

Religious Tourism in Jordan: **Current situation, future developments and prospects**

A case study on Islamic and Christian holy sites

Inauguraldissertation von

Malek Bader

aus Ajloun /Jordanien

zur Vorlage bei der

Mathematisch-Geographischen Fakultät

der Katholischen Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt

Eichstätt im September 2012

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Inauguraldissertation von
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List of Abbreviations

ABC	Arab Banking Cooperation
AIR	American Institutes for Research
BSC	Baptism Site Commission, Jordan
BTI	Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DoA	Department of Antiquities, Jordan
DoS	Department of Statistics, Jordan
FAI	Franciscan Archaeological Institute, Jordan
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information System
HDI	Human Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITB	Internationale Tourismus-Börse (International Tourism Fair) in Berlin
JD	Jordan Dinar
JNTS	Jordan's National Tourism Strategy
JTB	Jordan Tourism Board
KAAD	Katholischer Akademischer Ausländer-Dienst (Catholic Academic Exchange Service)
MoTA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan
SPM	Strategic Master Plan
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WHS	World Heritage Site
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

Abstract

The purpose of this research study is to analyse the state of the religious tourism product in Jordan from three main perspectives: To present the current state of religious tourism in Jordan through studying the tourism movement in the holy sites and analysing the potentials and future prospects. The relationship between the local community and these sites will be the second perspective from which the researcher will form the study. A third perspective is studying the visitors' satisfaction about the services presented to them and the evaluation of the current state of the selected holy sites, whether they are Islamic or Christian.

The study was carried out at the Islamic and Christian sites of Jordan: five Christian holy sites are included, namely the Baptism Site, Mount Nebo, Our Lady of the Mountain, and the shrines of Mar Elijah and Mukawir. The Vatican recognized these holy sites as pilgrimage places in 2000. Eight Islamic holy sites are included too, namely, the shrines of Ja'far bin Abi Taleb, Zaid ibn Harithah, Abdallah bin Rawahah, Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn al-Jarrah, Mu'ath bin Jabal, Shurhabil bin Husnah, Amir bin Abi Waqqas, and Dirar bin al-Azwar.

The selection of these sites was based on their religious and tourist significance, both Islamic and Christian. In addition, these sites, according to statistics obtained from Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, are the most targeted by tourists and pilgrims for religious purposes and motives.

The researcher obtained data by implementing different tools of study and research; most data depend on national and international statistics, indices of tourism and religious tourism in particular. In addition, literature on religious tourism helped in formulating the structure of the research, although the shortage of Arabic and English references was remarkable. Therefore, the researcher hopes that this study will be a good addition and asset to the literature of religious tourism in Jordan. The researcher's observations were a significant tool in this study and he made valuable observations that could play an important role in developing the religious tourism product in the kingdom if they are well implemented. The researcher conducted very fruitful qualitative research (interviews) with officials working in the field of tourism and, in particular, religious tourism, and he did a lot of interviews with visitors, tourists, and pilgrims at the holy sites, local communities

around the holy sites, directors of the holy sites, directors of tourism directorates and religious men (Imams¹ or priests). 211 self-completed questionnaires were filled during the study period (from the beginning of May to the end of August 2009) to analyse religious tourism at the sites from many different perspectives. The questionnaires were analysed with the programme SPSS 17.0, and the interviews were analysed with the help of the programme MAXQDA 10. In other words, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods of research.

The main results of the research can be summarized as follows:

The vast majority of those who responded to the questionnaire (83.3%) believe that understanding common religious heritage is a factor upon which dialogue and a better coexistence between religions can begin to take place in a part of our world which suffers a lot of problems based on religious conflicts. Less than 1% of the respondents gave a negative answer to this question, which indicates that there are strong feelings for understanding and building relationships based on common religious heritage. This is an important finding because it reiterates the role that common religious heritage has in the promotion of religious sites and the bringing together of people from different religious backgrounds. Christians were found among the Muslims in the Islamic holy sites and vice versa; this encourages the idea of the common religious heritage and its effect on the convergence and understanding between the people of different religions. However, there is one problem and this is related to visitors from Israel, but this is because of the well-known political reasons and not due to religious beliefs of the people.

