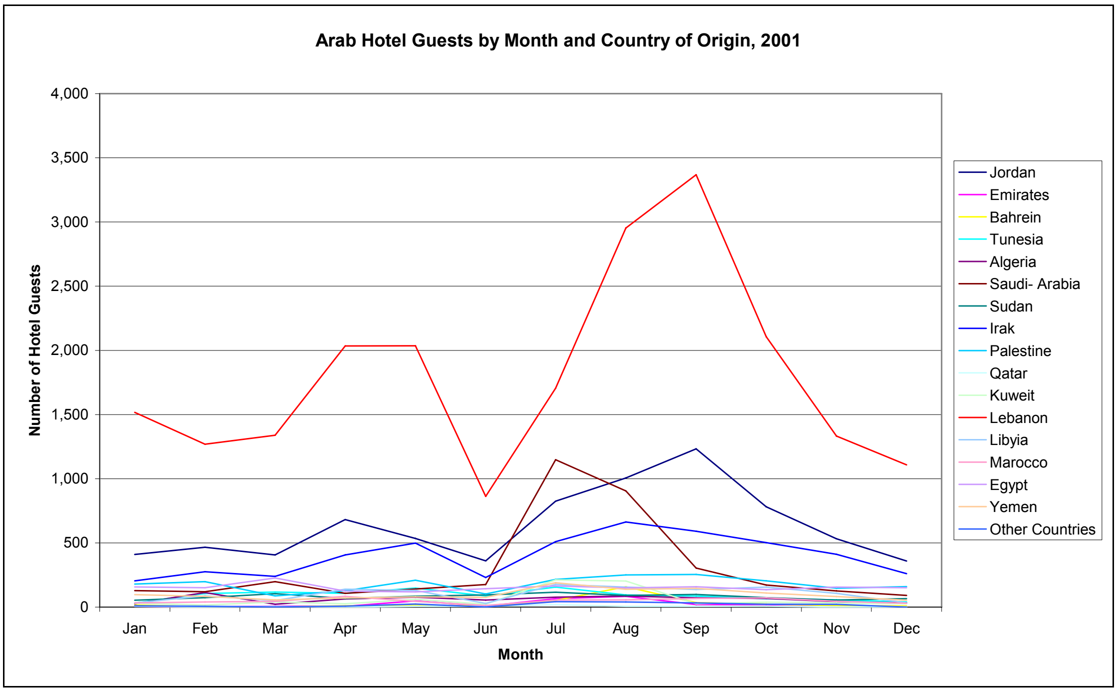
Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004

Seasonality of hotel guests in Aleppo in 2003.



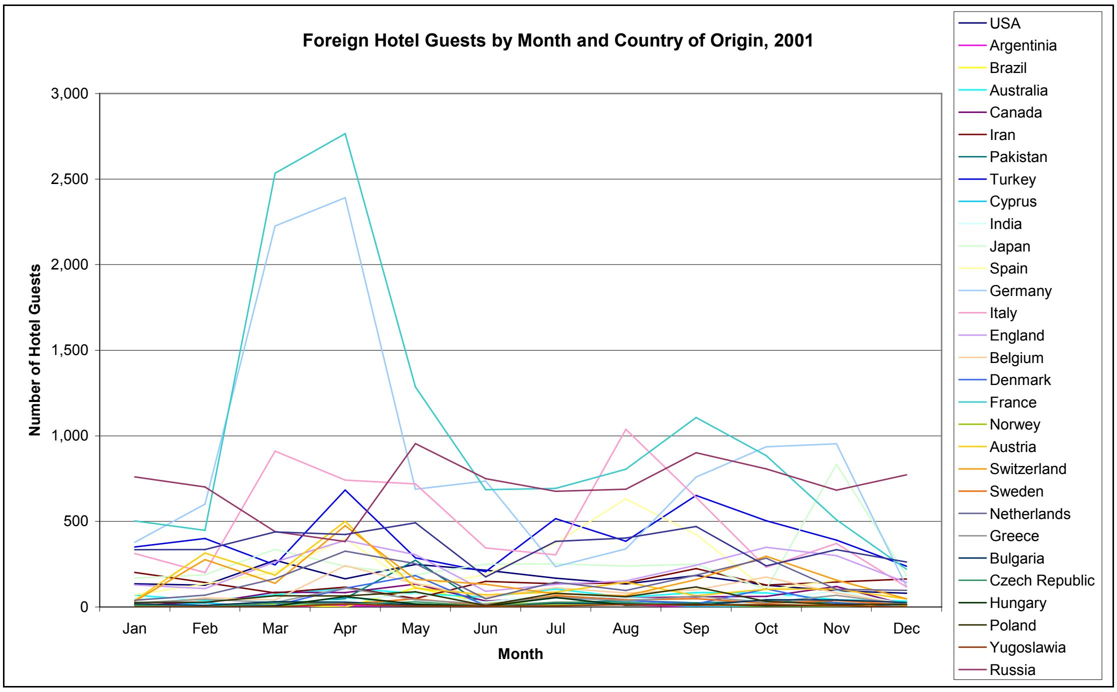
Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004, N'N Graph

Seasonality of Arab hotel guests, by month and by origin in Aleppo in 2001



Source: MOT, N'N Graph

Seasonality of Foreign hotel guests, by month and by origin in Aleppo in 2001

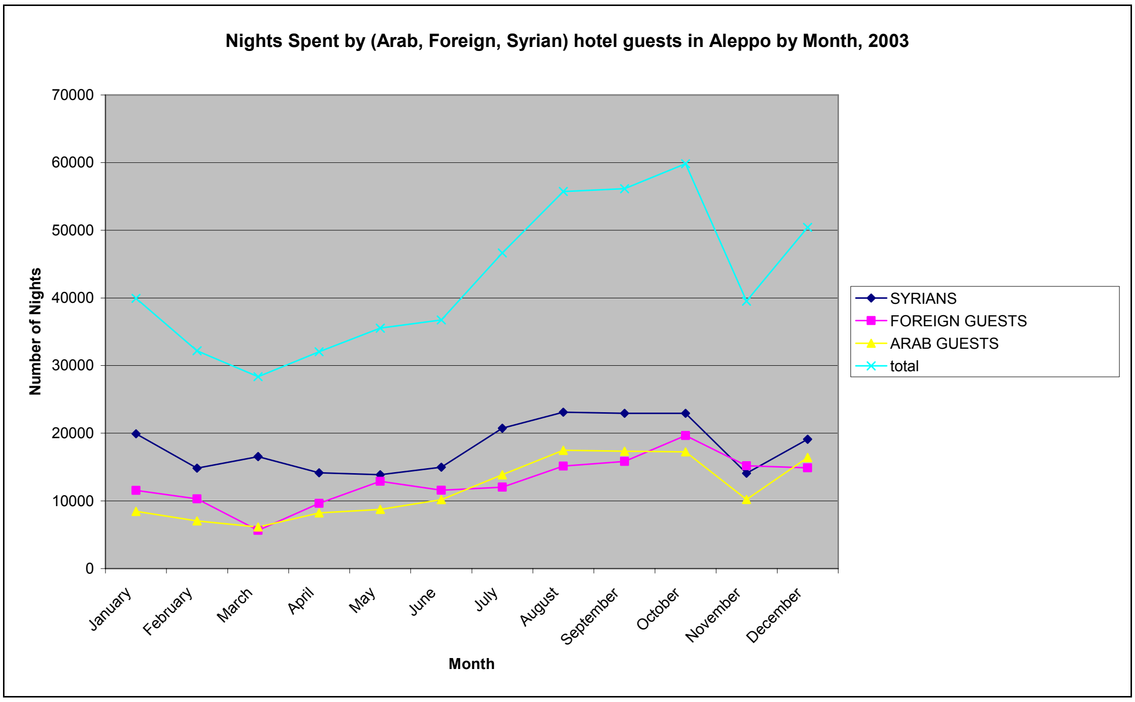


Source: MOT, N'N Graph

Nights Spent By (Arab- Foreign- Syrian) Guests in Aleppo by Month, 2003

	SYRIANS	FOREIGNERS	ARABS	Total
January	19929	11547	8460	39936
February	14854	10292	7028	32174
March	16562	5656	6133	28351
April	14163	9643	8233	32039
May	13858	12904	8755	35517
June	14982	11585	10192	36759
July	20735	12042	13870	46647
August	23100	15138	17479	55717
September	22943	15838	17357	56138
October	22936	19654	17249	59839
November	14092	15207	10217	39516
December	19107	14894	16428	50429
TOTAL	217261	154400	141401	513062

Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004



Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004, Own Graph

Duration of Stay by (Arab-Foreign-Syria) Guest in Aleppo by Month, 2003

	SYRIANS	FOREIGNERS	ARABS	OVERALL
January	1.52	3.47	1.85	1.90
February	1.53	3.67	1.93	1.99
March	1.57	2.32	1.80	1.73
April	1.51	3.43	1.88	1.93
May	1.45	3.00	1.93	1.93
June	1.49	3.14	2.10	1.98
July	1.42	2.53	1.73	1.70
August	1.40	2.65	1.75	1.73
September	1.45	2.80	1.72	1.78
October	1.39	2.61	1.83	1.79
November	1.54	1.70	1.89	1.68
December	1.39	2.59	1.83	1.77
OVERALL	1.46	2.68	1.83	1.81

Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004, own calculations

Factor Conditions

Factor conditions include the basic capital requirements for tourism industry and include cultural resources, people, finance, knowledge, infrastructure and institutions. In this section we will be relying predominantly on qualitative information.

Capital/Investment

In our interviews with tourist industry firms, it was frequently mentioned that capital is a constraint to the growth of their businesses. Both the cost of capital and the access to capital were major constraints.

Overall the majority of tourism infrastructure firms (i.e. hotels) claimed to finance their costs through internal earnings.

In terms of the competitiveness diamond, these funding arrangements would make the local tourism sector less competitive than a sector in a country where the cost of capital was not prohibitively high given the sectors growth rates.

Transport

Public transport available to tourists is a particularly weak link in the sectors service offering. Very few tourists to Aleppo use public transport and/or taxis due to the poor levels of those services and to the language barrier (the majority of taxi drivers are even illiterate in Arabic).

Car rentals is also very low, due to the chaotic driving that prevail in the city and to the weak signage system.

Bus hire remains the largest sub sector within tourism transport. While this may be advantageous in terms of providing opportunities for the tourism economy, the bottom line is that poor public transport and taxi services stop tourists from utilizing the entire value chain of tourism by decreasing their geographic mobility.

The Aleppo International Airport can play a better role given its strategic location. At the moment, no international carriers or charter flights land in Aleppo. Airport design and quality of service can be improved.

This poor transport system is not favorable in terms of the competitiveness of the local industry.

Aleppo's Tourism Resources

The following is a short list of current tourism resources:

- Heritage attractions: The citadel, the museum, the souks, the khans, the grand mosque, the bimaristan, Jdeideh, Baron hotel
- Religious sites: Mosques, churches, shrines.
- Traditional food and OCA restaurants
- Traditional crafts
- Festivals: folklore, performing arts.
- Industry and trade: contemporary workplace visits, shopping.

Aleppo Geographical Tourism zones

On a regional scale, the Aleppo tourism zone includes two Mohafazats, Aleppo and Idleb. Besides, Assad Lake is also included in this zone taking into account the distance from Aleppo. Aleppo city is the tourism core, consisting of the OCA and northern Aleppo (Saint Simeon, Ain Dara, etc.). for the purposes of this policy we shall focus on OCA.

OCA

Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. It may have been settled as early as the 6th to the 5th millennium BC. Its historic center, OCA, covers over 350 hectares and contains over ten thousand traditional courtyard houses, hundreds of historical monuments, and the largest covered souks (markets) of any Arab city. One of the best-preserved Islamic cities and a center for tourism in Syria, Old Aleppo was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.

Due to changing demographics of Syrian society and changes in living preferences of today's Syrians, the OCA had seen an exodus of middle and upper classes laving much of the housing to abandonment or for use by low income families the result is a decaying urban zone that has lost its vitality and that is loosing its stock of old buildings many of which are distinctive in character and have historic value.

Three main tourism zones are identified by REHAB within OCA; the citadel, the souks, as well as Jdeideh.

The souks

The souks of Aleppo are the worlds biggest supermarket (12 hectares surface area), they are extremely diverse (some interviewees see them as the cave of Ali Baba, where everything can be found). They are the best native marketplace in the region. they are the place to hear an amazing diversity of sounds, languages, and dialects. Market displays exhibit unparallel "action".

Even though tourists may not understand Arabic, but the highly skilled shop owners and the universal sign language of bargaining make purchases easy.

The most important single element about shopping in the souks, is the authenticity of the souks and the products offered for sale.

Jdeideh

This is one of the extra-mural quarters of the Old City of Aleppo. It has been settled since the 12th century. Both its history and architecture reveal that it came to light in the 15th century with the construction of a number of religious buildings. Through the 400 years to come, Jdeideh gained the form that tourists and Aleppians admire today.

Its residences manifest first-class paradigms of the luxurious traditional Islamic house of Aleppo. Walking through the quite picturesque stone-paved alleys of this neighborhood is a visual and social experience that can't be other than delightful. Moreover, an enormous Ottoman commercial complex, two mosques, and five major Christian churches enrich the fabric of the quarter and give it its distinction.

Today, Jdeideh is a place where commerce, residence, religions, and tourism coexist. It is also where cohabitation of tradition and modernity is exhibited through sensitive treatment and modern adaptations of the old architecture and through the creation of high quality hotels and restaurants.

The citadel

The Citadel of Aleppo is one of Syria’s foremost monuments. In 1999, it received just under 300,000 visitors; see the table below, 90,000 of whom were foreigners from outside the Middle East (AKTC, 2005).

Built on top of a natural limestone hill, the Citadel rises some 50 meters above the level of the surrounding city. Its high walls, imposing entry-bridge and monumental gateway remain largely intact and continue to dominate the skyline of Aleppo. The earliest evidence of occupation found at the Citadel may go as far back as the 3rd millennium BC. However, most of what exists today are the remnants of ceremonial, military and residential structures built by the Ayyubid (12th and 13th centuries) and Mamluk (13th to 16th centuries) rulers of the city. Inside the walls, a succession of invasions, bombardments and earthquakes have taken their toll, but amongst the ruins stand two fine mosques, a hammam and the remains of palaces all dating from the Zengid or Ayyubid periods and scores of houses from later periods.

Antiquities	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Palmyra Tombs ruins	14027	35484	44672	73626	70354
Bel temple in Palmyra	29932	48559	67838	93824	96518
Krak des chevaliers	87120	114826	126201	162686	149170
Markab citadel	18927	19375	23416	22833	33266
Ra's Shamra	15998	19945	23963	26402	33260
Sam'an Citadel	52698	54262	70051	93519	88570
Aleppo citadel	262945	241463	248045	338082	294792
Halabieh & Zalabieh	1373	2214	4461	7765	8275
kanawat Ruins	10009	9035	8795	11739	5434
Saladin Citadel	23936	36224	36989	38621	29915
Jableh Amphitheatre	756	722	505	917	916
Tal mardikh	2600	5320	11791	25178	24678
Ain Dara	2022	1799	2348	3192	4013
Musiaf Citadel	1562	1380	2141	2288	2232
Eben Wardan	1392	1098	1301	2014	1835
Mary	7130	3365	3910	9710	8532
Kaleb Louzeh	478	770	1373	2815	3267
Dora Orbose	2660	5189	7722	14083	13107
Busra	96817	149099	171930	314286	300079
Serjella	1985	2648	6319	9060	7664
Aphamia	16467	22743	34508	61089	51664
TOTAL	650834	775520	898279	1313729	1227541

Source: statistical abstract 2004

Human Resources

Employment

National number of employment related to the tourism sector such as wholesale, retail trade, restaurant and transport, storage and communication was 573,104 (17.2% of the total employment). It is estimated that at least 10% of the number work in tourism sector out of which about 80% works in private sector. In the public sector, MOT employs 1,602 staff and MOC employs 2,806.

The above mentioned figures may be unreliable first because they are not directly counted, but are calculated at best, and secondly because of the massive use of unaccounted-for labor in the sector. The majority of tourism firms don’t report their actual number of employees, just as they don’t report their actual activities and earnings.

Skills

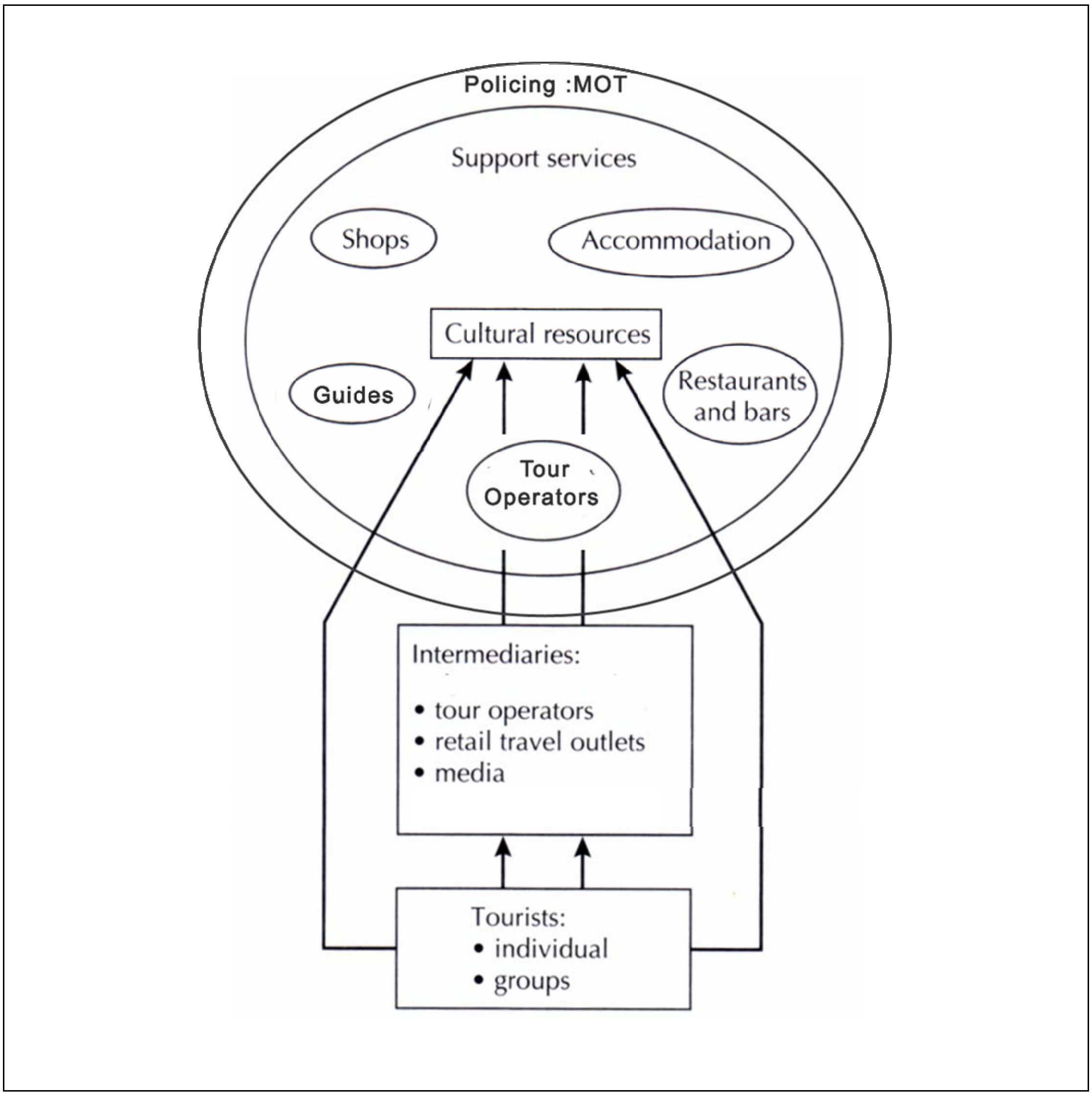
An expected pattern emerged when industry firms, along the entire supply chain were asked regarding the availability of skills. The majority of firms, small and medium sized, claimed to find it difficult to find managers and skilled staff, while very few had difficulty finding unskilled workers.

These trends suggest that small and medium size firms do not have sufficient resources to develop these skills in house, and they are obviously at the mercy of the general skills market.

With respect to skills therefore the local industry appears to only fare mediocrity well. On the bright side, however, the visitors’ survey, conducted nationally by JICA study team, found that 55-60% of visitors gave room, meal, facility, and service a Good evaluation, while 25-29% gave a fair evaluation.

Structure of the Tourism Industry

Diagram of the Structure of the tourism industry in Aleppo



Source: N'N

Ministry of Tourism (MOT)

MOT founds establishments and companies for the construction, management and operation of tourist facilities solely or in joint venture. MOT also assigns tourist status to accommodation facilities, restaurants and shops of tourism nature. Classification restriction for hotel and restaurants, licensing for travel and tourist agents and tourist guides, and supervision to these facilities, companies and guides are responsibility of MOT as well. (JICA, 1998)

Tour operators[3] and Travel Agents

Among 145 tour operators and travel agents registered in Aleppo[4] with the Syrian Association of Tourist & Travel Agents (SATTA), only 20 companies in Aleppo, and 30 or slightly more in Damascus, actually operate inbound package tours (interview with Nasser Adi, 17 August 2005). The market is dominated by Damascus based companies (interview with Azad Hamoto, 16 August 2005).

In Syria, only four companies, namely Karnak Tour, TRANSTOUR, Orient Tour and Cham Tour, are public-private joint ventures. Their respective government shares are 25 percent except for Karnak Tours whose government share is 67 percent. These joint venture companies were established by law and are given various concessional privileges such as income tax exemptions, custom exemptions and the right to open foreign exchange accounts. These four companies also dominate the transport services market, given their large fleets of buses.

The number of employees of each agent varies from one or two to several hundred. The average number of employees is approximately five or slightly more per agent, according to the hearing from SATTA. The total number of employees in the travel agent industry in Aleppo is therefore estimated at approximately 725. Wages vary, however average wage rate is approximately 7,000 per month. The monthly total personnel expenditure in the travel agent industry in Aleppo is estimated at approximately SYP 5,075,000 (US$ 94,000). Approximately US$1,128,000 is spent annually in Aleppo for the labor cost, which is by far larger than the estimated tour operation commission income; this is due to the large proportion of non-tour-operating agents. According to the hearings from tour operators, approximately 25 to 35 percent of the commission income is spent for payroll by tour-operating agents.

[3] Tour operators are companies that sell tours to customers, either directly or indirectly through travel agents.

[4] 55% of tourist & travel agents in Syria are based in Damascus, while less than 20% locate in Aleppo.

Tour Guides

At present tour guides are still short in number and quality. According to MOT, the number of guides in Aleppo is 95, and in Syria is 1000, but only about 270 are working. Skilled English guides are the most in number (100) followed by French (80).Comparing with these two; the percentages of other languages are small. For example, the number of Japanese guides is only 2. Besides, skilled ones are small in number, sometimes they are old and are very popular among travel agencies and the supply can not satisfy the demand. Newcomers are mostly low skilled and need more experience. Training of tour guides must play an important role, because, for a major history and culture tourism country such as Syria, flexible and integrated oral guidance is required in addition to on-site information displays.

Number of Tourist Guides Vs. frontier arrivals to Syria in 1996

Language	Registered	Working	Arrivals
English (British + American)	362	100	17,586
French	183	80	21,545
German	146	40	25,436
Spanish	67	25	3,981
Italian	52	20	10,776
Russian	92	30	58,151
Dutch	4	N/A	6,006
Greek	8	N/A	2,062
Chinese	1	N/A	N/A
Japanese	2	N/A	4,957
Bulgarian	3	N/A	4,510
Boronia	2	N/A	N/A
Romanian	2	N/A	4,587
Swedish	1	N/A	4,651

Source: MOT, 1997.

Although the average annual income is not estimated as small compared with the income level in Syria, many tour guides may face a serious seasonality. As shown in the table below, the lowest average monthly income is estimated at only SYP1,689. The seasonality problem however does not affect all the tour guides evenly. It probably affects less-skilled guide more acutely.

Estimated Income by Tourist Guides by Month in 1996

Month	Job opportunities (days)	Total income (SYP 1,000)	Average income (SYP 1,000)
January	630	945.0	3.5
February	1,505	2,257.5	8.4
March	3,276	4,914.0	18.2
April	3,024	4,536.0	16.8
May	2,345	3,517.5	13.0
June	462	693.0	2.6
July	637	955.5	3.5
August	1,050	1,575.0	5.8
September	2,163	3,244.5	12.0
October	2,814	4,221.0	15.6
November	812	1,218.0	4.5
December	931	1,396.5	5.2
Total	19,649	29,473.5	109.2

Source: JICA Study Team

Contrarily in the high seasons such as October, monthly total job opportunities nearly reach the maximum possible man-days of 270 tour guides, in Syria. This means that many tours are forced to be guided by unskilled tour guides and there must be shortage of guides in the near future in the high season.

Restaurants

Most of restaurants are licensed and classified by MOT according to the norm defined by MOT (cf. Section A5.2.4).

There are 110 restaurants registered with MOT in 2004 in Aleppo. A variety of restaurants is found in Aleppo. However, the lack of information (location and opening hours) and publicity is recognized.

Souvenir Shops

the traditional market "souq", composed of many shops of different kind including souvenir, jewelry, local product, food, public bath (hammam),etc. is well developed and of great interest for foreign and Arab tourists.

MOT created handicraft souqs in Aleppo by restoring historical Khan Elshouneh buildings. The effort should be encouraged. However, more consideration for the sequence with existing urban fabric should be taken into account so that they are easily accessible by foreign tourists.

Besides the MOT's handicraft souqs, most of the souvenir retailers are owned by local businessmen. They are controlled and regulated by the Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Internal Trade. Although there is no special license required for establishing souvenir shops, shop owners must register as businessmen with the Chamber of Commerce.

Hotels

Aleppo Hotel Supply

Aleppo in 2004 had a total of 4,549 beds – a share in national rooms and beds of 11.38 percent, see Table on next page. These shares are larger than Aleppo's hotel night shares; hence, they do not explain Aleppo's tight hotel market or high occupancy rates.

Hotel Distribution

Aleppo's shortage of hotel rooms becomes more obvious when considering hotels by class.

Since most package tour guests stay in 3- 4- or 5-star hotels this explains Aleppo's high occupancy rates in this market segment, and also explains why tourist operators sometimes limit overnight stay in Aleppo. Some operators report that their tours arrive in Aleppo in the morning and leave the city a day later at night.

Hotels & Rooms & Beds By Class And Mohafazat 2003

Hotel Class	TOTAL			Hostel			Third: 1 star			Second: 2 stars			First: 3 stars			Deluxe: 4 stars			5 stars		
Mohafazat	Beds	Rooms	No.	Beds	Rooms	No.	Beds	Rooms	No.	Beds	Rooms	No.	Beds	Rooms	No.	Beds	Rooms	No.	Beds	Rooms	No.
Damascus	13440	5680	183	221	88	11	3761	1551	102	2640	1002	36	2630	1006	19	1860	931	11	2328	1102	4
Damascus Rural	6338	2491	49	35	25	5	200	98	3	3378	710	23	296	123	3	1098	811	10	1331	724	5
Aleppo	4549	2183	91	198	68	10	2335	1054	61	564	257	9	428	236	5	608	316	5	416	252	1
Homs	3105	1491	50	48	21	2	432	194	17	604	282	15	903	435	12	420	210	2	698	349	2
Hama	891	405	15	85	32	5	113	52	2	353	156	7	–	–	–	–	–	–	340	165	1
Latakia	6185	2570	55	325	138	16	538	238	15	869	404	14	554	240	6	307	154	2	3592	1396	2
Deir - ez- zor	1077	569	16	150	53	5	233	107	6	152	92	2	230	151	2	–	–	–	312	166	1
Idleb	226	113	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	76	38	2	–	–	–	150	75	1	–	–	–
Al- Hasakeh	391	194	11	–	–	–	298	146	8	93	48	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Al-Rakkah	307	148	8	45	19	2	79	34	3	30	12	1	153	83	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
Al-Sweida	20	9	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	20	9	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Daraa	220	106	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	70	31	2	–	–	–	150	75	1	–	–	–
Tartous	2179	1007	33	526	233	14	234	107	5	444	207	7	469	257	5	506	203	2	–	–	–
Quneitra	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
TOTAL	38928	16966	518	1633	677	70	8223	3581	222	9293	3248	122	5663	2531	54	5099	2775	34	9017	4154	16

Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004

Investment Plans

Tourism Department in Aleppo reports plans for 11 new hotels in Aleppo. Of these 4 hotels appears to be located in the Old City –see table below. Another hotel close to the Old City is the 198 room, 5-star *Sheraton* to be completed in 2006.

No	Project name & Owner	rank	Location	Expected completion year
1	Edmon Hana Jino	2 stars	The old city	2005
2	Mariyam Gerardi	3 stars	The old city	2005
3	Raymond & Nasri Haffar	2 stars	The old city	2006
4	Karkor khjadorian	2 stars	The old city	2006
5	Bab alfaraj co \ Sheraton	5 stars	Bab alfaraj	2006
6	Boutros Murjaneh & associates	3 stars	Baghdad station	2007
7	Amir Rega & associates	4 stars	Bestan kel ab	2007
8	Khalouk Bikdash & associates	4 stars	Kafer Hamra	2008
9	Ziyad alzaim & associates	4 stars	Abu Shelm	2008
10	Rami & Rasin Martini	4 stars	Alhamdanyah	2008
11	Abdulkader harshow	4 stars	Kafer da`el	2009

Source: MOT, Department of Tourism in Aleppo, 2005

Hotel Pricing and Rating

A shortage of hotel space would usually translate into high prices and incentives for hotel investments. However, Government sets maximum rates based on an elaborate system of hotel grading. The same rates apply throughout the country and for all seasons. Most hotels use the same rates independent of season, suggesting limited price competition. However, smaller, more nimble hotel operators vary their rates depending on season and circumstance.

The National Tourism Development Plan (I, p.57) reports room rates of $100, $50, and $20 for 5, 4, and 3 star hotels respectively.

Competitiveness

Aleppo's hotel sector suffers from high cost

Taxes on Tourists

Government charges a 10% excise tax on the room rate of 5- and 4-star hotels, and a 5% tax on 3-star hotels. It also charges a 15%, 10%, and 5% excise tax on 5-, 4-, and 3-star restaurants respectively. In addition, there appears to be a $1 tax per night that goes to local government.

Occupancy Rates

The National Development Plan reports 1995 occupancy rate for Syria of 40.0%, as compared to 60.6% for Dubai, 58.0% for Egypt, 50.3% for Jordan and 39.1% for Turkey. However, the occupancy rate that year was 60% for Aleppo – the highest in Syria. These high occupancy rates continue to this date, as the supply of tourist grade hotel beds has not substantially changed in the last few years. In general, most markets require an occupancy rate of 50% - 55% to breakeven, suggesting significant investment potential for Aleppo.

The following table shows occupancy rates in Aleppo in 2003 by No. of beds and by No. of rooms for each hotel class. Occupancy rate by number of beds reflect return on investment, which is low in Aleppo in 2003, while occupancy rate by rooms reflect the difficulty to book a room in Aleppo. 4 star hotels show highest rates in both cases.

Hotel occupancy rate by hotel guests' origin and by hotel class, in Aleppo, in 2003.

Hotel Class	TOTAL		Hostel		1 star		2 stars		3 stars		4 stars		5 stars	
occupancy rate by	Beds	Rooms	Beds	Rooms	Beds	Rooms	Beds	Rooms	Beds	Rooms	Beds	Rooms	Beds	Rooms
Syrians	13%	27%	10%	29%	11%	25%	15%	32%	15%	26%	17%	33%	15%	25%
Foreigners	9%	19%	6%	17%	10%	22%	5%	11%	11%	20%	13%	26%	6%	10%
Arabs	9%	18%	3%	9%	9%	20%	7%	15%	8%	14%	13%	24%	4%	7%
Total	31%	64%	19%	56%	30%	67%	26%	58%	33%	61%	43%	83%	26%	43%

Source: Statistical Abstract, 2004, N'N calculations.

Hotel occupancy rates by Month, in Aleppo, in 2003

	By Beds	By rooms
January	29%	61%
February	24%	49%
March	21%	43%
April	23%	49%
May	26%	54%
June	27%	56%
July	34%	71%
August	41%	85%
September	41%	86%
October	44%	91%
November	29%	60%
December	37%	77%

Strategies

Firms' strategies

The way in which businesses in tourism industry are managed and choose to compete is affected by national circumstances in Syria. In Aleppo, the majority of tourism business, excluding MOT-related enterprises, are relatively small or medium sized firms, privately owned, some are run like family business, and they are often dominated by a single individual. In general, their economies of scale are modest.

Areas of strength

- Local businesses have the ability to adapt to market changes with considerable flexibility
- Local business show very high entrepreneurial spirit

Areas of weaknesses

- No strategic management or planning exists in the private and public sectors.
- Similar products offered by all businesses, no styling or customization available.
- Hardly any methodological product and/or process improvements efforts are noticed in both public and private sectors.
- Intangible quality service is rarely pursued
- Businesses, especially family owned ones, show a high degree of suspicion of authority – unless coming from the family.
- Social norms in Aleppo, unfortunately, favor individualistic behavior over group behavior, and favor low professional standards. These have grown out of the existing educational system in the country, social history, and many other intangible national conditions.
- Modest language skills of the pool of labor and their limited willingness to learn new languages negatively influence the performance of tourism businesses and limit their adoption of global outlooks.
- Some government policies have limited the internationalization of domestic tourism firms, and hence, their success. A straightforward example is foreign exchange controls and limitation of foreign direct investment.
- In the public sector, and in many private sector cases, people work primarily to enhance income, not to contribute to the government body or the company.

Private Sector Marketing Strategies

Travel agencies, tour operators and hotels seem to be taking relatively more aggressive and diverse promotional activities in comparison with the public sector. However, no clear strategies can be detected.

Direct interviews with some of the key persons of the major travel or tour agencies revealed that their activities are wider in range and more tourists oriented.

Some of the private sector promotional activities are pursued in cooperation with MOT. For example, they participate in the international/local tourism fairs, seminars, trade shows etc. Participation fee can cost up to US$ 6,000 a year per company.

Occasionally, private sector companies join in to invite tourism-related key persons or from several important markets. They build up a budget up to US$100,000. Such techniques have proven effective for business development.

Promotional materials are not much of a variety, however, they are more tourist-oriented or market-oriented than those made by the public sector; the following are examples.

- Road maps are well up to date.
- Brochures are prepared in a number of languages. The quality of paper and photo colors is better than those of the public sector.
- A recently published tourist guide is with the information tourist want; such as hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, airlines, tour agents, public service offices etc.
- Materials are well presented.

Some of the agencies have developed promotional video-tapes. Some are planning to make CD-ROM presentation materials.

Relations of Public and Private Sectors

The public sector has not had enough budget and skilled staff to play the leading role in the tourism promotional field. On the other hand, the private sector does not rely on the public sector. In return for little help rendered by the public sector, public sector initiatives have not been particularly welcomed by the private sector.

Related and Supporting Industries

This dimension looks at the value chain of a given industry looking at the existence and strength and proximity of upstream and downstream linkages.

Definitions

When talking of the tourist sector one must differentiate two levels of analysis, first there is the tourist industry and secondly the tourist economy.

The tourist industry comprises the attraction of visitors and their consequent direct demand for goods and services. However, this tourist industry demand creates a value chain of indirect and induced demand via intermediate consumption, investments and income effects leading to what can be termed indirect tourism demand, or what is commonly known as knock-on effects. Direct and indirect tourism demand together account for the tourism economy.

For the sake of clarity, we will use a few examples to illustrate the different concepts. If a foreign visitor spends a night in a hotel, that expenditure on the hotel is direct tourism demand. However if tourism demand grows such that new hotels need to be built, expenditure of the construction sector in building such a hotel is indirect tourism demand. Workers who gain employment on the new hotel construction site will earn an income that they will later spend on goods and services, which is thus an induced income effect.

Examples of Related and Supporting Industry

- Transport (ground intra-city, ground inter-city, and air transport)
- Media (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, books,
- Advertising agencies
- Fashion (design + textile industry + retail outlets + the culture of shopping)
- Art and performing arts,
- Apartment rentals
- Communication industry (phone, mobile, internet)
- agriculture and food processing industries,
- furniture manufacturing
- construction materials
- business services,
- financial services,
- professional services,
- construction design and engineering,
- security services
- government services.

Linkages

There appear to be weak linkages between the direct tourism sector and the tourism economy, especially in package tourism. By this we mean that the typical package tourist does not partake of many value chain activities while in Aleppo.

The most common activity is a trip to Saint Simon. Usage of domestic shopping, cinema, and cultural events is very weak. This poor utilization is an issue of supply (in terms of quality and quantity) more than it is of demand.

Certainly issues such as harassment and poor tourist public transport access are contributing factors to poor value chain usage, but this is an area in which very little information is available.

The area of greatest interest with respect to related industries and linkages has to do with retail tourism. With estimated spending of $500/per Turkish day-shopper, retail and wholesale economic activity in Aleppo is largely and importantly influenced by the stream of cross border shoppers, as such, when looking at related industries it is the trade sector and the cross border shopping sector which are most important to Aleppo in growing the tourism economy as opposed to the tourism industry itself.

Leakage

Leakages can be divided into three categories:

- internal leakage or the "import-coefficient" of tourism activities;
- external leakage or pre-leakage, depending on the commercialization mode of the tourism package and the choice of airline;
- invisible leakage or foreign exchange costs associated with resource damage or deterioration.

Internal leakage

We could not find "satellite accounts" within national accounting and survey procedures to detail all tourism-related economic activities.

In principle, import-related leakages are highest where the local economies are weakest owing to sparse factor endowment or inadequate quality of goods and services. The average leakage for most developing countries today is between 40 and 50 percent of gross tourism earnings for small economies and between 10 and 20 percent for most advanced and diversified developing countries.

