

Merchants' response towards urban tourism development in food markets

Rotem Mashkov and Noam Shoval

Abstract

Purpose – *In an age when a tourist's gaze is more involved in the daily lives of locals, it is evident that traditional food markets are being rediscovered as a space for recreation. Yet, the pressure of tourism development may result in retail gentrification to the point of losing the sense of local identity. Focusing on the "boutiquing" process at Mahane Yehuda Market in Jerusalem, this paper aims to measure the physical change in the marketplace, to understand merchants' attitudes towards tourism development, and to differentiate merchants based on their responses to these changes.*

Design/methodology/approach – *Two main research methods were used: comparative mapping of the business mix and in-depth interviews with merchants. The first method was used to characterize the physical change in the market, and the second method was used to examine merchants' attitudes and responses to tourism development.*

Findings – *There has been a significant physical change in the business mix of the market, with displacing mainly of traditional uses. A strong link between the merchants' responses to tourism development and their stall ownership status has found.*

Research limitations/implications – *The limitations of the study lie in its nature as a qualitative study of a case study; there is difficulty in generalizing and drawing universal conclusions.*

Originality/value – *Add to existing knowledge regarding merchants' responses in traditional food markets to tourism development in the context of retail gentrification.*

Keywords *Tourism development, Food tourism, Jerusalem, Mahane Yehuda Market, Merchants' attitude, Retail gentrification, Traditional food markets*

Paper type *Case study*

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Introduction

In an age of globalization and rapidly increasing inter-urban competition, many cities use culture and tourism as strategies for economic development. Urban food markets are an important part of the urban fabric. They have the potential to serve not only the growing appetite of tourists but also a sense of identity and social interaction within the marketplace. The return to the city centers that characterizes the present era has also enabled the rediscovery of urban marketplaces. Globalization has had an impact on many areas, including the local culinary industry and food consumption patterns among tourists (Mak et al., 2012). Because of the "tourists" desire for authentic experiences and interpersonal interactions with the local population and culture, there has been an increase in the number of visitors at urban food markets around the world (Pottie-Sherman, 2011). The growth and prosperity of traditional urban food markets are also evident in Israel, especially at the Mahane Yehuda food market in Jerusalem. Most of the Israeli food markets have shown a significant decline in their activity over the past decade, and quite a few empty commercial areas exist today. The food markets that were able to cope with the competition in the food industry were forced to reinvent themselves and provide their customers with a variety of experiences in dining, shopping and entertainment.

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This article traces the tourism development process in the Mahane Yehuda food market. In the early 2000s, the Mahane Yehuda food market suffered great damage because of the volatile security situation in Jerusalem because of Israeli–Palestinian tension and planning bias towards the suburban areas of the city. The questions that troubled the city governors concerning the city center, and Mahane Yehuda Market, in particular, were how to attract more visitors and prevent them from dying. Mr Eli Mizrahi, who was then the head of the Market Merchants Association, described the mood at the time:

Downtown hit a deadly blow that it has not recovered to this day [...] my vision back then was to keep the market alive; no more than that. That was the initial and main ambition (Eli Mizrahi, Personal communication, March 2014).

In two decades, the Mahane Yehuda Market has undergone a tremendous change. From being a local food market, it has become a culinary entertainment complex and a tourist attraction. The boutiques, restaurants and cafes that emerged in the market have provided it with a diversity of uses and users and a new source of income. These touristic uses, which opened up in the market along with cultural events such as music festivals, transformed the market into a new tourist destination, which manifests a cultural significance. The market has gained popularity and succeeded in improving not only its image but also the motivations for visitations. As Tzvika, a vegetable stall owner said:

People don't say anymore, let's go to the market to shop; instead, they say, let's go to the market for an outing. The "why" has changed (Tzvika Ovadia, Personal communication, April 2014).

It is hard to miss the changes that have taken place in the Mahane Yehuda Market over the past decade and a half – restaurants, cafes and boutiques have opened up, and the marketplace has become a hotbed for tourists from Israel and abroad. However, the dramatic makeover in the Mahane Yehuda Market threatens to change its character irrevocably. The issue of finding a balance between tourism development and the preservation of the authenticity emerges among the local population, residents and merchants alike, who raises concern regarding the future of the marketplace. This paper attempts to analyse the market transformation from the merchants' point of view. Therefore, the research question selected is how do merchants respond to tourism development in the Mahane Yehuda food market.

The target population of this research, i.e. the merchants, are influenced by the changes that occur in the marketplace and can also influence these tourism development processes and shape the spatial configuration of the marketplace and thus their importance. While many urban tourism studies place emphases on the host population and its attitude towards tourism development, most of them focus on the residents' population (Doğan, 1989; Gilbert and Clark, 1997; Mason and Cheyne, 2000; Aramberri, 2001; Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004; Nepal, 2008; Chen and Chen, 2010; Huili *et al.*, 2014). There is an imbalance in the literature when it comes to the reactions of local business owners, especially food merchants, compare to the reactions of residents concerning tourism development. The present study attempts to bridge this gap and provide information regarding the merchants' population attitudes and responses. Segmentation of the merchants' population may be beneficial not only in enriching research knowledge but also at the practical level of planning and managing tourism destinations such as urban food markets.

The purpose of this study is to:

- measure the physical change that occurred in the marketplace;
- understand the merchants' attitude towards tourism development at the marketplace; and
- assess the difference between merchants through their responses towards tourism development at the marketplace.

Two main research methods were used to achieve these research objectives: comparative mapping of the marketplace business mix and in-depth interviews with merchants. The first research method was used to characterize the physical changes that occurred in the Mahane Yehuda food market. The second research method was used to examine the merchants' attitudes and reactions to the tourism development process in the marketplace.

Literature review

Tourism as an urban development strategy

The socio-economic changes in post-industrial cities have led to local governments pursuing growth initiatives that would help them deal with the urban competition by accelerating private investment, increasing the residential and tourist consumption and improving the city's image. There are several discernable strategies for urban-cultural development: entrepreneurial, creative class and progressive strategies. The first two strategies aim for the renewal of city centers and economic growth by accelerating private initiatives or by improving the quality of life in the city to attract the creative class (Harvey, 1989; Florida, 2003). The provisions of incentives and grants for private entrepreneurs, as well as the construction of monumental cultural buildings in city centers, are some of the actions taken in increasing both the revenue and the quality of residential life (Harvey, 1989). Contrary to these strategies, which are based on the assumption that economic development projects function from the top-down, progressive strategies aim to expand the community's participation in cultural activities and set local social goals alongside the cultural and economic development ones. The private sector's supremacy in the contemporary capitalist economy often dictates the application of entrepreneurial strategies for cultural development. Economic consideration usually overcomes social consideration, and cities prefer to promote profitable physical investments to increase their commercial and economic activities (Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007).

There is a firm connection between culture and tourism, especially as cities and destinations seek to improve their attractiveness and competitiveness. While culture creates authenticity and distinctiveness in the global tourism market, tourism provides a substantial means of enhancing culture and creating income (OECD, 2009). Cultural resources are considered a significant factor in the choice of both places of residence and tourist destinations (Richards, 2011). Since the late 1980s, the tourism industry has started to gain attention from local governance, which adopted various tourism development strategies, thanks to its rapid growth, global involvement, high multiplier effects and the tendency to concentrate on city centers (Pearce, 1998; Hall, 2005). Because the tourism product is a complex one, it is difficult to isolate its impact on the city from other economic activities (Page and Hall, 2003; Pearce, 2001). Yet, tourism is widely recognized as one of the world's most significant forms of economic activity (De Kadt, 1984; Hall and Page, 2014). Tourism data can support this argument; in the year 2019 alone, more than 1.4 billion international tourists crossed borders with a total of 1.7 billion receipts, accounting directly for 4.4% of total gross domestic product and 6.9% of total employment (UNWTO, 2019). The change in public perceptions of tourism as an essential sector of the economy requires it to demonstrate not only economic efficiency but also environmental stewardship and social relevance (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999).