The main purpose and also the main incentive for the tourists and visitors to visit the holy sites are prayer and worship which are from religious motives. Holy sites in Jordan are places of prayer and worship which also provide some form of relaxation and entertainment.

When asked with whom visitors usually go to the religious sites, it was reported that 58.8% usually go to the holy sites with their families. It could be concluded from this percentage that religious tourism is also connected to family tourism. For this reason, the government and officials should take care to provide for the needs and services that are suitable for families at the holy sites.

¹ **Imam:** The male prayer leader in a mosque.

The majority of visitors and tourists who visit the holy sites are married and between the ages of 25 and 44. In addition, another good percentage of tourists are between the age of 45 and 64. Knowing this information is important because it solidifies who is coming to visit the holy sites and the manner in which these sites can be promoted. Moreover, the majority of the visitors to the sites are men which is remarkable. In fact, nearly 70% of the visitors are males. Most of the people who visit the holy sites are married (62.3%).

The research also found that most tourists who visited the holy sites are Jordanians, with 44.6% from the entire sample being from Jordan. The majority of people come from educated backgrounds having at least a Bachelor's degree.

For the professional people working in Jordan's tourism sector, it should be interesting that the most important mass media concerned is the Internet through which 40.8% of the tourists learned about the holy sites. The Internet has become the most important tool in advertising and promotion.

The most visited site was the Mount Nebo with 82.5% of the respondents having visited it. The two other sites Abu Ubaydah Shrine with 54% and Mount Nebo with 80.6%. Baptism Site and Mount Nebo are always in the programmes of travel agencies, but unfortunately the Islamic holy site of Abu Ubaydah Shrine is not in the travel agents programmes. Most of the tourists visit this holy site because it is situated on the way to the Dead Sea. Most tourists who visit Jordan definitely Dead Sea is on their programme. For this reason, travel agencies should include this holy site and other holy sites in their programmes.

The main problems and obstacles that tourists faced when visiting the holy tourist sites were associated with the services at the holy sites, especially with the traffic signs to the holy sites, the expensive prices, parking places, the bad condition of the roads, no guides inside many sites, no brochures in multiple languages, services of food and drink, and many others. In order to promote tourism in Jordan government and planners should take good care of these problems and try to find a solution for them.

Up to now, Jordan does not open the holy sites freely for all nationalities and religions, especially for Muslims from Shiite. There is a religious political problem from the perspective of Islamic religious tourism, as many experts and academics emphasised during the interviews.

The holy sites in Jordan, whether they are Islamic or Christian, are fragile and they will be so until Jordan takes good care of this precious resource of the tourism industry which could be one of the most important backbones for tourism in Jordan. There is also a gap between local communities and the holy sites. A lot of interviewees declared that they only see the tourists and they don't benefit from them. Therefore, there is no economic benefit for these societies.

Finally, on the social level and concerning intercultural and religious heritage, the researcher hopes through this project that it will contribute to develop a basis on which it is possible to bring Muslims and Christians in Jordan closer together through a deeper understanding of their common religious heritage.

Zusammenfassung

Im Rahmen der vorliegenden Untersuchung wurde die touristische Inwertsetzung religiöser Stätten in Jordanien aus drei verschiedenen Perspektiven analysiert: Zum Einen wird der aktuelle Stand des Pilgertourismus anhand der Besucherzahlen in den betreffenden Destinationen dargestellt, um Potentiale und zukünftige Entwicklungen analysieren zu können. Darüber hinaus liegt der Fokus auf der relationalen Betrachtung der Zusammenarbeit zwischen den touristischen Stätten und den Bewohnern vor Ort. Ebenso von Bedeutung für die Arbeit ist die Evaluierung der Destinationen anhand der Zufriedenheit der Besucher mit deren Angebot.