Current patterns of tourist package tourism have a high leakage because tourist don’t value and consume local resources as part of the tourism experience. Income per tourist appears to be quite low in Aleppo; $100/tourist/night (see the spread effect study). This is a function of various issues, such as a none favorable quality/price ratio in Aleppo, low diversity, low value added, the monopoly of Damascus over the industry.

Although restrictive trade policies in Syria reduce the size of the market, it is important to note that import openness tends to facilitate the leakage effect unless the economy has already in place a structure capable of reacting to the competitive stimulus of imports, which is not the case of Syria.

External leakage

External leakage or pre-leakage is normally difficult to measure and relates to the proportion of the total value added of tourism of services actually captured by Syria and Aleppo.

To the extent that Syria and Aleppo have limited access to commercialization channels in their target markets, they can only offer base prices to intermediaries that capture the mark-up on those services. Observed differences between paid and received prices for Syrian tourism services (lodging, food, entertainment, etc.) suggest external leakage or pre-leakage levels of up to 75 %.

Base prices do not allow for the economic sustainability, and normally do not contemplate replacement costs associated with resource depletion. This is leading to problems of infrastructure sustainability, which tend to be overlooked in view of the short-term importance of crucial foreign exchange inflows.

Role of Government

The Case for Tourism Development in Syria

There are several reasons why the Syrian government supports the expansion of tourism, namely:

- the potential for tourism to generate foreign currency is important, especially with the controlled exchange rates.
- tourism is labor intensive, and creates employment throughout the economy; tourists spend money on hotels, transport, and meals, but also on a wide variety of goods and services.
- the tourism industry does not, on the whole, require expensive or complex technology or a highly skilled workforce. With the exception of a small number of complex projects such as operating the airline, investment in tourism is not comparatively expensive, and will often return a profit reasonably quickly.
- Syria already have in place the basic and most important requirements for the development of the tourism sector; a pleasant climate, attractive scenery, historical sites, and hospitable people.
- tourism usually contributes to traditional industries
- Syria's tourist attractions are plentiful, are spread throughout the country and are, for the most part, easily accessible.

In other words, the government feels that their state possesses an untapped economic resource, and they decide to take advantage of it, consequently, the government has prepared an ambitious program of tourism expansion.

Economic Liberalization

In 1977 and 1978, tourism became a primary focus of economic liberalization, with the creation of mixed sector companies in the industry. Most significant were Law Number 56 of 1977, which led to the formation of the Arab Syrian Company for Touristic Establishments (ASCTE), and Law Number 41 of 1978 which created the Syrian Transport and Tourism Marketing Company (TRANSTOUR)

The common characteristics of these laws, and of many which followed in the 1980s, was the creation of mixed sector companies, with the government handing over to the private sector the managerial responsibilities of the enterprise. The government maintained a minimum 25 percent interest in the company, but its role was usually limited to the provision of capital such as land, property, and access to utilities. Such joint ventures enjoyed exemption from currency exchange rules, and exemptions were also granted from income taxes and some duties for up to seven years.

Joint venture companies such as ASCTE and TRANSTOUR were largely protected from competition by the fact that their establishment was made through specific laws, and not as the result of a general law liberalizing the economy.

After 1986, a number of broad macro-economic reforms were made to the Syrian economy, including exchange rate reforms, trade liberalization, an expansion of the private sector, price adjustments, and a reduction in government subsidies on commodities and utilities. These reforms, while not aimed directly at the tourism sector, did have some impact on the sector. The role of the private sector in tourism, especially in hotel and restaurant m management, increased markedly during the late 1980s and in the 1990s. Exchange rate reforms, including those of 1993 which established a "neighboring countries rate" for some transactions of 42SYP= 1US$ - as opposed to the previous single rate of 11.25SYP=1US$ - reduced many of the costs incurred by tourists visiting Syria.

Another key tourism reform was the 1986 resolution 186 of the Supreme Council for Tourism, which increased the role of the private sector in developing tourism facilities in Syria. A number of private hotels and tour companies appeared at this time, and the late 1980s were also the period of most rapid growth for the Cham Palace hotel group. Resolution 186 allowed investors who were establishing a tourist facility to by-pass laws on the importation of raw materials, tools, and manufactured equipment - especially for the construction of luxury hotels and facilities - and also to gain exemptions and favorable treatment on taxes and customs duties.

Perhaps the most significant reform was the promulgation of Law Number 10 of May 1991 for the Encouraging of (Productive) Investment, aimed at increasing direct foreign investment in Syria. The law offered a number of incentives for any investment project in excess of ten million Syrian pounds which generated employment, resulted in exports, and transferred technology or expertise. Law Number 10 included exemptions from the Foreign Exchange Law Number 24 of 1986, which placed restrictions on foreign currency transactions. Other incentives included customs and duties exemptions, exemptions from company taxes for up to seven years, and the freedom to repatriate profits overseas.

Small and medium-sized businesses, and Syrian expatriates especially, have used the law to their advantage and have invested modest sums in different areas of the Syrian economy, including the tourism sector. Restaurants and medium priced hotels have been created or expanded as a result of the law, especially by those seeking short-term investments.

Organizational Structure

At present, there are several organizations, in various levels of intensity, providing elements of leadership for Aleppo's tourism sector including the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), the Supreme Council for Tourism, Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), the Tourism Department (MOT local representative), and the Tourism Chamber (private sector association). These organizations have separate accountabilities and success measures which are not necessarily tied to a common tourism vision for Aleppo.

Aleppo's tourism sector currently faces a variety of organizational challenges, as evidenced by:

- No formalized, long-term shared vision among the principal stakeholders to guide tourism development, tourism marketing or tourism investment.
- Tourism not enjoying the same economic imperative as other key industry clusters in the City.
- Inadequate resources to undertake marketing, marketing research and communications.
- Low profile within the business community and the community at large;

The following paragraphs summarize the roles of key organizations.

MOT

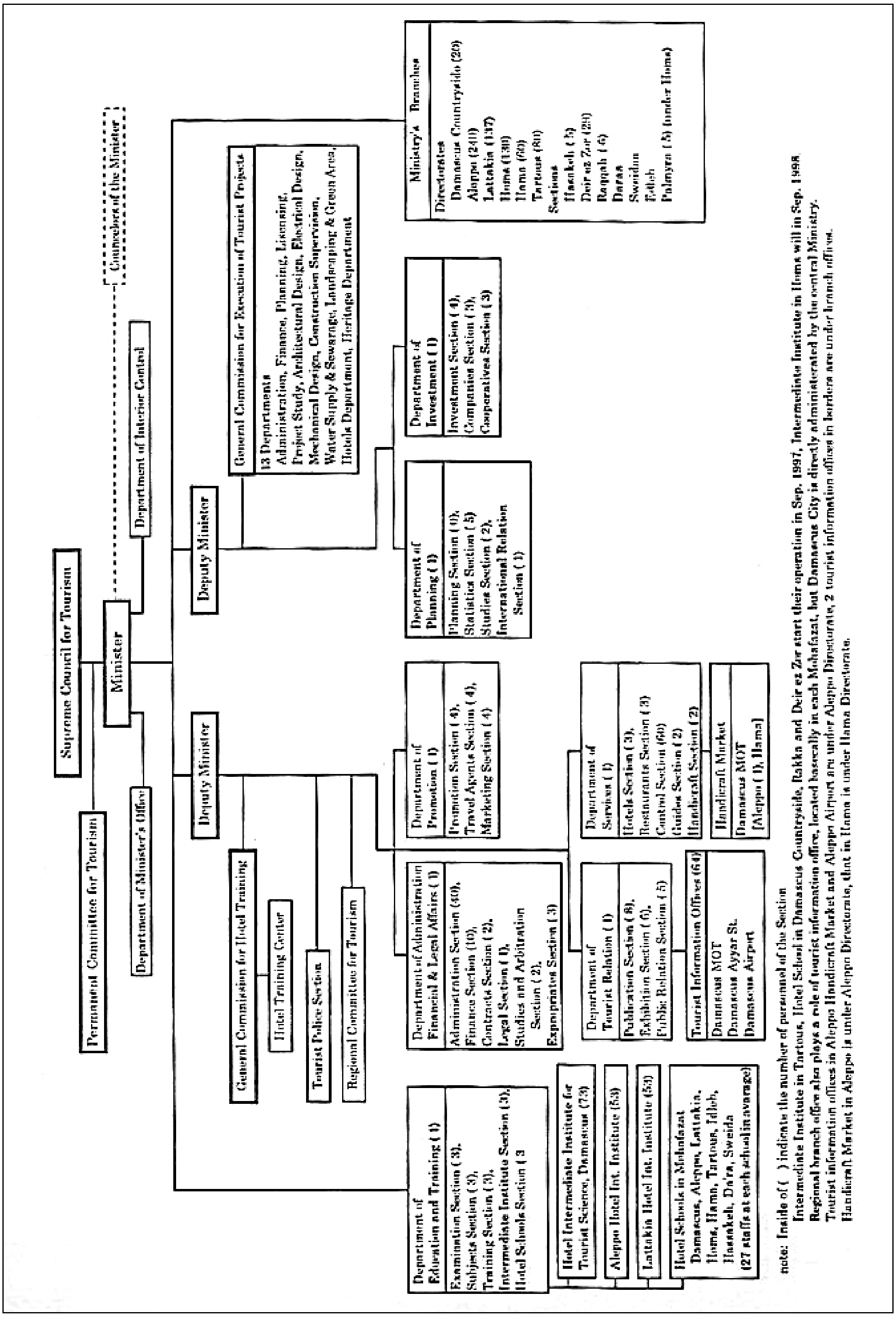
The objective of MOT[5] is to drive and promote internal and external tourism through tourism marketing and services and the establishment and direct/indirect investment in tourism facilities directly or through tourism companies and institutions. Specifically to:

- provide information and promotion for the country's natural qualities, cultural heritage and tourist sites both inside and outside;
- enter into and supervise the implementation of tourist agreement; found, advertise and provide promotion for tourist and summer and winter recreation centers;
- attend to tourist sites including summer and winter recreation centers, arrange for their easy accessibility, promote tourist and Syrian visits to them and supply all means of comfort and tourist services to visitors;
- Systemize the occupation of tourist guide and supervise the activities of guides under the laws in force and hold courses for upgrading, better information and training into correct conduct with tourists, attend similarly to other tourist-related occupations.

In order to achieve the objectives mentioned above, MOT is empowered to found establishments and companies for the construction, management and operation of tourist facilities solely or in joint venture. MOT is also given authority to assign tourist status to accommodation facilities, restaurants and shops of tourism nature, to centralize the administration concerning tourism. Classification restriction for hotel and restaurants, licensing for travel and tourist agents and tourist guides, and supervision to these facilities, companies and guides are responsibility of MOT as well.

[5] according to Article 3 of the Legislative Decree No. 41 of 1972

Organization Structure of the Ministry of Tourism



Source: JICA 1998

Supreme Council and Committees for Tourism[6]

The Supreme Council for Tourism is headed by the Prime Minister as a chairman and the Minister of Tourism as a vice-chairman and includes the following participating members:

- The Minister of Culture;
- The Minister of Supply and Internal Trade;
- The Minister of Local Administration;
- The Minister of Interior; the Minister of Finance,
- The Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade;
- The Minister of Transport;
- The Minister of Information.

The Deputy Minister of Tourism plays a role of reporter. There are no members from the private companies and their associations. Supreme Council is held whenever necessary, usually at 8 to 12 times a year, but more in case there are many things to discuss. The council is to settle all issues and arrangements related to tourism including long-term and short term tourism development plan and the establishment of public corporations or companies related to tourism.

There is a Permanent Committee for Tourism under the Supreme Council, for studying issues presented to the Council, making recommendations to the Council and following up on the enforcement of Council decisions. The committee is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Services, and members are Minister of Supply and Internal Trade, Minister of Local Administration, Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade and Minister and Deputy Minister of Tourism.

There is also a regional committee for tourism in each Mohafazat. Regional committee is headed by Governor of Mohafazat or Deputy Governor, and Director of MOT branch office, Director of DGAM branch office, etc. are its members.

Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM)[7]

The responsibility of DGAM is to preserve, protect and explore for antiquities and museums administration, specifically to:

- Sort, preserve and keep record of antiquities;
- Explore antique and historical sites and compile data as applicable; safeguard and arrange for the preservation of antique buildings; build, manage and expand museums and build up their supply of antique and artistic worth;
- Carry out archeological explorations and monitor explorations by authorized scientific missions;
- Inspect and maintain record antiquities in individual possessions;
- pursue accidental archeological findings and compile and study antiquities uncovered as such;
- Control trade in and prevent the smuggling of antiquities;
- Pursue offenses in the area of antiquities and file claims against offenders;
- Develop archeological, historical and museum-care scientific research and issue periodicals and other publications thereon;
- Preserve historical records and pamphlets being regarded as movable antiquities and thus covered under the Antiquities Law.

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[6] The Legislative Decree No. 41 of 1972 stipulates the establishment of the Supreme Council for Tourism.

[7] DGAM is established based on the Legislative Decree No. 88 for 1947 and No. 2176 for 1980 under Ministry of Culture.

Tourism Development Plans

The Syrian government, represented by the ministry of tourism and the supreme council for tourism, envisions transferring tourism in Syria into a strategic industry. The following list[8] summarizes the objectives of that vision:

- Put all the available resources in the disposal of this industry, such as: heritage, natural environment, legislations, financial capital, human resources, information technology, and the generosity and hospitality of the Syrian society.
- Tender government owned land and historical buildings for investment
- Modernize investment laws and services
- Increase investment in tourism sector (target is a total of 1.710Bil$ in 2005).
- Diversify tourism product by introducing new activities that capitalize on archeological sites, deserts, country side, protected parks, sport places, shopping, theaters, cinemas, and music festivals.
- Ensure value for money in all tourism products
- Reduce seasonality
- Increase direct tourism revenue from 475 Million USD in year 2000, to become 860 Million USD in year 2005 (average yearly growth of 6%, and increase of share in GDP from 2.6% to 4%)
- Accelerate and increase occupancy capacity from 36,000 beds in the year 2002 to become 66,000 beds in the year 2005.
- Provide 30,000 new work opportunities, in 3 years.
- Increase the number of tourists up to 12 Million tourists by the year 2020.
- Improve tourism marketing
- Plan for new tourism zones and integrate existing tourism zones in city and regional master plans
- Facilitate travel to/in Syria
- Develop human resources

To support this vision; The Ministry of Tourism have created vigorous ninth five-year plan. The last plan is for 2000-2005, it includes a large number of tourism development policies, which can be classified into the following categories: investment, tourism promotion, training and rehabilitating the tourism sector, tourism industry, folklore and handcrafts, tourists' services, transportation, tourism movement, information technology, tour guides, and quality.

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[8] Source: lectures by Minister of tourism in 2004 and 2002, in addition to the 9th five year plan.

Marketing and Promotion

Events

There were only 7 cultural events in Aleppo in 2005. The rest were industry events and trade shows (see appendix)

Promotional activities

Promotional activities include participating in international exhibitions, publishing books and tourism materials, running tourist information centers, and public relations.

Participation in international exhibitions seems to be the most important activity. Participation is decided through a meeting between the Tourism Relations Directorate of MOT, the SATTA, and hotel operators. MOT receives about 30 invitations from overseas exhibitions a year and it chooses about 10 exhibitions to participate. Those of Paris, Berlin, Milan, London, Madrid and Dubai are the ones MOT routinely participates on. Each year travel agencies, tour operators and hotel operators are asked to participate in those exhibitions and the cost of participation is shared among them.

The table below shows the budget allocation among the Tourism Relations Directorate and the number of staff. About US$ 6,000 are spent at each overseas exhibition by the Ministry and US$ 6,000 by each participant from the private sector. The budget is indeed small.

Budget and Number of Staff of Tourism Relation Directorate

Section	Staff	Jobs	Allocated Budget[9]
Publication	8	Publications of books, tourism materials	$ 345,000
Exhibition	6	International/local fairs, trade shows	$ 160,000[10]
Public Relations	5	Protocols, correspondence	$ 183,000[11]
3 information centers	64	Tourist information	None[12]

Source: JICA 1998

At present, Syria has no overseas tourism office. The establishment of the overseas tourism offices is already provided by Legislative Decree No. 41 in 1972

Promotional material:

The following can be noted on promotional material:

- The distribution nodes are regional and limited.
- A significant quantity of promotional material is left unused and kept piled up at offices and centers.
- Gateway materials are missing.
- On-site information materials and those for tour operators and travel agencies in and out of Syria are needed.
- At each site, no information materials are handed over to tourists. Even at Aleppo Tourist Information Center, no tourist map is available.

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[9] Staff salary is excluded from the budget; total budget allocation to the Tourism Relations Directorate is about $ 690,000; The appropriation of the budget among the Depts. are often excluded

[10] The budget is for overseas exhibitions and advertisement for the world Travel Guide.

[11] The budget includes local fairs, shows and tourism days

[12] Usually no budget allocation

Rehabilitation of OCA

REHAB

In 1992 the German Government and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development agreed to join efforts with the Municipality of Aleppo to initiate a rehabilitation program for Aleppo's Old City. The German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) was assigned by the German Government to administer its contribution, and the Arab Fund limited its contribution to technical assistance. The Municipality of Aleppo established the Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo (REHAB) to administer the affairs of the Old City; later a special Municipal Department was given this mandate.

The Project charted its methodology in a Development Plan: a flexible planning system with emphasis on defining objectives and strategies rather than rules and regulations. The planning approach was concerned with relating historic preservation issues to the various aspects of urban management including land use regulation, housing, technical infrastructure, traffic, social services, public participation, as well as the concern for monument preservation. Many of theses issues fall outside the normal operations of the Municipality. Indeed, other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations became directly or indirectly concerned with the future planning of the Old City. This comprehensive approach enabled the materialization of a wide range of experiences but mostly was essential in insuring the commitment of concerned parties to the rehabilitation process. A Development Plan, however, was a new concept within the local planning practices; it lacked the format of a planning directive. Furthermore, it was mostly a qualitative document missing what local authorities perceived as quantitative data. To offset this problem, two types of planning devices substantiated the Development Plan. On the one hand, sectoral issues were detailed in Subject Plans. These included primarily citywide issues such as traffic, environment and urban economy. On the other hand, abstract issues needed clear implementation parameters. These had to be localized in concentrated zones to insure visibility as well as synergetic effects. These zones were prioritized within Action Areas.

The action areas were excellent opportunities to build networks involving other agencies working on providing services in the Old City. Several action projects were initiated with the cooperation of the Awqaf (Administration of Religious Endowments), the Health Department and the Department of Education. These vary in scope from assistance to rehabilitate historic religious monuments to the provision of health points and kindergartens. The scope of the programs, limited as it may, was effective in substantiating the Project's expenditures in the action areas but effective in establishing standard operating procedures for future programs in the Old City.

The management of urban heritage was intertwined with several issues of urban management such as land use regulation, improving the urban environment, traffic and infrastructure, data management through geographic information systems, the provision of social services and housing. With regard to the latter, the housing stock in the old city suffers generally from poor maintenance. The structural conditions were such that public safety was becoming a major concern. An early program was initiated to assist the residents in their home repairs, especially when involving structural work (collapsing roofs, sagging foundation, and cracking walls). Revolving interest-free-loans were issued along with technical assistance and exemption from permit fees and procedures. The package was small but enabled many residents to invest matching funds and maintain their residences (approximately 700 cases to date).

The rehabilitation process is a complex operation involving many stakeholders and a variety of tasks other than monument restoration. The Project for the Rehabilitation of Old Aleppo has undertaken many of these tasks and tried to incorporate other players to join in the process. The approach was often criticized for not directly expending limited resources into the direct preservation of historic monuments. The municipality of Aleppo has undertaken the effort to develop this complex system through the help of international partners. Many of the lessons learned through the process were then transferred to other parts of the city. The City also, developed a level of know-how to handle similar future problems.

In the context of this international cooperation program the City learned to negotiate a margin of local decision-making, to tap on other sources of funding and to circumvent nonflexible regulations. Also, through the negotiations to formulate urban heritage procedures new planning methodologies were introduced for the first time in the country. In sum, the experience with urban heritage should be seen as indicator of the local administration to handle complex urban management efforts when allowed to initiate new programs beyond the business as usual climate of municipal work.

Tourism related urban development ptojects

Jdeideh

Jdeideh is the third action area being upgraded by REHAB. Interventions included issuing tourism facilities permits, upgrading infrastructure, calming traffic, providing parking, beautification of Sahet Al-Hatab and the surrounding facades, installing signs, and publishing tourist maps.

The Souks

REHAB is preparing detailed urban plans for the revitalization and conservation of the area and the souks surrounding the Grand Umayyad Mosque in the OCA.

The citadel

The Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) started restoration works in the citadel around the middle of the 20th century. In 2000, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) joined the restoration and rehabilitation process, aiming to stabilize the endangered sections of existing structures and provide up-to-date visitor facilities. The World Monuments Fund (WMF) also supports the work by providing funding for some of the rehabilitation efforts carried out by AKTC in the Citadel.

Three existing buildings are under rehabilitation for reuse as a visitor center and a museum. Structural and topographical surveys of the great majority of the Citadel features have been completed, detailing conditions before, during, and after interventions. Strategic plans determining the sequence and priorities of further restoration works, as well as guidelines for future reuse and site management, have been initiated. Training sessions and programs to provide instructions in up-to-date methodology of documentation and conservation techniques for the benefit of the DGAM and other local staff were conducted. The preparation of a management and maintenance plan for the Citadel is under way.

The western city gate and defensive walls

Summary will be provided by REHAB

Domestic rivalry

Vigorous domestic rivalry and the creation and persistence of competitive advantage in the tourism industry are highly correlated. Rivalry has a direct role in stimulating improvement and innovation, in stimulating firms to reap benefits of other determinants.

Anti-competitive behavior occurs largely in Aleppo, as a result of the competition being limited among a few integrated dominant players with a high market share in all segments of tourism industry supply, notably hotels and restaurants.

The dominant players like to believe that domestic competition is wasteful, because it prevents them from gaining economies of scale, hence, more profit. The big players are geared toward nurturing themselves to become even bigger "champions". Some also take the view that domestic rivalry is unimportant in the global industry of tourism. Plus, there is a unanimous belief that monopoly is profitable. This is due to the prevailing mentality generated by the closed economy system.

With the few number of local rivals in Aleppo, pressures are created for all sorts of "assistances" that undermine dynamism, such as favoritism of certain local firms at the local government. None of this "help" is conductive to innovation and ultimately to competitive advantage.

When analyzed with the lenses of global competition, most of Aleppo's tourism industry "champion" firms are uncompetitive. Static efficiency is recognized as the essential ingredient for success, instead of improvement and innovation.

New "legal" business formation in Aleppo, and in OCA in particular, is difficult. This is significantly harming the rivalry dynamics and hence the competitive advantage of Aleppo.

International Competition

Context

As other Arab states have become drawn into the international economic system, and have sought advantage in areas which include tourism. Tourism is an attractive vehicle for economic growth as it provides labor-intensive employment and valuable foreign currency. However, to compete effectively for tourists against other developing states, Syria has had to attract foreign investment and international expertise, which accounts in large part for its program of economic liberalization.

Because of their long history of tourism; Egypt, Morocco and Turkey have been the most successful regional states in developing their tourism industries, although states such as Tunisia and, more recently Jordan, provide something of an example for Syria. Tunisia has liberalized its economy, including its tourism sector, and at the same time achieved quite spectacular tourism growth, especially tourists from Europe. Jordan owes a recent leap in tourism to its peace agreement with Israel in 1994, which almost immediately delivered economic benefits. Jordan has also been especially clever in marketing itself internationally, taking advantage of tourists visiting Israel or Egypt by encouraging them to also include Jordan on their itineraries.

It is in this environment that Syria has to compete for tourists, with regional competitors often having a more liberalized tourism sector and more experience in servicing Western tourists. Structural deficiencies in the sector, such as a comparative lack of English, German, and Japanese language skills among Syrian workers, has been something that the government has tried to remedy for this reason. In recognition of the need to compete with the facilities of neighboring states, the Syrian government has tried to improve a number of facilities and services which not only attract tourists, but encourage them to return to Syria for a second or third visit. The increased emphasis on international marketing (spending on which has increased by about 20 percent per annum since 1990), supplying road signs and travel literature in English, and reductions in the complexity of currency regulations are examples. To expand and develop tourism, it is not enough to simply have tourist attractions, although these are obviously a necessity, but the facilities available have to satisfy the requirements of visitors as well. It is these areas which determine a tourist's satisfaction with the destination visited, and are important factors in a tourist's decision to return to a destination several times. So far, Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia have done this job better.

Regional Stability and Tourism

The real and perceived political stability of the Middle East has been an important determinant of tourists' willingness to visit the region. Over the past few decades, the number of Western' tourists traveling to Syria has depended on regional events and the tourists' perceived threats to their safety. During periods of international conflict or internal political instability, the number of tourists has fallen. In periods of stability, the numbers have recovered and often increased substantially. This is not the case only in Syria; neighboring countries show similar trends.

The centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict in tourists' perceptions of Middle East instability has previously accounted for the small tourism sector in many Arab states.

Many states, including Syria, have begun targeting Arab tourists, as well as those from Europe, North America and East Asia. Arab tourists traveling within the region typically have a greater respect for the culture and values of the host state, and, although some spend less money per day than Western tourists, Arab tourists tend to make their visit longer than their Western counterparts. Given that Arab tourists account for over half of Syria's tourist arrivals, it is not surprising that they continue to be targeted in its tourism plans.

Aleppo's Tourism Approach

The simple fact that Aleppo abounds in world-class archaeological ruins and historical monuments does not necessarily guarantee her a position in the global tourist destination map.

Tourism in Aleppo is based on the concept of "tourist attraction[13]" in lieu of "tourism product[14]". OCA receives a niche tourist market catering for a specialist interest which is antiquities. Tourism businesses in the city are neither aware of recent tourism trends developing in the global tourism marketplace, nor eager/able to develop new tourist products to diversify its market potential.

Tourism is a fiercely competitive market. Tourist destinations the world over are vying for patronage of the major tourist generating markets of Europe, the Americas and the East Asia, mobilizing every conceivable promotional means and exploring every available marketing channel. Aleppo tourism for that matter is apparently left out of the mega tourist movement due to lack of awareness to the global destination competition and the banal market approach.

[13] "tourist attraction", e.g. archaeological ruins, historical monuments or scenic wonders, is a commonly used in the first half of the twentieth century.

[14] The concept of "tourism product" covers not only traditional tourist attractions, but also a much broader types of attractions and activities that are sometimes artificially created. Typical examples include theme parks, cultural festivals, soft adventure sports, casino and entertainment. Even hotels and resorts (e.g. nostalgic, but totally refurbished hotels or palaces such as Winter Palace, Luxor in Egypt or the Pera Palace in Turkey), means of transportation (e. a. Orient Express in Europe or Hijaz Railway ride in Jordan), and cuisine (e.g. gourmet tours) can motivate modern tourists to travel.

Regional Comparisons of Syria's Tourism Competitiveness[15]

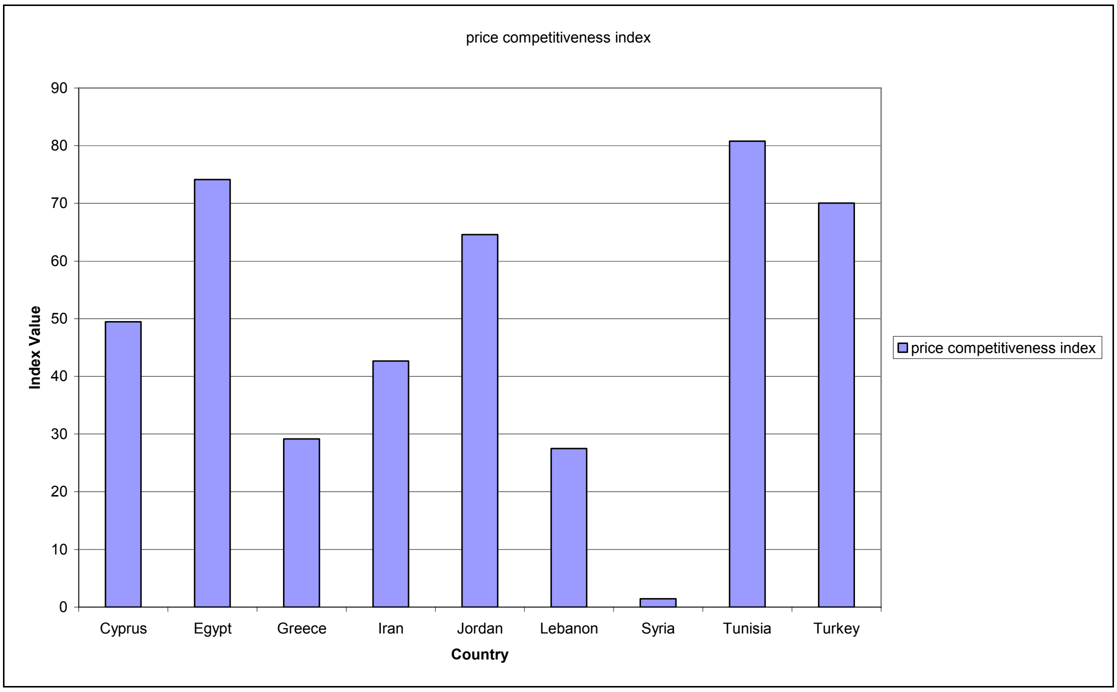
This section compares Syria with Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, Tunis, Egypt, and Iran.

The comparisons use the following indexes:

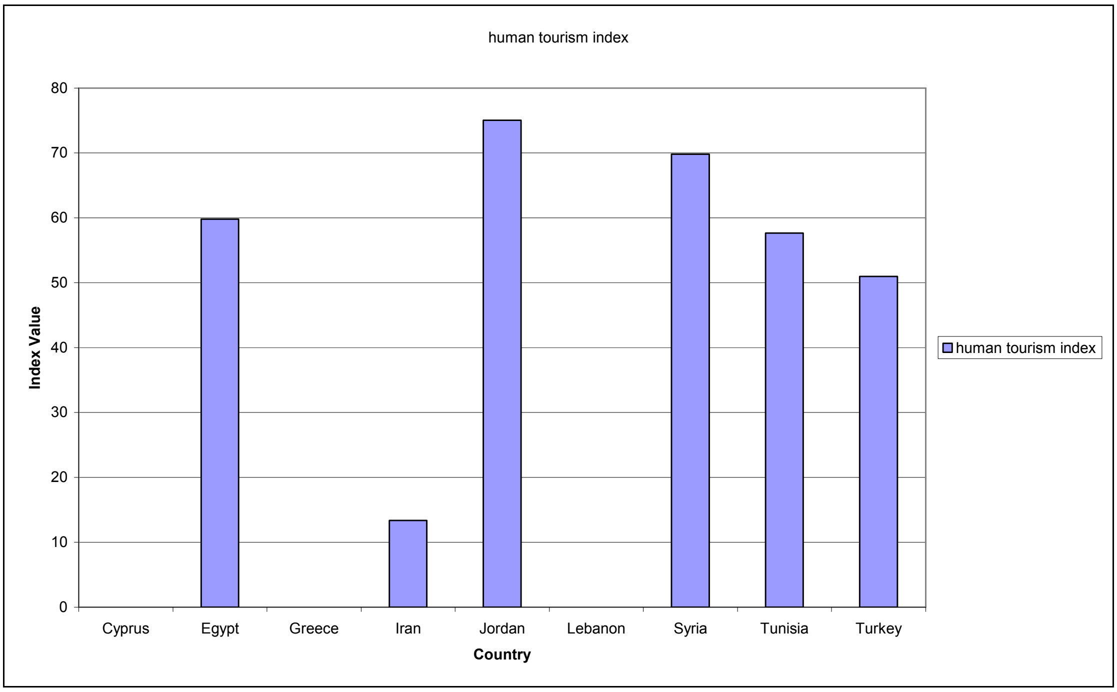
- Tourism Price Competitiveness Index (TPCI) shows the tourism price index across countries where the index value of '0' shows the least price competitive country and '100' represents the most price competitive country. It is computed using the Hotel Price Index and Purchasing Power Parity Index.
- Human Tourism Index measures the achievement of human development in terms of tourism activity. It is a new index and is in line with various kinds of human development indices constructed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to measure human achievement in various aspects of human development. The Human Tourism Index is calculated by taking the average of the Tourism Participation Index (TPI) and the Tourism Impact Index (TII).
- Infrastructure Index shows the level of infrastructure development, combining the Road Index, the Sanitation Index and the Water Access Index. The Railway Index is not included because of the limited data available. Index value of '0' represents the country with the least infrastructure while the value of '100' is for the country with the highest infrastructure.
- Environment Index combines the Population Density Index, CO2 Emission Index and the Environmental Treaties Index. An index value of '0' shows the least environmentally friendly country and '100' is for the most environmentally friendly country.
- Technology Index combines the Internet Index, Telephone Index, Mobile Index and HiTech Index.
- The Human Resources Index is proxied by using the Education Index obtained from the 2004 UNDP report. The education Index consists of the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratios.
- Openness Index shows the level of a country's openness towards international trade and international visitors. The Openness Index is an aggregate index combining the Visa Index, Tourism Openness Index, Trade Openness Index and Taxes on International Trade Index.
- Social Index: an aggregate social index, combining the Human Development Index (HDI), Newspaper Index, PC Index, and TV Index. Total crime recorded is not included because of the limited coverage of the data.

[15] Source: http://www.wttc.org/wttc/compmon/compmonstatic.asp, N'N graphs.

