

Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites

Tyre scale, Lebanon





Analysis of Threats and Enabling Factors for Sustainable Tourism at Pilot Scale

Cultural and Natural Heritage Site

Tyre scale, Lebanon



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OVERVIEW

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REVIEW

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List of abbreviations

CNRS	Centre national de la recherche scientifique
TCNR	Tyre Coast Nature Reserve
RSIS	Ramsar Site Information Service
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
MoE	Ministry of Environment
CDR	Council for development and reconstruction
APAC	Protected Area Appointed Committee

Abstract

This report aims to identify the cultural and natural heritage of Tyre, with a focus on its historical assets which identify the city. It is developed through the review of existing data at national and regional scales. The document is structured in three sections. Section 1 provides an overview of the cultural heritage of Tyre, highlighting the most destined places in the city and the main threats to their assets. Section 2 reports the observed effect of tourism on these sites to integrate sustainable tourism. Section 3 focuses on policies, plans and programs to manage tourism in the context of preserving cultural heritage.

Introduction

Tyre, known as the “Queen of the Seas,” has a rich historical and cultural heritage. This Phoenician city comprises significant archaeological monuments and historic remnants that have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Tamim *et al.* 2021). In Antiquity, the city was known for the manufacturing of purple pigment (purpura from the Murex marine snail) (purpura from the Murex Sea snail). Legend states it was home to King Hiram who had supplied material and workers to Solomon for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem, and from here Tyrian princess Elissar set off on her voyage that would culminate in the creation of Carthage. Tyre was once an island along the coast, therefore the Phoenician name Sor, which means “rock.”. It remained an island until 332 BCE (Fig. 1) when Alexander the Great laid siege to it and built an isthmus or causeway to link (Katzenstein, 1973). Over the ages, the mole silted in, and the accumulating sand created Tyre the peninsula it still is today (Boschloos, 2014).

In addition to its trade networks, Tyre was also famous in Antiquity for its purple dye, glass, and textile industry. It also included ivory and metalwork as well as agrarian products. Fishing and boat building were later developed by the island settlers and have become a traditional hallmark of the city (Nahas, 2013).

The two main archaeological/Cultural heritage zones are the Al Bass district in the east, with the necropolis and hippodrome, and the original island in the west, with a Byzantine church altar and a crusader cathedral, exist, as does a crusader tower that was formerly part of a defense wall. There are also several Ottoman private residences, two Ottoman mosques, many churches, and schools on the list of listed structures in the old city (Bikai, 1992).

All these remaining monuments contribute significantly to Tyre’s cultural heritage, making it a great tourist destination that the municipality works hard to promote to attract and satisfy visitors. They also strive to capitalize on and increase this potential by broadening the city’s tourism activities.