Für die Untersuchung wurden insgesamt fünf religiöse Stätten mit christlichem Hintergrund (Taufstelle Jesu, Berg Nebo, Kirche „Our Lady of the mountain“, Schrein des Mar Elijah und Mukawir) ausgewählt, die von Seiten des Vatikans im Jahr 2000 offiziell als Pilgerstätten anerkannt wurden. Weiterhin wurden acht touristisch in Wert gesetzte Stätten, die in der Religion des Islam eine besondere Bedeutung haben, betrachtet (Schreine von Ja'far bin Abi Taleb, Zaid ibn Harithah, Abdallah bin Rawahah, Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn Al-Jarrah, Mu'ath bin Jabal, Shurahbil bin Husnah, Amir bin Abi Waqqas und Dirir bin Al-Azwar). Alle Destinationen haben einen hohen religiösen und touristischen Stellenwert und verfügen über das höchste Touristen- und Pilgeraufkommen in Jordanien.

Die Ergebnisse der Arbeit wurden mit Hilfe einer Methodentriangulation gewonnen. In einem ersten Schritt wurden sekundäre Daten der nationalen und internationalen Statistik zum Tourismus und im Besonderen zum Tourismus aus religiösen Gründen in Jordanien ausgewertet. Weiterhin wurden 211 Besucher der Destinationen im Anschluss an ihren Besuch mit Hilfe eines standardisierten Fragebogens bezüglich ihrer Gründe für den Besuch und ihrer Zufriedenheit befragt. Die Erhebung fand zwischen Mai und August 2009 statt. Analysiert und ausgewertet wurden die statistischen Daten mit Hilfe der Software SPSS.

Ein weiterer Schritt beinhaltete schließlich die Durchführung qualitativer Interviews mit Vertretern der Tourismusbranche (insbesondere des Pilgertourismus), Besuchern und Leitern der religiösen Stätten, Vertretern der Kommunen und touristischer Institutionen sowie Priestern und Imamen. Die Auswertung der Interviews erfolgte mit MAXQDA 10.

Darüber hinaus waren die Beobachtungen vor Ort wichtig für die Analyse der erhobenen Daten.

Die Studie soll einen Beitrag zur touristischen Grundlagenforschung in Jordanien sowie relevante Ergebnisse für die Tourismusbranche des Königreichs im Hinblick auf Handlungsempfehlungen liefern. Die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung können wie folgt zusammengefasst werden:

Der Großteil der Befragten mit 83,3% ist der Meinung, dass das Verständnis des gemeinsamen religiösen Erbes Ausgangspunkt für einen zunehmenden Dialog darstellt. Dies zeigt die wichtige Rolle, die Pilgerstätten und touristisch in Wert gesetzte religiöse Orte für das gegenseitige Verständnis und das Zusammenleben von Menschen unterschiedlicher Religionen haben. Anhänger beider Religionen sind unter den Besuchern aller Stätten zu finden. Ein gewisses Problem stellen Besucher und Touristen aus Israel dar, doch Ursache dafür ist nicht die Religion, sondern es sind die bekannten, schwerwiegenden politischen Probleme, die das Leben in der Region seit Jahrzehnten massiv beeinflussen.

Der hauptsächliche Grund für den Besuch der befragten Personen ist der Wunsch nach Gebet und Verehrung. 85,8% besuchen die Destinationen zusammen mit ihren Familien, was den Zusammenhang zwischen Religions- und Familientourismus verdeutlicht. Aus diesem Grund sollten die Verantwortlichen darauf Wert legen, die Stätten besonders für die Bedürfnisse von Familien auszubauen.

Die Mehrzahl der befragten Besucher der Destinationen ist zwischen 25 und 44 Jahre alt. Davon sind 70% männlich und knapp zwei Drittel (62,3%) verheiratet. Weiterhin kann festgehalten werden, dass 44,6% der Besucher aus Jordanien kommen und mehrheitlich einen hohen Bildungsstand (mind. einen ersten Universitätsabschluss) besitzen.

Wichtig für die professionellen Akteure im Tourismus Jordaniens könnte sein, dass sich insgesamt 40,8% der Befragten über die besuchten Stätten im Internet informierten. Gleichzeitig wurde das Internet als wichtigstes Instrument zur Vermarktung der Stätten benannt.