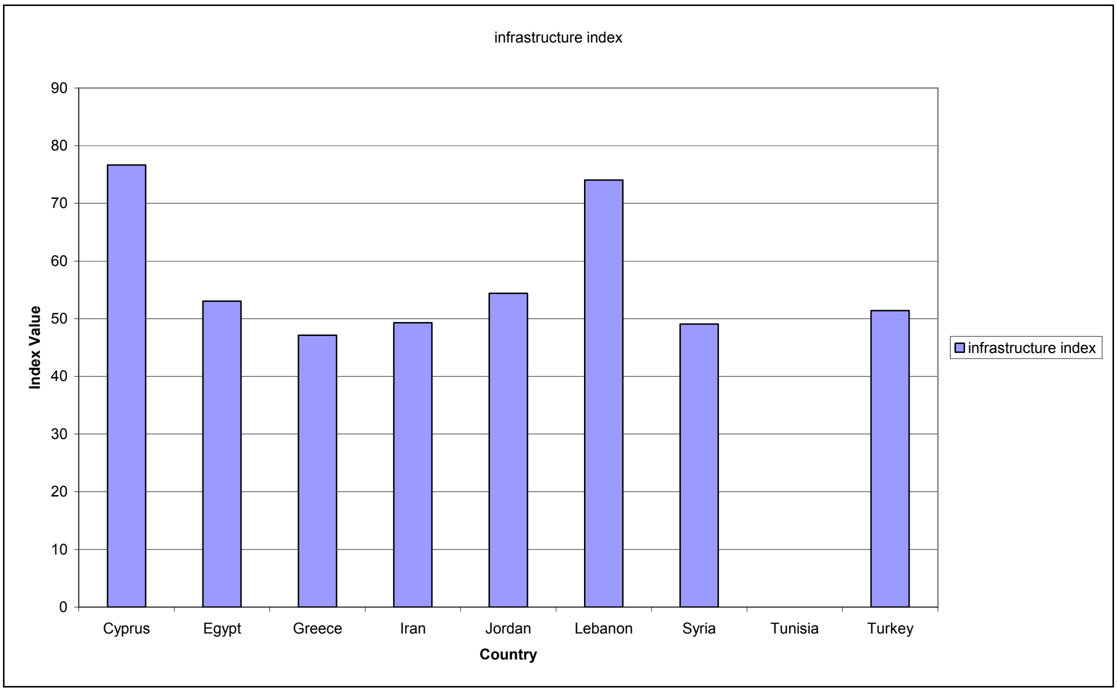
Price Competitiveness Index



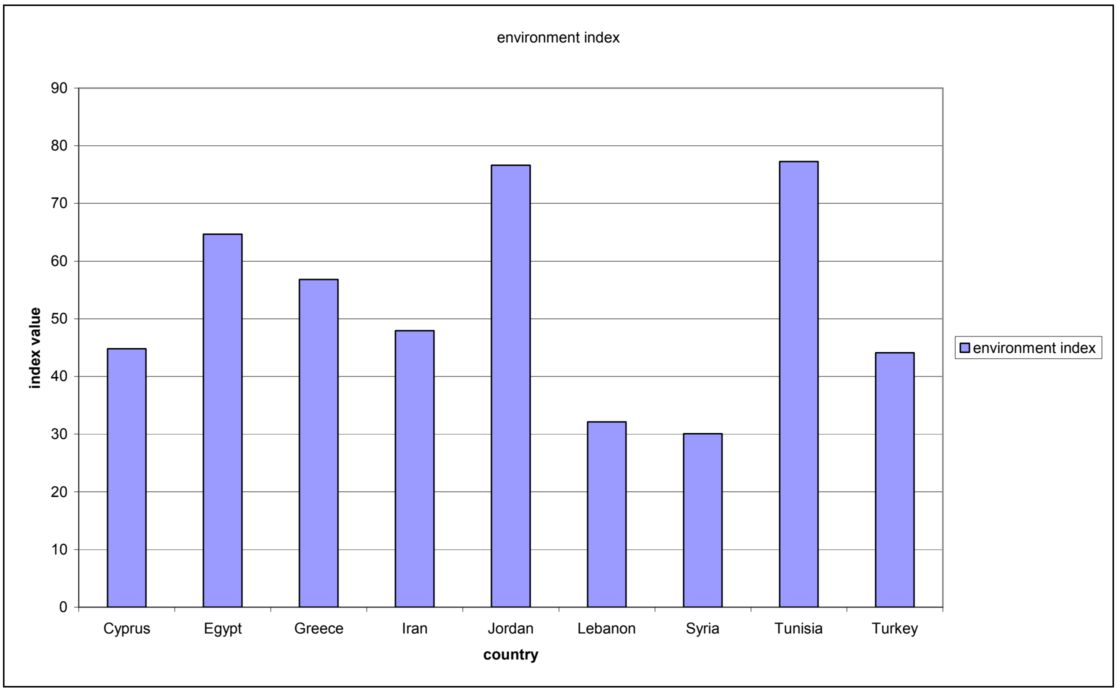
Human tourism index



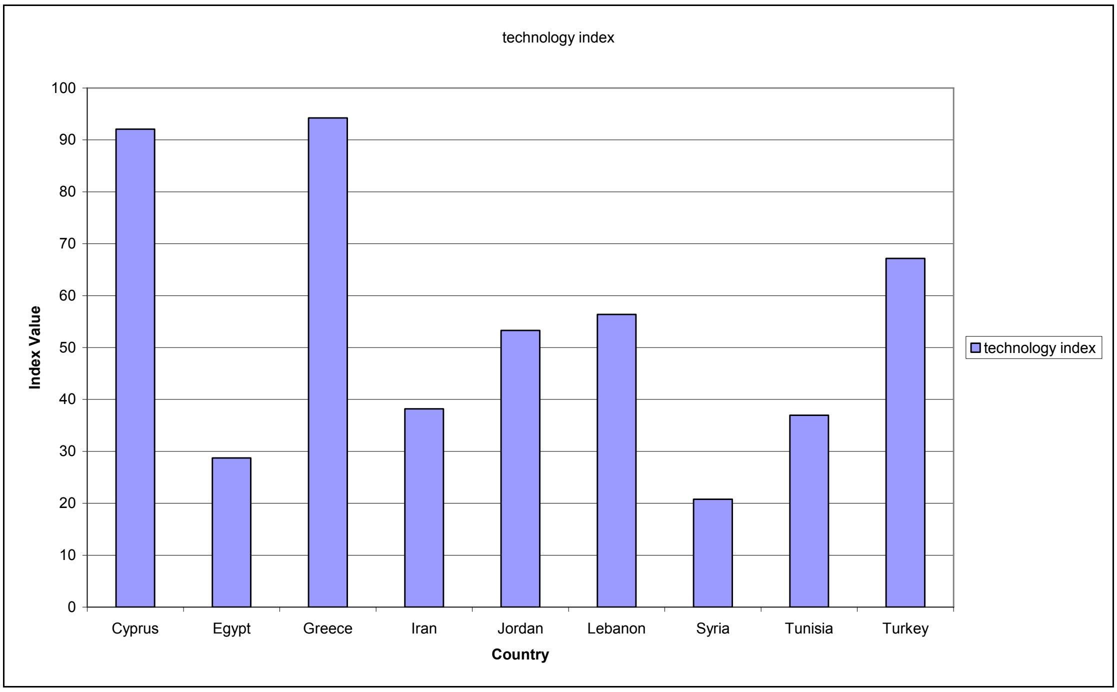
Infrastructure index



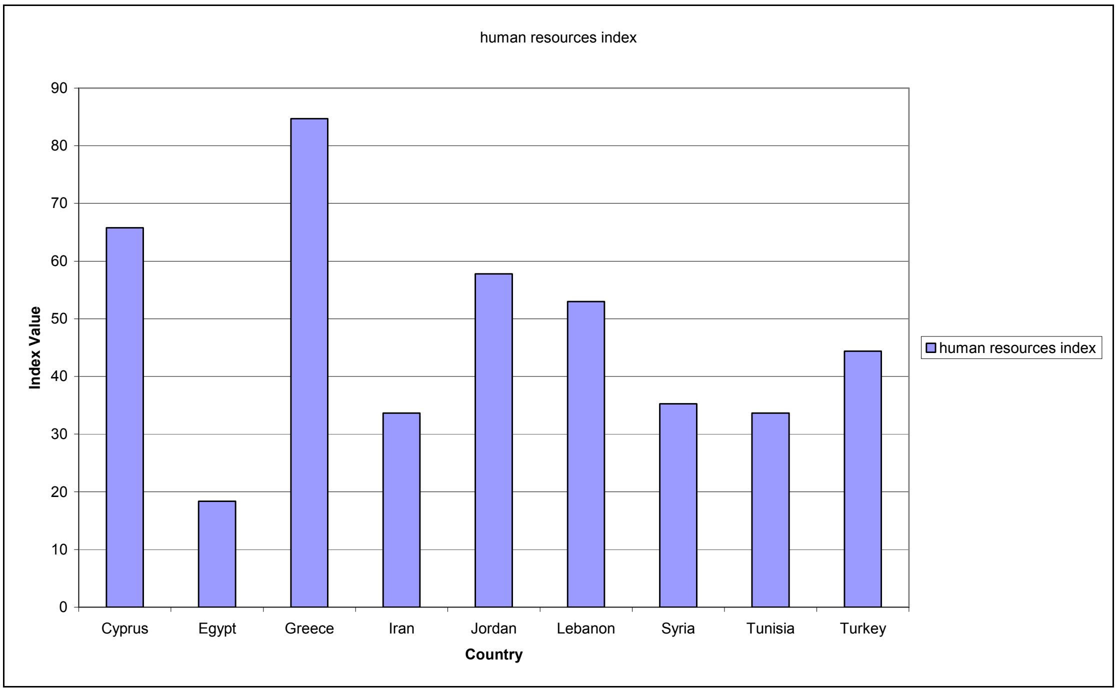
Environment index



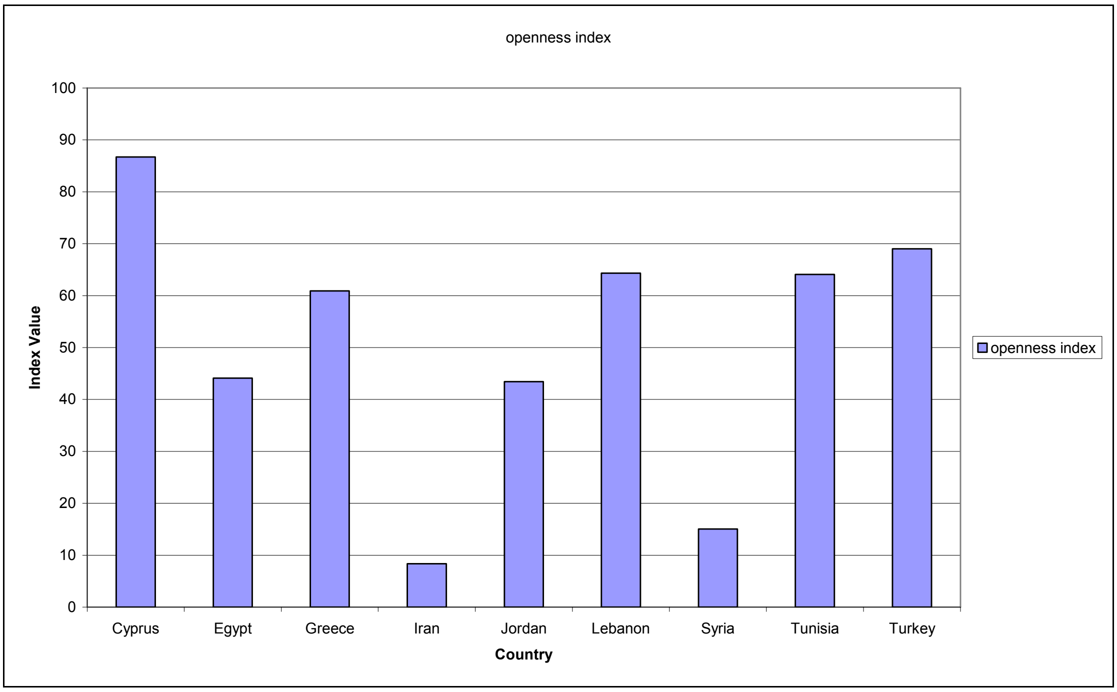
Technology index



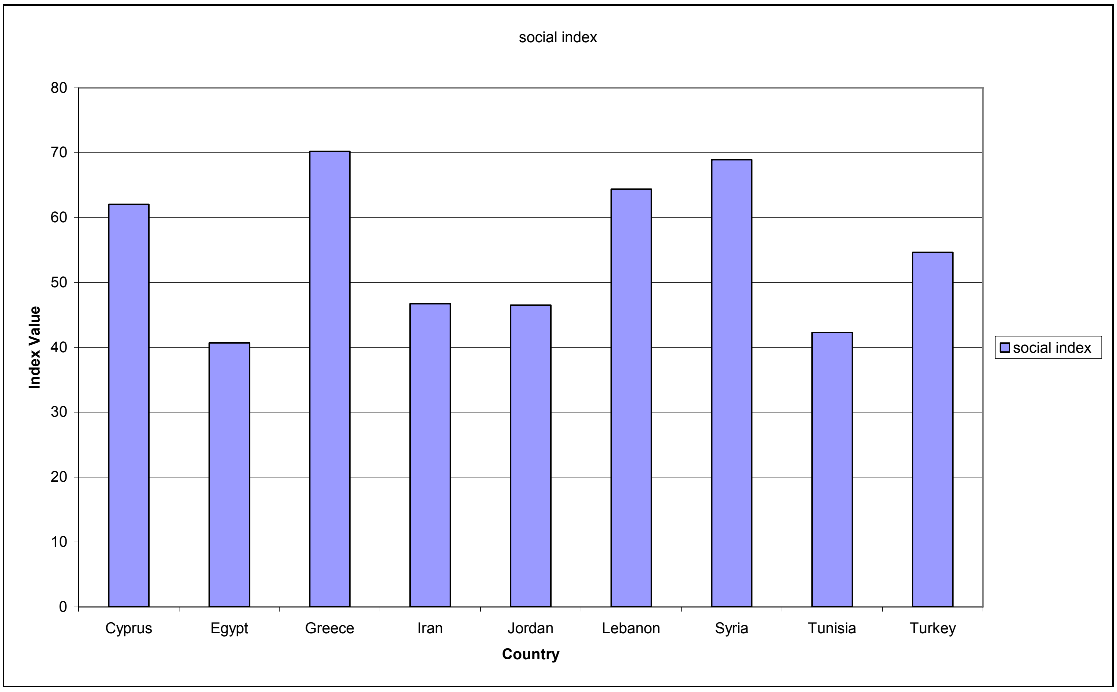
Human Resources



Openness index



Social index



Tourist Destination vis-a-vis Other Competing Destinations

Tourist destinations can be classified into four broad categories:

- tour circuit destination of historical and cultural monuments and ruins (e. g. Palmyra. Petra in Jordan, Luxor in Egypt);
- tour circuit destination of scenic and natural wonders (e.g. Wadi Rum in Jordan, the Sinai Valley in Egypt);
- beach holiday destination (e.g. Latakia, Aqaba in Jordan, Sharm el Sheik in Egypt); and
- urban tourism center destination (e.g. Damascus, Cairo in Egypt, Istanbul in Turkey).

Aleppo would be a tour circuit destination of historical and cultural monuments as well as an urban tourism destination.

Tour operators in the major tourist generating regions (Europe, Americas, and East Asia) generally package Syria in combination with other nearby tourist destinations, notably Jordan and more recently Lebanon, as it recovers from the decades-old civil war. It is rare for Syria to be featured alone as one independent destination in their tour packages.

Aleppo is endowed with potential resources for a variety of tourism products. However, because of poor product presentation and lack of product development initiatives, its destination appeal in the world market has fallen behind that of the other three destinations.

The following table examines the position of Syria compared with other destinations in the region by various itemized criteria.

Comparative Position of Syria Viewed by International Tour Operators

Country	Stand-Alone Destination			Product Representation of Resources							
	Destination Type	Recognition in World Market		Archaeology	History	Folk-life	Culture	Natural Wonders	Beach Holiday	Health Care	Themed Attraction
Syria	culture tourism, & small beach base	limited for cultural tourists	no	fair	weak	weak	weak	weak	weak	fair (GCC)	weak
Egypt	all-purpose tourism	established for general touists	yes	strong	strong	strong	strong	fair	strong	wcak	strong
Jordan	culture tourism, & small beach base	limited for culture tourists	no	fair	weak	weak	fair	weak	fair	weak	weak
Lebanon	all- purpose tourism	established for general tourists	Yes	fair	strong	strong	fair	fair	strong	fair	strong

Note: This evaluation shows only the image held by average international tour operators as published by JICA in 1998.

Aleppo’s Tourism Product

Tourism in Aleppo has been focused on the rather obsolete concept of "tourist attraction," as briefly touched upon before. Out of several categories of "tourist attractions", Aleppo has been and still is relying heavily on "antiquities" as the highlight of its tourist image, more specifically; its citadel. There is little effort to exploit the potentials that Aleppo has in many other fields of culture tourism (e.g. the souqs, the life and customs, the old city, old buildings… etc.).

The standard of access, physical management and presentation of Aleppo’s "antiquities" are, generally well below those provided in the developed tourist destinations, and often betrays the expectation of today's discerning tourist. The Aga Khan program for the citadel is expected to improve the situation in that site alone.

The table on the following page shows Aleppo’s tourism products, in comparison with Cairo and Dubai.

Comparative Position of Aleppo in Tourism Product

	Aleppo	Cairo	Dubai
Sound and Light Show	Aleppo Citadel	Giza Pyramids, Cairo	
Historical or Old Buildings, renovated into Up-market facilities	Shibani	Mena House Oberoi, Cairo (ex Ismail Pasha Palace)	Hatta Fort hotel, Old fortress village in the mountain
Unique local / Native Experience	Cuisine	Giza Pyramid at sunset, Cairo	Camel Market Visit Tradition Dhow Building Yard Visit. Moonlit Arabian BBQ under Bedouin Tent in desert
Off-road Experience	none	Camel Trekking, Sinai desert Camping, Sinai / West Oases Jeep Safari, Sinai Nature trekking Sinai	Camel Caravan Dune Driving / Wadi Bashing Sand Sking Camel Riding / Falconry
Water Crusies	None	Nile Crusies (3-4 nights) in luxury Floating Hotel Boats (variety of choices) Dinner Sunset Cruse, Cairo	Creek Cruse by purpose built Traditional Dhow Creekside park
Water Activities	Maybe in Lake Assad	Diving, Snorkeling Water Skiing Sailing Windsurfing Deepsea Fishing	Diving, Snorkeling Water Skiing Sailing Windsurfing Deepsea Fishing Modern Marinas / Yacht Clubs Water Wonderland Park Jumeira Beach park
Sports and Other Soft Adventure		Int`l Marathon of Egypt (Luxor) Int`l Angling Contest (Hurghada) National Bicycle Contest Arab Clay Pigeon Contest Underwater Photography (Sharm el Sheik) Pharaoh's Rally, etc. many others	5 World-Class Golf Courses Go-Carting Horse-riding Ice Skating Shooting / Archery Cycling / Jogging
Old Quarters renovated / converted into Tourism Products	Current tourist utilization of Jdeideh is a good start, but it is isolated and un-sophisticated.		Bastakia Quarter (Al Fahid) Fort converted into National Museum, Galleries, Boutiques) Deira Quarter Tourist Souq Bayt Al Wakil Historic Building (converted into maritime Museum)
MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition)		Cairo International Center of Conferences (planned to be expanded)	Dubai World Center (39-story business office tower , with world-class conference center / facilities)

Overseas Tourism Promotion

Some 170 tourist destination countries of the world are competing fiercely, mobilizing every conceivable promotional means and exploring every available marketing channel, in order to secure a larger share of the global tourist market.

Aleppo's promotion as a tourist destination is lumped up with Syria. Compared to the activities and efforts of other tourist destinations, Syria's present promotional approach regrettably has to be assessed as old-fashioned at best. One-shot participation in travel fairs in the major markets makes little or no impact on the target market, especially in the travel trade, engulfed by the more aggressive and sophisticated approaches adopted by competitive destinations. There seems to be no repetitive promotional or sales mission to follow up the trade fair participation.

To illustrate the argument, Syria's position in the field of overseas tourism promotion is examined in the following table, with the four other competitors in the region, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and UAE. The exercise confirms how poorly Syria performs compared with the others, due to the lack of awareness, know-how and resources for sophisticated promotional activities that is needed in the development of modern tourism.

Comparative Position of Syria in Overseas Tourism Promotion

Overseas Representation	National Carrier	Overseas Promotional Events / Campaigns	Efforts in other areas
Syria			
Nil (Zero location)	• One shot participation in travel fairs in major markets, making little impact, engulfed by more aggressive approaches adopted by competitive destinations. • No cohesive collaboration among MOT, Syrian Airlines, travel industry. • No follow-up or repetitive after-sale contact at regular interval toward key operators of major markets.		
Egypt			
• Europe: • Athens • Frankfurt • Madrid • London • Stockholm • Paris, Rome • Vienna • Moc\scow • Americas: • Montreal, • Chicago, Los Angeles, New York • Africa: • Johannesburg • Asia: • Tokyo	• Egyptian Air (MS) very active to promote Egypt's destination image. • MS overseas Offices also provide basic tourist information.	• Int'l Cairo Marathon, World travel & Tourism market in Arab States • World shooting Competition, Rising Sun Festival (Abu Simbel) • Tourist Festival, Peugeot Products, Int'l Fishing competition (Hurghada) • National Fishing Festival, Int'l Festival of Documentary Films • Wafai el Nil Festival • Int'l Windsurfing championship, Int'l Experimental Theater Festival, Int'l Film Festival, • Int'l Tourist Festival • National Fishing Festival Pharaoh's Rally, UN50th Annversary, Rising Sun Festival • Int'l Fishing Festival, Int'l nile Rowing Competition, Int'l Cairo Film Festival	
Jordan			
Nil. (Zero location) However, commercial or cultural Attachat some Embassy locations acts as part-time tourism Promotion officer (e.g. US, Japan)	• Royal Jordanian (RJ) very active To Promote Jordan's destination image. • RJ retains a folklore music and dance troupe and dispatches in to key markets in conjunction with Jordan Festival / Show.	• Royal Family creating very favorable image and enhancing Jordan's tourist profile. • Trade, Cultural, Travel Fair and show in Europe, often hosted by Queen Noor, Accompanied by RJ music and dance troupe. • Very high media exposure.	• RJ holds air traffic right JPN (Kansao)-Jordan and retains off-line representative sales office in JPN, employing ex-JAL staff. • With the effort of above JPN rep office, Rj successfully operating Peak-season charter flights Japan-Jordan, for tour packages covering not only Jordan , but also Syria and Egypt (Sinai), establishing Amman as one regional hub of JPN tourist Distribution
Lebanon			
• London, Paris, Cairo, Jeddah and Baghdad • Lebanese Embassies and consulates also provide basic tourist information.	• Middle eastern Airlines (MEA) very active to promote Lebanon's destination image. • MEA overseas offices also provide basic tourist information	• Rehabilitation and reconstruction of Old Quarters Tourist Souq. • International Formula One Grand prix Race 1998, invited at Hariri Beirut Circuit.	• New Modern Airport terminal Complex Scheduled to open in early 1998 • Malaysian Airlines (MH) fly direct Kl to Beirut and Malaysian visitors granted tourist visa upon arrival from May 1997. Similar facilitation planned for Japanese and Korean visitors very shortly.
Dubai			
• Europe: • London • Paris • Frankfurt • Rome • Moscow • Americas: • Philadelphia • Los Angeles • Africa: • Johannesburg • Asia: • Tokyo, Hong Kong	• Emirates (EK) very aggressive to promote Dubai Destination Sales • EK overseas offices also provide basic tourist information.	• Dubai Tennis Open, Desert Classic Golf Open, Formula Powerboat race, regular camel and horse races • DIMC Open Regatta, Dubai Shopping Festival. Dubai world cup (horse racing) regular horse races. • Muscat Sailing Race , Offshore Powerboat Race, Dhow Sailing Race – 43ft, ME Int'l Boat Show, Regular camel horse races • Laser Sailing Race, Formula S2000 Race, Arabian Travel Mart, Dhow Sailing Race – 60 ft • Asian PGA Golf, Formula 4 Powerboat Race, regular horse races • Formula 4 Powerboat Grand Prix Dubai International Seevens (Rugby), Jet Ski Championship, Desert Challenge rally, Dubai Int'l rally, Aviation cup Tennis, ME Int'l motor show, Dubai Int'l Air Show, regular horse races. • Dubai Duty Free Golf World Cup, Gulf news 4wd Fun Drive, National Day Camel Races, regular horse races.	• Tourist-friendly "14-day Transit Visa System" at a cost (US$60), easily obtain-able through hotels and tour operators that visitors intend to use

Source: JICA, 1998

Market Exposure

Tour catalogues of the leading tour operators in the four major package tourist generating markets of France, Germany, the UK and Japan were examined by JICA to identify the comparative exposures of Syria in the international tourist market. The following table summarizes the number of pages devoted to Syria in these catalogues in comparison with those for other competitive destinations in the Middle East and East Mediterranean Regions.

Egypt holds a dominant position in all four markets with 52 pages, followed by Turkey with 38 pages, and UAE with 22.5 pages. The pages for these three destinations exceed by far those allocated to Syria (5 pages) and Jordan (8 pages). This situation indicates that Egypt, Turkey and UAE are recognized as established, all-purpose tourist destinations in the world market; they contain a variety of attractions and products that appeal not only to the culture tourism market, but also to many other categories of the special-interest market (e. g. "themed" tour circuits, desert soft adventures, meetings and conventions, etc.) and ultimately to the mass, general-interest tourist market.

Attention is drawn to the pages dedicated to Lebanon, which is definitely on the increase. Lebanon in the ' 60s and ' 70s was one of the major tourist destinations in the region. Tourist generating markets, notably of Europe, remember the heyday of tourism in Lebanon and are prepared to return. Even in the Japanese market, Lebanon is featured as a "stand-alone" independent destination because of pent-up curiosity about the long sealed-off sites such as Baalbek. Ongoing vigorous effort of national rebuilding and rehabilitation will no doubt contribute to the re-emergence of Lebanon as one of the favored destination in the region.

The rather high profile given to UAE in the European and Japanese catalogues demonstrates the efforts of tour operators to introduce new destinations and products to stimulate the interest of potential holiday tourists. It also reflects a successful destination marketing approach deployed by UAE aimed at European and Japanese buyers (i.e. tour operators).

Exposure of Syrian Tour Packages in Major Markets

	Syria	Jordan	Lebanon	Egypt	Turkey	UAE
France (AF, JET TOUR)	4.5	4.5	1.0	17.0	15.0	0
Germany (DER Tour)	0	2.0	0	9.0	6.0	19.0
UK (BA, Holidays)	0	0.5	0	10.0	8.0	3.0
Japan (JTB, LOOK Tour)	0.5	1.0	0.5	16.0	9.0	0.5
Total	5.0	8.0	1.5	52.0	38.0	22.5

source: JICA, 1998

Package Tour Pricing

Tour pricing is one of the most important factors in attracting prospective tourists to choose one particular destination out of many other competitive destinations presented in the package tour catalogues. Again, the tour catalogues of the leading tour operators in the four major package tourist generating markets of France, Germany, the UK, and Japan have been examined, in order to identify the comparative position of Syrian packages vis-à-vis other competitive destinations in the real on.

The following table summarizes the result of examination. Two representative tour operators are selected in each source market: the one mainly catering to mass, general tourist market and the other specializing for smaller, culture tourism market. Care has been exercised to choose a median price package for Egypt and Turkey, where many offerings are available from high end to low end, while for Syria and Jordan there usually is one offering with one price due to the smaller size of market.

Allowance has to be made to the fact that the shorter the distance to the market, the cheaper the tour price becomes (because a fair portion of the tour price consists of airfare), hence Turkish packages from EU markets are often cheaper than Egypt and much cheaper than Syria or Jordan.

Out of the four destinations in the region, Syrian package prices are generally the most expensive in most markets, with a very few exception (e.g. British Museum Tour).

From EU markets, there is no great difference in air mileage to Syria, Jordan or Egypt. Yet Egyptian packages are offered 20 to 40 percent cheaper than Syrian or Jordan packages, which testify that Egypt is an established destination catering the mass, general tourist market consisting of a diversity of travel motivation.

Comparative Position of Syria in Package Tour Pricing

<table>
<tr><th>Tour Operator</th><th>Syria</th><th>Jordan</th><th>Egypt</th><th>Turkey</th></tr>
<tr><td>Studiosus. Germany
(Culture Tourism Specialist)</td><td>10 nights 11 days
DM 3.570</td><td>7 nights 8 days
DM 3.090</td><td>8 nights 9 days
DM 2.960</td><td>8 nights 9 days
DM 1.770</td></tr>
<tr><td>Deutches Reiseburo, Der, Germany
(Culture Tourism Operator)</td><td>No Package Tour Programmed</td><td>7 nights 8 days
DM 2.660</td><td>7 nights 8 days
DM 1.990</td><td>7 nights 8 days
DM 1.045</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Jet Tours, France
(General Tourism Operator)</td><td>11 nights 13 days
F 13.800</td><td>9 nights 9 days
F 10.950</td><td rowspan="2">7 nights 8 days
F 6.990</td><td rowspan="2">7 nights 8 days
F 3.650</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Syria / Jordan Combination
12 nights 14 days F 15.980</td></tr>
<tr><td>Procure Terre Orient, France
(Religious Pilgrim Specialist)</td><td>11 nights 12 days
F 11.750</td><td>8 nights 9 days
F 9.500</td><td>No Package Tour Programmed</td><td>8 nights 9 days
F 5.750</td></tr>
<tr><td>British Airways Holidays, UK
(General Tourism Operator)</td><td>No Package Tour Programmed</td><td>10 nights 11 days
£ 1.049</td><td>7 nights 8 days
£ 400 / 750</td><td>7 nights 8 days
£ 400 / 650</td></tr>
<tr><td>British Museum Tour, UK
(Cultural Tourism Specialist)</td><td>9 nights 10 days
£ 1.495</td><td>8 nights 9 days
£ 1.595</td><td>No Package Tour Programmed</td><td>8 nights 9 days
£ 995</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">JTB LOOK Tour, Japan
(General Tourism Operator)</td><td colspan="2">5 nights 9 days
Y 338.000</td><td rowspan="2">6 nights 8 days
Y 328.000</td><td rowspan="2">6 nights 8 days
Y 258.000</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">8 nights 11 days
Syria, Lebanon, Jordan Combined
Y 440,000</td></tr>
<tr><td>Global Culture Tour, Japan
(Culture Tourism Operator)</td><td colspan="2">9 nights 11 days
Syria, Jordan Combined
Y 398.000</td><td>5 nights 8 days
Y 318.000</td><td>6 nights 8 days
Y 298.000</td></tr>
</table>

Source: JICA, 1998

How the Market Views Syria

Tour operators have played and will continue to play the key role in the development of modern tourism. They activate an awareness of destination in the market, program the packages, market and hard-sell the product, and ultimately help develop a new flow of tourists to a particular destination. In this sense, it is no exaggeration to say that successful destination development can be achieved only with close collaboration with the tour operators in the source market.

Bearing in mind the importance of tour operator's role, an in-depth interview survey was conducted with the eight operators in the four major OECD countries. Two representative operators were selected in each country, so that the one covers for the mass, general interest market and the other for special interest market such as culture tourism.

The typical issues raised by most of the operators interviewed include:

- Pervasive negative perception toward Syria, linked with images of terrorism;
- Little awareness of Syria as a desirable destination in the tourist generating market;
- Absence of awareness for competition on the Syrian side (fierce competition among tourist destination countries vying for a greater share of the world tourist market); and
- Acute hotel shortage in major locations (especially in peak season), aggravated by limited choice of hotel category.

Various comments obtained from the eight operators are summarized in the following table, according to the major issues raised during the course of the individual interview. Comments and observations of the travel experts directly involved in the destination development clearly indicate the immediate issues that need to be addressed if Syrian tourism is to develop and to expand.

	Tourist Perception	Market's Knowledge / Awareness	Syria's Awareness of Competition	Pricing	Hotel	Seasonality	Beach holiday Potential	Tourist Support Facilities	Others
Deutches Reiseburo, DER, Germany (General Tourism Operator)	Sensitive to political stability in M/E. Depend on int'l media portrayal. Jordan least sensitive	customers & travel trade are not aware of Syria, this must change to allow Syrian tourism to expand,.					Can be add-on feature. Basically unknown and perceived as being undeveloped		DER has no Syria package now. New destination, to be combined with Jordan
Studiosus, Germany (Culture Tourism Specialist)	Bad reputation (mostly) undeserved). Poor market perception must change. Jordan least sensitive	"is there any promotion overseas?" MOT brochures don't sell Syria Hire professional marketing agency to avoid expensive mistakes	None. Studiosus offers longer-distance packages to India, Thailand, Mexico more cheaply than Syria	Extremely expensive destination. Dual exchange system is the reason.(misunderstanding NOT YET rectified due to lack of Syrian side publicity efforts).	Hotels / restaurants underdeveloped. 5-stars hotels "run-down" Two Aleppo hotels "catastrophe" New hotel development needed	Bottleneck, especially I Palmyra	Can be an add-on feature Not well known	Syria has yet to acquire infrastructure and know-how to market and operate as a successful tourist destination. Lack of good way-side establishments.	Advantages "most unspoiled country and incredibly friendly people" Contradicting the image of "unsafe, terrorist state, under police control."
Jet tours, france (general Tourism Operator)	Linked with images of terrorism. Jordan's perception much better. It is up to Syria to change the way they perceived	Retail travel agents know much more about Jordan than Syria. Need to educate the travel trade.	Syria must not forget price competition within the marketplace. Jordan uses Petra very effectively to increase tourist image.	Far more expensive (hotel and ground cost) than Jordan	Polarized between good 5-star and very bad 3-star, no satisfactory intermediate. Severe capacity / lack of choice needs to be addressed.	Very high seasonality aggravates hotel capacity problem further.			Hospitality major advantage over the neighbors
Procure Terre orient, France (religious Pilgrimage specialist)	Less security threat than a few years ago. Terrorism-linked perception is gone. An impression persists of heavily controlled state	Greater awareness, market image needed Limited overseas promotion . High standard of Syrian hospitality not known to the buying public	Syria needs to compete with other destinations in terms of value for money both in/ outside M/E.	More expensive than Jordan	Hotel capacity is major limiting factor Palmyra bottleneck. New hotel project in Palmyra seemingly restricted.	Extreme seasonality worsens the problem. Why do not try to extend the season	By nature of pilgrimage specialist, the operator not interested in beach holiday	Touring route not well kept (many potholes in roads). Why mobile phones not allowed? Jordan is the best in the region, with comfort and quality of services	High standard of hospitality. Doubt if the same hospitality survives, as volume increases.
British Airways Holidays, UK (General Tourism Operator)	General M/E perception with political / security troubles. Lack of tourist offices a constraint, and reinforces negative perception.	Little market awareness. Need 5 years to become a "touring product" like Jordan. Comparable destinations to Syria are Yemen, Iran, Lebanon	BA seeks joint marketing efforts with Syria MOT. Combined marketing not only save cost but also create a positive perception toward Syria within the market				Perceived as lacking suitable costline. Believed to be undeveloped, not particularly attractive.	Level of developed tourist infrastructure not comparable to Egypt / Jordan.	No Syria package now BA plans Syria / Jordan program for 1998 (10 departures a year, 26 pax each = 260 tourists total) Jordan perceived more stable.
British museum Tour, UK (Cultural Tourism Specialist)	Depends on general ME political situation. "safe feel" exists, but it is not known. Syria must try to convey this advantage by promotional effort.	The lay-man may not know even Palmyra. "what do Syria do?" Vacuum of Syrian Promotion. Trade education needed. Efforts needed to create a desirable market image.	Syria is not simply competing regionally, but globally for the tourist dollar. Erase of access better in Jordan (charter flights). Syrian air flies too indirect and take too long.	Tipping to guides becoming problem (greedy guides)	Existing hotels reaching capacity. Growth limited by inability to satisfactorily accommodate demand. 4-star lowest acceptable comparable to international 2-3star		General market not aware Mediterranean coastline exists south of Turkey, so Syria not considered as a beach holiday destination.	Poor site facilities / resthouse. Most signs Arabic / French and few English. Few mini-coaches for smaller-size tour groups. Hygiene major concern (toilets, restaurants)	More genuinely friendly than jorsdan
JTB LOOK Tour, Japan (General Tourism Operator)	Japanese public is generally free from negative perception by Western media, singling out Syria. Yet, whole M/E region perceived as politically insecure.	Niche market for archaeology/culture tourists.		Lack of Japanese-speaking guides obliges Japanese operators to send Japanese-speaking escort from Japan. This makes Syrian package more expensive	Difficulty in securing Palmyra rooms.		M/E will never be perceived as beach holiday location for Japanese market.	Dated airport Onerous visa acquisition (time consuming) Lack of investment from abroad. Poor road in some area.	Lack of direct flight from Japan. Jordan becoming regional hub by charter flights japan / Amman in Japanese peak tourist season
Travel Sekai Tour, Japan (M / E and Culture Tourism Operator)	Japanese public least influenced by negative perception (proven by the fact that packages to Iraq, Iran successfully operating. Stability of whole ME is crucial (no terrorism). Syria security alone is not enough .	Only known to niche repeat tourists keen on archaeology / culture . If Syria wants to emulate Egypt and tap broader market base of general culture tourists need large-scale promotion to build up destination image.	No market presentation at all	Lack of Japanese – speaking guides, causing the same problem as above.	Bottleneck of Palmyra – only one large hotel suitable for foreign tourists	.	As culture tourism specialist, no interest in beach holiday potential.		Lack of direct flight from Japan. Malaysia now flies Kuala Lumpur / Beirut direct with Japan connection, making Lebanon more accessible than Syria.

Spread Effect of Package Tourist Spending

Rapid Analysis of Package Tours

Number of package tourists

Prior to the arrival, every tour guide who would escort a group of more than 8 members must report its itinerary to MOT. By nature, these reports do not reflect sudden cancellation or alternation after arrival. However, these reports virtually represent the real structure of package tours to Syria.

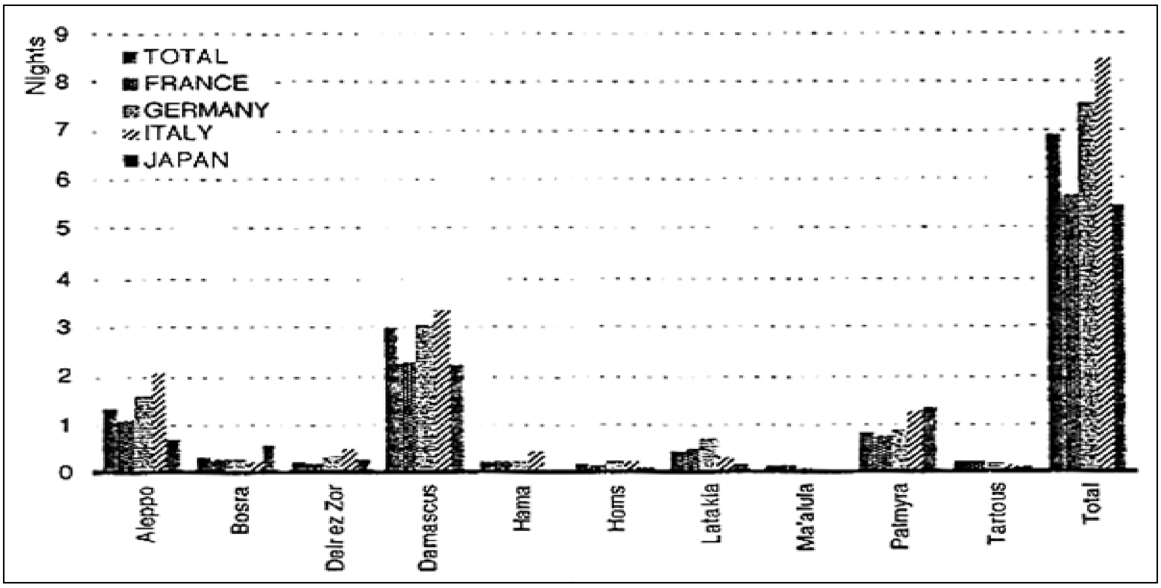
Unfortunately, we could not obtain those reports; therefore we devised the following solution to estimate the numbers of tourists: we assumed that 75%[16] of OECD hotel guests in 3, 4, and 5 star hotels[17] who stayed in the months of March, April, May, September, October, and November[18]; are package tour tourists. This number was roughly 25,000 tourists for Aleppo in 2001. This number represents more than 90% of the tourists[19]. Therefore, we estimate the number of package tourists who stayed in Aleppo in 2001 at 27,000 tourists.

The average size of package tours is approximately 20 tourists; hence the number of package tour groups is 1350 groups in 2001.

Length of stay

Based on the JICA report of 1998, we will adopt an average length of stay in Aleppo of 1.5 nights (see figure below). Hence The total tourist nights by package tours in 2001 is approximately 40,500 nights

Package tour average length of stay



[16] In 1997, The JICA carried out two marketing surveys, in which they interviewed more than 1300 foreign tourists comprising various nationalities: French, Italian, German, American, South African, etc. including some Arab nationalities. The interviews were carried out at major hotels and tourist sites in Damascus, Aleppo, Palmyra, Bosra, Latakia, etc. One of the findings of the surveys is that around 75% of tourists were package holiday tourists.

[17] Based on our hearings, it was established that package tourists stay only in 3, 4, and 5 stars hotels.

[18] Based on our hearings, it was established that the selected months represent the PT season.