Alongside its economic benefits, tourism policymakers must take into account its social impacts on the destination, its effect on the host population's behaviour, lifestyles and quality of life for both residents and local economic stakeholders (Hall and Page, 2014). The interaction between the tourist and the host population is strongly influenced by the carrying capacity of the city; a tourism industry whose dimensions exceed the urban capacity and its costs exceed its benefits would most likely cause adverse reactions among the locals (Van der Borg *et al.*, 1996). Overtourism and the growth in tourism led to an increase of negative attitudes among local populations towards visitors because of the rise in the cost of goods

and services, congestion other nuisances attributed to tourists (UNTWO *et al.*, 2018). Accelerated tourism development can provoke resistance and hostility from the local population and even hamper efforts to increase the demand for destination visits (Gilbert and Clark, 1997; Russo, 2002). Economic dependence was found to be the most influential factor in the local population's attitude towards tourism development. The higher the economic dependence on tourism, the more positive the residents' reactions. An integrated tourism plan that involves the local community may reinforce the initiative or at least assist in moderating the responses to it (Harrill, 2004).

Food tourism

Food consumption is an integral component of everyday life; also, it reflects changes in lifestyle and thus has social and cultural significance. In the context of tourism, food consumption goes beyond being an essential action; it is an action that takes place in an unfamiliar environment and, therefore, carries a symbolic meaning through which the tourist can get acquainted with the cultural values of the host population. Food consumption allows the tourist to experience a great deal of sensual pleasure, unlike any other tourist activity, and sometimes has an influence on the choice of the tourist destination (Mak *et al.*, 2012). Food tourism defined by Hall and Sharper (2003) as a travel experience that is primarily motivated by an interest in food. The food tourism discourse mainly concerns five themes: motivation, culture, authenticity, management, marketing and destination orientation. Ellis *et al.* (2018) emphasize the cultural importance of food consumption from an anthropological point of view, as a means to understand the interactions of tourists with the destination through the medium of food.

In an era where cultural production is becoming a dominant form of economic activity, food and food tourism are primary elements that shape the local identity. The growing number of food tourists resulted in destinations utilize local cuisine as a source of tourist attraction while relying on a considerable level of differentiation from competing destinations (Mak *et al.*, 2012; Yeoman and McMahon-Beatte, 2016). The social consequences of globalization on tourism and, in particular, food tourism is controversial; while many view globalization as a threat to local identity and fear that the "McDonaldization" would lead to the creation of a uniform gastronomic landscape, some argue that the homogeneity of the food market and erosion of the local culture are uncertain outcomes because of the tension between globalization and localization. According to the theory of glocalization, globalization is a dual phenomenon that simultaneously drives homogeneity and heterogeneity. Therefore, with the process of globalization in the food market, global products or ideas have been tailored to local needs, thus contributing to the reinvention and expansion of cultural and culinary diversity (Mak *et al.*, 2012).

Traditional food markets as recreational spaces

Urban food markets were an integral part of major cities and have historically been the engine of urban growth, serving not only as of means of transferring goods but also as the means of transmitting information, ideas and cultural, social and religious norms. Even today, urban food markets are perceived as public spaces of social and economic importance. Urban food markets are characterized by their flexible commercial activity, high social interaction, openness and informality. These features highlight the potential of urban food markets to strengthen local identities, create employment opportunities and serve as unique public spaces that promote social inclusion and the intermingling of ethnic groups, such as in the case of Souk Waqif, the local food market in Doha, Qatar (Hatem and Rania, 2012). However, these characteristics of urban food markets may also exacerbate existing tensions among different population groups, increase the sense of foreignness and promote negative activities (Sik and Wallace, 1999; Pottie-Sherman, 2011).

Food markets are becoming popular as new spaces for recreation by providing different options to tourists who are seeking new culinary, creative and cultural experiences. In line with this trend, recent studies have addressed the question of satisfaction and motivation for visitations to traditional food markets. While some researchers address the perceived degree of authenticity as a key aspect to predict satisfaction and intention to revisit (Crespi-Vallbona and Dimitrovsky, 2016), as well as other characteristics of the markets such as the physical environment, location and accessibility (Dimitrovski and Crespi-Vallbona, 2017), other suggest to segment the visitors of the markets according to their personal and demographic features (Castillo-Canalejo *et al.*, 2020).

Paradoxically, the quest for authenticity, expressed through consumption, leads to gentrification (Zukin, 2008). The authentic image of traditional food markets has become an urban development and renewal strategy that promotes new construction and forces out low-income residents and traders. As a result, markets may lose their qualities, and the city may lose its vital public spaces (Janssens and Sezer, 2013). Traditionally, most of the discourse about the concept of gentrification, displacement, and population change is concerning residential areas (Zukin *et al.*, 2009; Gonzalez and Dawson, 2018). Zukin *et al.* (2009) argue that the dynamic of urban redevelopment and this process of “boutiquing” displaces local retail stores and services and low-income consumers. Retail gentrification, according to Gonzalez and Dawson (2015), is:

[...] the process whereby the commerce that serves [amongst others] a population of low income is transformed/replaced into/by a type of retail targeted at wealthier people. From a different angle, we can also see it as the increase in commercial rents that pushes traders [and retailers] to increase the price of their products, change products, or change location.

When looking at retail gentrification within traditional food markets, three facets can be distinguished: disinvestment, displacement and re-valuation (Gonzalez and Waley, 2013). This argument can be well illustrated through the British case. The traditional food markets in the United Kingdom are caught between the two spatial processes of deterioration and revitalization. While some of the markets are thriving because of their existing diversity, most are in the process of decline. With the growth of department stores and supermarkets, the traditional food markets began to face heavy competition. The low prices and convenient shopping experience had a significant impact on consumer preferences. Trading in traditional food markets did not match the shopping experience that the modern consumer expected. From a planning standpoint, transportation congestion in the city centers made it difficult to access the food markets for both buyers and merchants. In addition, traditional food markets often suffered from neglect because of the difficulty of managing the marketplace spaces. Moreover, the market industry found it difficult to adapt to changing consumer trends (Gonzalez and Waley, 2013; Oldershaw, 2012; CLGC, 2009).

This process of decay results in a displacement not only of veteran merchants but also of local customers. Further on, the markets' commercial and real estate value is rediscovered and plans to regenerate implemented through the insertion of stalls selling up-market products. Re-branding and marketing strategy of the markets also show attempts to reach out to more affluent customers and traders (Gonzalez and Waley, 2013). Recently, many public campaigns in London have emerged calling on protecting traditional food markets from various threats: privatization, gentrification, closure, demolition, displacement of merchants, rent hikes or disinvestment. Examining public resistance to current trends in traditional food markets shows that some citizen-led campaigns, particularly in London, linked up to other public struggles such as housing affordability and privatization, gentrification, displacement and lack of community consultation (Gonzalez and Dawson, 2015). Therefore, Gonzalez and Dawson (2018) suggest discussing the issue of retail gentrification at traditional food markets as part of a more extensive discourse on the urban public struggle for the “right to the city”.

