

INTRODUCTION

The Neighborhood Initiative decided to carry out an employee survey regarding housing demand. The main aim of the study was to address this issue by studying the market for housing in the Ras Beirut area by conducting market research using a sample of AUB and AUH employees. These efforts are expected to result in re-nurturing the neighborhood spirit, and returning the Ras Beirut area to a place for all people regardless of their socioeconomic and/or religious backgrounds.

Ras Beirut has become a much more expensive place to live over the years. Luxury housing has replaced middle income housing and driven up property values in a general sense. In 1970, 80% of all AUB employees lived in the neighborhood; now it is only about 20%. Housing and lack of housing in the RAS Beirut district causes a serious problem. It became a commercial district with very few family housing units. As one of the main universities in the region providing higher education, AUB is taking the initiative to solve this problem.

The study firstly tried to estimate housing demand; secondly it looked at the factors that shape the decision-making process and how respondents decide where they want to live; and thirdly, it assessed attitudes toward the different, possible residential areas.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The study had four objectives:

1. To identify the current housing situation of AUB employees – such as where they live, in what type of residences they live, how much they pay, etc.
2. To determine housing preferences of AUB employees, such as: where they want to live, the size of the residence they choose, how much they want to pay for utilities, etc.
3. To specify the factors that shape the decision-making process, and how residents decide where they want to live.
4. To identify the attitudes toward the different, possible alternatives of accommodation.

Sample and Data Collection

The stratified sampling methodology was applied in the selection of the respondents since it is one of the probability sampling methods and minimizing the variability within each group and maximizing the differences between groups. It was decided to include AUB and AUH employees. The sample also embraced employees working in different roles – academics, administrators, and non-academic employees. Both genders are represented in the sample. The respondents from each group of employees were drawn randomly. The study sample was comprised of 126 university employees out of 400 randomly selected sample. The nature of the study is exploratory. Therefore, the results should be interpreted cautiously. The content of the questionnaire was determined through face to face interviews with employees from different levels, consultations with housing specialists and dept-interviews with the professionals like professors in the school of architecture and design. The data in the study were obtained through e-mail survey and face-to-face interviews.

Measures

The first part of the questionnaire related to personal information about the respondent. The second part included general household information, such as the number of persons in the household, and the number of persons contributing to the household income. In the third part, the respondents were asked questions about their current residence, such as the neighborhood where they live, the status of their current residence, the size of the dwelling, etc. The fourth part included questions regarding preferred residence. Finally, the respondents were asked questions relating to their attitudes toward several housing options in Ras Beirut.