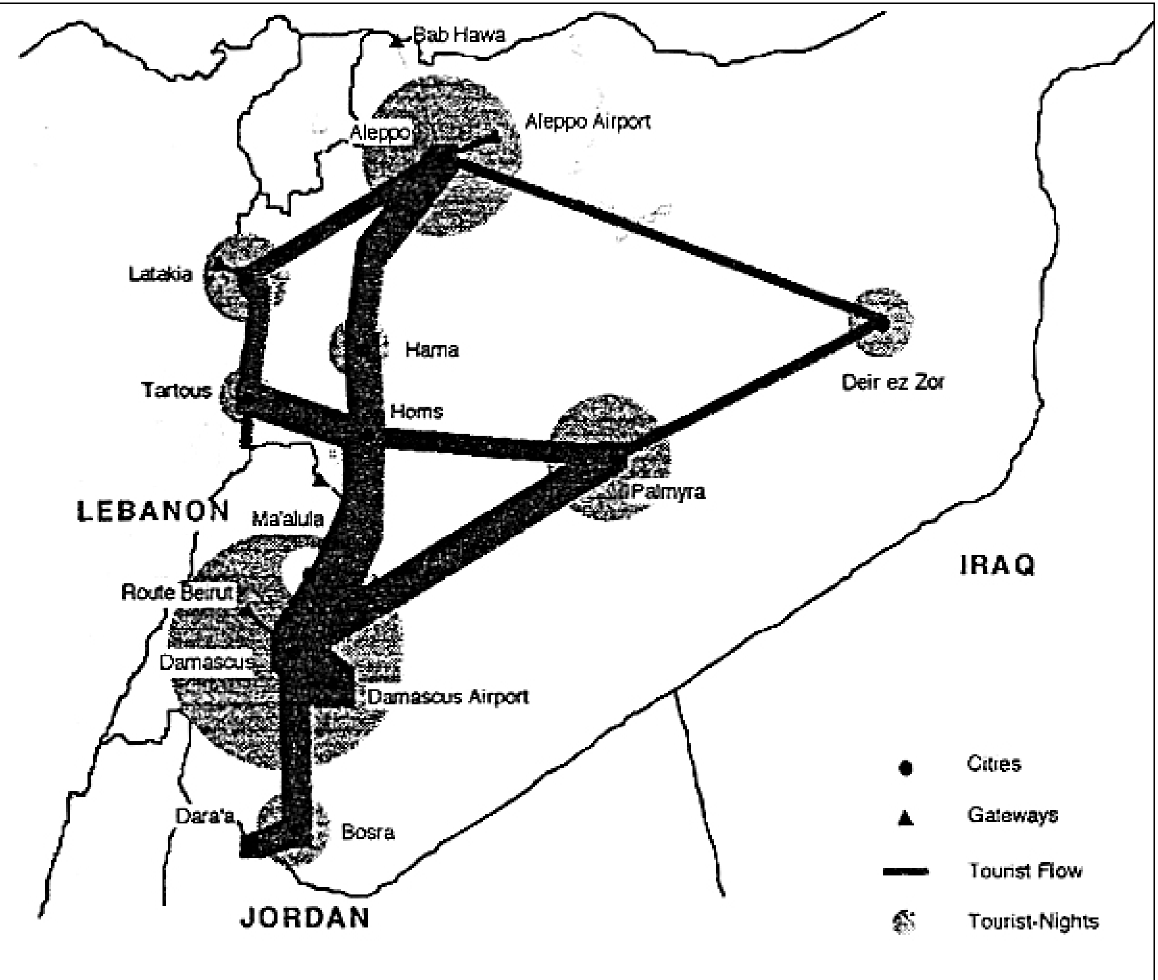
[19] Based on the findings of the JICA analysis of MOT reports.

Package tours' trends

Based on the JICA report of 1998, Some country-specific tendencies are apparent. Japanese package tourists for example stay in Palmyra longer than Aleppo, though other package tourists clearly show otherwise. The average lengths of stay of Japanese and French package tourists in Syria are shorter than the overall average length of stay. Italian package tourists stay longer in Syria and are more likely to stay in Hama and Deir ez Zor than other package tourists. German package tourists are likely to travel on the Aleppo - Latakia route.

The figure below shows itinerary made by package tourists in 1996. Overall characteristics of package tourists revealed by this analysis are adequately informative about actual package tourist movements. Flows of individual tourists may somehow differ from the flows of package tourists.

Package Tour Tourist Flows and Tourist Nights



Suorce: MOT

Note: This figure was made according to the places of stay. The following assumptions were applied.

- Tourist Flow to Ma'alula does not include visitors without spending night.
- Tourist Flows through Bosra includes all tourists between Dara'a and Damascus.
- Other places also include all tourists similary.

Rapid Analysis of Package Tourist Spending

Tour operators

The amount of tourist spending by package tours included in the package tour prices and the package tour commission income earned by tour operators can be estimated from the number of package tour tourist. Based on the result of our hearing from major tour operators, the following assumptions were set for the estimation:

- The average net cost for package tour tourists in an average size package tour per person per night is approximately US$ 75 and;
- The average profit rate[20] for package tours is approximately 7 percent, which equals $5 per person per night.

The estimated annual total package tour tourist spending and the estimated tour operation commission income in 2001 are approximately US$3,037,500 and US$202,500 respectively.

Tour Guides

Every package tour always includes a local tour guide so that the number of job opportunities for tour guides can be roughly estimated as the sum of package tour lengths (days), which can be obtained from the previous section.

The estimated total number of job opportunities in 2001, in Aleppo, is 2700 man-days (1350 groups x 2 days).

According to the hearing from some major tour operators, income from tour guiding services varies depending upon languages, experiences, knowledge, sites and schedules. The average earning per group per day is US$ 30.

Using this figure, the average annual income among actually working tour guides is estimated at US$ 81,000. Tour guides often receive tips in addition to the above mentioned income.

Restaurants

In most cases, package tour tourists take two meals at hotel restaurants and one meal at local restaurants because of individual hotels' policies. According to the hearing from tour operators, the average spending by a package tour tourist to hotel restaurants and to local restaurants are approximately US$ 20 and US$ 8 respectively (JICA, 1998).

The annual spending by package tours is therefore estimated as (US$ 28) x (Total Tourist-Nights). Using the figures shown above, the annual spending by package tour tourists on restaurant meals is estimated at US$1,134,000 in Aleppo in 2001. The annual package tourist spending to local restaurants and hotel restaurants are US$324,000 and US$810,000 respectively. Because package tour tourists use only hotel restaurants and some selected local restaurants, impacts of OECD tourists' spending on local restaurants however remain limited.

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[20] The total income by the travel agent industry as a whole includes earnings from some other services such as ticketing, cargo, and various services for individual travelers. Travel agents receive 6 to 9 percent commissions on issued ticket prices. For example, one of major tour operators stated that the amount of the commission income from ticketing is 11.3 percent to the package tour commission income.

Souvenir Shops

The average spending by a package tour tourist is calculated at SP 800 (US$17.8) per night per person from the results of the market survey conducted by JICA in 1998. Data used for this calculation are 170 answers by package tour tourists and each of them states the total amount of spending and its appropriation.

Using this figure, the annual total spending by package tour tourists is estimated at approximately US$ 720,900 to the souvenir retail industry in Aleppo. Shopping activities is usually included in package tours and the range of shops used by package tours is limited.

As the tourism in Syria inclines much towards package tours from OECD countries and holiday tours from GCC countries, touring of souqs by individual tourists is not regarded as an important tourism attraction. The direct economic benefit from the individual walking tour in souqs is therefore limited for the moment.

Hotels

According to the results of the hearing from tour operators, the average cost of hotel accommodation in the case of average package tours is approximately US$30 per person per night.

The annual total package tourist spending for hotel accommodation is therefore US$1,215,000, in Aleppo. Because the estimated annual total package tourist spending for hotel restaurants is about US$810,000, the annual total package tourist spending for entire hotel services in Syria is estimated approximately at US$2.025 million. Namely, two thirds of the local proportion of the package tour price is paid to hotels.

Direct Income, Multipliers, and Impact of Package tours

The estimated 2003 total income of each tourism industry component from the package tourist spending in Aleppo is summarized in the table below. The calculations have been based on findings of the previous analysis, namely:

- Estimated number of package tour tourists is 27,000
- Average size of package tour group is 20 people (JICA, 1998)
- Estimated number of groups is 1350 groups in 2001.
- Average length of stay in Aleppo is 1.5 nights + 2 days (JICA, 1998 + N'N)
- Number of hotel nights of package tour tourists is 40,500 hotel nights
- Tour operator revenue is 5 $/person/night (JICA, 1998. + N'N research)
- Hotel cost is 30$/person/night for room and $20/person/night for meals
- Number of job opportunities for tour guides is estimated as the sum of package tour days spent in Aleppo (number of groups x 2 days), which was 2,700 man-days in 2001.
- average earning of tour guide is 30$ per day (JICA, 1998)
- package tour tourists take two meals at hotel restaurants and one meal at local restaurants
- Average spending by a package tour tourist to local restaurants is $8/night/person (JICA, 1998)
- Average spending by a package tour tourist for souvenirs is estimated at US$ 17.8 per night per person. (JICA, 1998).
- Tips, tax, and other expenses are estimated at $10 per night per person.
- Transport costs are estimated at $8 per night per person.

Estimated Structure of Inbound Income from Package Tour Market in Aleppo,2003

Component	income (US$)	inside/outside tour price	Percentage of total
Tour Operators	202,500	Inside	5%
Tour Guides	81,000	Inside	2%
Hotel	2,025,000	Inside	50%
Local Restaurants	324,000	Outside	8%
Souvenir Shops	720,900	Outside	18%
Transport	324,000	Inside	8%
Tax, tips, others	405,000	Inside	10%
TOTAL	4,082,400	-	

Source: JICA Study Team, N'N calculations

Provisional Multipliers from Package Tourism Industry in Aleppo

	Income US$	multiplier	Impact US$
Tour Operators	202,500	2.195	444,488
Tour Guides	81,000	1.78	144,180
Hotel	2,025,000	2.056	4,163,400
Local Restaurants	324,000	2.403	778,572
Souvenir Shops	720,900	2.205	1,589,585
Transport	324,000	2.272	736,128
Tax, tips, others	405,000	1.78	720,900
TOTAL	4,082,400		8,577,252

Source: JICA Study Team, , N'N calculations

Conclusion: Where Are We?

Constraints

Tourism in Aleppo is in its first phase of development, which is factor driven. It is characterized by the following key issues:

Demand conditions

- Domestic demand constitutes more than half the hotel guests in Aleppo. However, local demand for tourism fall out of Synch with global demand, and domestic tourist are not sophisticated and demanding enough to drive the industry forward.
- Influx of foreign tourist to Aleppo remains quite low and unstable, as the tourism economy is very sensitive to world events.

Factor conditions

- The tourism industry in Aleppo draws its advantage solely from basic factors, namely abundant monuments with international prestige, inexpensive labor pool, and location.
- The city does not possess any factor creating mechanisms; i.e. international level of public/private education, tourism related apprenticeship programs, research institutes… etc.
- The city's transportation services do not fulfill the needs of tourism, especially the city's idle "international" airport.
- The tourism economy is vulnerable to the loss of factor advantage to other cities in neighboring countries, which have similar cultural resources.
- Given the difficult access to capital and the cost of capital at current levels of demand it appears as though Aleppo is unlikely to fundamentally increase it's stock of tourism firms.
- The tourism personnel have little training and experience in marketing, standards of accommodation and service and other fundamental skills.
- Mechanisms are not in place to determine carrying capacities of OCA and thoroughly monitor tourism impacts. This makes OCA vulnerable against possible problems of tourism organized without proper planning and control.
- Expensive air transportation to Aleppo resulting from Damascus airport monopoly and the national carrier monopoly inherited from the non-market economy.

Structure, strategy, and rivalry

- Foreign firms (i.e. tour operators) provide most of the access to foreign markets.
- The structure of the tourism industry in Aleppo is weak and do not respond to demand properly. There is an acute hotel shortage (especially in peak season), aggravated by limited choice of hotel category and inadequately high prices. There is also a lack of specialized tour operators and competent guides.

- Firms' strategy still depends on the outdated concept of the city being an "attraction". They don't seam able/eager to develop new tourist products to diversify their market potential.
- Monopoly oriented goals limit the rate of investment
- Domestic rivalry is weak
- A culture of complacency dominates the public sector.
- Conservativeness of thinking, lack of motivation, low responsibility of the local personnel
- Inward focus dominates at the big private sector players
- Special interests freeze the status quo.
- The willingness and ability to make social investment is non-existent
- No unified civilized standards of pricing tourist services rendered by the locals. Many local businesses, especially souvenir shops, keep prices incredibly high.

Related and supporting industries

- Linkage to related and supporting industries is weak, and those industries are not competitive themselves.
- High external or pre-leakage levels up to 75% as the largest portion of the economic benefits accrue to individuals and organizations outside Syria (international airfares, outbound tour operators, etc.), and base prices don't allow for economic sustainability and normally do not contemplate replacement costs associated with resource depletion.
- Current patterns of tourist package tourism have a high leakage because tourist don't value and consume local resources as part of the tourism experience

Role of Government

- The tourism is centrally planned, managed and marketed. Responsible government entities have very limited budgets, and they are overloaded with tasks well beyond their technical and manpower capabilities
- Central government plans are over ambitious, fragmented, supply driven, lack decisiveness and clarity, and lack market research.
- The tourism firms are protected by the law from foreign and domestic competition.
- Absence of specialized and qualified entity able to organize and coordinate the tourism development processes at the city scale

International competition

- The city's current position in the international market place is very weak, especially in marketing, product representation, and pricing (it is the most expensive when compared to competitors),.
- Lack of understanding of the recent international tourism trends, and new customer interests and mindset.

Spread effect of package tourist spending

Low diversity of the services and products do not provide adequate means for tourists to spend money, so OCA is not in the position to gain financially from tourism

It is clear that Aleppo has no present competitive advantage in tourism with respect to foreign tourism. The city does however have strong advantages in the areas of: heritage attractions and cross border shopping or retail tourism. The potential for growth exists, but there is much to be done before Aleppo fully harnesses the potential of this sector.

SWOT

	Strength	Weakness	The challenge
Demand conditions	• Local demand constitutes more than half of hotel guests	• Local demand is not sophisticated and not in synch with international demand • Tourism industry highly sensitive to world events • Small volume of high impact tourists • Short length of stay of high impact tourists • Lack of diversification in target markets	• Target attractive visitor segments • Upgrade domestic market demand • Reduce seasonality
Factor Conditions	• A large number of cultural attractions with international appeal • Exotic/new destination • Close to Europe (just 3 hours away from the middle of Europe) • Good weather • Short driving distances	• Advantage is only based on basic factors which are available at competitors • The city does not possess any factor creating mechanisms • Difficult access to capital • Tourist-unfriendly public transport • Idle airport and air services • Poor quality/vibrancy of life in the old city • Shortage in skilled labor	• Activate the airport & Attract charter flights and airliners • Preserve heritage resources & maximize potential of OCA • Provide for technical and managerial training • Establish Factor creation mechanisms
Structure	• Good cuisine and good emerging catering industry • Unbeatable shops array in the souqs	• Foreign tour operators control access to international markets • Damascus based firms dominate ground tour operators activities • Shortage on competent Aleppian tour guides • Poorly adapted lodging supply & quality • Exaggerated role of MOT • Still Poor grading of restaurants & bars	• Activate hotel construction • deliver higher value for money • provide integrated visitor info • Enhance new business formation • Attract new firms and talent to the cluster • Promote expansion of existing firms • Promote formation of spin-offs • Provide incubator services
Strategies	• Local businesses have the ability to adapt to market changes with considerable flexibility • High entrepreneurial spirit among local businesses. • Private sector marketing activities are wider in range, better quality, and more tourists oriented than public sector activities.	• No strategic management or planning at the private and public sectors. • Similar products offered by all businesses, no styling or customization. • Hardly any methodological product and/or process improvements • Intangible quality service is rarely pursued • Businesses, especially family owned ones, show a high degree of suspicion of authority – unless coming from the family. • Social norms in Aleppo, unfortunately, favor individualistic behavior over group behavior, and favor low professional standards. • Modest language skills and limited willingness to learn new languages • Some government policies have limited the internationalization of domestic tourism firms, • people work primarily to enhance income, not to contribute to the government body or the company.	• Diversify products • Create products that are unique to Aleppo • Foster networks among people • Establish networks among firms • Provide business assistance • Improve firms' cluster awareness
Related & supporting industries	• Strong cuisine and food industry • Strong construction activity and resources • Growing communication industry • Strong textile industry • Strong retail sector but not yet up to international standards	• Weak linkages to related and supporting industries • Some of key related and supporting industries are not competitive themselves; i.e. media, transport, advertising, arts & performing arts, restoration, apartment rentals, car rentals,	• Promote OCA as business location for related and supporting industries to tourism, to help activate the cluster.
Role of Government	• Government leadership encourages tourism development • Ambitious MOT plans and actions • The Law provides some forms of tourism related economic liberalization • Ongoing urban rehabilitation work in OCA	• MOT command and control is far away in Damascus • Overloaded, understaffed, under-qualified public sector entities • Weak marketing of Aleppo • Insufficient collaboration among government agencies and private sector • Laws protects "champions" from internal and external competition • Poor data collection and assimilation	• Redesign role of government as to stimulate dynamism and upgrading • provide for good market data collection and intelligence • provide for good leadership + public private collaboration • continue preserving OCA and other attractions • provide easy access to capital; i.e. through equal opportunity micro credit loans • provide for more tourist infrastructure, especially information • improve marketing
Domestic rivalry		• Anti-competition mentality prevails • Strong monopolies exist • Difficult new business formation, especially in OCA	• Enhance New business formation • Attract new firms and talent to the cluster • Promote expansion of existing firms • Improve firms' cluster awareness • Promote formation of spin-offs • Provide incubator services
International Competition		• Lazy and obsolete way of thinking dominates • Ignorance of international competition and trends is widespread • Negative perception of Syria • Expensive destination • Lack of diversity in tourism product offering • Poor presentation of cultural attractions • Weak market exposure • Weak international marketing	• Identify and create assets that set Aleppo apart from competitors • Expand market presence as a NEW destination • Distinguish itself as a unique world heritage city • Create a vigorous brand
Spread effect		• The tourist experience in Aleppo is very limited and short • Tourist direct spending is very low • Tourist spread effect is low (minimal spending on high multiplier sectors)	• Maximize the tourist's psychological experience • Maximize profit for tourism industry firms • Maximize the direct and indirect impacts of tourist spending

Competitive Advantages and Disadvantages of OCA

This chapter looks at OCA as:

- a place to visit
- a tourism business location
- a place to live

OCA as a Place to Visit

Competitive Advantages

Magnificent citadel

The Citadel of Aleppo is one of Syria's foremost monuments, and the most visited one. It is the most impressive medieval Islamic castle. Built on top of a natural limestone hill, the Citadel rises some 50 meters above the level of the surrounding city. Its high walls, imposing entry-bridge and monumental gateway remain largely intact and continue to dominate the skyline of Aleppo. The citadel is also one of the oldest locations in the City, the earliest evidence of occupation found at the Citadel may go as far back as the 3rd millennium BC.

Authentic souks

The souks of Aleppo are the worlds biggest supermarket (12 hectares surface area), they are extremely diverse (some interviewees see them as the cave of Ali Baba, where everything can be found). They are the best native marketplace in the region. they are the place to hear an amazing diversity of sounds, languages, and dialects. Market displays exhibit unparallel "action".

Even though tourists may not understand Arabic, but the highly skilled shop owners and the universal sign language of bargaining make purchases easy.

The most important single element about shopping in the souks, is the authenticity of the souks and the products offered for sale.

Great architectural heritage

OCA is a place where the joy of architecture can be exercised to the max. besides having an amazing stock of amazing monuments, OCA offers great exploration.

Public spaces are manifested in the alleys, by majority. The alleys provide a sense of visual enclosure, and a lot of dramatic entrances and exits to the buildings and to the streets. Stone paving floors cape provides immediate sensory change in the experience of walking, change in materials, change in visual pattern, which intensifies ones awareness of "being here".

OCA is like a maze packed with surprises, unpredictable changes in views, hidden architectural treasures, variety of historical buildings, glimpses of views into buildings.

The variety of architectural styles, the change in the nature of space between the alleys and buildings, and the outstanding details all intensify the joy of architecture.

Unique place

The OCA has an incredible array of unique features, both tangible and intangible, that set it apart from other cities. Unfortunately, the large majority remain unrecognized. These include: history, location, built environment, the people, cuisine, music, dance, traditions, arts, crafts, trades, products, nature. See appendix for details.

Exotic hotels and restaurants

In the recent years, OCA have seen the birth of several exotic hotels and restaurants, produced by a combination of careful renovation and good architectural design. The results were very distinctive. Tourists (and residents) were attracted to these facilities as they are designed in conformance with the local architecture, they are a part of the local landscape, they have the local decor and atmosphere, they are comfortable, and they have all the modern amenities such as air conditioning, central heating, ICT services…etc.

Jdeideh

This is one of the extra-mural quarters of the Old City of Aleppo. It has been settled since the 12th century. Both its history and architecture reveal that it came to light in the 15th century with the construction of a number of religious buildings. Through the 400 years to come, Jdeideh gained the form that tourists and Aleppians admire today.

Its residences manifest first-class paradigms of the luxurious traditional Islamic house of Aleppo. Walking through the quite picturesque stone-paved alleys of this neighborhood is a visual and social experience that can’t be other than delightful. Moreover, an enormous Ottoman commercial complex, two mosques, and five major Christian churches enrich the fabric of the quarter and give it its distinction.

Today, Jdeideh is a place where commerce, residence, religions, and tourism coexist. It is also where cohabitation of tradition and modernity is exhibited through sensitive treatment and modern adaptations of the old architecture and through the creation of high quality hotels and restaurants.

Competitive Disadvantages

Poor tourist oriented transport

OCA suffers from inadequate transport provision, both to and within OCA. Most of our target market visitors will want to reach Aleppo within 3 hours flight from Europe. The monopoly of Damascus international airport is not helping (there are almost no foreign airlines that land in Aleppo). The Aleppo airport facilities are not up to international standards. Transportation to and from the airport needs to be improved. Getting to OCA, around OCA, and around Aleppo is neither easy nor comfortable. There is a clear absence of tourist friendly public transport and taxis, public transit stations, parking lots, car rentals… etc.

Hospitality issues

OCA has a great cultural wealth; however, the existing population is not able to successfully host tourists. Challenges include: no warm welcoming spirit, the attitudes of OCA residents towards visitors, courtesy, friendliness, sincere interest, willingness to serve and get better acquainted with visitors, harassment, vagrancy, panhandler, and other manifestations of warmth and friendliness.

These issues have become a great barrier to tourism in OCA. Our interviews with tour operators revealed that a high percentage of tour operators have limited their tours in uncontrolled environments, such as the souks, due to tourists' complaints.

Lack of tourism infrastructure

The OCA lacks basic tourism infrastructure, which is paramount importance to successful tourism, such as: clean public sanitary services, effective signage system, tourist maps, good guidebooks, tourist information help points, night lighting, places of entertainment, museums, galleries,

Low hygiene

The complaint about the dirty OCA has become legendary.

Inadequate supply and grading of accommodation and food services

Accommodation in OCA is not available in sufficient quantity when measured against demand levels and development potential. Also, both hotels and restaurants are not available in varying price ranges, themes, and service. These two factors, quantity and differentiation, are driving demand away, and giving a serious blow to the tourism industry in Aleppo.

Lack of cultural activities

The OCA offers very little recreation activities to engage tourists during their stay. Considerable thought and effort should be devoted to expressions of culture, such as music, dance, drama, poetry, literature, motion pictures, ceremonials, festivals, exhibits, shows… etc.

Unethical sales practices

One of the most challenges facing tourist shopping in OCA is the pricing of goods. Interviews with tour operators showed that manipulating prices and dishonesty with tourists is probably resented more than any other single factor of tourism. Prices are not consistent, and a lot of shop keepers resort to unethical methods of selling, such as deception, selling imitation goods and products of inferior quality, short changing… etc. these practices have really hurt the tourist trade in OCA, as a lot of tours are skipping the shopping activity in the souks.

Lack of modern shopping

It is true that tourists look for local and authentic handicrafts, but they also look for everyday goods, anything from toothpaste to designer clothing. The OCA lacks shopping complexes that are exquisitely furnished, stocked, with high quality display, and imaginative and attractive décor… etc. OCA can also use factor outlet shops and discount stores.

OCA as a Tourism Business Location

Development expertise, capital, and recognized brands have become valuable commodities as cities around the world seek to capitalize on the growing demand for urban tourism. Attracting these elements has become a highly competitive Endeavour. In selecting their next project, developers of tourism attractions consider:

- Quality of the market (population, visitation);
- Established or potential long-term demand for their product;
- Cost of doing business and availability of incentives;
- Availability and cost of capital;
- Quality of place;
- Level of investment in tourism product and related infrastructure
- Scale and effectiveness of marketing by the local Destination Marketing Organization.

In the scope of this policy, we rapidly appraised OCA attractiveness as a destination for investment considering these factors. This section is dedicated to summarize our findings.

Competitive Advantages

Our rapid analysis of OCA has found that often-discussed advantages, such as low-cost labor and cheap real estate, are largely illusory. OCA might have available workers, but wages are not lower than in rural areas. Real estate costs may be lower than in nearby high-rent downtown areas, but cheaper real estate is available in the suburbs and elsewhere. OCA will not be able to compete if low-cost labor and cheap real estate are its only advantages. Instead, the genuine competitive advantages of OCA fall into four areas: strategic location, integration with regional clusters[21], unmet local demand, and human resources.

Strategic Location

OCA occupy what should be the most valuable location in the City, near high-rent business centers, entertainment areas, and transportation nodes. As a result, an OCA location can offer a competitive edge to location sensitive businesses that benefit from proximity to downtown, transportation infrastructure, and concentrations of companies. Although some traditional location-sensitive businesses have been decentralized by modern technology and better transportation, many others have been created (e.g. value-added business services). This powerful locational advantage of OCA, which has not been fully used or developed, explains the continued existence of the many printing, rapid-response warehousing and distribution, and light manufacturing companies in OCA areas, despite the conspicuous problems.

The REHAB comprehensive survey of OCA shall yield more documented insights on this matter once released.

[21] Clusters are unique concentrations of competitive companies in related fields.

Integration with Regional Clusters

The long-term business opportunities for OCA lie in its strong clusters and it strong links with nearby regional clusters of firms and industries; i.e. the textile industry.

The ability to access competitive clusters is more far-reaching in its economic implications than is the simple proximity of OCA to the downtown or transportation infrastructure. Building on regional clusters involves tapping powerful external economies on information, skills, image, infrastructure, and markets.

When looked at OCA from a cluster-based approach; OCA clusters can leverage private and public investments in skills, technology, and infrastructure; more easily. There are numerous opportunities to develop focused programs for training, purchasing, and business development leading to job opportunities for OCA.

Unmet Local Demand

The consumer market of Aleppo represents the most immediate opportunity for OCA–based entrepreneurs and businesses. Despite low average incomes in Aleppo, high population density translates into a large local market with substantial purchasing power. Making the market even more attractive is the fact that there tend to be few competitors serving it, in the services sector. At a time when markets in French and post-French neighborhoods are saturates, OCA markets remain poorly served- especially in many types of retailing, financial services, and personal services.

OCA-based businesses that serve the unmet local demand will have an advantage because of their central location. OCAbased retail and service businesses are also more likely to recognize and adapt to the fact that OCA is a distinct market, which demand uniquely tailored product configurations, retail concepts, entertainment, and personal and business services. An opportunity is present for national retail and service chains focusing on OCA, as well as large-scale manufacturing of tailored products to supply them.

The private sector is already waking up to the potential of OCA. For example, restaurants, facing market saturation in the rest of the city, are launching successful restaurants in beautifully renovated OCA houses. This isn't a philanthropic exercise. There are good food customers who come out in large numbers to dine in style and, from our interviews, in return render OCA restaurants disproportionately profitable.

Human Resources

Although Aleppo population present many workforce readiness challenges, Aleppo can also be an attractive labor pool for businesses that rely on a loyal, modestly skilled workforce, such as tourism. Anyone who lives in Aleppo can tell you that there is a meaningful proportion of unemployed or underemployed Aleppians who are ready and able to be good employees.

There is the potential to build on this resource, with new approaches to training. Rather than become paralyzed by the presence of residents unfit for work, our policy will focus on job development for the substantial group that is ready to work. The challenge is to create more accessible jobs and better connect these people to them. Over time, more people being employed will be a virtuous cycle that will lead to others becoming more fit to be employed.

A second and major advantage of Aleppo is that it has a highly entrepreneurial population. There is a capacity for entrepreneurship in Aleppo, demonstrated throughout its history, that still lives till today despite the current low educational resources, most of which has been channeled into micro enterprises and family businesses. For instance, OCA have a plethora of shops (in the souks). Behind the creation and building of those businesses is a whole cadre of local entrepreneurs who have responded to intense local and regional demand for their services.

Now, the challenge is to create a climate whereby other Aleppians, with similar talent and commitment, will build for-profit businesses that become meaningful employers and create wealth.

Competitive Disadvantages

Many people have asked, "If OCA truly has important competitive advantages, why isn't the market working?" There are several answers that have been underscored by interviews both inside and outside the OCA.

As business locations, OCA suffers many disadvantages: misperceptions, lack of public-private communication, indecent behavior problems, pollution, a weak workforce, and poor policies reflected in high taxes and utility costs, poorly maintained logistical infrastructure, burdensome regulations and permitting requirements, and no training systems.

Misperceptions

There are many misperceptions and biases about OCA and its opportunities. What economists call information imperfections? many see OCA as a poor zone devoid of economic activity and populated by people with no ambition, skills, or resources. Crime is indeed a sever problem in certain areas surrounding OCA, but not all. Such perceptions, which are often wrong or exaggerated, severely retard investment and business development in areas with obvious market opportunities.

Poor Policies

Many see that OCA's competitive advantages have been diluted, if not overturned, by poor policies, whereas disadvantages remain.. For example, the advantage of strategic location has often been dissipated by inadequate infrastructure investments, transport solutions, and maintenance. Until the many disadvantages of OCA as a business location are addressed, disadvantages will continue to outweigh advantages for many companies.

No communication

There is limited and garbled communication between entrepreneurs and companies, on the one hand, and advocates for OCA (e.g., REHAB and The City Council) on the other. Advocates for OCA often feel that companies are not doing enough for their communities. Whereas businesspeople feel victimized by what - they perceive to be unreasonable demands and expectations. The result is often tension, if not outright hostility, and business investment and growth are deterred. A few companies in sensitive industries will respond to pressure or mandates, but the effort will backfire by driving away other investors.

Regulations

Our primary focus is on the rules, permits, and regulations that have accumulated at the national and city government levels over many years. Many people see that the OCA, one of the areas that is most in need of business development, is the most overregulated.

Merely registering and legally operating an activity in OCA; for-profit, none-profit, or NGO, is daunting and sometimes forbiddingly expensive. The paperwork, cost, corruption, and confusion drive the would-be entrepreneurs away from certainty and down a slippery slope. They develop contempt for the government, because they no longer see it as their ally. That drives people into one of three ways: bribery, the underground economy, or away from OCA. This makes growing a business in OCA as a none viable option.

Absurd laws and regulated monopolies also plague OCA entrepreneurs. Everything in OCA require some sort of license. The licensing process in urban development fields is often onerous and preserves existing monopolies at the expense of those least able to defend them selves.

In the area of zoning and land-use, antiquated laws reflect an economy that has not existed for decades. The new master plans produced by REHAB only recently started to see the hope of getting ratified and applied. Till that happens, adhering to land use and having effective land use plans remain as two impossibilities.

Human Resources

There are several deeply entrenched problems about the nature of Aleppians

The first is that many do not want to work and opt for welfare over gainful employment.

The second, However, there is clear evidence that the work ethic and qualifications of some portion of Aleppo resident are sorely lacking, supporting the view of those who argue that investment in human capital is a priority. Aleppo, as a whole, have an undereducated, under skilled population, with a disproportionate number of people ill equipped for work for a variety of reasons.

The following quotations reflect all-too-common comments we have heard from employers in the services sector:

"I am dying for qualified labor"… "I can't afford to hire someone who can just show up for work" .... "There are a lot of unskilled people available, but they don't meet our needs"… "It is very difficult to find individuals who consistently arrived at work on time, followed direction, worked as a team, or showed even a modest degree of enthusiasm or ambition".

These quotations raise a number of important issues. First, they underscore the reality that the Aleppo workforce has a disproportionate number of people who are problematic employees. Hence, to hire from Aleppo, companies must have effective strategies for identifying good employees. Cultivating personal networks in the community is essential.

Indecent behavior problems

There has been a noticeable decline in the general public behavior in OCA. Harassment, vagrancy, and panhandler have become pressing issues.

Indecent behavior, with its associated fears and costs, is one of the greatest barriers to tourism in OCA. Our interviews with tour operators reveal the costs of the reality of harassment to OCA tourism business activity. A high percentage of tour operators have limited their tours in uncontrolled environments, such as the souks, due to tourists' complaints. This reflects in big missed opportunities for the local economy considering that shopping in the souks have the highest multiplier effect.

Pollution

The cleanliness of OCA streets has also become a major problem. Developers focus on trends, and the dominance of dirt and low-maintenance, coupled with the lack of apparent solutions, is a deterrent to those considering major capital projects.

Conclusion

As business locations, OCA suffers many disadvantages: misperceptions, lack of public-private communication, indecent behavior problems, pollution, a weak workforce, and poor policies reflected in high taxes and utility costs, poorly maintained logistical infrastructure, burdensome regulations and permitting requirements, and no training systems.

The OCA's disadvantages as a business location must be seen as an economic problem and addressed as part of an economic strategy. Too often, addressing weaknesses such as a poorly trained workforce or deficient logistical infrastructure is approached with only the social welfare of residents, not the needs of business, in mind.

Second, attempting to offset disadvantages with operating subsidies to businesses is futile. A more effective approach is to address the impediments to doing business directly. There is no substitute for reducing unneeded regulatory hurdles, simplifying permitting, and reorienting environmental cleanup requirements.

Third, our preliminary research indicates that many of the OCA's disadvantages are not inherent but are the result of poor strategies and obsolete public policies. There are many best practices worldwide that could be adopted in OCA.

OCA as a Place to Live

Competitive Advantages

Privacy

The traditional houses and the urban fabric of OCA offer high levels of privacy. Moreover, the courtyard serve as a practical and multifunctional open private space; i.e. play area for kids, small garden … etc.

REHAB as a service provider

REHAB carries out a host of intertwined tasks of urban management (including tasks of Aleppo Municipality in OCA) such as land use regulation, improving the urban environment, traffic and infrastructure, data management, the provision of social services and housing. the level of quality of REHAB work is "as good as it gets" in Syria.

Infrastructure renovation

The City of Aleppo, the GTZ, and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development have provided funds for implementing the measures to renew the infrastructure networks i.e. the sewerage, water, electricity, and telephone. Several zones within the three action areas have been selected to execute projects of rehabilitation of infrastructure networks, in addition to areas where the networks were deficient. New design and execution methods were developed in the course of the implementation of the Project of Rehabilitation, in addition to the introduction of new materials for the renewal of the networks. During 10 years of the Project activities (1993-2003) 65% of the drinking water networks and 40% of the sewerage systems have been renewed in OCA.

Housing fund

REHAB has recognized the challenges presented by the poor maintenance and structural conditions of the housing stock in OCA (which rendered public safety was becoming a major concern). A program was initiated to assist the residents in their home repairs, especially when involving structural work (collapsing roofs, sagging foundation, and cracking walls). Revolving interest-free-loans were issued along with technical assistance and exemption from permit fees and procedures. The package enabled many residents to invest matching funds and maintain their residences (in more than 700 cases up to date).

Competitive Disadvantages

Traditional houses are unfit for contemporary life

The traditional residence are unfit for the demands of contemporary life, due to poor protection from the weather, lack of sanitary services (especially bathrooms, and upper floor WCs), lack of modern kitchens, steep stair slops, difficulty of doing laundry…etc.

The housing stock is in bad shape

While the excellence in the Aleppian stone building tradition produced very durable structures, the decay of the wood beams that support the floor slabs present major problems all over the OCA. Of course, walls and foundations did not go free of problems, especially those associated with additional loads due to vertical building expansion.

Low hygiene

OCA is a dirty place and it is difficult to be cleaned up. This issue is not only limited to waste collection problems, but it is something entrenched in the design of the urban fabric; i.e. streets can get very muddy in the winter, very slippery when wet… etc.

High densities

The introduction of mulit-level buildings, the subdivision of traditional houses, the multiple family occupation of single houses, all have greatly increased population density.

Lack of public and social services

The OCA suffers from severe lack of parking, open public spaces, parks, playgrounds, kindergartens, health points, family planning, public education services, and other basic services.

Inadequate traffic management

Public transportation is not easy to use, congestion is high, and parking space is not available.

Inappropriate functions in residential neighborhoods

The intrusion of commercial, industrial, warehousing activities into residential areas in OCA is at critical and disturbing levels, as they generate a lot of waste, traffic, noise, intruders… etc.

The micro climate of OCA

The OCA is engulfed by the new city, the industrial areas, the metropolitan traffic, and the pollution. Hence, the micro climate in OCA is not exactly comfortable to live with; i.e. polluted air, no cool summer breezes, relatively higher temperatures in the summer than the new residential areas on the west of the city.

Conclusion

REHAB has been trying to stabilize the residential population of OCA and to prevent further drain. Efforts have focused on improvement of residences (through the housing fund, for example) and the improvement of residential neighborhoods (through implementing land use measures, renovating infrastructure, providing health points, improving schools… etc.)

A new direction which REHAB should consider is attracting new population segments into OCA. One segment could be intellectuals who appreciate the history of the place. Another segment could be students who look for a hip and cool place to live, they come on tight budgets but they help to popularize the place. A third segment could be newly wed professional who are looking for stylish affordable housing (both rental and/or ownership markets have prospects).

However, attracting any or all of these segments require a lot of efficient and differentiated services and activities. The task, as the REHAB administration is well aware, is daunting, but it is the best (and only) way to keep the OCA inhabited. The existing poor immigrant population will not be able to sustain life in OCA alone due to a variety of issues, such as: the already very high bill of rehabilitation is improving the place and extending it with 5 stars municipal services, the OCA’s reservoir of heritage needs to open up for development, gentrification is impossible to avoid… etc.