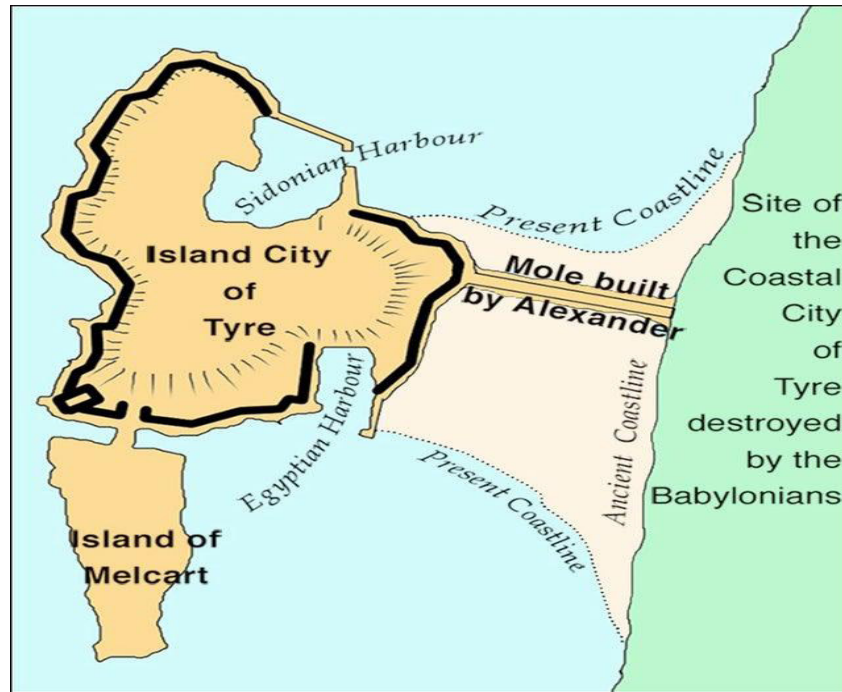


Figure 1. Old island of Tyre

This report aims to identify the cultural and natural heritage of Tyre, with a focus on its historical assets which identify the city. It is developed through the review of existing data at national and regional scales, and through consultation.

II. Cultural Heritage of Tyre

II.1. Overview

Tyre's rich cultural and historical heritage, its proximity to Qana and other archaeological/Biblical regions in the south, as well as its large stretches of clean sandy beaches and internationally significant natural heritage, have earned it a place on UNESCO's World Heritage list since 1984, making it a desirable node in any type of tourism: cultural, leisure, or biblical.

Tyre historical resources can be divided into two main categories:

- Onshore remains: Tyre's cultural heritage zones include the city's historic center as well as several archaeological monuments such as the Roman Hippodrome and Roman Baths. A Byzantine church altar and a crusader cathedral exist, as does a crusader tower that was formerly part of a defense wall. There are also several Ottoman private residences, two Ottoman mosques, many churches, and schools on the list of listed structures in the old city. Others remain buried or unexcavated onshore archaeological structures such as silted up harbors, buried shorelines, buried maritime infrastructure and wrecks. An estimated 32,500 m² under the current city market has the potential to reveal valuable archaeological information.
- Archaeological relics discovered offshore (wrecks and drowned land surfaces). Local divers have long been aware of the rich archaeological sites surrounding Tyre. Looting by illegal divers and treasure hunters, it is hard to quantify how much archaeological material has already been lost or removed from its native setting because of this activity and the black market selling of artefacts (Marriner and Morhange, 2008).

The Khan al-Ashqar and the Old Souks are part of the Old City. The Lebanese Museum for Marine and Wildlife is also located in the city. Tyre Festival is celebrated in the city every year during June and July. The event honors Lebanon's culture and includes everything from musical performances to poetry readings and seminars.

Typically, the event is hosted at one of the city's facilities (Roman theatre, for example). Unfortunately, both the museum and the event are no longer in existence.

Tyre is abundant with associations and institutions. Its natural beauty necessitates the presence of environmental organizations such as the Institute for the Development of People and the Environment and the Tyre Coast Nature.

The ADR, the most prominent local NGO active in Tyre today, works to improve human and natural resources in Lebanon's rural areas and the Tyre Cultural Movement (Perera, 2013). Women's empowerment and economic growth, according to Constantin and Mitrut (2008) and Aliqah and Al-rfou (2010), are inextricably linked. In one direction, growth may play a significant contribution to reducing gender disparity. That's why Tyre has women's associations such as the Mothers Committee and Southern Women's Beit Association.

Boat construction is another old tradition that has survived in the city. Thanks to their father and grandfather's knowledge, the Barbour brothers are currently the only boat builders in Tyre. Their strong desire to continue their company in full respect of history has pushed them to adopt ancient building techniques and basic traditional tools for boat construction.

The potentiality of tourism development by capitalizing on this tradition is somehow lacking, and relationship between local authorities and the boat builders is strained at times due to the use of the Cornish near the harbor by the builders and their somehow lack of time management and business prowess.

II.2. Threats

The proximity of touristic sites to the sea in Tyre, despite the decayed state of the coastal zone, forms a pole of attraction for local and foreign visitors. However, erosion on coastal banks of dunes not only jeopardizes historic resource preservation, but storms and strong flows can also expose tracts of archaeology to illicit divers, who steal these underwater artefacts (Fig. 2; Marriner and Morhange, 2008).