Die meistbesuchte Stätte ist der Berg Nebo 82,5% der Befragten gaben an, schon einmal dort gewesen zu sein. Ebenfalls viel besucht sind die Taufstelle Jesu. 80,6 und der Schrein des Abu Ubaydah. Etwas mehr als die Hälfte (54%) besuchten diese Stätten bereits. Gründe hierfür könnten sein, dass die Taufstelle Jesu und Mount Nebo in den

Routen der Reiseagenturen besonders berücksichtigt werden und der Schrein des Abu Ubaydah auf der Reiseroute zum Toten Meer gelegen ist. Daraus kann der Schluss gezogen werden, dass die jordanischen Pilgerstätten vermehrt in den Angeboten der Veranstalter vertreten sein sollten.

Unzufriedenheit bei den befragten Besuchern wurde oft durch Beanstandungen in folgenden Bereichen ausgelöst: fehlende Ausschilderungen bei der Anfahrt, übertriebene Preise, fehlende Parkplätze, schlechte Straßen, fehlende Fremdenführer, fehlende Infobroschüren in mehreren Sprachen sowie unzureichender gastronomischer Service. In diesen Bereichen herrscht dringender Verbesserungsbedarf für alle Verantwortlichen der Stätten.

Bislang sind einige Pilgerstätten nicht für alle Nationalitäten und Religionen zugänglich. In einigen muslimischen Stätten ist beispielsweise der Zutritt für Shiiten verboten. Die in diesem Zusammenhang bestehende Problematik gerade der Pilgerstätten des Islam wurde von vielen Experten im Interview betont.

Insgesamt lässt sich festhalten, dass die Pilgerstätten mit sowohl christlichem als auch islamischem Hintergrund in Jordanien großes Entwicklungspotential besitzen. Vor allem die Zusammenarbeit mit den Kommunen und Entscheidungsträgern vor Ort ist stark ausbaufähig.

Die vorliegende Arbeit möchte insgesamt einen Beitrag zum Verständnis zwischen den unterschiedlichen Religionen und zu einem dialogorientierten Zusammenleben zwischen Völkern und Religionsgruppen beitragen. Dabei sollen die Basis des gemeinsamen religiösen Erbes und die Bedeutung von Pilgerstätten hierfür betont werden.

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² Since October, 2011 Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: my mother, sisters,
brothers and to the spirit of my late father.

Chapter One

Introduction

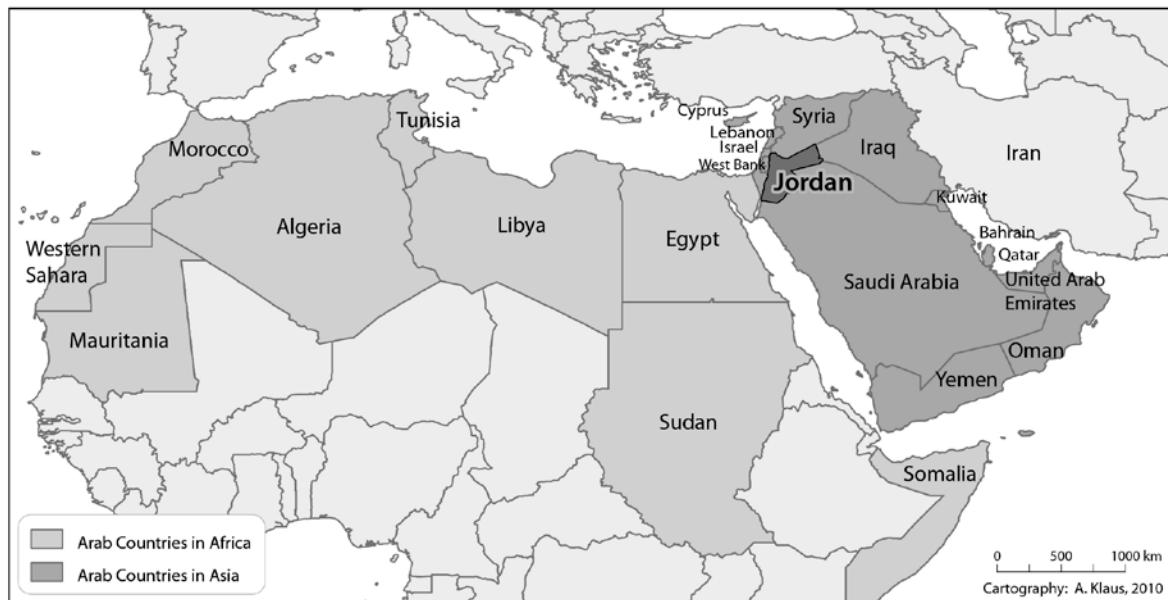
1.1 General Information on the Field of the Study: Jordan