Mahane Yehuda food market in Jerusalem

Establishment of the Mahane Yehuda market. The Mahane Yehuda food market began its commercial activity at the end of the Ottoman rule in Palestine in the early 1920s. It was characterized by its unorganized trade of fruits and vegetables. Until then, trade in Jerusalem had been concentrated in the markets within the Old City walls, which had been divided according to the main commodities being sold. Towards the end of the 19th century, as a result of the residential construction outside the city walls, temporary secondary markets began to emerge in new neighbourhoods such as Mea Shearim and Mahane Yehuda. To the south of the Mahane Yehuda neighbourhood, on the other side of Jaffa Road, spontaneous trading activity began to develop. The merchants saw the market's location as a strategic point because of its proximity to both the new city and Jaffa Road, the main entrance to the city to the west. The market, which was mainly owned and built by the merchants, soon became a planned and permanent one. The spatial development of the Mahane Yehuda Market has been shaped by two key factors. First, The British Mandate, which, in contrast to the previous Ottoman rule, instituted a strict policy in matters of urban sanitation and trade norms, encouraged and pushed the merchants to regulate the commercial activity in the marketplace and align it with the proper municipal conditions. The second factor was the commercial initiative of the Jewish collective, which included economic cooperation of various stakeholders from the Jewish community, including merchants, landowners, the Jewish committee in the municipality and the Loan and Savings Bank, from the first Jewish banks in the country (Feinberg, 2010; Cohen-Hattab, 2001).

These initiatives, such as land acquisition or obtaining a loan for the construction of stalls and stores, gave the market his official name The Loan and Savings Market and have found Mahane Yehuda Market as the central market of West Jerusalem during the British Mandate (Feinberg, 2010). In addition, a market bylaw formulated the regulation of the commercial activity in the market according to the Jewish calendar. It was also determined that the market would be managed by a select merchant committee; this committee has been operating on-site to this day (Cohen-Hattab, 2001). The Mahane Yehuda food market is bounded by Jaffa Road on the north and Agripas Street on the south. The market includes two main streets: Etz Haim Street and Mahane Yehuda Street. Mahane Yehuda Street is an open to the sky street, also used for unloading and transporting goods to the market for when it is not operating. Etz Haim Street is a narrower and covered street. A series of side alleys connect the two parallel streets. The covered market consists of single-story stalls; the original stalls were distributed almost evenly, each booth with an area of about 16 square meters and a display width of about half a meter and a half. The Iraqi market is another part of this market and lies to the west of the central market. The Iraqi market was residential back courtyards that converted to market use in the 1950s. Thus, this part of the market is characterized by a smaller size of stalls (Figure 1).

From 1949 to 1967, Jerusalem was divided, and the Old City was under Jordanian rule. During this period, Jewish businesses transfer to the Mahane Yehuda Market from the older markets. Mahane Yehuda Market and the surrounding area acquired a new cultural role. The market was the primary market in West Jerusalem. After the Six-Day War and the unification of the city, the market activity weakened because of two main factors: the first was the urban development policy-oriented with suburban development, including the construction of twelve Jewish neighbourhoods to create a ring surrounding East Jerusalem. This peripheral policy led to ongoing negative migration and the decline of the city center. The second factor was the constant growth of supermarkets, grocery stores and food chains, which competed with the traditional food markets over the same target population by offering attractive prices, convenience and accessibility. The worsening condition of the market was accompanied by a drop in customers. The market had acquired a bad reputation because of social problems and its poor physical condition. In 1988, as part of the revitalization efforts of the market, the

inner-city by encouraging living, promoting urban commerce and increasing the number of visitors (Vitman, 2011).

The effort to drive the revitalization of the city center over the past decade and a half has included, among others, development of infrastructure, restoration of public spaces, encouragement of cultural initiatives (Yelinek, 2009). One of the most prominent public spaces in downtown Jerusalem that have changed its face utterly is the Mahane Yehuda Market. The old marketplace has shifted towards a diverse business and visitors mix, becoming a thriving tourist and entertainment hub. The rehabilitation of the market has brought a new type of cultural visitors. Coffee shops and high-end boutiques have appeared to serve the new visitors who are primarily looking for a cultural experience, and the market transformed from being a collection of food stalls to an around-the-clock culinary destination. Another manifestation of the change in the market is the perceptual change concerning the marketplace's image. An analysis of 150 articles from the Haaretz newspaper from the mid-1990s to 2010 reveals that there was a substantial change in the discourse around the Mahane Yehuda Market. "The new trend," "a place for connoisseurs," "a sign of urban renewal," "brilliance," "Jerusalem's hot real estate scene," "gourmet pearl" and "buzz around Mahane Yehuda Market" are some of the descriptions that have been used by journalists to describe the market in recent years (Mashkov, 2016).

However, the great success of the Mahane Yehuda Market may have a downside as well. The high demand in the market is already raising its usage costs; if this trend continues, the market will lose its less profitable uses, such as vegetable and fruit stalls, for the benefit of the more profitable and tourist-oriented uses. Gentrification and commercialization are changing the identity of the market, and the future of Mahane Yehuda as a traditional marketplace is in question. The tourism development surrounding the "Jerusalem success story," as the former mayor Nir Barkat called it, raises quite a few concerns among the local residents and merchants: Is the Mahane Yehuda Market saturated with tourist uses? How can one maintain the business mix in the market? To what extent should one interfere or not interfere in the process when tourism development harms its environment? This study aims to analyse the different reactions of the market merchants and to propose a segmentation according to the personal, physical and economic variables of the merchants and their stalls. Such an analysis can help to understand the contribution of the different variables to the continued tourism development of the marketplace and may indicate future development strategies.

Methodology

Research question and research objectives

The main research question of this study – i.e. how do merchants respond to tourism development in Mahane Yehuda food market? – is an examination of the changes taking place in the market from the "merchants" point of view. As the literature review shows, economic dependence in the tourism industry is one of the most influential factors that affect the local population's attitude towards tourism development. The more the host population is economically dependent on the tourism industry, the more positive their perception of tourism development will be and vice versa (Harrill, 2004; Page and Hall, 2003). The target population in this research, the local business owners, has a significant economic interest. Therefore, the merchants can be divided into two major groups based on their attitudes towards tourism development in the market: the veteran merchants and new merchants. The new merchants, cafes, restaurants and other tourist uses are positively impacted by tourism development, which gives them exposure to their target population and, as a result, provides them with economic opportunities. On the other hand, the veteran merchants, who own the traditional food product stalls have negative attitudes towards this development as the increasing tourist-centric demand is likely to hurt their livelihoods. The many tourists who visit the