Furthermore, according to Nahas (2013), the archaeological and cultural sites in Tyre are characterized by negative visitor experiences, because of insufficient signage, non-existent public utilities, information booths, or tourist-related facilitation.

Moreover, many of the excavations have not been properly documented. The urban, social, and historical context for these constructions has not been properly recorded, owing in part to excavation practices that concentrated almost entirely on monumental architecture. These gaps are crucial for both a visitor's comprehension of these places and local awareness of their significance.

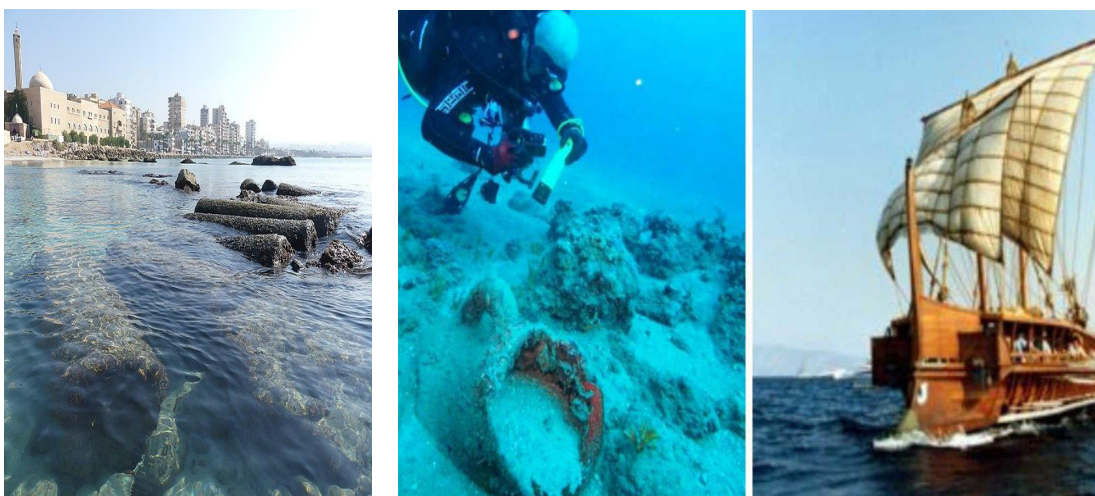


Figure 2. Tyre underwater ruins and a replica of a Phoenician ship

More critically perhaps, very little protection has been afforded to these monuments from both the natural environment or local inhabitants and visitors to the site. On the one hand, inadequate repair attempts have accelerated the physical degradation of numerous structures. Many antiquities, such as the Roman baths, are in extreme degradation and require immediate restoration. On the other hand, the lack of obvious and impermeable boundaries surrounding these monuments, as well as an insufficient number of guards and public awareness campaigns, has permitted theft and vandalism to these sites by residents and tourists.

The refugee camp of Al-Bass is located near the Roman Hippodrome and partially covers a Phoenician cremation cemetery. The Al-Rasheedyeh camp is claimed to be situated over the ruins of Palaetyros (continental Sour), while the Burj al-Shemali camp is said to be built atop a significant Roman and Byzantine necropolis. At the same time, the lack of clearly defined limits has resulted in high-rise developments encroaching on many of these sites. Several antiquities, like the triumphal arch (Fig. 3), hippodrome (Fig. 4), and aqueduct, have been visually obscured by these constructions.



Figure 3. Arch of Triumph, Tyre



Figure 4. Tyre hippodrome's grandstand

III. Tourism and cultural and natural heritage of Tyre

III.1. Effects of Coastal/Maritime tourism

According to Marriner and Morhange (2008), cultural tourism, which allows the tourist to participate in local cultural activities, can be a great opportunity for durable development in Tyre and particularly along the coastline and at various archaeological-cultural sites of Phoenician, Roman, Arab, Christian, and Muslim heritage. However, investment in tourism is mainly concentrated in Sour municipality (where 36% of enterprises are tourism-related; CRI *et al.* 2015).