OCA Tourism Target Stakeholders

This chapter identifies the targeted stakeholders of OCA, and points out to their needs, wants, behavior choices, and their image of OCA. These are:

- The Community
- Tourists

The Community

This policy bases its information on three residents' surveys. The first was carried out by JICA during December 1997[22]. The second was carried out by Ms. Luna Khirfan during June 2005[23]. The third was carried out by the Consultant during November 2005[24].

All surveys were face to face interviews. And collectively they aim to:

- Evaluate the image and understanding of OCA by its residents and by Aleppians.
- Evaluate the impacts of tourism development to the local community
- Measure attitude and acceptance of tourism development
- Measure the potential human resource supply of the communities to tourism development.

All three surveys have revealed similar results on several topics. The following paragraphs show mainly the surveys' results of the third survey – carried out by the Consultant. Results of the JICA survey can be found in the appendix.

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[22] The JICA survey was conducted with the 448 samples in the selected four zones distributed as follows.

Tourism Zone	Heads of Household	Mothers	18+ Female daughter	18+ Male son	Total Number
Damascus	55	33	12	12	112
Aleppo	55	33	12	12	112
Hama/Homs	55	33	12	12	112
Coastal	55	33	12	12	112
Total Number	220	132	48	48	448

In each zone, a stratified random sampling method was applied for the selection of the samples to check the characteristics of the residents between those of the different geographical locations. Area 1: City center of tourist site location (1 /3 of Samples). Area 2: Major Commercial Area (1 / 3 of Samples). Area 3: Residential Area (1 / 3 of Samples)

[23] Ms. Luna Khirfan is a PHD candidate at the University of Michigan, USA. She carried out a survey among residents of OCA, as part of a case study on distinctiveness and sustainability of tourism in OCA. The information we use here are based on our observations from the raw data sets she collected with the supervision/assistance of REHAB. Results of her survey remain confidential till she publishes her PHD thesis.

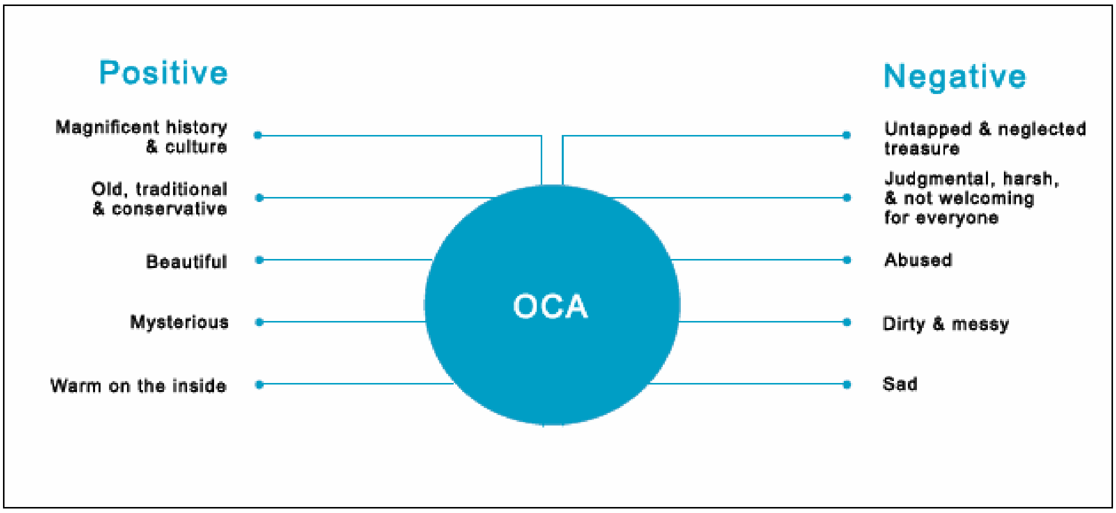
[24] The Consultant carried out residents' surveys targeted at university educated generation X professionals who live and work in Aleppo. The survey was conducted with 40 people.

How The Community Sees OCA

Image

- Aleppians have mixed views of OCA, illustrated below:

  Top of mind associations - Aleppians



Source: N'N interviews

- The majority of OCA residents are unaware of it's tangible and intangible distinctiveness, and the majority think that historic buildings are not suitable for their needs and for contemporary life.
- OCA does not really mean anything to people. Inside Aleppo, awareness of tangible brand icons are limited and awareness of intangible/emotional supports are non-existent
- Quality of awareness is low – business and place to visit/live
- The Citadel of Aleppo is the main recognizable element in the City

Tourist attractions

- The majority of interviewees see the bulk of their city's attractions concentrated in OCA.
- The highest rated attractions are: 1) the citadel, 2) the souks, 3) the exotic restaurants in renovated Arabic houses, 4) the Umayyad Grand Mosque and the Khans, 5) the Arabic bathhouses, 6) the churches, mosques, and city gates.
- The local cuisine, music, people, and history were hardly recognized as attractions.

Things that detract from visiting OCA

- All interviewees think that detracting factors are internal, and not external
- The highest rated detracting factors are: 1) dirt, waste, and pollution, 2) traffic and transport, 3) lack of tourist infrastructure, 4) lack of organization, maintenance, and policing, 5) hospitality issues, 6) lack of activities, 7) noise, 8) lack of marketing and advertising.
- Language barriers were hardly seen as a detracting factor.

Attitudes Towards Tourism Development

How benefital is tourism?

Respondents were asked to list the perceived advantages and disadvantages of tourism in Aleppo. A close examination of the results reveals the following:

- 90% of respondents see that future tourism development is beneficial. The highest rated benefits are: 1) better income and jobs, 2) cultural communication and better understanding, 3) better infrastructure and transport, 4) more leisure facilities.
- 20% of respondents see that tourism has no negative impacts. The rest have identified the following impacts: 1) traffic congestion, 2) garbage and noise, 3) the tourist behavior and dress styles, 4) socio effects on community.

Acceptance of tourists

To take the attitude measurement a step further, respondents were asked to state their attitudes toward tourists by nationality. The sample expressed slight negative attitudes toward Syrians and Lebanese tourists (respondents who welcomed them amounted only to 57%, and 51% respectively). Respondents with positive attitudes toward European, Turkish, and Asian tourists amount to 97%, 86%, and 77% respectively. This percentage is much higher than the percentage of respondents with negative attitudes.

What can be done to attract more tourists

Respondents were asked to give ideas and suggestions on what can be done to attract more tourists into the community. The suggestions given by the respondents cover a wide range of area in tourism development. Highest rated suggestions included (in order):

1. maintenance and beautification of ancient sites (voted for by 100% of respondents),
2. maintenance and beautification of streets (voted for by 100% of respondents)
3. training of tourism personnel (voted for by 100% of respondents)
4. better sanitary services and better waste collection (voted for by 97% of respondents)
5. recreational facilities (voted for by 75% of respondents)
6. better public relations (voted for by 75% of respondents)
7. art centers, galleries, and cultural program ((voted for by 69% of respondents)
8. shops and restaurants (voted for by 63% of respondents)

Some suggested "better domestic and international advertising and marketing", other thought "improve transport", "public awareness raising", "multilingual tourism guide books", "improve supply and quality of accommodation", "maintaining the identity of OCA", "develop new kinds of niche tourism", "fighting air, noise, and visual pollution" would attract tourists.

Attitudes toward work in tourism

Readiness to Join/Help in a Tourism Development Project

Out of the total sample 77% expressed readiness to join in projects to encourage tourism, 3% will not cooperate, and 20% did not know.

Desired Professional Services in Tourism

The respondents gave their views on whether they could provide tourism-related services, falling under 6 categories. The most desirable activity was "tourist guide (37%)", followed by "hotel (20%)", "souvenir shops(17%)" and "restaurant (17%)". Other suggestions include "planning and developing tourism (17%)", "visitor information solutions (12%)", "travel agents (9%)", "events".

Desired Types of Jobs in the Tourism Sector

57 % of respondents expressed interest in "public relations", followed by 26% of respondents for "marketing and advertising" and 23 % for "managerial", 6% for "secretarial works". Aleppo respondents who prefer "public relations" are higher than the national average (29%). Others suggested working in "planning, design, construction of tourism (10%)".

Willingness to Participate in Tourism Training Courses

75 % of respondents are willing to take training to work in tourism projects at their own city, while 9% of respondents said no, and 16% did not know.

The Tourists

In 1997 The JICA carried out two[25] marketing survey, in which they interviewed more than 1300 foreign tourist to Syria comprising various nationalities: French, Italian, German, American, South African, etc. including some Arab nationalities. The interviews were carried out at major hotels and tourist sites in Damascus, Aleppo, Palmyra, Bosra, Latakia, etc. The following is a brief on the findings of the surveys.

Current OCA Tourist Market Segments

The JICA marketing survey's identified the following profile of tourist:

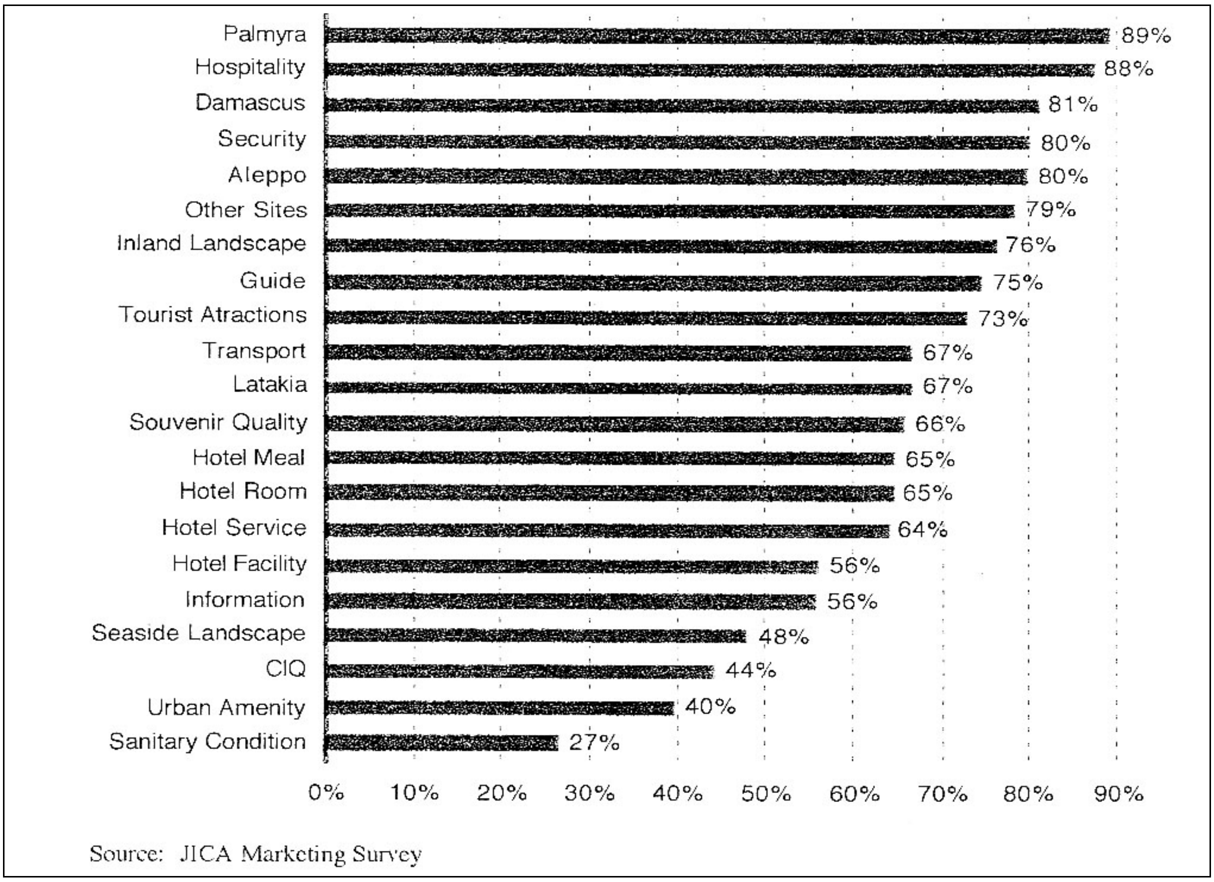
- Gender — Female accounts for 52%, while male remains 42.9%
- Age Group — 20-39 years accounts for 36.9%, followed by 40-59 years of 35.2% and 60 years/over of 19.3%.
- Occupation — Professional or administrative accounts for 20.8%, followed by retired of 14.2% and office/sales clerk of 13.8%
- Traveling With — Spouse accounts for 28.9%, followed by friends of 26% and family of 16.3%.
- Purpose of Visit — Holiday dominates with 83.8%. Other purposes are negligible with Other of 6.6% and business of 4.5%
- Package or NOT — Package dominates with 76.5%. Those not on package tour accounts for 18.3%.
- Travel Experience — 2-4 times holds 39.7%, followed by 5-9 Times of 37.3% and 10 Times/More of 20.7%.

[25] The first survey was made during May to June 1997 and the second was made during October to November 1997.

What do our visitors think of us?

The figure below shows the results of the JICA tourist interview survey, it indicates the percentages of tourists who rated various items as "good." However, one should discount the results by as much as 50 percent, as people ordinarily are polite in answering questions asked by host country people in the host country.

Percentage of tourists who rated “good” for



Source: JICA Marketing Survey, 1997

Aleppo was rated high, along with "Palmyra", "Damascus", which signals the pull of cultural resources. The problem is that Aleppo does not stand well as a city, as "Sanitary Conditions", "Urban Amenity" and "Custom Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ)" were rated lowest. Moreover, tourist services such as "Information", "Hotel Facility" and "Souvenir Quality" were not rated high. These results show that software parts including services need further improvement. What international tourists are indicating is that Aleppo’s offer falls short of what modem tourism require.

Why Syria?

48.1% of respondents cite Historical Site as their reason for choosing Syria, followed by Cultural Site of 29.3% and Religious Site of 15.4%. Beach Holiday is almost negligible with only 5%.

Aleppo attractions

The following attractions were identified based on interviews with various tour operators: the citadel, the souks, grand mosque, museum, baron hotel, Baghdad train station, Khan Alwazir, Jbeili soap factory, Shibani, Bimaristan, Jdeideh, Bab Antakia.

Who are our competitors?

23.6% of respondents cite Egypt as their alternative destination before Syria, followed by closely Jordan of 22.6% and Turkey of 21.1%

Accommodation

On all four elements of room, meal, facility, and service, Good holds an average 55-60% and fair of 25-29%. On Facility count, however, Good remains the lowest of 51.5%, with Fair and Poor the highest of 33.6% and 7.15 respectively.

Improvement required for Hotel Facility other than Room and Restaurant: e.g. reception, lobby, other peripheral services of business, fitness and entertainment.

Hospitality

Overwhelming majority of 84.5%gives Syrian Hospitality Good rating, with Fair 8.5% and poor only at 0.6%.

Security

Good holds dominants 74.6%, with Fair at 16.5% Poor remains only at 1.8%.

Customs & Immigration

Good remains moderate at 41.0%, while Fair and poor hold relatively high share of 32.0% and 12.2% improvement required.

Sanitary condition

Hygiene at restaurant outside of the hotels is one certain area of concern with overall poor rating. Good rating very low at 23.8%, while fair stands out at 40.1% and poor at alarming 23.0%. Immediate improvement required.

Information

- Information provision: Good remains at 45.3%, while fair and poor hold relatively high 28.2% and 11.4% improvement required for general provision of tourist information.
- Information sources: Out of the five useful information sources about the destination, Guidebooks comes the first with 31.3%, followed by tour brochure of 25.2% and recommended by Friends and relatives of 21.6%.
- Information needs: Out of eight information items desired, Map and Tourist Site stand out with 28.5% and 26.4% respectively, followed by Hotel of 11.0%, Transport of 9.3% and Restaurant of 8.5% improvement required.

Tourists fears

Our interviews with tour operators, tour guides, and tourists have revealed that tourists fear the followings, in Aleppo: Wandering alone in Aleppo, Getting lost, aggressive shop owners, paparazzi-like behavior of locals, beggars, aggressive street vendors. Tour guides and tour operators insist that this was not the case prior to year 2000.

What do tourists want?

Recent studies undertaken in the United Kingdom have quantified changes taking place in attitudes that are having increasing impact on why people travel and what they seek from their travels. While the study was undertaken in one European country, it represents similar changes in attitudes taking places in other developed countries and major source markets for Aleppo.

Research found that today's travelers want:-

- customised and flexible travel (a package but not a package holiday) to a destination generally within 3 hours travel time;
- special interest holidays and special experiences;
- an authentic experience (with the experience mattering more than the destination);
- good value for money (there's sustained pressure on prices at every level, with some Europeans making several calls and internet searches to save a few pounds per night).
- people are now seeking more substance over style, they are seeking something more and are shunning brands and experiences which are all glitz and no substance. This is particularly noticeable in the 30 - 40+ age groups, who are much wealthier than the generations before them and are able to express their individuality and follow their dreams of self realisation. In many cases they are reacting to work and social pressures. While in most cases they don't want to surrender their affluent suburban lifestyles, they do, however, want to pursue their own dreams and values that are increasingly important to them;
- in these changes, authenticity is becoming increasingly important;
- rather than opting out, people are opting in. They have strong views and an increasing sense of society and community;
- material wealth becomes less important, while learning, self reliance and self actualisation becomes more important. People put more emphasis on the potential of their own skills and energy;
- self improvement and self development are increasingly important;
- the majority of people believe their lives have become too cosseted and predictable;
- inner growth and personal development are more important than wealth or personal wellbeing;
- work and lifestyle pressures are making people increasingly unhappy and unhealthy;
- as a result of their increasing affluence, people are more self-determined and unhealthy;
- people are becoming more determined and proactive in their personal attitudes and outlooks;
- people are becoming less passive in their consumption habits and are less likely to be happy with what is what is `just dished up to them';
- a large majority of people agree that achieving a balance between personal and professional projects is an important part of life;

- many agree that `adventure' is once more important and are now able to seek it. They want to `escape' and `go it alone';
- most people are keen to learn and immerse themselves in new experiences and cultures;
- the largest majority are no longer wanting to avoid risks, but are keen on learning, gathering knowledge and seeking out `life changing moments' and to live a life `less ordinary';

To sum up these changes: In the past people were content to travel to discover new places and things, today increasingly the motivation is to travel to places and do things to discover themselves.

Predicting Future Trends

new consumers, cultural drivers, travel implications

The following diagram summarises the linkages between the new consumer context, the associated key cultural drivers and the travel implications:

NEW CONSUMER CONTEXT	KEY CULTURAL DRIVERS	TRAVEL IMPLECATIONS
• Globalisation dominates • Temporal communities • Infinite mobility • Niche culture • Liquid time • Individuality rules • Multiple yous • Technology marches on	• Authenticity • Uniqueness • Security • Self navigation • Connectivity • Speed	• Scenarios • Mindsets • Desired experiences

From a traveller behaviour perspective, it is predicated that various choices will be made depending on the year, the mood, the interests and lifestage. These choices are fluid and the traveller cannot be `pinned down' or typecast with respect to when, how and for how long he/she chooses to travel. Getting down to practicalities, requirements from the travel experience are predicted as follows.

AUTHENTICITY	Focus on what is true, original and enduring in people and experiences as the world becomes more generic
UNIQUENESS	Desire for what can be ours only as globalisation creates a more homogenous world
SECURITY	Movement towards what is known, safe and unambiguous arising in the face of rapid change and uncertainty
SELF NAVIGATION	Reliance on the individual in light of more information, more choices and less guiding structures
CONNECTIVITY	Plugging into a collective consciousness of the world on a personal, local and global level
SPEED	Life is rushed, life is now, life is change and moving faster every day

Potentail for OCA

Based on all of this market research, significant changes can take place, if recommendations of this policy are followed, in the OCA tourism market:-

- The biggest market increase can come from the strongly growing Turkish cross boarder shoppers and overseas cultural market, predominantly from Europe. The vast majority of visitors will live within a 3 hour flying distance of Aleppo.
- There is a potential for growth if rising consumer expectations are met. growth can come from increased spending per tourist if we get better at offering a wider variety of experiences and products to meet our visitors' expectations.
- Competition for visitors will be stiff, and visitors will expect a warm welcome and can-do attitude everywhere they go.
- Visitors are likely to be increasingly time-pressured with expectations that their experience will be smooth and any problems sorted quickly.
- Easy booking and good access will be crucial.
- Visitors will want self-discovery and chances to try new things, and will be ever better travelled and more sophisticated, with an interest in heritage, culture, and the arts, high and low brow.
- Visitors will be looking for rich opportunities to experience authentic OCA, and will be turned off by any hint of a tourist trap.
- Population changes in Europe will means more older visitors

OCA Tourism Policy

Premises

The following premises need to be well understood in order for any tourism policy to work in OCA:

- The role of this policy toward OCA tourism is to stimulate dynamism and upgrading.
- The REHAB cannot create a competitive tourism industry, firms must do so. Dynamism leads to competitive advantage
- Survival of tourism in OCA demand that the tourism industry upgrade.
- Aleppo's competitive advantage in the tourism industry is geographically concentrated in and around OCA.
- Competitive advantage in the city's tourism industry is created over a decade or more, mot over three to four years business cycle.
- OCA will gain and sustain its advantage because of differences, not similarities, with other cities/destinations.
- The process of creating and sustaining advantage may be intensely uncomfortable for local firms and those who work in them.

Vision

OCA as a business location

Our vision begins with the premise, as indicated earlier, that a sustainable tourism economy can be created in OCA only as it has been elsewhere: through private, for-profit initiatives, and investments based on economic self-interest and genuine competitive advantage instead of government mandates, or charity.

A sound tourism policy must focus on the position of OCA as part of the Aleppo tourism economy, rather than treating OCA as separate, independent economy; otherwise, economic activity there will not be sustainable. We must focus on developing the clusters within OCA (such as a tourism cluster), instead of isolated companies, and linking them better to those in the surrounding economy.

Tourism development in OCA will come only from recognizing and enhancing the inherent advantages of its accumulating heritage, while dealing frontally with the present disadvantages of OCA as a business location.

The OCA is a good business location for the tourism industry as well as its related and supporting industries; i.e. media, music, advertising, fashion, beauty, cultural business (events exhibitions & galleries), exotic rental apartments... etc. There is genuine economic potential in OCA that has been largely unrecognized and untapped.

OCA, like other areas, must compete for investment and jobs. The best (and only) way to develop its economy is to make it an attractive and welcoming place in which to invest and do business.

It is our belief that the private sector will step forward into OCA, because OCA can offer attractive markets. There is already a clear evidence that the private sector is already investing in OCA, and the trend is building momentum. With improvements in the OCA business environment and continued changes in perceptions, OCA business development can accelerate.

There is a continuing, vital role for the government to create a favorable environment for business and living; i.e. improving the public schooling system, assembling and improving sites, training workers, providing micro credit loans, upgrading infrastructure, streamlining regulation..etc

Tourism in OCA can benefit for the presence help of a new player: that is a dedicated tourism cluster facilitator. It can facilitate private-sector involvement, change attitudes, and link stakeholders.

Investment in tourism involves the development of the attractions' cluster area (zone X at the REHAB) into a place for consumption. This means the development of multifunctional land use in the 4 dimensions.

Investment in tourism also involves the marketing of OCA and the selling of its unique identity which will assist in the attraction of tourists, tourism industry, and desired related and supporting industries. In order to attract mobile investment and activities OCA must first gain attention in an increasingly competitive real estate market of Aleppo. Advertising OCA and engaging in development activities will raise the profile and visibility of OCA and this will be of assistance to those engaged in economic promotion.

OCA as a place to live

Our vision is to continue stabilizing the population of OCA and to attract new residents.

The renewal of old districts, the new image, and the functions which should be expanded and/or created - such as culture - will help persuade potential OCA residents, such as intellectuals, that OCA is a good place to live, that it has the right lifestyle opportunities.

The new facilities which are constructed partly to attract tourists will also be available to local residents, and the money spent by tourists in these facilities will assist in making them more economically viable, maintaining them to the benefit of the local community.

Finally, the development of these facilities, the physical regeneration of zones and the arrival of more visitors will increase civic pride which is generally regarded as a desirable quality. It is suggested that local residents who have civic pride will take a greater care of the environment!

OCA as a place to visit

Our vision is to position OCA as a quality, distinctive, must see World Heritage City, as a city that protects its uniqueness by celebrating it, as a city that delivers a diverse mix of unique, authentic and REAL[26] experiences, as a city that supports its living and exploration experiences with the highest standards of infrastructure, facilities, and service, with a skilled and motivated workforce, and with informed, coordinated, efficient management.

[26] REAL= Rewarding, Enriching, Adventuresome and Learning

How Do We Intend To Do It?

This policy calls for 7 main activity areas, namely:

- Pillar 1: industry development
  - Create a cluster facilitator role
  - Invest in research
  - Invest in training
  - Encourage new business formation especially SME's
  - Create an investment friendly OCA
  - Prepare a retail sector development plan
  - Launch marketing campaigns to create a prestige for OCA and help attract good business/people.
- Pillar 2: product development
  - Quality of visitor experience in OCA
  - OCA product development and innovation
  - Tourism focused urban planning
  - Events
  - E-business
  - Tourist transport
  - Integrated visitor info
- Pillar 3: Cultural development
  - Establishing a cultural partnership
  - Enabling Aleppians and visitors to participate in, and enjoy, culture
  - Encouraging the highest standards of creativity and excellence
  - Developing lively and sustainable cultural industries
  - Developing cultural infrastructure
  - Promoting culture for children and young people
  - Supporting the contribution of cultural activities to the lifelong learning process for the wider community
  - Preserving and interpreting Aleppo's heritage
  - Promoting the expression of Aleppo's diverse cultural identity
  - Develop cultural activities which enrich community development.
- Pillar 4: branding OCA

  Promoting OCA's values and image so that potential users are fully aware of the place's distinctive identity and advantages

- Pillar 5: Marketing
    - Establish Visit OCA
    - Increasing market reach and impact
    - Marketing tourism products
    - Increasing market demand
    - Raising the profile of the tourism industry.
- Pillar 6: Data collection and assimilation
    - Developing a sophisticated data collection mechanism
    - Knowing your market
- Pillar 7: Control tools

  That aim at designing the right mix of features and services.
- Pillar 8: Organization
    - Development of short, medium, to long-term strategic plans
    - Increasing awareness of the value of tourism
    - Increasing participation in/of the Tourism Chamber
    - Create Organization Vehicles

Pillar 1: Industry Development

There are several activity areas within this policy pillar:

- Create a cluster facilitator role
- Invest in research, (see pillar 5: data collection and assimilation)
- Invest in training
- Encourage new business formation especially SME's
- Create an investment friendly OCA
- Prepare a retail sector development plan
- Launch internal and external marketing campaigns to create a prestige for OCA and help attract good business/people. (see pillar 4: Marketing)
- Measure progress, (see pillar5: data collection and assimilation)

Create a Cluster Facilitator (CF) role

The Cluster Facilitator is an individual selected by REHAB/City Council to lead the effort of activating the tourism cluster, to guide the other units that tackle specific topics.

This individual should:

- be an industry insider with a strong network within the cluster.
- understand and believe in the overall picture more than other individuals.
- believe in dynamics and change.
- accept no constraints, and know they can change the nature of outcomes, and have the courage to act.

CF will have multiple tasks to do, including:

- Membership to international organizations
- identification of constraints and motivation of intervention to REHAB/City Council
- Opportunity identification for SME's
- Value chain co-ordination issue identification and solutions

The rationale behind the creation of a CF has nothing to do with the ability to hire human resources at higher remuneration packages or to avoid the checks and balances of the City Council's procurement policies. The CF is only proposed due to the importance of having industry stakeholders intimately involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of the tourism policy of OCA. The REHAB/City Council operating in isolation of the tourism industry will achieve none of it's stated goals. A CF allows for an industry wide commitment to a given direction, it facilitates the harnessing of skills both board and operational level from the industry and also pools financial and effort resources so as to achieve critical mass.

In establishing the CF role, the REHAB/City Council must take note of several threats. The greatest threat to the success of the CF will be the industry's perception of "yet another government initiative"; "yet another talk shop" or "yet another set of meetings I need to attend which will yield no result." The reputation of governmental CF, especially in the tourism sector, is extremely negatively prejudicial. It seem practicably unlikely that a REHAB/City Council initiative could distance itself from such perceptions.

The second threat to the REHAB/City Council establishing CF is the issues of turf regarding the Aleppo Tourism Department, which currently appear to have a different focus to that suggested in this policy. It can be argued that it would not be in OCA's interests to subsume itself into the Tourism Department activities in any meaningful way, but that the two entities should have a co-operative and cordial relationship.

Given the two points above it is believed that the best strategic route to follow would be a totally novel approach to government - industry relations. The proposal is fraught with difficulties and will be extremely difficult to pull off, but may prove to be a most valuable investment of time and may prove to be a turning point for governmental agency perceptions. This radical approach is made on the basis that the REHAB/City Council has traditionally been a small and relatively insignificant player in tourism in Aleppo, as such it has no moral or experiential authority to now demand center stage. In the absence of large financial contributions, it may be better to seek an alternative approach.

It is proposed that REHAB/City Council take advantage of the presence of the Chamber of Tourism. it is an amalgamated organization of existing city based business tourism organizations. the REHAB/City Council can join such an organization through the CF. This amalgamated organization is owned by the industry stakeholders and is the best representative organization of Aleppo Tourism, so far.

The benefits from the CF as an industry's perspective is that the industry will be joining forces and creating critical mass on their own terms with the REHAB/City Council who would be merely acting as the catalyst in the early stages. Industry will also, we believe, appreciate the bottom up approach shown by REHAB/City Council and believe that City Council is recognizing and validating the industry's own skills, structures and contributions. Once the CF is in the Tourism Chamber, the addition of REHAB representation will increase it's stature and complete the ring of influential stakeholders.

From REHAB perspective, the benefits of this approach is that firstly it will buy the REHAB credibility which it is sorely lacking in this particular industry, second it removes from REHAB the burden of staffing up and funding overheads of the actual organization and thirdly it places private sector financial contributions on the table prior to committing it's own funds. The basic philosophy is that the REHAB encourages the industry to optimally look after it's best interests and only once the industry has "pulled itself together" does the REHAB/City Council offer patronage, financial support, political pull, and direct project assistance to the industry.

Two fundamental issues emerge from this approach which need to be addressed up front. The first is representation. By definition the power relations have been reversed in this approach and whereas in a City Council designed and operated CF the City Council could be assured of position of Chairman- no such guarantees would flow in this model. It is suggested that the REHAB/City Council not seek the Chairmanship of the Board but that it seek a place on the Board of Directors. As to the composition of the board, the Council should argue it's case but not impose restrictions or conditions. The Council must however insist on good knowledge of the Finance Department so as to ensure accountability of spending the money.

The second issue is the adoption, by the Chamber of Tourism of the OCA vision, mission and policy for tourism. The argument here is simply that if the REHAB is unable to ague and motivate the adoption of it's policy, (as opposed to imposing it as a fait accompli upfront) then the plan would never have worked in any case. If the REHAB feel satisfied in the integrity and rigor of it's policy it should not feel uncomfortable arguing it's merits and adoption to the industry who most stand to benefit from it. Those portions of the policy which have to do with control tools, which may in the short run not directly benefit the industry as a whole, have been placed internally within REHAB so that their support cannot be compromised.

Invest in training

Rationale

It doesn't matter how clean our streets are, or whether there are fresh flowers in every hotel bedroom if our people working in tourism and its related sectors provide anything less than a warm welcome, a professional service and an authentic experience. Anything less can ruin even the best visitor experience. We need to ensure that everybody working in tourismand its related sectors has the skills and attitude to give visitors a warm welcome and an enjoyable and interesting stay, to add positively to every visitor experience. After all, our visitors say they love the hospitality of the Aleppian people. So **our ambition is to have the best possible tourism workforce**, with highly skilled managers and leaders who nurture and value their staff. This, in turn, will improve the employee experience which will, in turn, provide a better customer experience – and visitors will be more likely to spend more, and to return.

Objectives

- Prepare a workforce development plan.
- Encourage managers and business owners to increase the take-up of training.
- Improving recruitment of staff

Prepare a workforce development plan.

People 1st will work the Tourism Chamber to develop and implement a workforce development plan to achieve a more highly skilled workforce.

A key part of delivering better workforce development will be courses to enhance tourism businesses' productivity and competitiveness. In addition to core customer service skills. People 1st will work with CF to ensure that the skills and training opportunities available match what businesses need.

Encourage take-up of training

People 1st and the CF will also work with private and public partners to develop a program of leadership and management development to strengthen leadership skills in tourism businesses.

If managers and staff are well trained, they will not only be able to provide a high quality service for visitors. They will have the skills to gather information about their visitors, to provide effective information and marketing to visitors.

Management training and staff development is, however, only part of the answer. We need to make tourism the first choice career for talented and motivated people. One way to do that is to ensure our industry nurtures and values its staff. But in addition to that, we need to make sure we take every opportunity to tell people what a good industry it is to work in.

Improve recruitment of staff

People 1st will deliver support for businesses to improve recruitment of staff.

Enthusing people about working in tourism needs to start in universities. People 1st will have to play a key role in highlighting the career opportunities available in tourism. The Tourism Chamber will support businesses in developing links with the University through the CF. A program can be established to assist young people to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to work in tourism.

Encouraging new business creation, especially SME's

Once tourists land in Aleppo they consume a variety of goods and services which collectively constitute the tourism economy's value chain. Items in the value chain include everything from transport and restaurants to shopping, tours and theatre outings. The strategic approach of the REHAB should be that such activities are best left to the market, however, it is proposed that in certain key instances the REHAB can and should intervene to address market failures. Within this regard, it is suggested that REHAB/City Council can intervene in activating and stimulating the tourism and related and supporting businesses in OCA.

A host of opportunities exist for backward linkages and small business activities in the tourism industry and the tourism economy. New businesses are badly needed to fill in and to activate the industry.

There are two basic mechanisms by which new business are formed:

- Establishing entirely new companies, whether they are spin-offs from established firms, are founded by employees of suppliers and customers, or are the results of ideas gleaned during academic training or university research.
- Internal diversification into new business by established firms.

The various interventions discussed in this Pillar play major roles in new business formation, however a dedicated support entity will be vital. The REHAB/City Council should establish a Tourism Economy SME Support Unit which will have multiple functions. The unit will seek existing SME's or new SME's to fill outsourcing needs of big players, and the unit will help give birth to brand new SME's on the basis of opportunities it can identify. (see Organization, for further details on the role of this Unit)

There is an accepted role for the Support Unit to play in identifying opportunities in a value chain by virtue of the fact that individual industry players characteristically have neither the information nor the reason to view a complete industry value chain from an overall perspective. As the proposed information system grows and becomes more sophisticated it is likely that the information will act as market signals, thereby reducing the role of government, but it is believed that strategic direction with respect to completing and deepening the value chain should be the responsibility of City Council. the CF can play this role, backed up with the Tourism Research Unit and the Tourism Economy SME Support Unit.

It is suggested that SME support is required in related industries as well, such as: Media offices, music studios, photography studios, advertising agencies, architectural and engineering offices, fashion (design + retail outlets + discount stores), cultural businesses (related to art and performing arts), exotic apartment rentals, banks, retail.

Create an investment friendly OCA

Rationale

A critical success factor for any urban destination is ongoing investment in new, enhanced or expanded attractions and services. OCA has undergone a major public sector investment thrust (through the REHAB work). This should ignite increased private sector investment interest. In order to capitalize on and sustain the private sector interest, OCA should be more proactive in soliciting investment. The increasingly competitive environment for attracting tourism investment, combined with declining visitation presents a significant challenge. REHAB needs to focus on making OCA more investment friendly.

Objectives:

- Develop tax incentives
- Develop flexible financing models
- Deregulation
- Enhance the quality of the urban environment
- Seek investment to capitalize on unique at tributes
- Effective destination marketing

It is suggested that REHAB prepare a Tourism Investment Study of OCA covering these objectives in depth.

Tax Incentives

Various tax incentives have been employed, around the world, to support economic development in designated areas, often called enterprise zones. Although we support measures that make OCA more competitive (and higher taxes than exist in the surrounding region are often a significant disadvantage"), the record of enterprise zones is not encouraging. Again and again, businesses that locate in an area because of tax breaks or other artificial inducements, rather than genuine competitive advantages, prove not sustainable. Research is accumulating from around the world that few businesses make location decisions based on tax incentives-especially the modest ones commonly associated with enterprise zones. Thus the bulk of tax breaks goes to businesses that would have beer operating in the enterprise zone anyway. Enterprise zone incentives can be perverse in a number of other ways. They often fail to encourage the hiring of residents of the depressed area and to promote entrepreneurship by residents. Tax breaks that do not rest on making a profit are also dangerous because they encourage investments.

Aleppo, like all Syrian cities, is not competitive when it comes to offering development incentives.

Programs such as Tax Increment Financing that lower the overall project cost, or that can be converted to development equity, would allow OCA to compete in attracting development capital. Model programs exist that allow municipalities to offer incentives that increase long term municipal tax revenue while having no adverse short-term impact on local tax revenues. As such programs benefit many economic sectors, the strategy to move these initiatives forward in OCA should not rest REHAB/City Council and city leaders.

It is recommended that OCA work to create a favorable economic climate by removing or reducing barriers to profitability and providing the private and public sector stakeholders the tools required to compete effectively.

Access to Capital

To be filled in upon request of REHAB administration

Deregulation

To be filled in upon request of REHAB administration

Enhance the quality of the urban environment

The Tourism Investment Study of OCA should examine the viability of programs (e.g. awards, awareness campaigns) to enhance the quality of place, in particular the urban environment, especially in Zone X.

Seek investment to capitalize on unique at tributes

The lack of government investment in new tourism products can be deterrent to attracting private capital. However, the major investments by REHAB on OCA, represent a very positive story that needs to be promoted to potential developers. Other initiatives such as redevelopment of the Citadel surroundings and west city walls and gate will further enhance our ability to attract tourism capital.