Established as a sovereign state in 1946 and officially called the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan since 1950 (Map 1.1), the kingdom is named after the River Jordan. Jordan is located in southwest Asia. Its neighbouring countries are Iraq to the east, the West Bank and Israel on the west, Saudi Arabia to both south and east and Syria to the north. Jordan is home to approximately 6.3 million people (Department of Statistics, DoS, 2012). Although the official language of Jordan is Arabic, English is widespread and today a compulsory subject in schools.

Jordan is 89,342 km² in size (land: 88,802 km², water: 540 km²). To compare its size with other countries, it is slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Maine or approximately one quarter the size of Germany. The climate is arid Mediterranean along the high western plateau, with a desert covering some 80% of the country (Coleman, 1997, p.8). Water bodies are limited to the Jordan River, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Dead Sea. Agricultural land is limited, and water is considerably scarce: Jordan ranks as the world's fourth poorest country in this regard. Though the cultural heritage until very recently was based on nomadic pastoralism (Bedouin) and small-farming, today the population is around 80% urban and is one of the youngest among upper middle income countries, with 38% being under the age of 14 (World Bank, 2012, p. 11).

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan mediates the two wings of the Arab nation, one in Asia and one in Africa, and it is characterised by the fact that international guests as well as Arab tourists who come to enjoy the natural scenery, extraordinary climate conditions and holy sites in relative safety, free of the plague of political instability, are warmly welcomed. Jordan is a secure destination as a comparably stable Middle Eastern country, offering most of the comforts of a contemporary western country on the one side while

still rooted in traditional culture on the other.³ Jordan also offers a wide variety of tourist experiences – from rugged desert and lush spring wildflowers, urban Amman to tiny, rural villages, from wild mountains to beach resorts.



Map 1.1: Jordan in its regional context, the MENA Region (Middle East and North Africa)

Another important information for the present study is that tourism is one of the fastest growing industries worldwide. It is one of the most important sectors of international trade and for many governments it plays a vital role in raising the gross national product (GNP) and in improving their balance of payments. Tourism is a major source of hard currency, provides work opportunities and is one of the major objectives for economic development programmes (Al-Hariry, 2001).⁴

Concerning tourism, especially religious tourism in Jordan, there is a vital basis: The Abrahamic traditions, Islam, Christianity and Judaism, insist on hospitality as a religious commitment. This is especially attractive for tourism development, especially in milieus where such religious teaching dominates everyday as well as religious life. For example, there are many places in the New Testament where the obligation of hospitality toward

³ Throughout the so-called Arab uprising of 2010-2011, Jordan has remained stable, though there have been numerous small-scale demonstrations in the capital of Amman and in smaller towns usually considered strongholds of the Hashemite royal family. Popular discontent is widespread in Jordan over the moribund economy, unemployment, corruption, and inequality – the same grievances that sparked revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya (Sharp, 2011, p.1).

⁴ Cited in Odat, (2011, p.2026)

the foreigner or guest is mentioned; Romans 12:13 exhorts “*Open your homes to strangers.*” 1 Peter 4:9 reads: “*Open your homes to each other without complaining,*” a message of St. Peter in his Epistles built into the foundation of Christian theological teaching that observant Christians are taught to follow in their everyday behaviour. The Old Testament too, enjoins the Israelites on more than one occasion that they should treat strangers well.