Tyre City is home to two outstanding UNESCO World Heritage sites. Mercy Corps and Shield (2015) have proved in their studies that municipal officials believe tourism will be the most important source of job creation in South Lebanon. Security issues, however, are a concern for tourism and industry growth (CRI *et al.* 2015). Due to security concerns in the South, tourism investment is shifting to the real estate industry, which is seen as a safer alternative. This dynamic, however, may be more relevant to the district's south, closer to the national boundary, than to Tyre city. Surprisingly, the multiple wars that have afflicted the Tyre District's south have served to conserve its natural riches from overdevelopment (CRI *et al.* 2015).

Moreover, hosting villages tend to be proud of their land and local culture, and rural tourism encourages them to protect their natural environment and ecosystem (Faraj, 2020).

Tourism, according to Constantin and Mitrut (2008), is superior to other industries because it creates jobs (direct and indirect jobs), raises living standards, and contributes to sustainable development (e.g., Shunnaq *et al.* 2008). It also has low start-up costs, is feasible in a wide range of areas and regions, is a constantly growing sector, and the industry is aware of the need to protect the resources on which it is based (local culture, built and natural environment). Furthermore, well-managed tourism should include Non-renewable resource conservation, biodiversity conservation, local people's well-being, interpretation/learning experience, and a focus on local involvement, ownership, and commercial prospects. As a result, pursuing a coordinated tourist strategy can help a country's local economies diversify. Tourism has been highlighted as a driver of economic progress, increasing the viability of undeveloped regions, and raising the living standards of residents. Nowadays, in tourism, like in any other business, the sustainable approach is the only realistic option (Shunnaq *et al.* 2008).

III.2. Cultural and Natural heritage to development tourism

Perera (2013) claims that sustainable tourism, defined as the most efficient use of resources while considering the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental aspects of the local community where development is taking place, contributes to the strengthening of social capital by assisting local communities in growing their economies by utilizing their abundant resources. From a social and cultural perspective, cultural tourism may also improve the quality of life in a region. This is accomplished through

expanding the number of attractions, leisure activities, and services available. Residents may also meet new people, learn about various cultures, widen their perspectives, and get a better understanding and appreciation for diverse ways of life through cultural tourism.

Natural resources must play a major role in fostering sustainable development. It is defined as addressing the requirements of this generation without jeopardizing future generations' capacity to meet their own. To be effective, governments must use and manage the scarce natural resources at their disposal in an effective, sensible, and responsible manner (Constantin and Mitrut, 2008, Shunnaq *et al.* 2008; Grynspar, 2012). Developing countries, with a rich resource base of natural and cultural richness, have a substantial competitive advantage in their ability to attract visitors seeking unique new experiences throughout the world (Grynspar, 2012). Many studies have been conducted not just on the value of tourism, but also on how good and efficient resource management may contribute to the growth of the local community. Tourism has grown crucial since visitor spending is funneled directly into the tourism industry, which helps to grow the economy.

At the same time, the country can share its culture and authenticity with visitors. For tourists, Tyre is a city perceived as having a traditional aspect through its old neighborhoods, a remarkable beach and impressive sites with festivals considered important events, and in which tourism is diverse and the nightlife is pleasant. Tyre is also perceived as a city of cultural plurality, secure and welcoming to pedestrians with a friendly population and healthy local cuisine and where life is not expensive. However, the city's historical heritage is not seen as very rich, and hotel services are not regarded as very acceptable. Furthermore, parking lots and traffic congestion are regarded as significant issues. Following Tourists and Tyre's municipal authorities clashed on two aspects of the perceived image: historical heritage and hotel amenities.



Figure 5. Tourism in Tyre necropolis

IV. Sustainable tourism management in Tyre

IV.1. Policies, plans, programs, and recommendations

The study conducted by Tamim *et al.* (2021) to assess the image of Tyre as perceived by tourists, found that this image needs to be improved. Because service is the foundation of tourism in this city, it must be manifested such that it contributes value to the city's entire image. They recommended the creation of public parking lots and the organization of traffic by the municipal police and the establishment of adequate signage in the streets to facilitate the stay of visitors and tourists.