Aleppo's citadel is viewed by many as a prime location for tourism development. The citadel development plan should focus on implementing a vision centred on city cultural resources. The REHAB has cited the importance of tourism and cultural attractions on the citadel surroundings and zone X. However, the timing, scope and direction of citadel and zone X (especially the souks) redevelopment must be clarified before significant private sector interest can be secured. Furthermore, culture and tourism must be more prominently featured in the funding model for the area, which at present does not contain sufficient public investment to fund the development of major tourism, cultural or heritage attractions.

Tourism Investment Study of OCA should demonstrate how REHAB can focus on attributes that are unique to Aleppo and that cannot be duplicated with bricks and mortar in other cities, including: Multi-cultural heritage; and Indigenous industries.

It is recommended that Tourism Chamber work together with REHAB and Aga Khan to proactively seek investment on an ongoing basis, and focus that investment on tourism development that builds on Aleppo's unique attributes.

Effective destination marketing

One of the key considerations for tourism developers and investors is the level and effectiveness of destination marketing. Strong tourism attractions and effective destination marketing ensure the positive destination image and strong market opportunity necessary for a profitable new tourism venture. As discussed before, Aleppo is not competitive when it comes to marketing and promoting. Recommendations relating to the marketing can be found in pillar 3: branding OCA.

Prepare a Retail Sector Development Plan

With respect to infrastructure constraints facing the retail tourism sub sector, a true challenge exists. This sub sector has never been formally recognized and never prioritized as a market for Aleppo and as such no infrastructure, strategy or intervention has ever been made. It appears from preliminary research that the retail sub sector is indeed very important.

The REHAB/City Council could adopt one of two approaches to this sub sector.

Firstly it could take a laissez faire approach and leave the market to run it's course with some interventions on the edges pertaining to marketing. The second option would be to create a complete value chain for the sub sector in a concentrated manner.

If REHAB adopts the second option, which is recommended given existing information, then once again two options exist. The first option would be to support the market specifically but to not assign a geographically location to the market. The second option would be to designate a primary geographic location in OCA and develop what would essentially be a retail tourism hub (besides the Souks).

The advantages of a hub would need to be investigated, but the most immediate rationale would be that: it would concentrate the discount stores of goods and services most often bought by cross border shoppers and the Aleppian community thereby producing economies of scale for both consumers and sellers, secondly it would decrease search times and internal costs to shoppers making the hub more economical, thirdly it would allow for the creation of specifically designed support services such as storage and freight forwarding and packaging. A final and crucial advantage of a hub, is that it would be able to control xenophobia more explicitly than in a general City environment. While a business case needs to be developed, it is suggested that a peripheral zone in OCA would be an ideal location for such a hub. The hub would generate much needed economic activity and jobs within OCA, and would use courtyard houses in new, innovative, and effective ways.

An infrastructural project of this magnitude would require support from the provincial and national government's as well as the private sector.

Pillar 2: Product Development

There are several activity areas in this pillar:

- Quality of visitor experience in OCA
- OCA tourist product development and innovation
- Tourism focused urban planning
- Cultural development
- Events
- E-business
- Tourist transport
- Integrated visitor info

Quality of visitor experience in OCA

Rationale

Most holiday decisions are influenced by personal recommendation. We want to increase our visitors' propensity to return and to become ambassadors for OCA, so we need to make sure that the quality of visitor experience that we are offering will surprise and delight. And if people enjoy themselves while they're here, they are also likely to spend more.

REHAB will work with the Chamber of Tourism to establish QA schemes for tourism industry, encourage their application, and ensure that the QA scheme criteria are constantly reviewed to reflect changing and rising consumer expectations.

Objectives

- establish QA schemes for tourism industry in OCA,
- encourage application of QA scemes, and ensure that the QA scheme criteria are constantly reviewed to reflect changing and rising consumer expectations.

Establish OCA Quality Assurance (QA) schemes

This is partly about making sure our hotel bedrooms, visitor attractions, food and shops are all of a high standard and that our visitors experience pleasant, litter free places. Businesses of all kinds, not just the traditional tourism businesses, need to improve the quality of their product to ensure they are staying ahead of what visitors want.

REHAB will work with the Tourism Chamber to run an OCA-wide quality assurance initiative, providing annual benchmarks for the visitor experiences of OCA.

Encourage application of Quality Assurance (QA) schemes

Every tourism and related business will be strongly encouraged to become part of OCA QA schemes, where they will be supported in raising their standards. We want to work towards all businesses participating in the appropriate QA schemes (eg accommodation, restaurants and other food outlets).

Tourism Research Unit will support tourism businesses in collecting customer feedback which they can use to continually improve the quality of their product, and the Unit will ensure that useful research is provided which allows tourism businesses and others to learn from best practice. (See also "evidence and intelligence".)

Of course it's not all about what tourism businesses and culture and heritage organizations can do to improve quality. Visitors use many of the same services that are used every day by local people. REHAB will therefore continue to maintain and improve the quality of OCA public places so that our visitors are pleasantly surprised by all they see.

OCA Tourist Product Development and Innovation

Rationale

The reader, of this document, now knows what OCA's market looks like and what the future market might look like. The reader also knows how local businesses are doing in relation to others internationally.

We now need to make sure that everything we do will exceed our visitors' expectations.

We must think creatively, innovatively and collaboratively to develop new products and enhance existing ones – from accommodation to visitor attractions to eating places – to ensure that they are exceeding our visitors' expectations. And we need to use our research findings to identify the new products which are needed to meet our visitors' changing tastes – for city breaks, for activity breaks, for pampering, for food and drink, for culture and education etc. Visitors will only return if we exceed their expectations first time round. We must therefore ensure that what we're offering is always one step ahead of expectations.

Objectives

- The Tourism Innovation Group and CF will work with the Tourism Chamber to spot emerging trends of visitor needs and progress the product and sectoral development needed to meet them.
- Packaged unique culture and heritage products will be the main focus.

Matching visitor needs with products

The Tourism Innovation Group and CF will work with the Tourism Chamber to spot emerging trends of visitor needs and to develop the product and sectoral development needed to meet them.

Culture and heritage organisations should also develop new activities and experiences in response to emerging markets. The result will be an increased propensity to return, and to recommend OCA as a great destination.

The Tourism Innovation Unit will work to stimulate higher levels of innovation and product development by groups of businesses, and will provide support for industry and partners to deliver Destination Development and Management Plans for the key tourism destinations.

The CF will try to speed up the processing of planning applications.

Packaging unique products

Packaged "tourism experiences" must play key roles in promoting OCA as an attractive year round cultural destination. Development efforts should focus on a combination of attractions and products that are unique to OCA, and can provide a competitive advantage. Long-term success will come from promoting what is truly unique about OCA. Examples include:

- Aleppian cuisine packaged products; the package can include books, magazine articles, and TV programs on Aleppian cuisine, visits to kitchens at work, quick lessons on preparing traditional meals, tasting sessions, dining out, buying recipes, visiting food markets and shopping for ingredients… etc.
- Natural beauty packaged products, the package can include books, magazine articles, and TV programs on Aleppian natural beauty, skin care and bath products, visits to production sites, massage and Arabic bath sessions, skin

care treatment, quick lessons on skin care, shopping for products in attractive environments, visiting source areas of plants… etc.

- Fashion packages; a whole new industry can be based on using traditional fabrics in making modern clothing. This industry will start with designers who can find innovative ways to reuse traditional fabrics. The package can then include books, magazine articles, and TV programs on Aleppian traditional fabrics and new emerging designs, fashion shows, visits to designers studios at work, fashion makeover services, shopping for products in attractive environments, visiting source markets of textiles, visiting manufacturers of textiles… etc.. .

Packaging cannot be looked upon as a quick fix. Assembling a bundle of tourist experiences into a marketable package is a labour intensive and often frustrating process. The operators that are looking for packaging opportunities are very often the small to medium size businesses that lack the resources to access outlying markets on their own. In far too many cases, these operators do not have a product or service that is export ready. And it must be recognized that the return on investment for many packages is not high, particularly if they are purchased by short trip tourists (as it is the case now: 1.5 nights average length of stay for package tourists).

Destination marketing organizations that have been successful in developing packages with small operators invariably have substantial seed money to cover the staffing and related costs of developing and implementing these packages, and can match operator contributions to expand the reach of these packages. As our unique attributes are often best represented by small and medium sized operations, OCA must find the means to bring more of these opportunities to the market. OCA’s long term success depends on finding a way to increase the resources devoted to cultural destination marketing.

Tourism Focused Urban development

Objectives

- Adopt an integrated quality management (IQM) approach
- Prepare capital plans for City owned attractions
- Accommodation

Adopt an Integrated Quality Management (IQM) approach

In order to maximize the economic impact of tourism in a sustainable manner while enhancing the quality of life for local residents and businesses, a number of European cities have adopted a consistent approach — Integrated Quality Management (IQM).

The IQM process recognizes that the visitor experience is affected by many organizations in both the public and private sector— from the obvious (such as attractions, taxi drivers and accommodations) to the less obvious (such as police and public works). A more detailed description of IQM is included in the Appendix.

We recommend that the REHAB oversee the development of a pilot IQM program focused on urban environmental issues. To focus the initial effort the program should be piloted in the visitor areas and focus on the following issues:

- Security[27], to address concerns about harassment, panhandling and vagrancy
- Quality of the urban environment, to address the cleanliness of streets, waste collection, adaptive reuse of strategic sites, and West city walls and gate development
- Visitor services, to address the availability and distribution of visitor assistance, language and accessibility issues in public transit and public places, taxi services (cleanliness, language, visitor assistance, short fare policies, inspection)
- Accessibility and mobility, to address the availability of parking, enhanced intermodal public transport between visitor areas, attractions (both internal and external to the city) and major transportation nodes (air, rail, road)

Prepare capital plans for City owned attractions

Major tourism assets in Aleppo/OCA are owned by private sector interests and all levels of government. The development of a common vision and integrated strategy for long-term development, therefore, is a complex task. However, past success in Action Area III in OCA clearly demonstrates what can be achieved when stakeholders from the private sector and all levels of government are aligned behind a common vision.

Planning for city-owned attractions

The City of Aleppo owns a significant inventory of cultural and heritage facilities, which are operated largely by the DGAM. Some of these provide the venue for the performing arts that constitute an important element of our tourism product

[27] Strategically the fist issue is to pinpoint accurately the specific security concern. In such a situation it is insufficient to state harassment as a constraint, but it is necessary to be more specific - is the fear real or perceived, is the fear greater at particular sites… etc. All these variation would have an impact on the potential remedy. For example if tourists are not visiting city attractions due to general perception fears then the remedy is predominantly a PR and visible policing issue.

inventory. Others tell the story of our settlement, growth and heritage. Many of these venues are suffering from deferred maintenance. A number of key City-owned attractions are experiencing a loss of visitation and market share, such as the Museum. Due in part to a shortage of funds for upgrading, re-imaging or expansion.

It is suggested that the REHAB/City Council prepare a Culture Plan for OCA. This plan should address the long-term vision for OCA's cultural and heritage assets. The Plan will include strategies for private sector involvement in redevelopment, renovation or enhancement programs where appropriate.

Long-term plans for all existing and proposed City-owned attractions, cultural and heritage assets should be provided by REHAB for consideration in tourism planning.

Planning for government owned attractions

Many of the OCA's most important tourism attractions are owned and operated through various ministries of the Government. Just as with the City-owned attractions, the long-term vision and plans for key government assets must be considered.

The REHAB should work with the management of each of these attractions, to coordinate the assembly of long-term plans for the major Government owned attractions. These plans should be provided for consideration in tourism planning

Cultural Development

Rationale

Culture[28] is the way through which individuals, communities and nations define themselves. From the earliest traces of recorded history, Aleppo has been the wellspring of cultural development. Up till the middle of the past century, Aleppo was the focus of an extraordinary upsurge of intellectual, scientific and cultural energy, which shaped thought and life in the Levant region. Aleppo's contribution to culture has guaranteed it a place in history, but what about the future?

It is the Consultant's view that culture is not an optional extra, but an essential element in lifelong learning, economic development, social regeneration, and in the quality of life and personal well-being of individuals.

A high cultural profile of the City, both nationally and internationally, has had a significant impact on the City economy by attracting increased numbers of tourists and visitors, who bring in money and employment opportunities for local businesses and citizens. The feeling that Aleppo/OCA is a good place in which to live helps to attract new business and investment to the City.

Cultural activities are also important for the people of Aleppo:

- they encourage active involvement and participation from individuals and the community, which helps to develop self-worth and community identity
- they help to of issues relating to the heritage
- they are part of the education and lifelong learning process
- they help to raise awareness of and to develop a sense of pride in the City's heritage and built environment
- they bring in new ideas, experiences and a sense of enjoyment to the City, contributing to the quality of life.

Objectives:

- Establishing a cultural partnership
- Extending the role of REHAB
- Preparing cultural strategies

[28] This policy uses the term culture in a broad sense to include a range of activities which is not limited to the traditional components such as the live arts, heritage, fine art, or literature, but follows the definition of culture formulated at UNESCO's World Conference on cultural policies, which states: "Culture consists of all distinctive, spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional features which characterize a society or social group." (Mexico 1982)

Establishing a Cultural Partnership

The Consultant recognizes that REHAB is not in a position to provide all cultural services and solutions directly. This requires collaboration and partnership with other organizations and the private sector.

This policy proposes the establishment of a Cultural Partnership as a means of creating co-operation and co-ordination between cultural providers and supporters.

The aims of the partnership would be to: bring together the ideas, skills, experiences, efforts, and funding of organizations and individuals which are involved in working with, or supporting cultural activities, such as higher and further educational establishments, national institutions, libraries, museums and galleries, community organizations, and the commercial and private sector.

REHAB's role can include, but not limited to:

- develop partnership working with public agencies, the commercial and private sector providers and the voluntary and community sector in the City which are involved in cultural activities
- ensure a coordinated approach to programming, funding and promotion of cultural activities
- seek to increase funding for cultural provision through opportunities presented by external sources such as international and government funding agencies
- support audience development initiatives, in collaboration with other cultural providers.

Extending the role of REHAB

The REHAB has a duty to make adequate local provision for cultural activities, but it is for the reasons outlined in the introduction - of this section - that we encourage REHAB's to extend its support and commitment to cultural activities beyond current requirements.

The new role of REHAB can include:

- Enabling Aleppians and visitors to participate in, and enjoy, culture
- Encouraging the highest standards of creativity and excellence
- Developing lively and sustainable cultural industries
- Developing cultural infrastructure
- Promoting culture for children and young people
- Supporting the contribution of cultural activities to the lifelong learning process for the wider community
- Preserving and interpreting Aleppo's heritage
- Promoting the expression of Aleppo's diverse cultural identity
- Develop cultural activities which enrich community development.

Enabling Aleppians and visitors to participate in, and enjoy, culture

All of Aleppo's citizens should have equality of access to culture and be able to enjoy a range of activities which cater to different age groups and interests across the geographic, cultural, generational and socio-economic communities of the city.

The REHAB/City Council should support cultural activities which stimulate and enrich the lives of the greatest possible proportion of Aleppians. This will be achieved by striving to ensure that:

- all venues are accessible in terms of transport, physical access and cost
- information on events within the city is made available across the city and is available in alternative formats
- events taking place in local areas receive support and encouragement
- there is continued support to those organisations which work in local communities or with client groups who need help and encouragement to participate in cultural activities
- there are programs of local events, community education, arts education and arts outreach projects, which reach those people and areas of the community which, in the past have, been excluded
- the REHAB program of events, performances and exhibitions should reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of the citizens of OCA and Aleppo
- the REHAB should take the lead in developing education programs linking performances, exhibitions and events to school and community education curricular priorities and in developing library based activities
- financial barriers to involvement are minimised through the promotion of enlightened charging and concessionary pricing policies.

Encouraging the highest standards of creativity and excellence

It is important that in all cultural provision over which the REHAB/City Council has influence, it encourages the highest quality of performance and levels of creativity and artistic innovation. This will be achieved by:

- ensuring that the REHAB/City Council and other funders support organisations which encourage or provide innovative activities with a high standard of creativity
- ensuring that funding conditions are clear and monitored to maintain standards and achieve 'Best Value'
- supporting specialist facilities
- encouraging collaboration and co-operation between cultural organizations to share best practice and support systems, and develop new ways of working
- supporting and developing the creativity of individual artists in Aleppo
- ensuring that the people of Aleppo are provided with the opportunity of enjoying cultural performances and activities of the highest national and international standards.

Developing new, lively and sustainable cultural industries

Culture is all embracing and dynamic and should evolve with the opportunities presented by new technologies. In this connection, it is important that the REHAB helps to stimulate a mood of vibrancy, energy and initiative in the City, through its support and promotion of innovative and high profile events and projects in OCA. This will be achieved by:

- keeping informed of developing technologies and recognizing their contribution to cultural activities in the City and the opportunities they provide for increasing access to culture
- developing links between arts and science

- investing in new technology and recognising the opportunities for using this as part of learning, for example, in the teaching and enjoyment of music, film, art and design
- acknowledging the role new technologies play in contributing to the energy and excitement of youth culture.

Developing cultural infrastructure

The REHAB can play a role in helping to create and sustain an environment within OCA in which cultural industries and activities can prosper. This is not just about maintaining and developing the existing infrastructure, but also about looking to the development of future audiences and activities. This can be achieved by:

- supporting the development of the service sector through the promotion of OCA as a quality visitor destination
- supporting cultural activities at various levels, including Aleppo based entities and national entities
- ensuring community arts continue to grow and develop
- lobbying for the maximisation of funding
- attracting events to OCA and recognising that this can bring additional participation and investment in local cultural activities
- acknowledging the importance of education and the arts in developing future audiences and creators of cultural activities
- with others, identifying gaps in infrastructure provision and developing strategies for filling them
- nurturing partnerships which identify and build new audiences
- promoting OCA as a location for quality film, video and multi-media production and associated services.

Promoting culture for children and young people

It is important for children and young people to experience and enjoy diverse cultural activities as a powerful medium of learning, as a means to encourage them to develop their creative potential, and as an important part of their leisure activity. This would be achieved by:

- supporting and developing the arts through youth centers involving specialist staff teaching art and design, music, drama, film, dance and literature
- supporting activities which reflect and address the requirements of children and young people with specific needs
- encouraging cultural organizations, through the funding of REHAB, to develop activities which meet heritage awareness priorities
- supporting specific initiatives which encourage the pursuit of excellence
- encouraging youth provision and embracing the youth culture scene as part of the overall cultural provision in the city
- providing the opportunity for children and young people to engage with professional performers and artists as part of the education process
- creating libraries
- consulting children and young people about cultural provision
- recognizing the importance of play and leisure in children’s and young people’s lives.

Preserving and interpreting Aleppo's heritage

OCA has a magnificent built heritage. Working with others, REHAB should foster the public interest in the City's heritage. This will be achieved through:

- preserving and enhancing the city's built heritage
- arranging displays on aspects of the city's history
- carrying out archeological and social history research
- developing close links between the city's schools and its museums and galleries
- encouraging the enjoyment of the city's built heritage
- interpreting the city's architectural and historical background and identifying ways of making it more accessible to the public
- collecting and preserving artefacts relating to the city's heritage.

Promoting the expression of Aleppo's diverse cultural identity

Aleppo has a well-deserved reputation among researchers as an important historic cultural centre. It is crucial that we extended this reputation across the world to all audiences. This will raise the profile of the city in Syria and abroad, facilitate economic development, and attract income through visitors and new businesses, which helps to support the city's service sector.

This will be achieved by:

- investing in cultural facilities to enable them to produce and attract top quality and high profile events
- recognising the richness of culture within the city and supporting those events which promote areas of unique culture
- maintaining support for cultural exchanges and touring companies from Arab, European and international cities
- supporting the existing major festivals and the possible development of new festivals
- Maximising and building on cultural links through existing networks of twin and partner cities; i.e. Heidelberg and Hanover .

Develop cultural activities which enrich community development

Participation in, and experience of, cultural activities can bring people and communities together, encourage them to develop a sense of local identity and build individual self worth. This will be achieved by:

- recognising the importance of outreach work in local communities and supporting community cultural projects developed within and for the local community
- ensuring that, where appropriate, investment in cultural activities and organisations can be used as a resource for the community
- supporting cultural activities which bring people together, provide opportunities for social interaction and help to build and develop individual and community confidence, social involvement and the acquisition of new skills
- greater co-ordination of skills, information and resources in community development and economic regeneration.

Preparing cultural strategies

The term culture embraces such a variety of activities that it would be inappropriate to bundle them into one lengthy strategy. Instead, the Consultant believes that each area requires detailed consideration, with its own program of action and targets relating to overall strategic objectives.

The Consultant suggests having strategies for Dance; Education and Arts; Festivals; Film, Video and Media; Heritage; Libraries; Literature and Poetry; Music; Science and Technology; Theatre; and Visual Arts and Crafts.

There will inevitably be some important themes (or premises) which will be common to them all. These themes areas are summarized below:

- Consultation is vital to ensure community groups, cultural organisations and relevant bodies are involved in and contribute to the drawing up of the strategies. Consultation should take place on each strategy with providers, producers and makers, the audience and funders. The consultative process should build upon existing common interests.
- Lifelong education should be recognised as being a cornerstone of all the strategies.
- Community arts and the involvement, participation and support for activities and events at the local level is a major priority and should be considered within each strategy.
- Unique local culture in the City contributes to its diversity and vibrancy and should form part of each strategy.
- High quality and innovative artistic participation which celebrates the new and innovative as well as heritage and tradition should be encouraged.

Events

Rationale

The effectiveness of MOT and MOC in creating events, and the actual tourism impact of these "signature events", is not widely understood by tourism operators.

While some would suggest that the MOT abandon its special event programs, we do not share this view. Arguably, most of the events produced by MOT draw only minimal impact from high yield target markets. However, these events help to animate the city and bolster community pride, all of which can indirectly support the tourism sector.

We, however, question the ability of MOT and MOC to plan and run such events for the benefit of OCA and this policy. We suggest that REHAB/City Council need to establish EventOCA, and produce special events geared towards the community and tourists.

Objectives:

- Create EventOCA
- Improve city run events
- Develop a tourism event strategy

Create EventOCA

Description of this entity goes here.

Improve city-run events

There are several community oriented initiatives that can enhance OCA's tourism product inventory, namely the creation of 8 to 10 recurring events as "official" OCA events, to be funded and supported by the REHAB/City Council

These events will help to animate the OCA and bolster community pride, which can indirectly support the tourism sector.

Tourism events have as a primary goal the generation of direct, incremental economic benefits through increased tourism visitation. As such, we believe that those receiving the lion' s share of these benefits must assume greater responsibility for the stewardship of these events.

Accordingly, **the following guiding principles are recommended**. Tourism events supported by the REHAB/City Council:

- Should be delivered through collaborative approaches, including but not limited to joint ventures, sponsorships and strategic alliances
- Must meet a clear tourism sector need, either across the broad sector or to a specific priority sub-sector or area
- Must be consistent with this policy
- Must be sustainable, with consideration given to the requirements for long-term dependence on City resources
- Must clearly deliver, within an agreed upon timeframe, the expected benefits to the tourism sector.

The following criteria are recommended for consideration in identifying/ designating tourism events:

- The estimated economic impact of an event considering number of participants, spectators, support teams and others, their length of stay and their estimated daily expenditure – tourism events must generate a material level of overnight visitation with the primary purpose being travel to the event.
- The role of media and the potential to create awareness of or interest in OCA as a tourism destination to the priority and/or developing markets for OCA
- Event frequency – giving preference to recurring events.
- Ability to secure significant private sector investment to ensure leverage of public funds.
- Fit within gaps in the Aleppo event tourism calendar.

We believe an important role for REHAB/City Council is to support events hosted by other entities, and act as an incubator for new events that fill a strategic niche in Aleppo's annual tourism calendar. EventOCA should serve as an incubator for new events that have the potential to evolve into major tourist events. On an ongoing basis, REHAB/City Council should provide support to major tourism events, through its asset base, municipal services, local/international experts resources, and financial support. However, long-term direct city management of such tourism events should only be considered when:

- No other service provider or organization is capable or willing to undertake the long-term event management; or
- Industry input has demonstrated that the City is the preferred service provider.

Develop a tourism event strategy

The primary objective should be the development of a year round calendar of major tourism events that reinforce OCA's brand, and bolster travel during gaps in the high and low travel seasons.

The strategy should:

- Start by creating events where OCA enjoys a unique, sustainable position in the marketplace.
- Include events that already take place; i.e. the International Jazz Festival.
- Include the development of initiatives to enhance the level of overnight visitation generated by these festivals and events.
- Include incentives and risk mitigation strategies to encourage events in non-peak periods.

The EventOCA's role in special events should be twofold:

- Work with existing events and community generated events to enhance their tourism impact
- Identify market niches and potential product market matches, and assist in creating strategic alliances or partnership agreements with third parties for the long-term management of new tourism events.

Accordingly, we recommend the following:

- Criteria should be developed to define and categorize tourism, signature, hallmark, blockbuster and community events.

- An independent review of all events produced by MOT should be undertaken to identify those with established or potential tourism impact (" Tourism Events"). This independent review should incorporate generally accepted research methodologies for sampling and impact analysis;
- For each of these tourism events, a strategy should be developed to maximize tourism impact. This strategy should include clear performance benchmarks, timetables and measurement tools.
- For each of these tourism events, a long-term management strategy should be established to shift event stewardship and management to the benefiting stakeholders. This strategy could include a long-term support agreement with the City;
- Events currently produced or supported by MOT that are of a community nature such as Khan Alharir Festival… etc., that have minimal tourism impact should be reviewed to ensure that it is appropriately resourced following this realignment of community events.
- Market research should be undertaken by EventOCA to identify new tourism events that support this policy, with particular emphasis on events during gaps in the existing event calendar;
- For each of these new tourism events, a Business Plan should be developed by the EventOCA to support the REHAB/City Council investment in the event. This Business Plan should address the delivery of event management support in a manner consistent with the guiding principles outlined earlier.
- The EventOCA should develop a support framework for existing tourism events produced by third parties. This support framework should include, where appropriate, an incentive to reschedule existing events to produce a more balanced year 'round event calendar.

Coordination is required between City events and those being developed and/ or marketed by the MOT.

E-business

Rationale

Tourists increasingly want to find out about trips and activities online, and to book them online in real time. If we can't provide this service, visitors are likely to go elsewhere, regardless of the quality product we have to offer them. We therefore need to ensure that tourism businesses and culture and heritage organisations are able to provide this service, either themselves or through visit OCA.

But it's not just about information and booking. Technology today is like electricity 100 years ago – it provides countless opportunities for tourism businesses to change the way they work – whether it's creating a customer feedback system, providing visitors with handheld electronic guides to your visitor attraction, or texting visitors to let them know about events likely to interest them or special deals in your B&B. Better use of technology could also allow tourism businesses to work smarter, thus leaving them with more time to enhance their product or spend valuable time with their guests.

Objectives

- Every tourism business in OCA should become fully e-enabled
- develop an OCA Box Office which will provide online calendar of events and online booking

e-enabling

Every tourism business in OCA should become fully e-enabled to maximize sales – either directly or through visit OCA - and improve the visitor experience (from internet booking to e-marketing to hand-held e-guides).

Visit OCA will work with the Chamber of Tourism to support tourism businesses, especially tour operators, in becoming e-enabled and improving their use of e-business by ensuring access to training and advice. REHAB will take the needs of tourism businesses into account in considering planning applications for the supply of high speed internet infrastructure.

Develop an OCA Box Office

The CF and Visit OCA will study how best to develop an OCA Box Office which will provide online calendar of events and online booking of performances.

Visit OCA will develop closer links with culture venues and events organisers to present visitors with up to date information about what's on in OCA and offer tailor-made packages to encourage visitors to attend.

Transport

Rationale

Our tourism product needs to include excellent transport provision, both to and within OCA. Visitors will want to reach Aleppo within 3 hours (direct flight, or by bus from Damascus), so we need to make sure we can get them here quickly – the airport needs to be activated. As most people will only be in Aleppo for a short stay, but will want to pack in as much as possible, we need to make sure they can get to OCA and around Aleppo quickly, easily and comfortably. Also we need to encourage more visitors to use public transport wherever possible.

Objectives:

- Prepare an OCA tourist oriented transport strategy

Prepare an OCA tourist oriented transport strategy

REHAB should prepare an OCA Transport Strategy which will consider the needs of visitors. This strategy should be based on a research into the travel behaviour of visitors to Aleppo. Aim is to improve the visitor experience.

The research into travel behaviour of visitors to Aleppo will map the current trends and patterns of visitors' travel behaviour.

The City Council should lobby aggressively to extend direct air routes to Aleppo airport, targeting routes that have the greatest benefit to Aleppo. City Council should work to maximize opportunities to run tourist friendly commuting services from and to the airport.

But it's not just about what the City Council can do. Tourism businesses and culture and heritage organisations must make themselves aware of local transport issues facing their visitors and their staff will be able to signpost travel information and suggest best routes and modes of transport. Tourism businesses and culture and heritage organisations will introduce innovative and sustainable ways of transporting their visitors around. The Tourism Innovation Unit will support tourism businesses to do this.

Visit OCA will work with tour operators to market OCA as a destination, and to highlight ease of access to OCA.

Visit OCA will work with transport operators to ensure they are aware of visitors' needs and expectations at transport hubs. Events organisers will work with transport providers to develop transport to events, and to develop ticketing schemes.

Integrated Visitor Information

An integrated visitor information and management strategy to improve the OCA tourism experience needs to be developed following a research that will be commissioned for this purpose.

This section will be expanded upon request of REHAB administration

Pillar 3: Branding

There are five stages in the branding process, which are:

- Brand Research
- Brand development
- Concept testing and development
- Guidelines launch and implementation
- Monitoring and measurement

In this chapter, we will present a brief on the first two stages. It serves as a guide for any future branding plan and strategies.

OCA Brand Research

Context

OCA – the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. A city that was home to numerous kingdoms, culture, arts, architecture, politics, religious science, commerce, and agriculture. A city that hosts the biggest souks in the world. A city that hosts the most impressive citadel of Islamic medieval times. A city that is doted with hundreds of monuments and extending over 350 hectares, and boasts a living community of 110,000 residents and over 25,000 daily jobs.

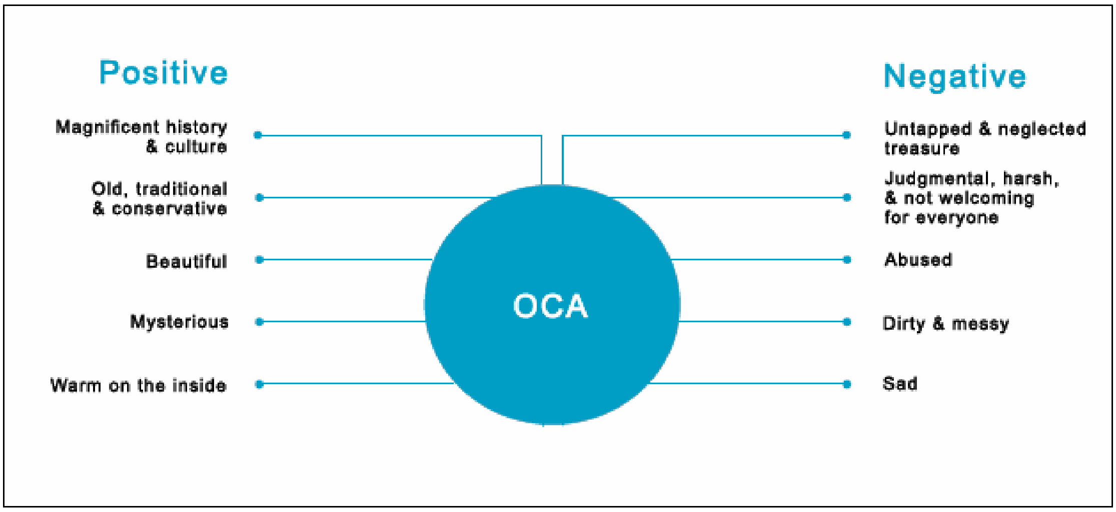
We're doing fine – so why do we need to do anything differently? The answer lies in the following section.

Research findings

Our preliminary research found that:

- Aleppians have mixed views of OCA, illustrated below:

  Top of mind associations - Aleppians



  Source: N'N interviews

- The majority of OCA residents are unaware of it's tangible and intangible distinctiveness, and the majority think that historic buildings are not suitable for their needs and for contemporary life.
- Not on radar, OCA is not top of mind for tourism consumers – in fact, their awareness is limited.
- OCA does not really mean anything to people:
  - Inside Aleppo, awareness of tangible brand icons are limited and awareness of intangible/emotional supports are non-existent
  - The further distance you travel from Aleppo, awareness levels diminish dramatically
  - Inside Syria, the tangible and intangible assets of OCA are almost non-existent, and when they are present they are blurred and confused
- Quality of awareness is low – business and place to visit/live
- The Citadel of Aleppo is the only recognizable element – too narrow, static, do not evoke sense of what OCA is like

- Aleppian associations: traditional, slow, obnoxious – need to be overcome
- without a perceived value to the customer, OCA has to compete on price and it has failed to do so;
- OCA as a destination has become a commodity;
- competitors with a stronger and more positive brands are wining the business.

Developing a brand – not just a logo and catch-line but a positive and clear image of what we are and what we offer – will be a powerful tool in our efforts to keep people visiting OCA, investing in the city and deciding this is a great place to live and work.

OCA Brand Development

Premises

Several issues should be kept in mind in this process that OCA will use to build an instrument to present itself. Branding must:

- be used as vehicles to broadcast urban identity.
- be seen as instruments to increase competitive capacity, through providing OCA with an image, a cultural significance, a source of economic value, and an instrument to agilely convey OCA's strengths.
- target multiple groups, namely: tourists, residents, and businesses.

Goals

The development of a brand for OCA will:

- Increase the city's stature, the impact of its communications and drive economic benefit
- Provide a clear vision and shared benefits for all stakeholders
- Create expectations of the destination, enhancing differentiation and driving preference
- Build a sense of civic pride and direction
- Encourage inward investment
- Attract visitors

Ideas/Brand Values

Connect past, present and future

OCA is not only the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, but she has been a kingdom of commerce, culture, agriculture, spirituality, and wealth for most of its life. The picture of OCA today contrasts its past glory. It is an acutely depressed place, struggling with poverty, unemployment, low human capital, run-down built environment, dirtiness… etc.

The contrasting facets of OCA; present depression and past affluence, traditional fabric and needs for modern use, a local humble place with international heritage significance, all make OCA a city of contradictions. Problems associated with such contradictions threat to lose OCA's unique identity. Moreover, the current image of poverty and clutter prevent the emergence of an adaptively reused and competitive OCA. For example, when the world sees OCA as linked to the stereotypes of poor immigrants; it becomes difficult to construct and consolidate a new image as an old place with modern use, which is competitive, especially in the eyes of the Aleppians.

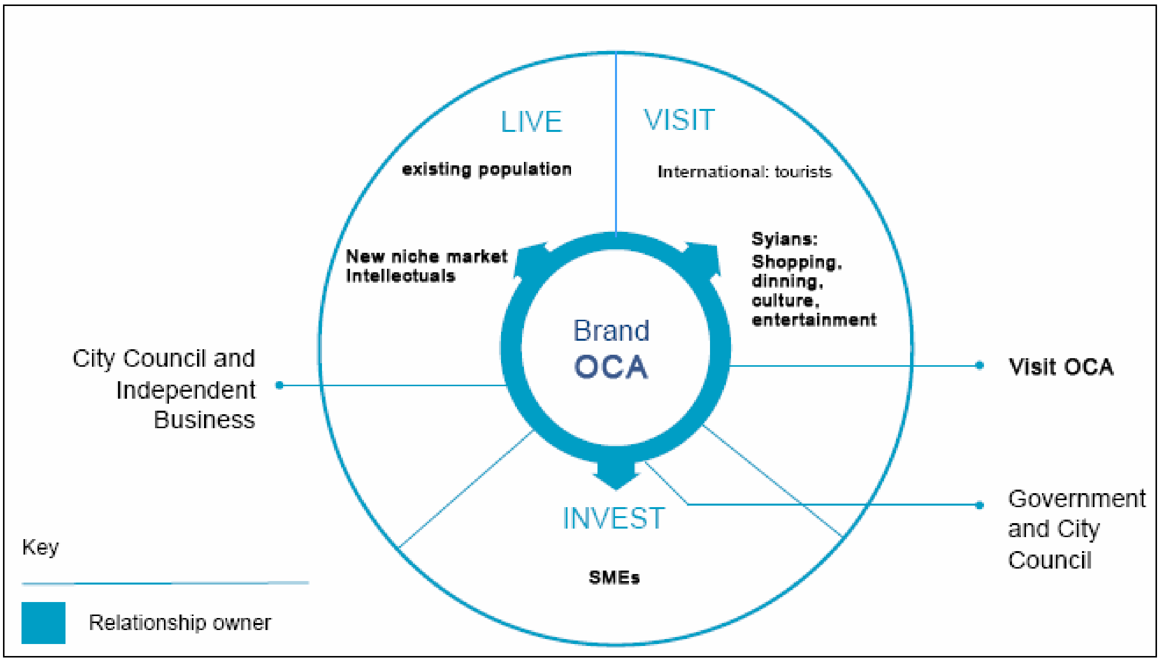
The question, therefore, is the following: What can be done to integrate these two factors – the greatness (which is mainly from the past) and the present opportunities/needs for development - to develop into a new image that will be the OCA of the future?

The contrast between past and present of OCA, along with the OCA No.1 feature should give birth to the brand driver. One proposal is to create the OCA brand: "alive". It covers the existing contrast. It brings together a vivid past and a vivid future, one which is determined to continue living with greatness. It provides: stature, meaning, modernity, link to past, and vitality

The gap between the images of OCA and its reality should be eliminated with the help of the other pillars of this tourism policy and with the overall work of REHAB.