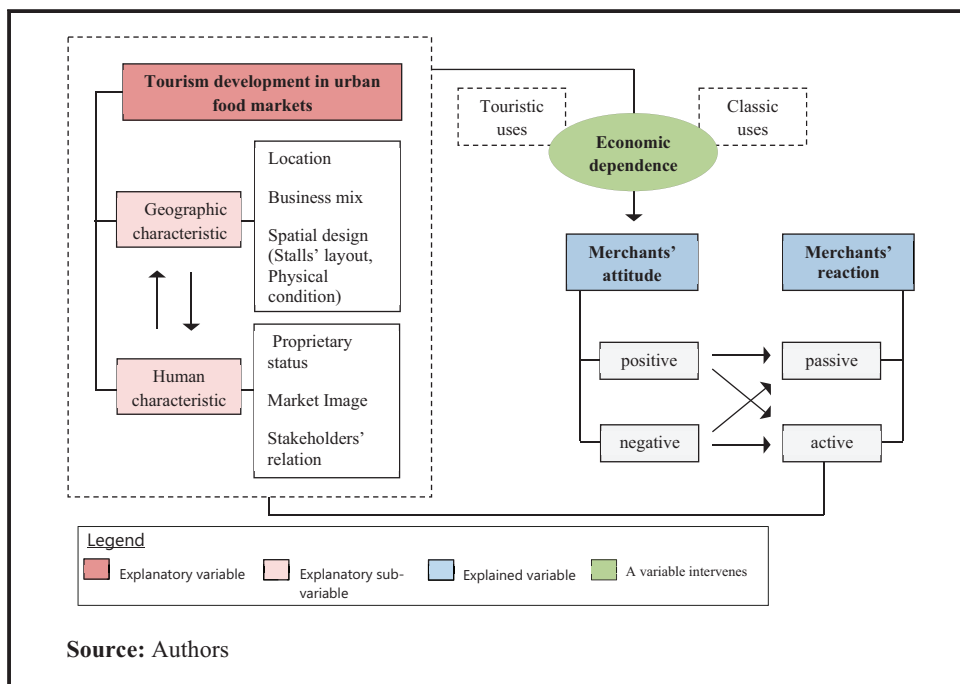
market are not among their potential customers; moreover, mass tourism raises the level of overcrowding in the market and reduces the ease of accessibility for local consumers, who slowly decrease their visits to the marketplace. As illustrated by the conceptual model (Figure 2), the relationship between the explanatory variable, which is tourism development, and the explained variable, which is the trader's response, is a two-way relationship. Tourism development affects the position of the merchants according to the economic dependence of the trader in the tourism industry. In response, merchants have the power to change the spatial characteristics of the marketplace, which would contribute to continued tourism development. It is also conjectured that the merchants' response to tourism development will shift from passive resistance to active support.

Research methods

The present study combined quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study used two key research methods: comparative mapping of the business mix in the marketplace, and in-depth interviews with merchants. While the first quantitative research methods aimed to characterize the conscious and physical changes in the Mahane Yehuda Market, the second research method, i.e. in-depth interviews with merchants, was a qualitative method used to examine the research hypotheses regarding the merchants' attitudes and reactions to tourism development at the marketplace.

Comparative mapping of the mix of stalls. The comparative mapping of the mix of stalls in the marketplace enables to estimate the extent of the tourism development with respect to the changes in the market's physical characteristics in accordance with the first research objective: to measure the tourism change that occurred in the marketplace. Although the market is playing an increasingly significant role in the Jerusalem tourism industry, an up-to-date map of all the market uses could not be found. This research method was conducted in three stages: mapping the mix of stalls in the market at three time periods (2007, 2014

Figure 2 Conceptual model



and 2020), classification of the uses based on the type of product or service traded at each stall, and finally, a quantitative comparison between the different time periods. The main mapping work was conducted by the authors in April 2014 to record the mix of stalls in the market. The mapping examined the contents of the stall relative to its display width; this was made possible thanks to the structure of the market. The Iraqi market did not conclude in the comparative mapping. To compare the mappings with a previous period, another mapping was conducted based on photographs taken in prior research within the marketplace. The data extract from the photos was cross-referenced and supplemented with the information provided by the market's veteran merchants during the interviews and tours to assemble the map of the mix of stalls in the Mahane Yehuda Market for the year 2007. A follow-up mapping also was conducted in May 2020.

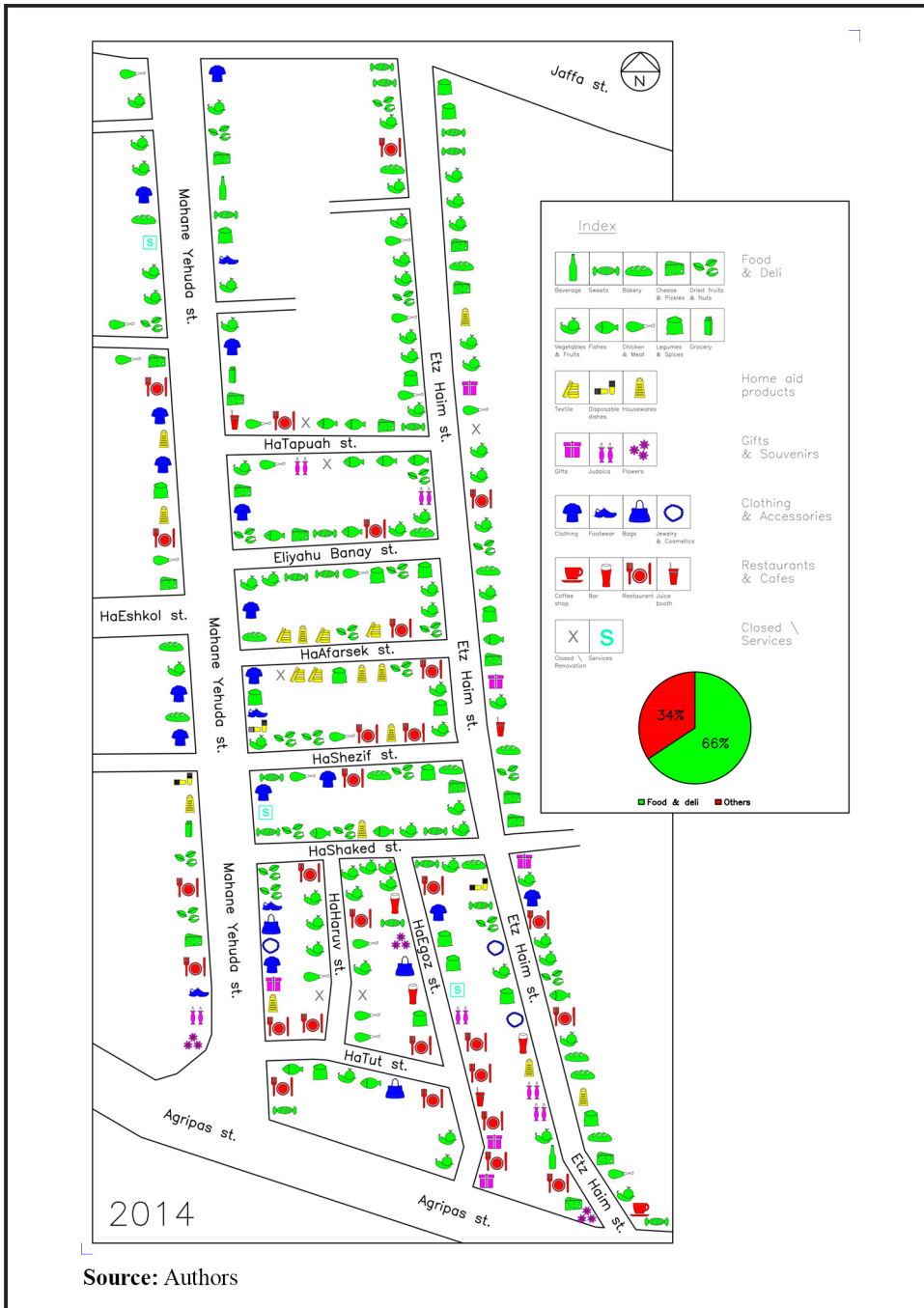
In the second stage, market uses were classified into seven categories: food and delicacies, restaurants and cafes, clothing and accessories, home aid products, gifts and souvenirs, closed or in the renovation and services. The high diversity of uses found in the market has created difficulties with the classification work, which aims to minimize the number of categories without compromising their quality. Moreover, a change in the classification could have resulted in different findings. To overcome this limitation and to preserve the existing versatility, the mapping also included a graphic symbol for each subgroup, as shown in [Figure 3](#). This method allows for the creation of additional mappings for different categories when required.