The installation of explanatory panels, as well as the accessibility of brochures, was recommended in different literature (Nahas, 2013; Tamim *et al.* 2021) to assist tourists and provide them with a better understanding of the city. Tamim *et al.* (2021) demonstrated that many visitors did not have the chance to visit the entire city and study its historical legacy, or even get to know its hotels and their services, because a huge number of them were excursionists who traveled to spend the day and could not attend all the locations in the city, preventing them from grasping essential features. A trail connecting all of Tyre's historical and cultural attractions can be created (Perera, 2013).

Furthermore, substantial media coverage of Tyre, both locally and globally, is essential to emphasize the historical, cultural, and ecological legacy. Marketing is a component of a destination's strategic strategy, and it comprises market research, selecting target markets, and establishing a marketing mix. Tyre marketing is kept to a minimum, and its benefits are overlooked. Effective marketing maintains the location on the list of "places to visit." And, once again, financing is the biggest impediment to local governments doing this.

The seashore has the potential for long-term economic development. However, some precautions should be taken, such as organizing the tents to improve accessibility, recruiting lifeguards, fining people who litter and damage natural and cultural sites, providing water activities for a small fee or developing water shows and schools for teaching water sports.

Building cultural awareness is the cornerstone of an effective tourist sector, according to Perera (2013), and it may be accomplished through boosting education, public awareness, and engagement through:

- Encouraging the local community, school, and other stakeholders to participate in education and training programs.
- Inform tourists about the location and the necessity of conservation.
- The sustainable use of resources, mandated by rules and regulations.
- Establishment of educational centers and events.

According to Nader *et al.* (2013), a Sea Food Festival presenting the delicacies of Lebanese cuisine might be a great opportunity to encourage the city's fisheries sector.

The event can be appealing to tourists since it will allow the public to discover and experience a variety of local sea cuisine and coastal delicacies created by fishermen, as well as begin the development of new ones.

IV.2. Integrating the Blue Economy concept

One aim of the blue economy is to ensure the protection of underwater cultural resources, as well as surrounding marine ecosystems and biodiversity. Not only protecting it but promoting it as a touristic site. Thus, the preservation of underwater natural and cultural assets and fishing tourism can be a driver for the development of coastal communities in terms of employment of vulnerable people (especially women and youth) and preservation of traditional, cultural, ecological, and ethnological values.

An appropriate plan should be based on an assessment of the social, cultural, and environmental effects of tourism products and services of the site, by developing site-specific and more sophisticated indicators and verification methods for an informed planning process.

Moreover, promoting ecotourism in protected areas requires increasing the competence of protected area staff, who are typically uninformed about critical issues of visitor sustainability. Protected Areas are excellent settings for ecotourism activities, provided that local and regional stakeholders learn how to compete and balance market expectations with conservation objectives.

Protecting the natural and cultural resources of the city allows the development of coastal communities by providing employment for vulnerable people (particularly women and youth) and preserving traditional, cultural, ecological, and ethnological values, in different majors, especially tourism.

V. Conclusions

As the foremost Phoenician metropolis, Tyre has a high tourism potential. Despite its clear advantages and the efforts of various local actors, including the municipal council, this city is battling to earn the tourist attraction it deserves. The characteristics that impact the perception of a tourism site include historical heritage. It is critical for any tourist destination to develop a strong and distinct image, as well as a solid and easily discernible positioning, supported by a set of communication and marketing elements that will help attract tourists and meet their expectations, ensuring a level of satisfaction that will entice them to return to this city. A tourist location must adjust the generated picture to the perceived complex image. While the image multi-dimensional effect is difficult to manage, municipalities can benefit from ongoing and large-scale visitor expectations surveys. It is recommended that municipal decision-makers, service providers, and residents of a tourist destination work closely together to build up a sustainable tourism industry that directly impacts the livelihood or the various stakeholders.

The strategy for such tourism development should be multi-faceted and built on the historical identity and assets. Needed support to fisherman and traditional craftsmen is of utmost importance. Local authorities' role is to ensure the continuation of crafts such as traditional boatbuilding, possibly through the development of managerial capacities and technical know-how of the craftsman, and through programs that ensure knowledge transfer. Great potential also exists in the making of touristic souvenirs and selling of local artisanal goods that reflect the unique and world renown cultural identity elements.

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