Appeal to multiple audiences

The brand has 3 distinct audiences, with multiple segments, across: Live, Work and Invest. And they are served by a number of diverse organizations



Build on areas of strength

OCA brand must be conceived in a manner that supports, in every level, maintaining OCA's unique identity features whilst contributing to increase its competitiveness. OCA's competitiveness is increased when it obtains the best return from the utilization of its assets.

The city branding process, as an integral part of the positioning struggle, must identify what those assets are and which of those assets has the most potential of providing an outcome that is economically interesting, compatible with the city's existing values and social beliefs and non harmful for OCA's identity in the long term.

Branding must ensure that the strengths of OCA are properly connected to the needs of the marketplace, and, in areas in need for change, support a regeneration strategy that will bring economic renaissance.

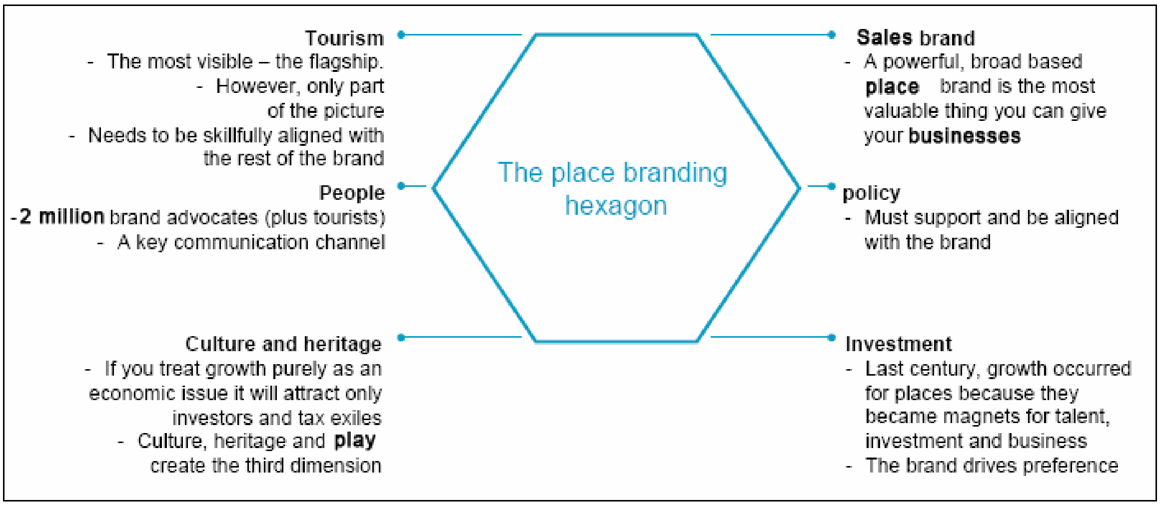
Additionally, comparative studies can inform the city branding process in order to prioritize assets that are innovative and least easy to replicate.

During the research for this policy, professional form different backgrounds were asked to identify areas of strength to build the new OCA brand platform. Their contributions are summarized below, they form a good starting point:

- OCA Values: unique, authentic, sensory, engaging,
- OCA attributes: the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, world heritage status, great architecture, multi-sensory place

Work on multiple dimensions

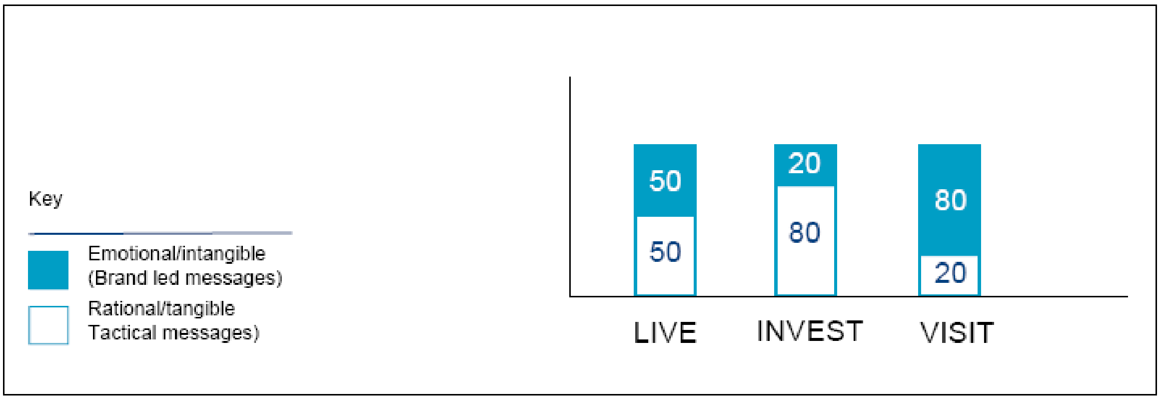
OCA place branding hexagon



Source: modified figure, original from: The Economist, Brands and Branding, Place brands 2003

The brand we will be selling is OCA; however, it will play multiple roles with varying degrees of influence, namely:

- **Live** - lifestyle vs. work / opportunity
- **Invest** - market suitability/ government policy/ talent pool vs. environment/ aspiration association
- **Visit** - Intrigue / fashion / aspiration vs. perceived negative images of terrorism and backwardness



In relationship to Syria; the country image must be leveraged within the brand. OCA should be seen as a microcosm of Syria.

must-haves

The brand must have the followings:

- **Truth** – we must be true to OCA, presenting a true, valid, believable, full and contemporary picture
- **Complexity and simplicity** – capture the richness of OCA but communicate this in a way that is simple, truthful, motivating and memorable
- **Aspiration** – we must present a credible, compelling vision for the future (not where we are today but where we want to be tomorrow)
- **Inclusive** – the brand should drive societal, political and economic objectives. For those less favored we must support them in other ways
- **Appeal** – the brand should be very appealing and unique.

Pillar 4: Marketing

This pillar of the policy includes three activity areas:

- Establish Visit OCA
- Increasing market reach and impact
- Marketing tourism products
- Increasing market demand
- Raising the profile of the tourism industry.

Establish VisitOCA

Visit OCA should be created to market OCA to Aleppo, Syria, and the rest of the world. Its mission should be to build the value of tourism in OCA by creating world-class destination brand and marketing campaigns. Visit OCA also builds partnerships with and provides insights into the Chamber of Tourism and other organizations that have a stake in Aleppo tourism.

Visit OCA should be funded by REHAB, and it will try to raise non-government funding.

Visit OCA should operate in target overseas markets.

Visit OCA will have four core areas of focus: creating a brand for OCA, exploiting marketing venues, engaging private sector stakeholders in marketing OCA, and aligning culture to deliver its objectives.

Increasing Marketing Reach and Impact

Rationale

Cultural visitation to Aleppo is low, and it is of minimum economic impact. While some growth has spurred naturally (without marketing) in the cross border shopping sector (from Turkey), this is not merely enough. For Aleppo tourism to develop it must be a successful urban and cultural destination. As a result, building **awareness** of OCA as a unique and attractive urban/cultural destination must be a sustained marketing priority. And not just within Aleppo. Consider that:

- Prestige, Aleppo is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world! It has a heritage reservoir unmatched by any other city in the Levant. And it has been, up till the sixties of the last century, the region's prime center for agriculture, trade, industry, architecture, culture, politics, religious science… etc.
- Location, Aleppo is the principal ground (rail, bus, car) gateway (and should be, naturally, the principal air gateway) to Syria from the north (Europe).
- Money, Aleppo's agricultural and industrial economies represent the largest pool of marketing dollars of any Syrian destination.

As a result, no comprehensive marketing plan for Syrian/Levant tourism industry is complete without a significant role for and contribution from Aleppo. Over the past however, Aleppo's ability to market itself independently or in conjunction with national "partners" has been severely handicapped as a result of central tourism planning/marketing, insufficient marketing resources, and a less than strategic national marketing focus.

As of 1960's, Aleppo's position in the Levant has been diminished, and its position in international tourism marketplace has been less than moderate. Aleppo is becoming a harder sell as a result of eroding awareness and the increased "noise" and aggressiveness of its key competitors.

Increasing marketing reach and impact will be a function of not only additional marketing resources but also of excellent branding and more efficient use of existing and future resources.

Objectives

- More efficient use and focus of marketing resources to ensure awareness of OCA as an attractive cultural destination by:
  - Leveraging market research and knowledge of OCA customers to a much greater extent.
  - Increasing overall awareness and focusing on existing and potential niche markets.
  - Capitalizing on the forthcoming renaissance among OCA's new cultural attractions and packaged products.
  - Positioning of new entertainment products (events).
  - Developing stronger relationships with other levels of government and adjacent destinations (e.g., St. Simon Cathedral).
  - More focus on cultural markets.
- Greater marketing resources over the short and long terms, specifically,
  - A short-term plan to address immediate (i.e., 2006 and 2007) needs; and, A longer-term plan focused on substantially increasing and maintaining marketing resources from 2007 onwards.

Leveraging market reach

In times of reduced resources, even greater emphasis needs to be placed on understanding OCA's market opportunities, ensuring products are matched with these markets and monitoring visitor satisfaction. Aleppo's current market research efforts— and much of the research efforts at the national level (MOT)-- are focused mostly on historical performance analysis (e.g., number of visitors, hotel occupancies, cross-border statistics). While such historical data provides interesting comparisons, it has limited benefit in planning marketing strategy or helping to stay focused on building product – market matches.

Tourism Chamber and the Tourism Research Unit need to work more closely with MOT and the in the identification and conduct of appropriate consumer and market research. As a starting point all ongoing Aleppo specific research efforts should be reviewed with the view of determining relevancy (against pre determined criteria) and all existing research should be catalogued and made available for more universal use. Consideration should be given to harmonizing the existing visitation statistics to avoid confusion over differing numbers from different sources. Future coordinated research efforts by Tourism Chamber and the Ministry of Tourism should focus on two areas. First, the conduct of broad awareness and consumer interest research directed to the larger geographic source markets for Aleppo and Syria visitors. The Tourism Research Unit market research efforts should be used wherever possible. The second, and probably more relevant, research focus should be directed to learning more about niche markets where OCA offers attractive products. Markets where Aleppo already enjoys a strong competitive advantage should be clearly delineated as the primary research focal point.

The research role for the Tourism Research Unit should be to work with the Ministry of Tourism in defining priorities and developing appropriate methodologies and plans for evaluating visitor satisfaction, tourism event visitation, economic impact, benchmarking and other tourism service and infrastructure related research.

Increase focus on existing and potential niche markets

Aleppo has an established reputation in cross border shopping market segments.

However, overall awareness of the destination is waning. Selling tourism, as with any consumer product, requires sustained awareness, differentiation from competitive choices, communication of key competitive advantages and frequent " calls to action" . Building awareness is not just a function of traditional advertising but encompasses the full range of marketing channels, including individual and group sales, public relations, travel press liaison, partnership marketing and the like.

Awareness must be linked to OCA as an identified " brand." Much more than just a mark or logo, OCA's tourism brand needs to be relevant to all potential market segments regardless of trip purpose, geographic origin or niche segment. The brand should be compatible with national marketing efforts. If the City' s branding strategy (including any logos, wordmarks, slogans and images) is to be incorporated into destination marketing initiatives, it must be compatible with the marketing and sales strategies resulting from this policy.

Capitalize on the forthcoming cultural renaissance

Over the next few years millions will be invested in rehabilitation of the citadel surroundings. In addition, the national government have cooperated with investors from the Arabian Gulf to finance and built multimillion dollars hotels, resorts, and entertainment projects throughout Syria.

While each of these facilities is (or will be) an integral part of Aleppo's tourism product offering, the degree to which they are positioned as tourism " products" varies widely.

Tourism use of these cultural and recreational assets can co-exist with resident use. In fact, tourism use should be encouraged if for no other reason than the level of investment by the national and municipal governments in such infrastructure.

The expected cultural renaissance still needs a decade, as the renovation and expansion of these cultural assets is completed, should be a catalyst to better position Aleppo's cultural assets as a unique selling feature. Concerted marketing efforts leading up till that time should be followed by sustainable marketing budgets to properly position these assets as part of the tourism product offering. Cooperative marketing between these cultural facilities should be encouraged (as is happening already with joint market research initiatives), as should partnerships with contrasting attractions and related tourism sectors— both public and private sector.

Expand access to entertainment products

EventOCA will work to offer a host of leisure activities including theatrical productions and special events. These activities should be successfully marketed primarily to the Aleppian market, and to the national market through regular media coverage.

From a business viewpoint, attracting local residents to a theatrical production is less expensive than attracting non-residents. The value of these products as visitor attractions is less apparent to the owners and promoters than it is to the tourism industry. Visitors from outside Aleppo, and in particular to the tourists. bring new expenditures to Aleppo, generating incremental tax revenue and employment. As a result, EventOCA should be encouraged to seek avenues to create dependable access to these products without compromising the business interests of the promoters. Such approaches to realizing the tourism potential of theatre and other related activities may include, for example, committing to ticket blocks at the commencement of the season and working with ground tour operators to purchase blocks.

Build stronger relationships with cities in the region

While the adage " what's good for Syria is good for Aleppo" may be a tougher sell in OCA, the fact remains that ignoring Aleppo does a disservice to the entire national tourism industry. Numerous examples exist where major urban markets (and gateways) have been the focus of tourism marketing to the benefit not only of the urban destination but also the broader area. Chicago, London, Berlin and Sydney are each capital cities and the dominant economic centre of their respective market areas. In each case, tourism marketing authorities at all levels have recognized the value of the 'gateway' in building a broader marketing campaign. A Syrian tourism marketing strategy is incomplete without a similar profile for Aleppo.

The recent resource shortfall facing MOT has limited Aleppo's ability to gain exposure within national marketing media. VisitOCA should be engaged to a much greater extent to work with destination marketing organizations within the broader regional market area, i.e. Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey. From the visitor's point-of-view, particularly the culture visitor, " Aleppo" is a composite of a variety of experiences, not just those found within Syria.

Increase marketing resource

Aleppo has no taxation revenue dedicated to marketing.

In the United States, visitor taxes (including taxes applied to hotels, car rental and restaurant meals) have been used to fund not only marketing but also projects ranging from convention centres to football stadiums and arts programs. The implementation of hotel marketing taxes has taken destination marketing in major North American cities to a new level.

marketing efforts in Syria receive their budget from direct national grants. Aleppo's budget compared very negatively to that of its major competitor Damascus, despite the fact that our market satisfaction is very high.

Hotel taxes can allow cities to significantly expand their marketing reach. Without access to similar resources, Aleppo's tourism marketing budget is significantly low in relation to its competitors.

The MOT might consider the introduction of a hotel tax internal to Aleppo to be inconsistent with its policy platform. Accordingly, the short-term planning context for this policy assumes no destination marketing funds from any form of hotel tax.

In the short term, a " made in Aleppo" solution must be found to increase the resources available for destination marketing. However, it must be acknowledged that without access to " user pay" revenues, putting the full burden for destination marketing on the City and the industry will place Aleppo at a competitive disadvantage in the long term.

We recommend a two-stage approach to address funding requirements over both the short and long terms as follows:

Short term

The REAHB/City Council can work with OCA hotels to form a consensus among them (eventually to include other Aleppo hotels) to participate in a self-imposed 3% levy that would mirror a hotel tax. All funds raised via this levy would be available to Visit OCA for destination marketing. The hotels should be encouraged by Tourism Chamber, the City of Aleppo and all Aleppo tourism stakeholders to continue pursuing this initiative.

In the absence of a voluntary solution to the visitor levy issue, the City of Aleppo is encouraged to increase its financial support for destination marketing initiatives— such support may also be required to " top up" marketing resources generated through a visitor levy. The ultimate goal is to ensure that Visit OCS total destination marketing budget, including funds from sponsorship and voluntary levies, is at a competitive level with our major regional competitors. The City' s financial contribution may be program or initiative specific, or can be directed towards building the organizational capacity of Visit OCA. Regardless of the use of funds, the City's financial support for enhanced destination marketing should be demonstrable and committed over at least the medium term to permit effective planning.

Long term

We are not aware of any major city in the region that has successfully funded a competitive destination marketing organization through a self-imposed (essentially voluntary) levy or other revenue enhancement strategies. Nor are we aware of any major destination marketing organization that receives direct municipal funding equivalent to the sums raised through hotel marketing taxes. Simply put, the introduction of hotel marketing taxes in major markets has permanently changed the landscape for destination marketing organizations.

Accordingly, we do not believe a voluntary level or increase in the City' s grant to be an effective long-term solution to OCA' s marketing resource shortfall. To this end the support of Aleppo hotels, the City of Aleppo , Tourism Chamber and all stakeholders in the municipal tourism industry, should continue to encourage the national government (MOT) to enable hotel tax dedicated to OCA. While a hotel tax places a greater burden on the visitors to the accommodation sector than on all other segments of the tourism industry, this approach is now commonplace amongst the European and North American tourism industry. Without some form of stabilized, long-term user-pay funding mechanism, Visit OCA's ability to market the destination is placed at a growing disadvantage vis a vis its competitors. Aleppo's position in the national, and international tourism marketplace will continue to erode as destination awareness fades.

Marketing tourism products

Rationale

After we have identified who OCA's market is, what it wants, and we have created a brand and enhanced the quality of OCA tourism product so that OCA is providing something its customers will love. But how will they know about its product?

Objectives

- Tourism Chamber[29], culture and heritage organizations, and VisitOCA will use effective marketing techniques to market OCA prodcuts.

Effective product marketing

We must have world class marketing[30] which sells OCA as a must-visit destination.

Visit OCA will work to produce effective marketing campaigns to promote cultural tourism in OCA, and creative ways to sell OCA as *the* place to visit.

Visit OCA will work with the international tour operators to market OCA as part of a Syria package for long haul travelers.

EventOCA will work with organizers of major events to assist with their marketing, maximize the number of participants and spectators and maximize the media coverage in domestic markets. This media coverage will itself act as a valuable marketing tool, promoting OCA as a vibrant and exciting destination with a thriving culture, which offers a diversity of experiences for our visitors.

But it's not just about promoting OCA itself as a destination. If visitors are considering coming to OCA, we need to be able to tell them about individual businesses, visitor attractions and events so that they know exactly what they can do when they're here. The Tourism Innovation Unit will assist tourism businesses to develop original ways of marketing their products to them. For example, projects of unique OCA cultural tourism products; i.e. old textile/new design fashion, should be marketed creatively through books, magazine articles, TV programs, tours, fashion shows, exhibitions, apparel brands, retail outlets… etc.

Tourism businesses, culture and heritage organizations and others will find it particularly usefull to take advantage of available marketing opportunities with Visit OCA. Visit OCA will build effective marketing and delivery across all pre- and post-arrival channels.

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[29] Crucial to this marketing initiative is the strategic decision, for OCA to not venture into this arena in isolation from Chamber of Tourism. It is a strategic imperative that the Chamber of Tourism and the REHAB work together so as to achieve critical mass.

[30] In the search for best practices for reaching target markets, the REHAB's international connections should be of great use. Strategically, it is incredibly important that the REHAB/City Council utilize existing international organizations as the channel into external market segments. This approach, which is not often used in Syria, allows for deeper and faster market penetration at a fraction of the cost of more generalized marketing. International experience suggests that there is a steep learning curve with respect to international marketing activities. Strategic alliances with industry players and international organizations will be useful in decreasing the learning curve for the Visit OCA.

Increasing Market Demand

Rationale

The tourism industry and economy is entirely demand driven - people need to visit Aleppo in order for the sector to grow. As such the scope, scale, efficiency and depth of value chain of the tourism industry and the tourism economy is meaningless in the absence of demand for such services and products.

The crucial variable in achieving the vision, as set forth is therefore to endeavor to increase demand for Aleppo/OCA tourism. The key contribution the REHAB can directly make to tourism in OCA is to undertake activities which increase the flow of tourists to the City. Once in the City, it is argued that the industry, rather than the REHAB is better positioned to play the lead role, however, as it was seen earlier in this policy, there is an important role for the REHAB/City Council to play in the development of the value chain.

The REHAB/City Council can increase aggregate demand in three ways:

- The REHAB/City Council can intervene directly through establishing Visit OCA to work on marketing and other promotional activities to attract greater numbers of tourists to the City.
- The REHAB/City Council can indirectly increase aggregate demand by addressing the issues which are raised by tourists and potential tourists as the reasons for them not exercising their demand in Aleppo or minimizing their demand of tourist products and services while in the City.
- The REHAB/City Council can assist in infrastructure development, in cases where, infrastructure is the driver of tourism demand. Infrastructure projects such as formalizing historic sites, souvenir markets and walking trails… etc do not constitute 'demand increasing' infrastructure in relation to aggregate demand, but constitutes value chain infrastructure.

Objectives:

- Selecting attractive target markets
- Preparing a marketing strategy to increase demand

Selecting attractive target markets

Demand for tourism is significantly correlated to disposable income. Since local economic growth is less than moderate, Aleppo must look to foreign markets in order to increase tourism.

The crucial variable in achieving the targets of the policy, as set forth, is therefore to endeavor to increase specific market segments demand for OCA tourism. identification of such segments should depend on the following criteria:

- attracted to OCA unique offerings
- high per-capita tourism expenditure
- cost effective marketing and distribution channels
- critical and carrying capacity-sensitive mass of visitors
- adequate transportation infrastructure is feasible

Preparing a marketing strategy

The Consultant sees that a vigorous marketing strategy aimed at increasing demand is required. The following is only a short proposal for a strategy.

Once the attractive target markets are defined it is suggested that a specific research effort be undertaken to better understand and disaggregate these sectors into their constituent parts. This is a once off benchmarking exercise and will be turned around far quicker than the overall data collection system, which will in time provide this market research on an on-going basis.

Once this research is complete, then we need to undertake an investigation of best practices for reaching these highly specific markets.

At this point the REHAB/City Council international connections, as mentioned above, should be of great use.

Depending on the profile of the market, registration with other international organizations would then be appropriate. Strategically it is felt to be incredibly important that the REHAB utilize existing international organizations as the channel into particular market segments. This approach, which is not often used in Syria, allows for deeper and faster market penetration at a fraction of the cost of more generalized marketing.

Crucial to this marketing initiative is the strategic decision, for REHAB to not venture into this arena in isolation from key stakeholders, such as Tourism Chamber. It is a strategic imperative that the industry and REHAB work together so as to achieve critical mass in identified markets.

While this rapid proposal looks like generalized marketing, it is anticipated that the actual approach will be anything but general. The activities should be of a highly specific nature. International experience suggests that there is a steep learning curve with respect to these activities. Strategic alliances with industry players and international organizations will be useful in decreasing the learning curve for REHAB or it's selected entity for the job.

Raising the tourism industry profile

Rationale

Tourism does not enjoy the same economic imperative as, perhaps, the pharmaceutical industry or textile industry. This problem is not unique to Aleppo, but it does mean that the tourism sector needs to work harder to achieve the level of support required for sustained growth.

The tourism sector has not launched any initiatives to demonstrate to the community at large the importance of tourism, not just as an economic lever, but also for its contribution to quality of life. The linkage between quality of life and our ability to attract new investment may be known to urban planners and academics, but not to the average citizen.

For OCA's tourism to succeed, a new understanding is required. Tourism is an important contributor to quality of life and place, and is therefore an integral element of any successful economic development strategy.

This message needs to be communicated and discussed within the business and political circles and also within the local community.

This element of the branding and marketing pillar should be aimed at three key target audiences:

- Business and political leaders;
- The community at large; and
- All Aleppians having contact with visitors (e.g. police, drivers .. etc).

The initial goal would be to generate a broad level of awareness of the role tourism plays in supporting recreation and culture, quality of life and economic growth. The second and perhaps more important role is to motivate involvement and activity at a variety of levels (business, political and community) aimed at supporting tourism development initiatives in OCA. The ultimate goal should be to integrate tourism-friendly attitudes into the fabric of OCA's urban life.

For these goals to be achieved, REHAB should prepare a communication strategy to assist the CF. VisitOCA should join the work. This strategy should be based on the three goals identified above. Here is a quick account of what the strategy needs to explain with regard to the goals above.

Objectives

- Generating broad tourism awareness among business and political leaders
- Generating broad public awareness
- Motivating visitor friendly Aleppians!

Generate broad awareness among business and political leaders

The first initiative in the communication strategy should include the traditional elements of an economic impact analysis, as well as an overview of recent studies on the importance of quality of life/ quality of place on competitiveness. This background piece would provide business and political leaders a comprehensive picture of the scope, scale and importance of tourism, both as an economic engine and as a contributor to quality of life and place. But not simply in OCA. A key part of this message is to communicate the central importance of OCA/Aleppo as a gateway to visitors entering Syria from the North.

A number of existing organizations, such as Tourism Chamber and the tourism Department, should be encouraged to assist in the preparation and execution of this element of the program. For example, it is important that any statistics used in the campaign be consistent with those used by the Tourism Department.

Generate broad public support

There is a need to move beyond dry, lifeless statistics and present the message in a more active, compelling light— and to a broader audience. Not only business and public leaders, but also the community must understand how tourism enhances their quality of life, and how they can help improve this important sector.

This broad awareness campaign would likely include print, TV, radio, and billboards media and one or more special events. The thrust of the campaign should go beyond the usual economic impact argument, to illustrate how tourism affects a wide cross section of industry. For example: The impact of hotel purchases on suppliers of food industry… etc.

Using this approach, we believe it would be possible to enlist the support of major industry suppliers such as the advertising media (Concord, Future… etc), major car dealerships, the Syriatel and Areba telecommunication suppliers in funding this campaign. Going to market in association with recognized companies to promote tourism will highlight the importance of the sector and bring credibility.

A complementary message would be to generate excitement and pride about the quality and level of the cultural and recreational experiences available in OCA. There is a need to dispel the image of being "bored," and encourage individuals to be a " tourist in your home town."

Motivate visitor-friendly Aleppians

The REHAB/City Council, in partnership with Tourism Chamber should oversee the development of programs to motivate front line workers, or people that interact with visitors regularly and can impact upon the visitor experience. These workers include not just waiters and front desk clerks, but retailers, police, and airport employees that interact with visitors at key points. Awards programs that bestow individual effort should be incorporated into the communication strategy.

Pillar 5: Data Collection and Assimilation

This pillar includes the following activity areas:

- Development of a sophisticated data collection mechanism
- Knowing your market

Development of a Data Collection Mechanism

Rationale

Through out the research for this policy; the issue of data has emerged as a major constraint. The issues relating to data are: data sets collected at a city and national levels is plagued with methodological errors, unreliable, inconsistent across fields, inconsistent across time periods, and finally they are not relevant to making strategic decisions[31].

The proposed development of a sophisticated data collection mechanism for Aleppo/OCA is not only a monitoring mechanism, but a crucial tool necessary to identify where action is required and what action is required in order to achieve the city's vision and mission.

The elements of the project design would incorporate: what data series are required, where such data could be sourced, who would capture such data and how such data is to be disseminated. Industry co-operation will be vital and issues pertaining to confidentiality would need to be assured. In this exercise it would be shortsighted to not take advantage of considerable international expertise and experience of GTZ in this area.

As a first step the City Council should seek membership to the World Tourism Organization , the World Travel and Tourism Organizations and other international organizations who could act as a resource. As a second step the City should approach it's sister city partners, especially Heidelberg to see what type of assistance is available. With respect to funding the project, the initial design and setting up of the system will be too onerous for the City's budget, and financial contributions from international organizations and donors should be sought, as well as, funds from provincial and national government. On going costs of the system will most likely be borne by the Council and it's stakeholder partners.

Objectives

- Improve the measurement of the contribution of the tourism sector to the Aleppo economy and monitor/forecast the impact of changes in tourism numbers and effectiveness of programs.
- Build better business intelligence for increased competitiveness and an evidence base to support arguments for winning new investment and resources.
- Ensure useful and robust qualitative market research in order to identify areas for product development.

Headlines for Action

- Establish a Tourism Research Unit that will provide information on international trends, trends across Aleppo, and on driving product enhancement and development.
- Establish a robust and reliable method of providing statistical data for the industry and producing regular and authoritative Aleppo tourism impact statistics and foresights will be developed with Chamber of Tourism as appropriate.

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[31] If we want to exceed our customer expectations so that they have a great time in OCA and want to come back – and recommend us to their friends, we need to know who our customers are and what they'll want from us.

- Carry out comprehensive audit of existing data sources identifying strengths and limitations.
- Key partners will be identified to plan and coordinate a research program to gather other on-going economic data and industry intelligence, analysis of employment trends, skill and learning needs in the tourism and hospitality sectors, including trend and time series data.
- In the short term, particular attention will be given to the price competitiveness of Aleppo's offers and to the evaluation of promotional campaign expenditure.
- Establish with industry providers (especially SMEs) the market intelligence that will make the most positive impact on their businesses and work to provide this service to members of Aleppo's tourism chamber.
- Every tourism business and culture and heritage organisation will collect data from their own customers to help them "know their visitor" – who they are, why they have come and what they want out of their trip – and use this to inform their business strategies.

Knowing your market

Rationale

We are in a continuously-changing and competitive consumer marketplace. So we need to stay ahead of the game, keep on top of market trends and new developments and be quick to respond with development and enhancement of our own products and services.

Objectives

- Establish a tourism information network
- Establish "know your visitor" data system

Establish a tourism information network

The CF will establish a network, involving REHAB, the industry, culture and heritage organizations, the Tourism Research Unit, and Visit OCA to ensure that appropriate research takes place, is disseminated appropriately and meaningfully to all stakeholders, and is used to drive innovation and product enhancement.

The Tourism Research Unit will set the research agenda to provide the information that's critical for all stakeholders. It will work with Tourism Chamber and the Tourism Department to identify the information that would be most useful for businesses and the best means to get it out to the people who need it. It will benchmark against international best practice in the collection and use of tourism research. And it will work with stakeholders to ensure that research is used to drive product enhancement and development.

But the Network won't have all the answers. While it will be able to provide information about international trends, and trends across Syria and Aleppo, it won't be able to provide individual businesses with information about their business and customers. The only way the Network will be able to provide useful information is if businesses gather and share this kind of information about their own businesses and customers. The more businesses and others organisations are willing to collect this kind of information and to share it, the more useful the research findings will be to everyone.

Establish "know your visitor" data system

Every tourism business and culture and heritage organization will collect data from their own customers to help them "know their visitor" – who they are, why they have come and what they want out of their trip – and use this to inform their business strategies.

The Tourism Research Unit will advise businesses how best to collect relevant data and make it meaningful to inform their business strategies. The CF will work to ensure that the information they are being asked to provide is consistent.

The Tourism Research Unit will also look at whether there is a more useful way to measure how much visitors enjoy their stay than the current 'satisfaction' rating system which does not allow us to understand their views in detail. After all, if our aim is to surprise and delight our visitors, we need to know more than that they were satisfied!

Pillar 6: Control

This chapter explains how to maintain the right mix and balance of tourism activities to insure sustainability of life and identity in OCA. This is through:

- Going heritage safe.
- Proposing tourism growth management strategies.

Going Heritage-Safe

Previous pillars have identified how to provide a product which will attract visitors to OCA and will surprise and delight them once they're here; which will encourage them to spend more money while they're here; and which will encourage them to come back again and to recommend us to family and friends. We've identified how to promote our product to our market. And we've identified how to stay ahead of the game in knowing what our visitors are likely to want in the future, what our competitors are providing and how our businesses are performing.

So we've broadly identified how to achieve growth in both visitor numbers and visitor revenues. But is this sustainable? For our world heritage city?

Visit OCA will produce increasingly effective marketing campaigns which will promote OCA. Visitors increasingly want to pack lots into their stay so they will want to experience city. If we get this right, it means that we shouldn't have a huge number of additional visitors packing into our tourism hotspots at peak season. Instead, our visitors will be distributed to experience different parts of OCA and at different parts of the year. For example, Visit OCA marketing campaigns will promote Syrian expatriates tourism. We know that Syrian expatriates tourism has growth potential, and that it takes place in the summer, off the two peak seasons of cultural tourists.

If we get this right, it means that our increased number of visitors will not all converge on OCA in April, May, November, and October. Likewise, cultural events should be activated in the winter. If we can maximise this potential for off-peak events, more tourism businesses can stay open all year round.

Many of our visitors are attracted to Aleppo because of historical monuments, authentic souks, and "alive" old city. We want to build on this. To do this we need to ensure that tourism growth doesn't result in the degradation of the very life and building stock which is one of our unique selling points. REHAB is working to ensure that life in OCA is conserved for future generations. This pillar of the policy will ensure that heritage preservation considerations are taken into account in planning applications. But tourism businesses have a real responsibility to ensure that they are protecting the heritage which brings so many of their visitors.

REHAB and the Tourism Chamber will work together to create Safe-Heritage Tourism Business Scheme.

Tourism Chamber and Visit OCA should work together to encourage the membership to the Safe-Heritage Tourism Business Scheme.

Tourism businesses must develop their understanding of how their business practices can affect the heritage and local community in OCA and move to using business practices which are more respectful. REHAB will support businesses in becoming more heritage–safe. REHAB will underpin this effort by supporting key research and projects.

Visit OCA will work with tourism businesses to market heritage responsible tourism to socially-conscious visitors. Visitors are increasingly attracted to businesses which use responsible practices, and are willing to pay more to use them. Tourism businesses and culture and heritage organisations will therefore want to make increased use of SHTBS status as part of their own marketing in order to maximise interest from socially conscious tourists.

There is also scope for creating new products which allow visitors to experience our heritage, but which are responsible in themselves.

Going Heritage-safe should not, therefore, be just another financial burden for businesses. investment in heritage responsible business practices is likely to be a real draw for the increasing number of sustainably-minded visitors.

Tourism Growth Management Strategy Options

REHAB can use direct and indirect strategies to control growth of tourism, and assure that the "right" balance of tourism versus other functions (i.e. residential) is maintained. The table below contrast the two strategy options:

Direct strategies	**Indirect strategies**
Enforcement	*Physical alternations*
• Increased surveillance (formal, informal) • Impose fines • Establish by-laws	• Provide guidelines for: - architectural design - development - landscape design - Access to infrastructure - capacity
Zoning	*Information dispersal*
• Separate incompatible: - activities - land uses - tourist groups - resident/tourist groups	• Disseminate appropriate behavior information • Advertise alternate locations • Distribute low impact activity guidelines • Distribute codes of ethics for tourist, residents, tourism operators
Use rationing	*Economic incentives*
• Limit use of: - specific facilities/sites - access routes • Provide reservation use only	• Create: - differential user-fee structure - differential utility fees - local improvement areas
Activity restrictions	
• Restrict: - type of use - length of stay - timing of activity	

Pillar 6: Organization

This policy pillar includes the following activity areas:

- Development of short, medium, to long-term strategic plans
- Increasing awareness of the value of tourism
- Increasing participation in/of the Tourism Chamber
- Organization Vehicles

The current fragmentation of the tourism sector in Aleppo makes collective action difficult, if not impossible, without effective leadership and organization.

The organization we propose in this policy is a combination of formal "Units" to much more informal structure "Cluster Facilitator" (generally an individual but sometimes an organization).

Two steps are necessary to enact change. The first step is to acknowledge the challenges and identify the priority leadership actions. The second step is to provide an ongoing vehicle for leadership where roles and responsibilities for these actions can be discussed and achievements monitored. Matching these responsibilities to the unique resources and capabilities of the stakeholders will minimize overlap of activities and effectively utilize limited resources.

The four priority organization actions believed to be crucial in building a stronger foundation for OCA's and Aleppo's tourism industry are:

- Developing short, medium, to long term strategic plans for each of the pillars of this policy
- Increasing awareness of the value of tourism (see pillar 3: Branding OCA)
- Increasing private-sector participation in OCA Tourism
- Creating an effective and efficient organization vehicle(s)

Development of short, medium, to long-term strategic plans

This Tourism Policy can form the basis of a variety of Strategic Plans for the tourism sector. However, completion of each strategic plan requires further work on the normal elements of such a document, including market outlook, product requirements, policy amendments, competitive assessment, consumer research, SWOT analysis, role and support of publicly-owned tourism infrastructure, budgets, timetable for deliverables and assignment of responsibilities... etc.

Leadership for each Strategic Plan should come from REHAB/City Council, until the role of a Cluster Facilitator (CF) becomes activated. The strategic planning process, no matter who is leading it, should coordinate at least with the Tourism Chamber. External consulting resources required should be furnished by REHAB. The cost of the Strategic Plans can be first supplied by REHAB/GTZ to start the ball rolling, later it can be shared with the City. Support should also be sought from the Ministry of Tourism if possible.

Increasing awareness of the value of tourism

Tourism is a significant contributor to quality of life in OCA. Yet the awareness of the value of tourism is low— even within the industry itself.

The development of an effective communication plan to raise the profile of the tourism sector within government, the business community and the community at large is necessary. An innovative, vibrant approach is required to present the message in an active, compelling light. (see pillar 3: branding OCA)

Increasing participation in/of the Tourism Chamber

Tourism is an industry comprised primarily of small and medium sized businesses. However, over the past few years, the MOT and many of the larger private sector tourism businesses that directly benefit from tourism activity (e.g., major hotels) have dominated the industry. These larger private-sector businesses have also been most active in advocacy functions. This situation is not unusual, however, how the tourism sector responds to this challenge can determine whether a common vision and alignment of objectives can be achieved. Clearly, MOT and large private sector stakeholders are necessary to the long-term success of the industry. But…the myriad of small operators, and those who benefit indirectly from tourism (e.g., retail) should also be encouraged to play a more active role. This will help demonstrate the value of tourism beyond the traditional, larger players.

A related issue is that the composition of the new Tourism Chamber membership base has been skewed towards larger industry participants. During the consultation process for this policy, concerns were expressed among the smaller, tourism businesses about their inability to play a role in the decision making process.

Broadening the membership base of Tourism Chamber to include direct beneficiaries of tourism activity— large and small — as well as indirect beneficiaries should be a priority of Tourism Chamber. As the member-based association representing the industry, Tourism Chamber needs to play a much stronger role in this area to ensure inclusion— real and perceived— by the entire industry.