Finally, a quantitative comparison between the three-time periods conducted to estimate the tourism development occurred within the market, and measure the growth of tourism uses in the face of a reduction in classical or traditional uses. Classical uses were defined as the consumption of raw and non-immediate food products all under the category of food and delicacies. The main goods of this category are fruits and vegetables, fishes, chicken and meat, legumes and spices, dried fruits and nuts, cheese and pickles and bread. It also has sweets, beverages and grocery products. Tourism uses include the consumption of leisure and recreational products or services. The category of restaurants and cafes is the most identified with tourism uses. Tourism can also be attributed to the growth of other uses, such as clothing and accessories, gifts, home aid products, gifts and souvenirs and different services. Yet, all the uses mentioned as tourism uses have been an integral part of the market throughout its existence. Therefore, the comparison focused on the decrease of the classical uses and to examine the claims of retail gentrification and the loss of authenticity.

In-depth interviews with merchants. The second and primary research method used was an in-depth interview with merchants in the market. Interviews were conducted with 15 merchants categorized based on the goods or services they are offering, seniority in the market, their ownership status, and political activity (representation in the Market Merchants Committee). The use of the in-depth interview analysis methodology that examines the tourism development at the marketplace from the merchants' point of view was in line with the research objectives: to understand the "traders" attitudes towards these processes and to assess the difference between merchants through their responses towards tourism development at the marketplace. This method has many advantages: it allows for access to informal information, provides flexibility, and, sometimes, reveals new issues to the interviewer. The main disadvantage of this method is the subjectivity that is inherent to it. Therefore, the information provided by the market merchants was verified and cross-referenced with additional interviews conducted with other relevant players, such as representatives of the local government and the community administration.

The questions in the interviews were divided into three main parts. The first part focused on technical details to characterize the merchants, including questions related to the size of the stall, products sold at the stall, changes in the contents throughout the years, condition of the stall and its surroundings and more. The second part of the interview aimed to

Figure 3 Map of the mix of uses in the Mahane Yehuda Market: April 2014



characterize the changes that occurred in the marketplace from the merchants' point of view, involving questions related to when the changes in the market began, the effects of the changes on the merchants, the motivations behind the changes and so on. The third part concentrated on the merchants' reactions to tourism development in the marketplace. Questions regarding the merchants' reactions to the changes and the steps to be taken for tourism management based on their respective perspectives and experiences were asked to understand their attitudes and towards the change and how it emerged.

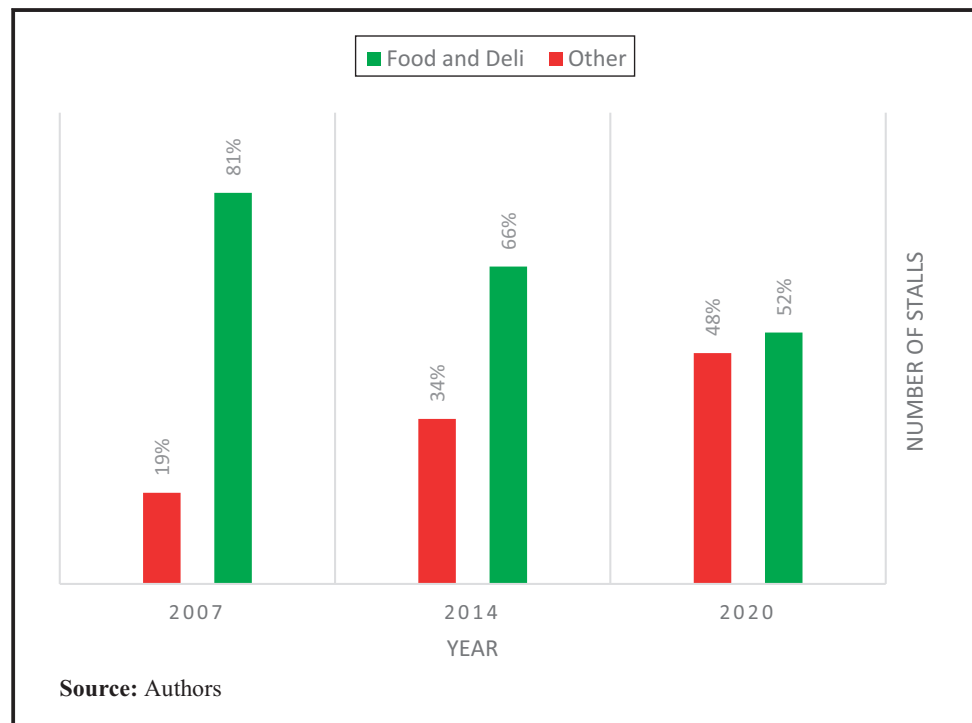
Findings

Comparative mapping of the mix of stalls

The comparative mapping of the mix of stalls results indicates a significant decline in the percentage of food and delicacies stalls as compared to the other uses. As shown in [Figure 4](#), the food and delicacies category has steadily declined from 81% in 2007 to 66% in 2014 to 52% in 2020. As discussed above, of the seven categories, the food and delicacies category is the most associated with the classical uses. However, it is evident from the mapping that certain uses within the food and delicacies category, in particular, those who are immediately consumable such as candy counters, and Halva stalls, duplicate themselves at the expense of other classic uses. A conservative approach was used for this study, and these uses were included in the food and delicacies category. Within the category of restaurants and cafes, only those with a seating area were included. If the food and delicacies category exclude these “problematic” uses, the percentage of it in both the year 2014 and 2020 will decrease significantly.

The 2014 mapping reveals two opposite spatial trends in the Mahne Yehuda market. On the one hand, the clustering of tourism uses at HaEgoz Street, and the beginning of spatial dispersion, on the other hand ([Figure 3](#)). In the past, HaEgoz Street was primarily used by butchers and spice merchants. Now, it serves as a type of food court, consisting of a great agglomeration of restaurants, cafes, and bars open until the late hours of the night. The tourist development on HaEgoz Street also radiated to its perpendicular Street, HaTut. The opposite trend of spatial dispersion is also observed on Etz Haim Street, new bars and cafes were opened in the middle and on the northern end of it (such as Cafelix and the Greek bar Sirtaki). While the trend of clustering increases demand and allows new tourism businesses to enjoy economies of scale, the spatial dispersion trend based on placement strategies that rely on the benefits of differentiation and uniqueness. Today, placement

Figure 4 Rate of classical uses relative to all other uses: a comparison between 2007, 2014 and 2020



strategies based on uniqueness are almost irrelevant, given the massive penetration of tourism uses into all parts of the market (Figure 5).

Another change worth noting is the intensity of tourism development. When the mapping of the market was performed during April 2014, it was evident that three new businesses had been established, and four had been closed for renovations. On the follow-up mapping during May 2020, the number of stalls within this category doubled (Figure 6). These figures indicate not only the high intensity of development but also the increase in the intensity of development and change over time. This process of change is mainly one-way, with the classical uses being displaced in favour of tourist-oriented uses.

In-depth interviews with merchants

Merchants' attitudes towards the tourism-related changes in the market. The in-depth interviews conducted with the merchants raised several interesting issues around their attitudes towards tourism development taking place in the marketplace. First, the interviews indicate that there are disagreements among the various merchants about the contributions of tourism development at a personal level. A strong connection was found between the economic dependence of each stall in the tourism industry and the respective trader's position and perception of the change as positive or negative. While some merchants embrace the changes and appreciate the increase in the number of people who visit the marketplace, others are vehemently opposed to them.