In Islam, hospitality is a major theme in the Qur’an and Hadith (the canonical traditions associated with the Prophet Muhammad and the foundational community of Islam, the nation [in Arabic Al-Umma], as well as one of the basic ethics of Arab traditional culture). This attitude of Islam toward hospitality is strongly connected with the fact that the *hajj* is one of the five fundamental commandments for an Islamic believer. One Hadith states that one of the ways for a believer to achieve paradise is “*by offering hospitality to the traveller, the guest*” (Vukonic, 1996, 110-11). Another Hadith for Islamic hospitality towards the guest states: “*He who believes in Allah (God) and the Last Day should show hospitality to his guest*”. (Sahih al-Bukhaari, Volume 8, Book 76, Number 482) & (Sahih Muslim, Chapter 20, Book 001, Number 0075).

Tourism based on pilgrimage and visiting the holy sites became important in Jordan, especially after the two visits of two Christian popes. Jordan is part of the Holy Land due to the presence of holy places representing the three monotheistic religions. The Holy Land is the area where the events described in the Bible and is defined geographically as the area extending from southern Syria to the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea, and from the borders of Iraq to the shores of the Mediterranean (see Map 1.2).

Pilgrimage is usually perceived as a religious or saintly activity. As tourism and pilgrimage are, however, related, we should pose the question: *What is the connection between pilgrimage and tourism?* Pilgrimage is often viewed as the ancient forerunner of present-day tourism, as pilgrimage is frequently discussed in the literature in terms of religious tourism (Fairer-Wessels, 2007, p.40).

According to Collins-Kreiner,(2010, p.440) pilgrimage is one of the oldest and most basic forms of population mobility known to human society, and its political, social, cultural and economic implications have always been, and continue to be, substantial. Pilgrimage is a phenomenon linked to all religions. It existed before the books of the Bible. It was a feature of primitive religions, connected to the worship of so called holy places

and the ancestor cult. It was deeply rooted not only in small tribal communities, but also in all world religions, whether monotheistic or not. Sometimes the development of pilgrimage was linked to trade routes, such as the Incense Road in Arabia or the Silk Road (see Map 1.3) in the Far East. The last has been the bridge between the East and the West for many centuries, losing its prestige only after the sea-routes opened in the 16th century.