Organization Vehicles

The tourism sector needs permanent, professional, capable, effective, and efficient vehicles to provide strategic plans, serious work on implementing these plans, and to monitor results.

The Aleppo tourism sector lacks "organizing capacity[32]". Once the organizing capacity is in place; then a common vision and/or strategies can help align the stakeholders and determine direction and investment priorities.

Theoretically, MOT and its local Tourism Department should be the de facto "champion" of the tourism industry. MOT not only carries out a comprehensive national marketing program, but also prepares long-term strategy and policy. MOT and Tourism Department have undergone a lot of improvements to handle this role with proficiency.

We believe that the City of Aleppo, other levels of government and the private sector should be wholly supportive of MOT and Tourism Department developing the capacity to take on a broader leadership role. The followings are a few issues which can help the Tourism Department to improve its leadership to Aleppo's tourism sector:

- An independent large revenue source is put in place. Without a stable, big, and long-term revenue source— one not largely reliant on money left over from Damascus— Tourism Department will not be in a position to develop the broadly based industry support necessary.
- It should join force with the Tourism Chamber, which in turn should broaden its membership base to include a greater number of smaller operators, and indirect beneficiaries of tourism (e.g., retailers, suppliers).
- The marketing focus for Syrian tourism should be more advanced and balanced, specifically to include a greater emphasis on Aleppo. A board restructuring may be necessary to properly address this issue.
- The Tourism Department can use the new directions in this policy
- The Tourism Department should agree to develop its technical know-how and manpower to take on additional tasks identified in the pillars of this policy.
- Ideally, this transformation should be very fast, it should require no more than 18 to 24 months

To enable the industry to move forward by allocating responsibility for key initiatives, we recommend a number of organizational vehicles that are a combination of formal structure, such as "Units" (to carry out specific tasks), and much more informal structure, such as the "Cluster Facilitator" (generally an individual but sometimes an organization). The REHAB administration, City Council, and MOT will develop / implement this solution as they see fit and of best interest to the City.

The following sections describe the role of each required organizational vehicle.

[32] organizing capacity is defined as the ability to bring all stakeholders (public and private) together to develop policy and implement strategy for sustainable economic growth.

REHAB / City Council

REHAB can play a variety of roles to achieve what it sees fit from this policy and its subsequent strategies. Some very obvious roles include:

- Creating and supporting CF
- harnessing national and international technical expertise and providing studies
- negotiating with national government and stakeholders and getting key players on board
- directly/indirectly addressing urban development needs
- creating and operating the SME support system in it's entirety

However, there are other more extended roles for REHAB/City Council to play. This section will give a preliminary overview on these potential roles and their instruments.

Regulating tourism development, through:

Laws

Planning laws can give considerable power to REHAB to encourage particular types of tourism development through, for example, land use zoning which determine desirable and undesirable land uses

Licences, permits, consents and standards

They can be used for a wide variety of purposes especially at REHAB/City Council level, e.g. restraining undesirable uses, setting materials standards for tourism development or they can be used to set architectural standards for heritage streetscapes or properties.

Quid pro quos

REHAB may require businesses to do something in exchange for certain rights, e.g. land may be given to a developer below marker rate, the development is of a particular type or design or there is a guaranteed period of occupancy or use.

Removal of property rights

In order to achieve planning outcomes, such as the development of tourism infrastructure or the removal of inappropriate land uses, REHAB may remove property rights (freehold or leasehold ownership) either on the market or through compulsory acquisition.

Encouraging Voluntary action, through:

Information and education

Expenditure on educating the local public, businesses or tourists to achieve specific goals, e.g. appropriate tourist or industry behavior.

Volunteer associations and non-governmental organizations

REHAB can support community tourism organizations. Support may come from direct grants, tax benefit and/or by provision of office facilities. Examples of this type of development include local or regional tourist organizations, heritage conservation groups, main street groups, tour guide programs, or the establishment of industry associations and networks.

Technical assistance

REHAB can provide technical assistance and information to business with regard to planning and development requirements, including the preparation of heritage and social impact statements

Argument and persuasion
REHAB may seek the cooperation of stakeholders by persuading them that certain patterns of behavior or conduct is appropriate for furthering, common interest of Stakeholders and/or self interest.

Providing funding, through :

Expenditure and contracting

This method can help REHAB achieve policy objectives as it can spend money directly on specific activities, this may include the development of Infrastructure, or it may include street beautification programs.

Contracting can be used as a means of supporting existing local businesses or encouraging new ones.

Investment or procurement

Investment may be directed into specific businesses or project, while procurement can be used to help provide businesses with a secure custom for their products.

Public enterprise

When the market fails to provide desired outcomes REHAB/City Council may create their own businesses. If successful, such businesses may then be sold off by private sector.

Public-private partnerships

REHAB may enter into partnership with the private sector in order develop certain products, locations or regions. These may take the form of a corporation which has a specific mandate to attract business to a certain area for example

Monitoring and evaluation

REHAB may allocate financial resources to monitor socio-economic indicators. Such measures are valuable to government to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of tourism planning and development policies and objectives, and can also be a valuable source of information to the private sector as well.

Promotion

REHAB/City Council may spend money on promoting a region to visitors either with or without financial input from the private sector. Such promotional activities may allow individual business to reallocate their own budget by reducing expenditures that might have made on promotion.

Providing financial incentives through:

Pricing

Pricing measures may be used to encourage appropriate behavior, market segments and/or to stimulate or reduce demand, e.g. use of particular walking trails through variations in camping or permit costs.

Taxes and charges

REHAB may use these to encourage appropriate behaviors by becoming individuals and businesses i.e. pollution charges. Taxes and charges e.g. passenger or bed taxes, may also used to help fund infrastructure development e.g. the airport, or help fund tourism promotion.

Grants and loans

Seeding money may be provided to businesses to encourage product development, business relocation, and/or to encourage the retention of heritage and landscape features. Grants and loans may also be used to provide for business retention in marginal economic areas.

Subsidies and tax incentives

Although subsidies are often regarded as creating inefficiencies in markets they may also be used to encourage certain types of behavior with respect to social and environmental externalities, e.g. heritage and landscape conservation, that are not taken into account by conventional economics. Subsidies and tax incentives are one of the most common methods to establish or retain tourism businesses, especially in peripheral and rural areas.

Rebates, rewards and surety bonds

Rebates and rewards are a form of financial incentive to encourage individuals and business to act in certain ways. Similarly, surety bonds can be used to insure that business act in agreed ways; if they do not then the government will spend the money for the same purpose.

Vouchers

Vouchers are a mechanism usually used to affect consumer behavior by providing a discount on a specific product or activity, e.g. to shop in a specific centre or street.

Cluster Facilitator (CF)

The Cluster Facilitator is an individual selected by REHAB/City Council to lead the effort of activating tourism in OCA, to guide the other units that tackle specific topics.

This individual should:

- be an industry insider with a strong network within the cluster.
- understand and believe in the overall picture more than other individuals.
- believe in dynamics and change.
- accept no constraints, and know they can change the nature of outcomes, and have the courage to act.

The rationale behind the creation of a CF has nothing to do with the ability to hire human resources at higher remuneration packages or to avoid the checks and balances of the City Council's procurement policies. The CF is only proposed due to the importance of having industry stakeholders intimately involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of the tourism policy of OCA. The REHAB/City Council operating in isolation of the tourism industry will achieve none of it's stated goals. A CF allows for an industry wide commitment to a given direction, it facilitates the harnessing of skills both board and operational level from the industry and also pools financial and effort resources so as to achieve critical mass.

In establishing the CF role, the REHAB/City Council must take note of several threats. The greatest threat to the success of the CF will be the industry's perception of "yet another government initiative"; "yet another talk shop" or "yet another set of meetings I need to attend which will yield no result." The reputation of governmental CF, especially in the tourism sector, is extremely negatively prejudicial. It seem practicably unlikely that a REHAB/City Council initiative could distance itself from such perceptions.

The second threat to the REHAB/City Council establishing CF is the issues of turf regarding the Aleppo Tourism Department, which currently appear to have a different focus to that suggested in this policy. It can be argued that it would not be in OCA’s interests to subsume itself into the Tourism Department activities in any meaningful way, but that the two entities should have a co-operative and cordial relationship.

Given the two points above it is believed that the best strategic route to follow would be a totally novel approach to government - industry relations. The proposal is fraught with difficulties and will be extremely difficult to pull off, but may prove to be a most valuable investment of time and may prove to be a turning point for governmental agency perceptions. This radical approach is made on the basis that the REHAB/City Council has traditionally been a small and relatively insignificant player in tourism in Aleppo, as such it has no moral or experiential authority to now demand center stage. In the absence of large financial contributions, it may be better to seek an alternative approach.

It is proposed that REHAB/City Council take advantage of the presence of the Chamber of Tourism. it is an amalgamated organization of existing city based business tourism organizations. the REHAB/City Council can join such an organization through the CF. This amalgamated organization is owned by the industry stakeholders and is the best representative organization of Aleppo Tourism, so far.

The benefits from the CF as an industry's perspective is that the industry will be joining forces and creating critical mass on their own terms with the REHAB/City Council who would be merely acting as the catalyst in the early stages. Industry will also, we believe, appreciate the bottom up approach shown by REHAB/City Council and believe that City Council is recognizing and validating the industry's own skills, structures and contributions. Once the CF is in the Tourism Chamber, the addition of REHAB representation will increase it's stature and complete the ring of influential stakeholders.

From REHAB perspective, the benefits of this approach is that firstly it will buy the REHAB credibility which it is sorely lacking in this particular industry, second it removes from REHAB the burden of staffing up and funding overheads of the actual organization and thirdly it places private sector financial contributions on the table prior to committing it's own funds. The basic philosophy is that the REHAB encourages the industry to optimally look after it's best interests and only once the industry has "pulled itself together" does the REHAB/City Council offer patronage, financial support, political pull, and direct project assistance to the industry.

Two fundamental issues emerge from this approach which need to be addressed up front. The first is representation. By definition the power relations have been reversed in this approach and whereas in a City Council designed and operated CF the City Council could be assured of position of Chairman- no such guarantees would flow in this model. It is suggested that the REHAB/City Council not seek the Chairmanship of the Board but that it seek a place on the Board of Directors. As to the composition of the board, the Council should argue it's case but not impose restrictions or conditions. The Council must however insist on good knowledge of the Finance Department so as to ensure accountability of spending the money.

The second issue is the adoption, by the Chamber of Tourism of the OCA vision, mission and policy for tourism. The argument here is simply that if the REHAB is unable to ague and motivate the adoption of it's policy, (as opposed to imposing it as a fait accompli upfront) then the plan would never have worked in any case.

If the REHAB feel satisfied in the integrity and rigor of it's policy it should not feel uncomfortable arguing it's merits and adoption to the industry who most stand to benefit from it. Those portions of the policy which have to do with control tools, which may in the short run not directly benefit the industry as a whole, have been placed internally within REHAB so that their support cannot be compromised.

Tourism Economy SME Support Unit

The unit will have two types of functions: direct functions, and coordinating and facilitating function.

Firstly the unit should approach large industry players and discuss with them the possibilities of increased outsourcing and diversity of services. Once an opportunity is identified the unit should then seek existing SME's or new SME's to fill such contracts and support them to ensure that the company provides value for money, meets quality and reliability requirements and is sustainable. Such interventions would be on an individual basis and resource intensive. In the longer term the unit should have an SME network which makes it cost efficient and easy for the industry to sub contract to smaller players as a normal course of business as opposed to a direct policy intervention.

Secondly the unit should help give birth to brand new SME's on the basis of opportunities identified via the information system. In addition SME opportunities related to call centers for large conferences, courtesy busses, packaging of parcels for cross border shopper etc need to be facilitated.

VisitOCA

Visit OCA should be created to market OCA to Aleppo, Syria, and the rest of the world. Its mission should be to build the value of tourism in OCA by creating world-class destination brand and marketing campaigns. Visit OCA also builds partnerships with and provides insights into the Chamber of Tourism and other organizations that have a stake in Aleppo tourism.

Visit OCA should be funded by REHAB, and it will try to raise non-government funding.

Visit OCA should operate in target overseas markets.

Visit OCA will have four core areas of focus: creating a brand for OCA, exploiting marketing venues, engaging private sector stakeholders in marketing OCA, and aligning culture to deliver its objectives.

Tourism Research Unit

The Tourism Research Unit will set the research agenda to provide the information that’s critical for all stakeholders. It will work with tourism businesses and the Aleppo Chamber of Tourism to identify the information that would be most useful for businesses and the best means to get it out to the people who need it. It will benchmark against international best practice in the collection and use of tourism research. the unit will work with stakeholders to ensure that research is used to drive product enhancement and development.

But the Unit won’t have all the answers. While it will be able to provide information about international trends, and trends across Aleppo, it won’t be able to provide individual businesses with information about their business and customers. The majority of Aleppo’s cultural tourists might come from the

Europe, but OCA might attract Asian visitors as well. So businesses will want to know about their own business trends. And indeed, the only way the Unit will be able to provide useful information about national trends is if businesses gather and share this kind of information about their own businesses and customers. The more businesses and others organisations are willing to collect this kind of information and to share it, the more useful the research findings will be to everyone.

The Unit will advise businesses how best to collect relevant data and make it meaningful to inform their business strategies. The Cluster Facilitator will work with the Tourism Research Unit and Tourism Chamber to ensure that the information they are being asked to provide is consistent.

The Tourism Research Unit will also look at whether there is a more useful way to measure how much visitors enjoy their stay than the current 'satisfaction' rating system which does not allow us to understand their views in detail. After all, if our aim is to surprise and delight our visitors, we need to know more than that they were satisfied!

Tourism Innovation Unit

description is available upon request of REHAB

People 1^{st}

People 1^{st} is a training unit to be established by REHAB and the Tourism Chamber.

People 1^{st} will work to ensure that the skills and training opportunities available match what businesses need. it will address three crucial areas of challenge - workforce development, leadership/management training, and recruitment/retention

Event OCA

Objectives

- Increase the number of events held in OCA by developing OCA's capacity to compete for such business.
- Enhance the tourism impact of events produced by the City;

Last words

There is no aspect of this policy which has been sufficiently analyzed and consulted as to make it inviolate. However, sufficiently rigorous research and thinking has been undertaken (given the data constraints) to allow the suggestions here to be considered a reasonable, attainable, visionary, inherently consistent and methodologically rigorous set of actions, that can achieve the vision and mission as stated.

Each suggested policy pillar will need to be considered in detail, refined and reworked. However, *collectively* the policy pillars present a road map of how to achieve the overall goals envisioned by stakeholders, namely: advancing the local economy, maintaining the identity of the old city, and combining interests of stakeholders. It is felt that whereas there is much room, flexibility and opportunity for the strategic manner in which the pillars are to be implemented and actioned to be amended and changed; it is very strongly argued that the dropping of one of the pillars, or the amendment of the goals of one of the pillars will fundamentally affect the outcome of the policy. A piecemeal approach to this economic sector will result in failure to achieve the desired outcomes.

REHAB is committed to work with the tourism industry and key stakeholders, ensuring that this policy is activated to enable Aleppo’s tourism to build on the city’s uniqueness.

Tourism industry stakeholders are invited to feedback comments and suggestions on this policy. REHAB will simultaneously instigate a program of dialogue with a range of partners. Success will be dependent on the commitment of all those involved to the process of making Aleppo a better place for Aleppians to live and for tourists to visit.

Appendix

Events in Aleppo 2005

Event	Organizer	Date	Location
Images from old Aleppo	DOC & GTZ	January	
Drama &Shows for kids	Ministry of Culture	January	
The 4th exhibition for Plastic & Rubber	Al yaman Company for exhibitions	9-13/3/2005	
Exhibition for communication and Informatics	Shmeames for exhibitions and commercial market	13-17/3/2005	
National Symphonic Orchestra Performance	Ministry of Culture	13/03/2005	
The 6th International Exhibition of Building & Decoration& Furniture	Al yaman Company for exhibitions	13-17/4/2005	
The 6th International Exhibition for Medicare	Arab group for Exhibitions	21-24/4/2005	
The 5th International Exhibition for Cars	Aafak for exhibitions	18-22/5/2005	
The Inclusive Industrial Exhibition	Al yaman Company for Exhibitions	8-12/6/2005	
The International Exhibition for Banks& Finance Markets	Orient Expo for exhibition & conferences	16-19/6/2005	
The International exhibition for cars& Accessories	Al yaman Company for Exhibitions	16-20/6/2005	
Aleppo Summer Festival for Shopping	Al yaman Company for Exhibitions	24/6-10/7/2005	
Drama &Shows for Kids	Ministry of Culture	June	Citadel's amphitheatre
The 2nd International Exhibition for Textile & Fabric Machines	Al yaman Company for Exhibitions	20-24/7/2005	
Exhibition for The production Industrial &Agricultural Market	Minstiry of Economy&Trade	July	
Khan AL Hareir Days for Shopping	Al yaman Company for Exhibitions	4-19/8/2005	
International Exhibition for Leather Technology	Al yaman Company for Exhibitions	25-29/8/2005	
Shoes & Leather Exhibition	Afake for exhibitions	1-5/9/2005	
The 4th International Ex. For Nutrition Industries	Al yaman Company for Exhibitions	7-11/9/2005	
Nour AL Shark Festival For Fashion	Sukar co. for exhibitions	11-12/9/2005	Sham Hotel
The 1st International Exhibition for Hotels Equipments & Furniture	Afake for exhibitions	11-17/9/2005	
The 4th Exhibition For Agricultural Equipments	Al yaman Company for Exhibitions	15-19/9/2005	
Cotton Festivals and simultaneous exhibitions	Ministry of Agriculture	September	
The Syrian Song Festival	Ministry of Information	September	
The 7th International Exhibition for Textile Machines	Al yaman Company for Exhibitions	9-13/11/2005	
The Permanent Exhibitions for Reviving Old Aleppo	DOC & GTZ	All the year	Shibani
The Photography & Arts Exhibitions	French cultural center & European commissariat	All the year	Khan Shouneh

Source: Ministry or Tourism website

OCA: a Unique Place

The following is a quick account of the things, both tangible and intangible, that are unique to OCA; that set it apart from other cities.

History

- Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world

Location

- Aleppo is Syria’s gateway to Turkey and to the non-arab world
- Aleppo has been a major nod on the international silk road

Built environment

- OCA is and has always been a dirty place with low levels of hygiene!
- Historic buildings realistic representation of contemporary life is low.
- Traditional courtyard houses don’t fulfill needs of contemporary life, and they are impractical to live in all year round (the courtyard house natural conditioning theories don’t really work).
- The Alleys: Public spaces are manifested in the alleys, by majority. The alleys provide a sense of visual enclosure, and a lot of dramatic entrances and exits to the buildings and to the streets. Stone paving floors cape provides immediate sensory change in the experience of walking, change in materials, change in visual pattern, which intensifies ones awareness of “being here”.
- The urban fabric and the joy of exploration: the Old City is like a maze packed with surprises, unpredictable changes in views, hidden architectural treasures, variety of historical buildings, glimpses of views into buildings.
- The architecture: the variety of architectural styles, the change in the nature of space between the alleys and buildings, and the outstanding details all intensify the joy of architecture.

The people

- Aleppians are serious and obnoxious people with no sense of humor.
- Aleppians are rough on the outside but they are good hearted
- Aleppo was home to many foreign communities and embassies/consulates
- Aleppian beauty: white, blond, and colored eyes.
- The Aleppian family normally has numerous kids
- Aleppians like to eat!
- In the past, the Aleppian tradesmen had an undisputable reputation for keeping their word in business.
- Aleppians deserved a lot of credit in the country’s struggle against the French Mandate.
- Aleppo is the hometown of many religion scientists and politicians.
- Aleppians own an impressive collection of social maxims

The cuisine

The Aleppian cuisine is a happy marriage of Turkish and Mediterranean cuisines. It is distinguished by the followings:

- Numerous healthy dishes cooked exclusively with olive oil
- The absence of the glass house led to the mastering of the art of dried food; i.e. the drying of pistachios, tomato, tomato sauce, peppers, egg plant… etc.
- Aleppian meat grills
- Aleppian sweats, mostly made from local materials
- The endless variety of Kebbeh
- Rolled and stuffed grape leaves
- Stuffed vegetables; egg plants, zucchini, squash… etc.
- Chopped and mixed vegetables
- The black bitter coffee
- Drinks like: sous, kamardin, tamer hindi, fruit syrups.
- Jams: rose jam, cherry jam, eggplant jam, nanerg jam.
- Meat with cherry
- Baklava with cherry
- Spices

Music & Dance

- The Aleppian audience is known to be the masters of chant. Earning their applaud was the bar exam , and the ticket to success, for singers throughout history.
- Aleppo is famous for its "Koudoud" and its oriental musical scale.
- Samah Dance: a dance involving both sexes invented in Aleppo by Omar Batash.
- Sward & shield dance
- Mawlawieh: a religious soufi dancers originally introduced in Konia. Aleppo was their headquarters in the Ottoman Period.
- The manufacturing of the "3oud" musical instrument.

Traditions

- The Aleppian white nights
- The Hammam parties (for men and for women)
- Wedding and engagement ceremonies
- Games: barjis, the castle game, the dice (black gamin), Mankala (a game from the Ayubi period)

Arts, crafts, trades, and products

Aleppo is home to the following industries and products:

- Aleppo's architectural stone ornaments industry is exceptional
- Calligraphy

- Aleppian houses exhibit outstanding wood ornaments work
- the world class Aleppian Soap; i.e. ghar, beilon bward, perfumed soap… etc.
- perfumes: Aleppo was famous for its roses-based perfumes; jasmine, roses, nanerj, kabbad, lemon flowers,
- Distinct perfume market.
- a thriving textile industry and several textile products, such as: damesco, saieh, Indian shal, labad, sormeh.
- Cupper, silver, and gold crafting.
- Aleppian carpets, rugs, labad
- Fur and gowns (abaia)
- Wool beddings and comforters
- Bath related products: Bath scrubbing gloves, the silver water pots, the soap, beiloon,
- Cotton wear: under garment
- Printing: Aleppo was home to the first Arabic print shop in the East, dating back to 1705

Nature

- Aleppo was famous for its public gardens
- Aleppo is hometown to the following tree species: Aleppian sanobar, nanerg, kabbad, jasmine, foull, aleppian pistachios, ghar, rihan.
- Aleppian water ponds were distinctly shallow, because they were used for cooling only.
- The concentration of plants, flowers, trees, and water ponds in the courtyards of buildings increase the sensual enjoyment of presence in them, intensify the experience of change in nature. This change makes some pause for a moment to inhale deeply. Water in ponds offers an inexhaustible source of pleasure
- Aleppo's climate has two main seasons, winter and a very hot summer.
- Aleppians performance is notably decreased during summer

Souks

- The souks of Aleppo are the worlds biggest supermarket (12 hectares surface area)
- The souks of Aleppo are extremely diverse, they resemble the cave of Ali Baba, where everything can be found.
- The souks are the place to hear an amazing diversity of sounds, languages, and dialects
- Vendors are distinct "hosts", their vigorous approach to prospective customers is simply impossible to go unnoticed.
- Market displays exhibit unparallel "action".

Results of the JICA Residents' Survey

The JICA carried out a social survey, during December 11 to 20, 1997, which aims to

- evaluate the impacts of tourism development to the local community
- measure attitude and acceptance of tourism development
- Measure the potential human resource supply of the communities to tourism development.

The survey method was a Face to face interviews conducted with the 448 samples in the selected four zones distributed as follows.

Tourism Zone	Heads of Household	Mothers	18+ Female daughter	18+ Male son	Total Number
Damascus	55	33	12	12	112
Aleppo	55	33	12	12	112
Hama/Homs	55	33	12	12	112
Coastal	55	33	12	12	112
Total	220	132	48	48	448

In each zone, a stratified random sampling method was applied for the selection of the samples to check the characteristics of the residents between those of the different geographical locations. Area 1: City center of tourist site location (1 /3 of Samples). Area 2: Major Commercial Area (1 / 3 of Samples). Area 3: Residential Area (1 / 3 of Samples)

The following paragraphs show the survey results

Q12: what kind of job in the tourism sector are you interested in? (Multiple answer)

Kind of job	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Souvenir shops	10.7%	14.3%	10.7%	7.1%	10.7%
Tour guide and conductor	17.9%	16.1%	16.1%	5.4%	13.8%
Travel Agent	11.6%	25.0%	33.0%	9.8%	19.7%
Public relation	15.2%	40.2%	47.3%	26.8%	32.4%
Hotel	19.6%	17.0%	29.5%	11.6%	19.4%
Other	0.0%	3.6%	1.8%	9.8%	3.8%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448

Q13: Are you satisfied with the work you are doing now?

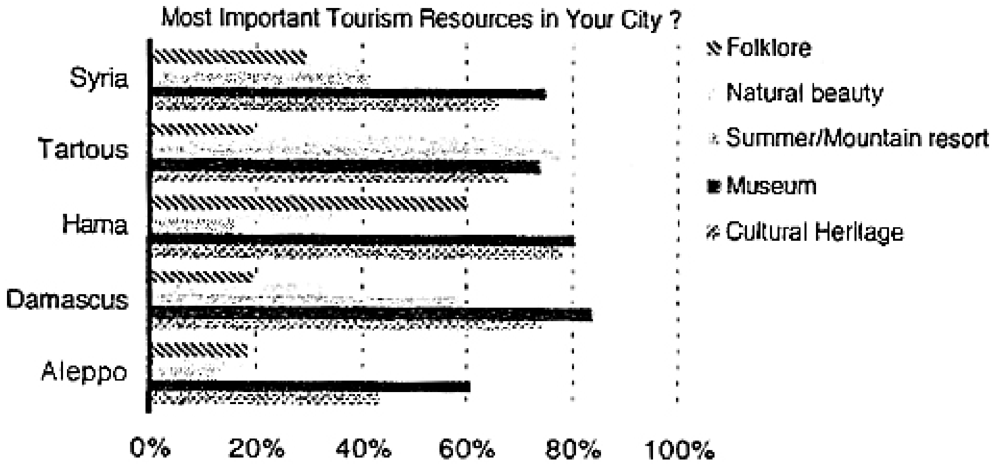
Answer	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Yes	56.3%	55.4%	62.5%	77.7%	63.0%
No/No Answer	20.5%	9.8%	2.7%	9.8%	10.7%
Do Not Know	23.2%	34.8%	34.8%	12.5%	26.3%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448

Q15: Do you think that you can improve your present occupation and/or your salary through further training courses?

Answer	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Yes	62.5%	67.0%	64.3%	75.0%	67.2%
No/No Answer	20.5%	4.5%	6.2%	11.6%	10.7%
Do Not Know	17.0%	28.6%	29.5%	13.4%	22.1%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448

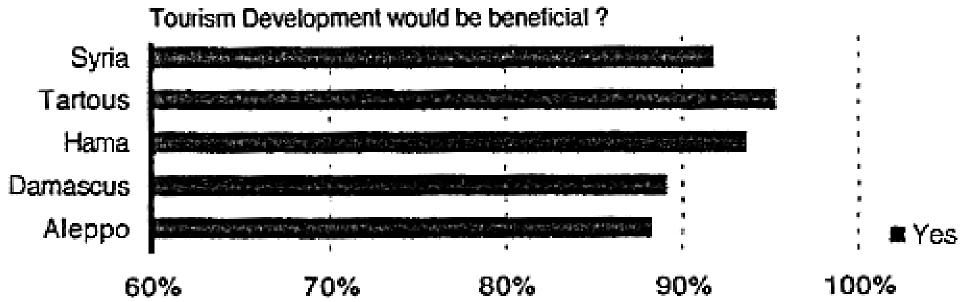
Q17: what is the most important tourism resource in your city? (Multiple answer)

Type	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Cultural heritage	43.8%	75.0%	78.6%	67.9%	66.3%
Museum	60.7%	83.9%	80.4%	74.1%	74.8%
Summer resort/mountain resort	13.4%	58.9%	16.1%	77.7%	41.5%
Natural beauty	17.9%	33.9%	35.7%	75.0%	40.6%
Folklore	18.8%	19.6%	59.8%	19.6%	29.5%
Other	1.8%	3.6%	0.0%	0.9%	1.6%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448



Q18: Do you think that future tourism development would be beneficial? (Multiple answer)

Answer	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Yes	88.4%	89.3%	93.8%	95.5%	92.0%
No/No Answer	2.7%	8.0%	1.8%	2.7%	3.6%
Do Not Know	8.9%	2.7%	4.5%	1.8%	4.5%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448



Q19: What will be the benefit from tourism development? (Multiple answer)

Type	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Better job and income	17.0%	34.8%	38.4%	70.5%	40.2%
Better education	51.8%	75.0%	74.1%	58.9%	64.9%
Better infrastructure and transportation	32.1%	67.0%	67.9%	71.4%	59.6%
More leisure facilities	35.7%	58.0%	64.3%	55.4%	53.3%
Other	3.6%	1.8%	0.0%	0.9%	1.6%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448

Q20: What would you like to be done to attract more tourists to your city? (Multiple answer)

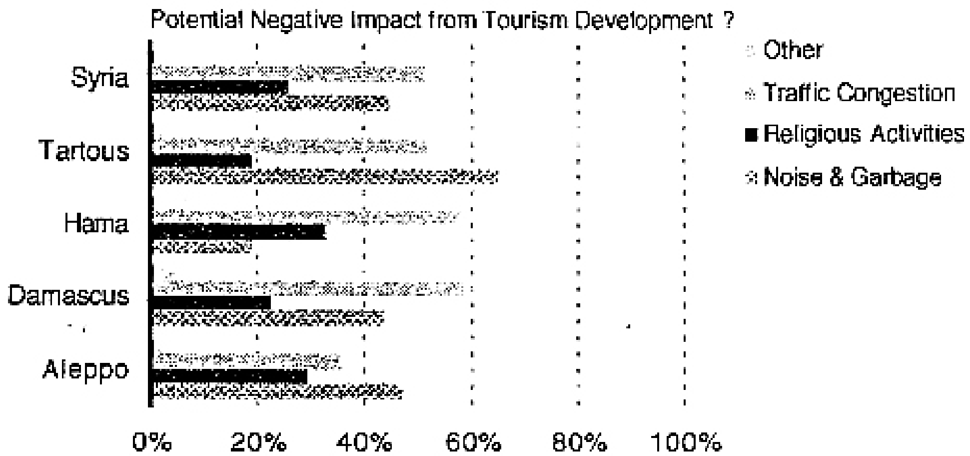
Type	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Maintenance & beautification of ancient sites	67.0%	90.2%	89.3%	81.3%	81.9%
Hygienic & recreational facilities	43.8%	82.1%	79.5%	84.8%	72.5%
Shops, restaurants & Rest Houses	43.8%	62.5%	78.6%	60.7%	61.4%
Art Center, Galleries & Cultural program	41.1%	64.3%	66.1%	67.9%	59.8%
Maintenance & beautification of streets	65.2%	62.5%	49.1%	81.3%	63.8%
Better Public Relation	47.3%	52.7%	32.1%	75.0%	51.8%
Training of tourism personnel	55.4%	50.0%	25.9%	68.8%	50.0%
Others	5.4%	2.7%	0.9%	3.6%	3.1%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448

Q21: How is your opinion about various groups of tourists in your city? (Multiple answer)

Welcome	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
European tourists	90.2%	96.4%	85.7%	98.2%	92.6%
Asian tourists	87.5%	91.1%	83.9%	89.3%	87.9%
Arab tourists	80.4%	70.5%	76.8%	91.1%	79.7%
Lebanon tourists	89.3%	92.9%	80.4%	98.2%	90.2%
Jordan tourists	66.1%	75.9%	77.7%	97.3%	79.2%
Syrian tourists	84.8%	84.8%	86.6%	93.8%	87.5%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448

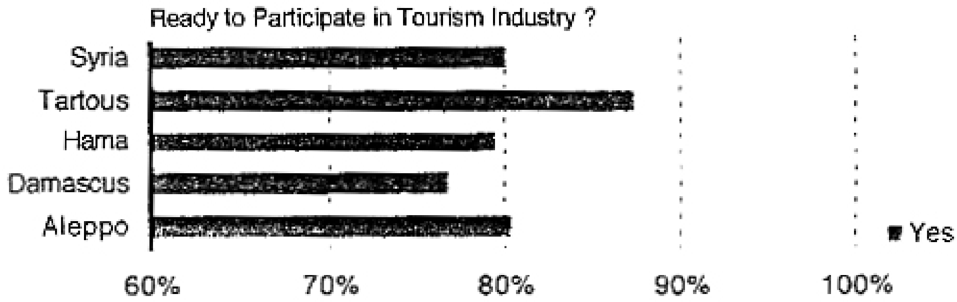
Q22: What will be the negative impact from tourism development in tour city/community?

Type	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Noise & garbage	47.3%	43.8%	18.8%	65.2%	44.6%
Religious activities	29.5%	22.3%	33.0%	18.8%	26.1%
Traffic congestion	35.7%	58.9%	58.9%	51.8%	51.3%
Other	2.7%	5.3%	7.1%	2.7%	2.9%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448



Q23: Would you be ready, if you were asked, to participate in a project that aims at developing tourism in your city?

Answer	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Yes	80.4%	76.8%	79.5%	87.5%	80.1%
No/No Answer	6.3%	6.3%	3.6%	8.0%	6.3%
Do Not Know	13.4%	17.0%	17.0%	4.5%	13.6%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448



Q24: Would you be ready, to apply for projects that aim to developing tourism in your city?

Answer	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Yes	67.9%	72.3%	76.8%	84.8%	75.4%
No/No Answer	21.4%	8.0%	4.5%	10.7%	9.8%
Do Not Know	10.7%	19.6%	18.8%	4.5%	14.7
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448

Q25: What kind of job would you like to apply for? (Multiple answer)

Type	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Planning, Design & construction	11.6%	21.4%	21.4%	27.7%	20.3%
Secretarial	15.2%	4.5%	3.6%	3.6%	8.5%
Managerial	31.3%	21.4%	12.5%	12.5%	23.9%
Sales & Public relations	17.9%	27.7%	36.6%	36.6%	29.0%
Others	2.7%	3.6%	2.7%	2.7%	2.5%
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448

Q26: would you be ready to receive training, if needed, to work in project that aim at developing tourism in your city?

Answer	Aleppo	Damascus	Hama	Tartous	Syria
Yes	70.5%	65.2%	59.8%	78.6%	68.5%
No/No Answer	8.9%	9.8%	3.6%	6.3%	7.1%
Do Not Know	20.5%	25.0%	36.6%	15.2%	24.3
Number of respondents	112	112	112	112	448

Integrated Quality Management

The European Commission produced a report in 2000 on Integrated Quality Management (IQM) in Urban Tourism Destinations. This work involved 15 case studies that defined the successful strategies and the methods and procedures that have been employed in developing successful urban tourism destinations. The following is a summary of some of the key points that are relevant to the OCA/Aleppo situation.

Integrated Quality Management is a repetitive and participatory process. The process requires a strong and recognized authority/ leader (may not have been officially appointed but initiated the IQM process). The following six criteria were identified as being important to implementing IQM in urban tourism destinations throughout Europe:

- Forging a partnership approach with close and cohesive cooperation between all stakeholders
- A common vision and a high quality internal system for circulation of information to all stakeholders
- Consistent monitoring and communication of impacts of tourism for all stakeholders (visitors, industry professionals, and local residents)
- Consistent policy and coordination between all that have an influence on the visitor experience (public transport, public cleanliness, police etc)
- Incentives (constructive or repressive) to promote private initiatives to improve quality (tax concessions, subsidies, prizes/ awards etc)

In order to maximize the economic impact of tourism in a sustainable manner while safeguarding/ enhancing the quality of life for local people and businesses, the IQM process is useful in identifying measures needed to improve the urban environment, accessibility, mobility and security. For OCA, tourism policies and actions should be developed to cover each of these three areas as follows:

- The environment and sustainable development
    - Waste collection in visitor areas such as the Citadel surroundings and Jdaideh.
    - Cleanliness of streets particularly in tourist trails
    - Rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of abandoned sites
    - West city walls and gate development
- Accessibility and mobility
    - Sales of products and services to encourage visitor use of public transport
    - Improved parking for the group tour market
    - Enhanced intermodal public transport between visitor areas, attractions (both internal and external to the city) and major transportation nodes (air, rail, road)
    - Signage in appropriate languages
    - Visitor care services at strategic points
- Security
    - Services to help visitor who are victims of harassment
    - Training of police and other service providers in visitor care/ needs

The IQM approach for OCA should follow the steps outlined below:

- Determine the needs and expectations of the different market segments including local residents, businesses and visitor markets in terms of the environment, accessibility and transport, and security.
- Prepare a plan identifying measures and policies to enhance the visitor environment and services in response to the needs not currently being met.
- The plan can then be used as the foundation for implementation by various appropriate partners.
- A monitoring plan can be developed to ensure the approach is regularly measured in terms of satisfaction of visitors, residents and businesses, as well as the sustainability of development.
- The plan and actions can be adapted according to the findings from the monitoring program

Abbreviations

CF	Cluster Facilitator
DGAM	Directorate General for Antiquities and Museums
DOC	Directorate of the Old City
FIT	Foreign Individual Tourist
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IQM	Integrated Quality Management
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council (Countries)
GCETP	General Commission for Execution of Tourism Projects
GCTHT	General Commission for Tourism and Hotel Training
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
MOC	Ministry of Culture
MOLA	Ministry of Local Administration
MOT	Ministry of Tourism
MOTR	Ministry of Transport
OCA	the Old City of Aleppo
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
QA	Quality Assurance
RB	Syrian Airlines
REHAB	Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo
ASCTE	Arab Syrian Company for Tourist Establishments
SATTA	the Syrian Association of Tourist and Travel Agents
SCTT	Syrian Company for Transport and Tourism (TRANSTOUR)
SPC	State Planning Commission
SYP	Syrian Pounds
WTO	World Tourism Organization