Opposition merchants used descriptions such as "monkeys in the safari" and "Mahane Yehuda Market museum" to illustrate their feelings about the changes. A quote from one of the interviewees is given below:

I'm personally against the change; a market should be a market! In the full sense, people should come to the market to shop. We are not a circus show. In the past, there were stalls for fruits and vegetables from here until there [points]. There was competition. Today there is no competition. Look, I am here alone; who else has fruits and vegetables here? The people who are buying stopped coming. People we have known for years, no longer come. It probably makes an impact. Once, one stall used to support four-five families; today, hardly one family (Moshe Rotem, Personal communication, April 2014).

These merchants indicated that revenues have significantly declined in recent years because of the tourism development processes which have resulted in, among other things,

Figure 5 Market use mix distribution: a comparison between 2014 and 2020

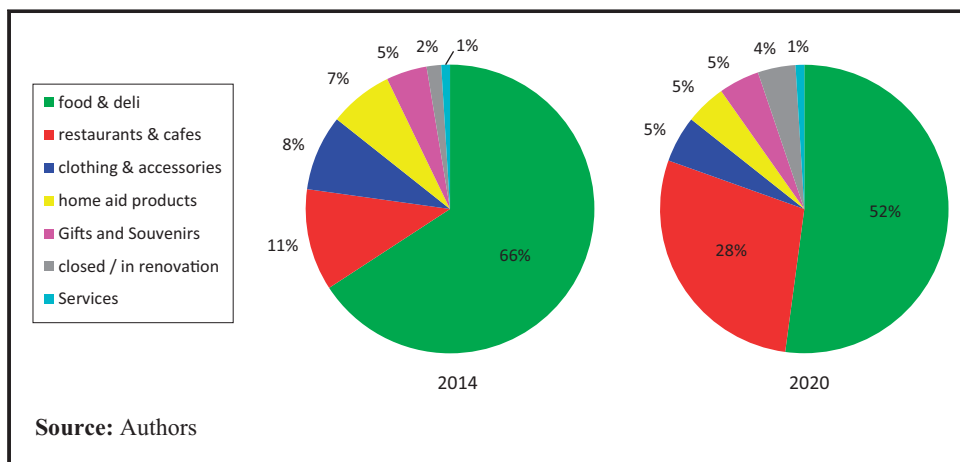
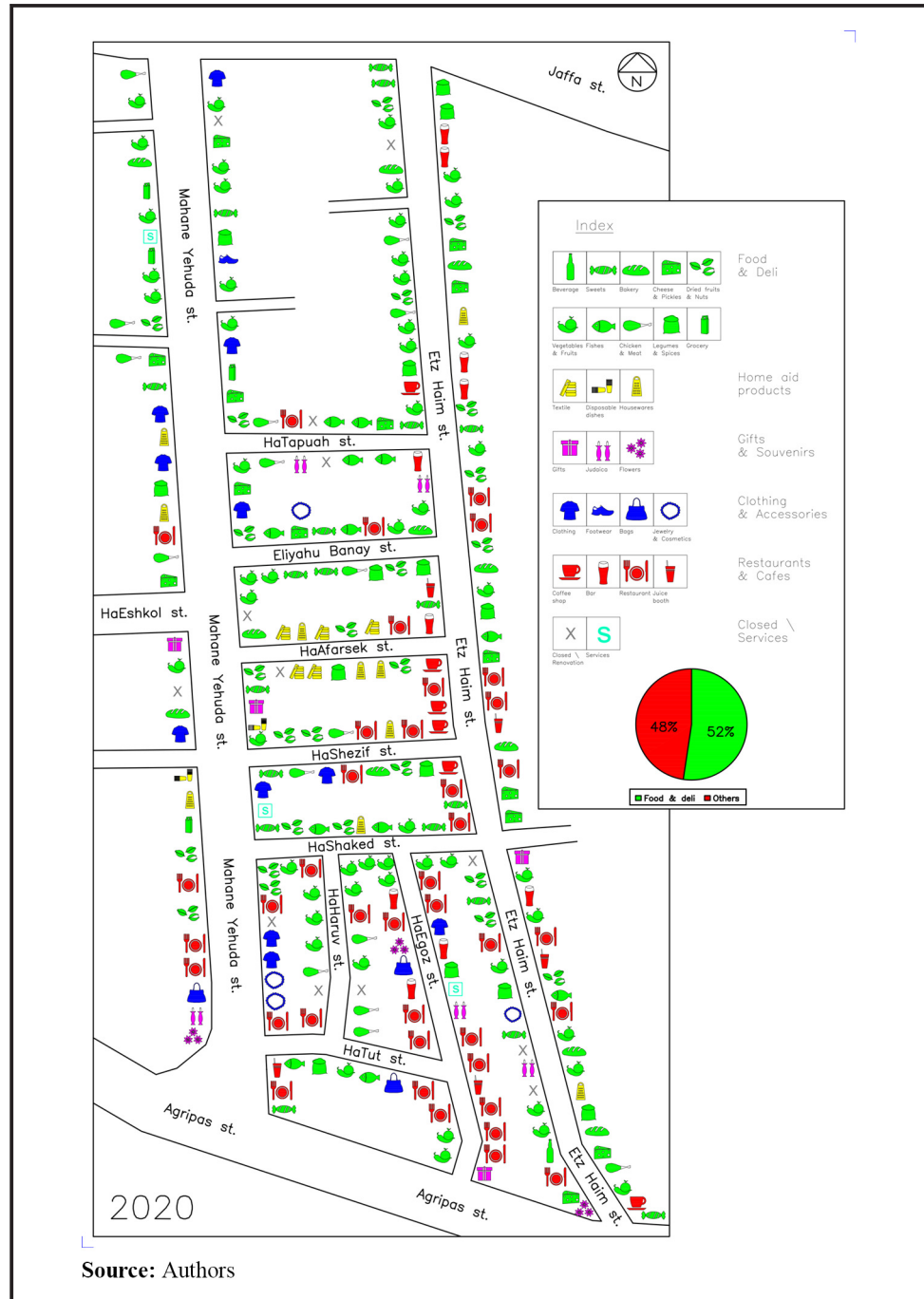


Figure 6 Map of the mix of uses in the Mahane Yehuda Market: May 2020



an increase in the number of tourists, a multiplicity of new uses, a deterioration in the competition between stalls and a decrease in the visitation of the local population. In addition to the congestion, merchants also noted the lack of accessibility and parking as key factors preventing the local population from visiting the marketplace. Alongside these claims about the economic slowdown experienced by the classic merchants, there were calls to mitigate the turmoil against tourism development and mentions of the market's

dismal state prior to this development. For example, one of the veteran merchants supporting the tourism-related changes said:

Before this revolution anyway, there was no one here, neither tourists nor tourists, there were no flies here either. People have forgotten what was here before and should be proportioned (Eli Mizrahi, Personal communication, March 2014).

In spite of this controversy among the merchants about the contributions of tourism development at a personal level, when asked about the implications of tourism development on the marketplace as a whole, a surprising level of uniformity emerged from the two groups of merchants. The old and new merchants noted that the market is saturated with tourism-related businesses and even expressed their concerns about the future of the market if these developmental trends continue. In the past, the establishment of new businesses brought a freshness and creativity with it. In contrast, in recent times, new businesses do not add to the complexity of the market but, on the contrary, detract from it. There was a clear consensus among the interviewed merchants on the need for authentic uses in the marketplace and to maintain a balance in the business mix. According to a cafe owner:

We [the coffee shops] are the things that decorate this market [...] We don't want nor need that all other businesses in the marketplace will do what we do; it just won't be right; it will cause people to lose their interest in the marketplace (Jonathan Hirshfeld, Personal communication, March 2014).

Merchants' responses to the tourism-related changes in the marketplace. In addition to examining the merchants' attitudes towards tourism development as a whole, a significant part of the interviews dealt with their varied reactions to the developmental changes around them. A direct relationship was found between each merchant's response and their stall ownership status, as the merchant could exercise their position in various ways depending on the possession type. Thus, the merchants' responses were divided into three main groups according to their ownership status: rental, partial ownership, and full ownership (Figure 7).

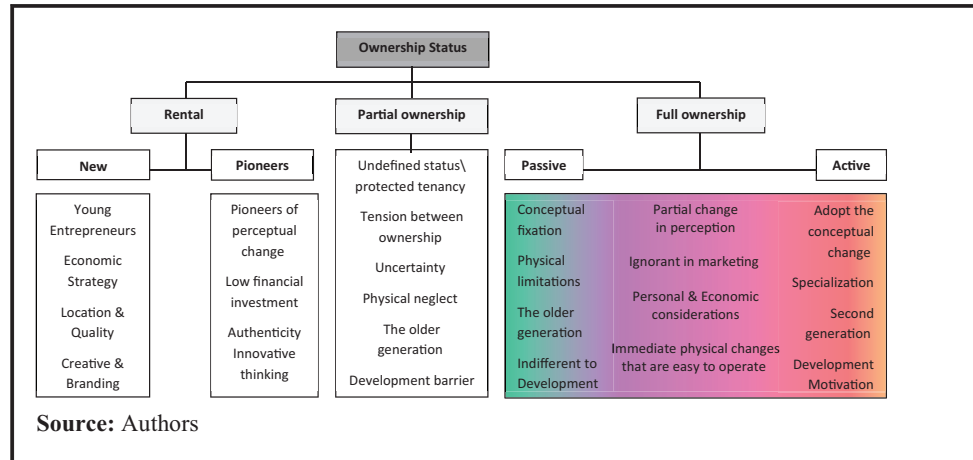
The renters in the first group are characterized by their short-term thinking with respect to their stall ownership lease. The majority of the tourist-oriented uses in the market to lease their stand. Because of the wide variety of tenants and to refine the findings, the subdivision was further divided into two subgroups. The first subset includes the merchants who started operating in the market about a decade and a half ago; their appearance in the marketplace marked the advent of change. In contrast to these old renters, the second subset comprises of new tenants who entered the market in recent years with the rise in tourism development. The businesses in the first subgroup were significantly involved in breakthrough changes in the marketplace's image. Relatively low financial investments were required from these pioneering tenants because of the shaky state of the market at the time, allowing them to take more risks in running their businesses and offer creative and original products at the marketplace.

On the other hand, new renters have to deal with skyrocketing rental prices and growing competition. Because of the huge investments involved, they take into account strategic considerations such as the location, size, product quality, uniqueness and branding of the stall when establishing their business. For example, a cafe owner who launched the cafe while the mapping work was in progress described the considerations of choosing the stall's location:

This location drew our attention from the beginning. It is located at the intersection of two streets, it is cornered, and in the middle of the aisle, so it can be seen from both the bottom and the top. Etz Haim Street is the busiest street on the market, and it is covered, which allows opening all year round. Our considerations in choosing a place for rent were purely cold business and economics wise (Regev Ivanshitz, Personal communication, April 2014).

The second group included merchants who have partial ownership of their respective stalls ("key" money) or merchants with an undefined legal ownership status (a situation that characterizes many merchants in the Iraqi market). Co-ownership of a stall results in

Figure 7 Segmentation of merchants' responses according to their ownership status



conflicts between the property owner and the protected tenant, the merchant. On the one hand, renters wish to maximize profits and may be considering joining the tourism-related changes. On the other hand, the property owners want to regain possession rights over the property and rent it at full price. Any action taken by the tenant to improve the profitability of the stall and adapt it to the tourist target audience, including a change in the contents sold at the stall, may be considered as grounds for cancellation of the contract between the tenant and the owner. The tension that exists between the co-ownerships results in uncertainty and physical neglect and presents a significant barrier for further development.

The third group comprised of merchants with full ownership over their stalls. Their responses to change and tourism development can be characterized using a scale that ranges from passivity to activity. On one side of the scale are the passive merchants who respond indifferently to the development taking place around them (Figure 7). Indifference can be explained in terms of personal or physical factors. Most of these merchants belong to the old generation, for whom the stall is not just a workplace that provides economic well-being but a place of emotional and symbolic significance and an integral part of their daily lives; therefore, they face difficulties in giving it up. They neither want to make changes nor do they have the tools to do so. Sometimes, physical restrictions such as location or size make their properties less attractive to new business entrepreneurs. A tempting enough proposal may motivate them to change their minds in the future (Figure 7).

On the other side of the scale are the active business owners who drive tourism development. These business owners mostly belong to the second or third generation. They have witnessed the deterioration experienced by the market in the face of terror attacks, fierce competition against food marketing networks and ongoing policy of neglect. To revive their family businesses, these business owners decided to take a stand and change their family businesses from the ground up (Figure 8), initiating the change in the image of the market. Their strategies of action included expanding the target audience, prioritizing product quality over quantity, and emphasizing professionalism, specialization and aesthetics while drawing inspiration from culinary trends around the world. Here is how one of the veteran owners described the process of change in his business:

To change a renowned business was not easy, and there were quite a few who had doubts. Even our father did not accept this substantial change at first. But we saw how the big supermarkets are starting to bite into our audience target. We said let's think a few steps ahead, what will happen in 15, 20 years? It is, first and foremost, a matter of changing in perception (Dudu Basher, Personal communication, March 2014).

Figure 8 Sequence of the owners' responses to tourism development from full activity (right); to integration attempts (center) and passivity and indifference (left)



Source: Authors

Most of the reactions of the merchants with a full ownership status were divided between the two extremes described above and ranged from passive to active. As the intensity of tourism development in the market grows, more merchants in the market begin to actively take part in the tourism development process and try to tailor their wares to the current target audience, i.e. the tourists. Some make minor changes that are compatible with the tourists' experiences, such as the addition of delivery services or the sale of food products in smaller packages for immediate consumption (Figure 8). Others take the initiative to change the contents of their stalls. Still, in the absence of professional knowledge and financial backing, they tend to choose relatively easy management uses that do not require high financial investments or maintenance, such as the candy booths or Halva stalls, as observed during the mapping process.

Discussion

The findings show that the Mahane Yehuda Market has undergone significant physical change over the past decade and a half. The market offers a variety of leisure and cultural products and services and is a unique recreational space in the Jerusalem urban fabric. From the analysis of the two research methods presented above, it can be concluded that the growth trend of the tourism services in the Mahane Yehuda Market will continue to rise. This study, which sought to characterize the merchants' attitudes and responses to tourism development, found that the interest levels and economic capabilities are the most influential factors that affect merchants' responses and motivate them to embrace profitable uses, namely, tourism. Merchants with negative attitudes towards tourism development are unable to resist the developmental pressures, and, in response, take the "if you can't beat them, join them" approach.

What is happening in the market today is good for tourism and bad for us, the veteran traders.

But, with today's reality, we either keep the stall as it is and stay behind or join the change (Gideon Ezra, Personal communication, March 2014).

It was also found that the merchants' ownership statuses directly affect their responses to tourism development. Full ownership over a stall allows for a wider range of development options and initiatives among the market merchants. Many stall owners choose to adapt to the changes in the market by renting out a stall or changing its contents. This process in the Mahane Yehuda Market was heavily influenced by the free-market forces. It was evident that for merchants having full ownership over their stalls, their interactions with the local authority had a lesser influence on their patterns of operation than those merchants with other ownership statuses. In spite of the disagreements over the contributions of tourism development, there is a consensus among the merchants and decision makers that a balance in the business mix of the marketplace must be found for the continued success of the market. The issue of balancing the various uses and the danger that hovers over the

continued existence of traditional uses in the market troubles old and new merchants alike. Consistent with the comparative mapping findings, it is evident that the tourism development process at the Mahane Yehuda Market displace the classical uses, when the first merchants pushed out are the fruit and vegetable. This trend is in line with the trend in traditional food markets in the UK, where essential food products become secondary or disappear (Gonzalez and Dawson, 2015).

Continued accelerated tourism development that encourages retail gentrification may result in the loss of the identity of the market and the decline of its authenticity (Janssens and Sezer, 2013; Gonzalez and Waley, 2013). Given that the perceived degree of authenticity is a fundamental aspect of market motivation for visitation among tourists (Crespi-Vallbona and Dimitrovsky, 2016), this process may have far-reaching implications for the future of the market. In spite of the time distance, Jacobs (1961) better to describe this force of decline to whom she calls the *self-destruction of diversity*:

Thus, from this process, one or a few dominating uses finally emerge triumphant. But the triumph is hollow. A most intricate and successful organism of economic mutual support and social mutual support has been destroyed by the process (page 234).

Therefore, future tourism policies have the power to decide whether the market will continue to function as a vibrant, multifaceted urban center or become a collection of restaurants and cafes serving a narrow segment of the population.

General conclusions and policy implications

Supermarkets, shopping malls and other shopping centers that characterize the postmodern city have caused changes in consumer habits and endangered traditional city centers. The competition for the consumers' attention has caused city centers to reinvent themselves using their historical assets: the urban traditional food markets. The last decade has seen a resurgence of urban markets. The present study focused on traditional food markets because of their unique historical, geographical and economic importance in the urban fabric. The purpose of this study was to examine the developmental processes of the Mahane Yehuda Market while trying to trace the factors that led to the varied developmental patterns. While the literature dealt extensively with the changes in consumption and recreation habits and the various strategies used for revitalizing the city centers (Harvey, 1989; Florida, 2003; Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007), there is a lack of researches that presents empirical data on the impact, implications, and barriers involved in the "return to the market" phenomenon. Within the studies that engaged with tourism development in traditional food markets, most examined the motivations of tourists' visitations by segmenting visitors according to behavioural patterns and demographic characteristics (Crespi-Vallbona and Dimitrovsky, 2016; Castillo-Canalejo *et al.*, 2020). Other studies addressed the phenomenon from its supply-side, examining the markets' characteristics such as location and accessibility and its physical environment (Dimitrovski and Crespi-Vallbona, 2017).

The present study adds to the existing knowledge by an in-depth examination of another major actor who, in spite of his unique characteristics, is absent from the research discourse. Analysing merchants' responses to the tourism development process and segmenting their attitudes and motivations contributes to understanding the process of retail gentrification in traditional food markets, especially in food markets that are privately owned, such as the Mahane Yehuda Market in Jerusalem. The study contributes to the research field by suggesting that the phenomenon of retail gentrification in traditional food markets is widespread. While, previous research has documented this phenomenon mainly in global cities such as New York, London and Barcelona. The current study indicates that this phenomenon also exists in other, less touristy destinations such as Jerusalem. Another contribution of the study is that it presents a model of bottom-up tourism development and retail gentrification.

Mapping the physical changes that occurred in the Mahane Yehuda Market and analysing dozens of interviews with merchants and other stakeholders helped deepen the understanding of the development of urban markets as spaces for consumption and recreation, not only at the theoretical level but also at the application level. The results of the study can be used by planners, decision makers and other stakeholders for their work. For example, the mapping may help develop tools to measure the intensity of the changes. Additionally, the findings from the comparative analysis could influence the future policies and developmental strategies of other markets. The findings from this study indicate that the lack of an organized and professional market administration impairs the ability of traditional urban markets to adapt properly to the developmental processes taking place in and around them. Optimal development policy must be in full cooperation with the market merchants as well as the residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods.

It is within the power of a municipal policy to exploit the inherent potential of urban markets and realize their benefits to the city. However, urban policy or, rather, the absence of such a policy may lead to an irreversible process that changes the market beyond recognition. Traditional urban markets can and should be essential centers even in the 21st century by adapting to the changing consumer reality and maintaining a balance between the mix of uses and their unique identity. Public authority plays a key role in maintaining this balance. Therefore, the starting point for motivating this type of tourism development is initiating a dialogue between the local government and market merchants.

The research presented in this article focused on the developmental processes that have taken place in the Mahane Yehuda Market as part of the local tourism scene and as well as the perception of their effects from the merchants' point of view. A qualitative approach was used to examine the use of the tourism space in the case of the Mahane Yehuda Market. To compensate for the limitations of the qualitative method, a quantitative research method was also incorporated into this research. However, there is a need to continue researching the issues that have not yet been fully answered, such as the impact of tourism development in urban markets on a city's image and on other tourist attractions in the city. Further research should extend the comparative analysis to other urban markets such as The Carmel Market in Tel-Aviv, which displays an opposite process of top-down tourism development or, alternatively, urban markets that have been able to cope well with the retail gentrification processes. Such a study would focus on the third major actor—the decision maker—to analyse the developmental strategies and create a useful tool for decision makers to maintain the balance between the preservation and development of traditional urban food markets.

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Further reading

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Appendix

1. List of interviewees:

- Moshe Rotem, a merchant at a vegetable stall in the Iraqi market (11.03.14).
- Gideon Ezra, owner of a spice shop on HaEgoz Street (19.03.14).
- Baruch Israel, a merchant at candy and juice stall on HaEgoz Street (19.03.14).
- Regev Ivanschitz, owner of a food stall on HaEgoz Street (24.03.14).
- Dudu Basher, owner of a cheese deli on Etz Haim Street (24.03.14).
- Eli Mizrahi, owner of a coffee shop on HaShezif Street and chairman of the Merchants Committee in the past (25.03.14).
- Shimon Darvish, chairman of the Merchants Committee in the present (08.04.14).
- Ilan Cohen, director of the Mahane Yehuda Administration (08.04.14).
- Tzadok Abraham, owner of a flower shop on Etz Haim Street (23.04.14).
- Tzvika Ovadia, a merchant at a vegetable stall on Etz Haim Street (23.04.14).
- Ophir Ben Harush, owner of a coffee shop on Etz Haim Street (23.04.14).
- Tali Fridman, owner of a chef's restaurant on HaHaruv Street and conducts culinary tours in the market (30.04.14).
- Jonathan Hirshfeld, owner of a Greek bar on Etz Haim Street (11.05.14).
- Neta Dahan, a merchant at a fish stall on HaShaked Street (28.05.14).
- Einav Bar, Holder of Small Business office, Jerusalem Municipality (29.05.14).
- Kobi Frige, event Producer and son of one of the merchants in the market (20.01.15).
- Uri Amedi, Former director of Community Administration "Lev Hair," Jerusalem Municipality (12.12.14).
- Meirav Einstein-Siano, VP at Czamanski & Ben Shahaar Ltd. (December 23, 2014).

2. List of figures:

- The Mahane Yehuda Market environment, Source: Municipality of Jerusalem.
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- The rate of classical uses relative to all other uses: a comparison between 2007, 2014 and 2020, Source: Authors.
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- Segmentation of merchants' responses according to their ownership status, Source: Authors.
- Sequence of the owners' responses to tourism development from full activity (right); to integration attempts (center) and passivity and indifference (left), Source: Authors.

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