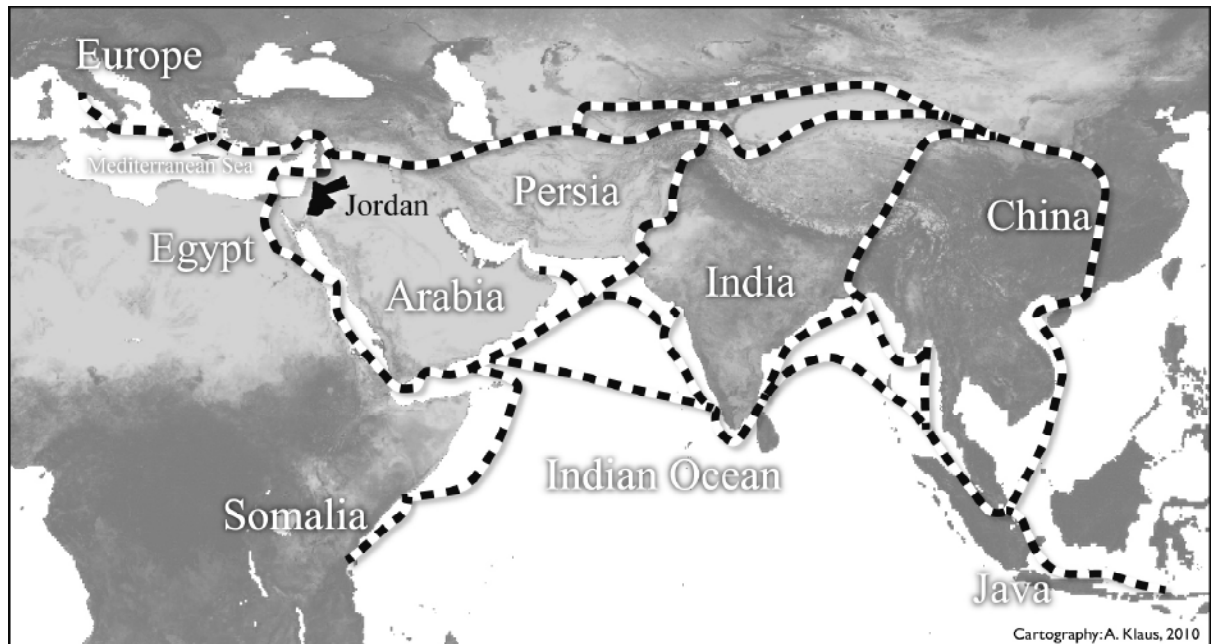


Map 1.2: Borders of the Holy Land

Many ancient pilgrimage destinations, such as Rome, Fatima, Lourdes, and Jerusalem, have since been developed as tourist sites and are also known for their attractiveness and economic impact. If we are to expect a certain economic impact from religious tourism, and especially from pilgrimage, we need to have the appropriate infrastructure, which we might call a “tourism infrastructure” (Vukonic, 1996, p. 175).

In Jordan and centuries ago, pilgrims flocked to Mount Nebo to visit the sanctuary on the way to their final destination. These pilgrims left behind vivid accounts of their travels, helping archaeologists identify the sanctuary. The memorial of Moses at Nebo, according to tradition the site of his death and burial place, has been a pilgrimage centre since earliest Christian times, and is now an important cultural heritage site because of its religious significance to all three monotheistic religions. At Nebo the intersection of religious tourism and cultural tourism is abundantly evident.

Politics in the Holy Land, however, have played havoc with the religious tourism industry. It is difficult to make statistical comparisons of the number of tourists coming to the Holy Land for pilgrimage pre- and post-1967,⁵ at which time the West Bank was annexed by Israel, bisecting the Holy Land.



Map 1.3: Silk Road and its different branches (Source: Whitfield, 2004, pp.8-10)

Timothy and Iverson (2006, pp.186-201) remark that it was not so much lack of development which attributed to the fluctuation in numbers; rather the fear of having to go through a land mutilated by war. Occupation and terrorism made going on pilgrimage and visiting the holy sites very risky even for the most pious. Greek Orthodox pilgrims and Coptic pilgrims once timed their pilgrimages to Jerusalem to coincide with Easter and the period immediately after. They came to visit the domicile of Christ and stayed with friendly Christian and Muslim families throughout the city of Jerusalem, also bringing goods to trade. They left happy and purified. This pilgrimage tradition ceased after 1967.

Western pilgrims, especially those whose travels were organised by church congregations and other religious groups and institutions from the United States and many other parts of the world, suffered a lot from the impact of this political situation. Like many

⁵ The West Bank was under control of Jordan from 1949 to 1967. Since 1967 West Bank is under Israeli occupation.

others the U.S. government issued warnings (at times requiring) that their citizens stay away from dangerous zones in the Middle East, advising people not to go there for leisure, pleasure or pilgrimage. Most churches representing the various sectors of the Christian faith suffered a lot from the impact of this fraught situation and stopped encouraging visitors or pilgrims, as there were a variety of safety and even liability concerns.



Map 1.4: Borders of Jordan from 1949-1967



Map 1.5: Borders of Jordan after 1967

Tourism has been a culture and a means of sustenance for Muslims, Christians and Jews, conducted in communion between the Muslims and the Christians of the Holy Land, as it provided everyone's "bread and butter." After 1967 all three "host cultures" in the Holy Land suffered from the lack of moderation and from intolerance that started to breed between the various socio-political factions. Fleishman (2009) attributes these growing tensions to the possessiveness of the Israeli occupier, who was hardly a devout Jewish observer "save for the Wailing Wall", and who valued security and the pretext of security above tourism revenue or the interests of a Christian church or Muslim mosque.

According to a tourism sector report by ABC⁶ investments (2009, pp.7-8): "*Tourism is a vital organ in the Jordanian economy contributing substantially to the Kingdom's GDP, with hotels and restaurants alone adding JD 179.1 million to Jordan's real GDP at market prices. Due to a lack of publicly available information related specifically to the tourism sector as a whole, the true added value of this sector to the economy cannot, however, be determined here. Tourism is the fastest growing sector in the Kingdom, growing at a CAGR⁷ of 15.4% during the period 2003–2007, and is the second largest producer*

⁶ ABC: Arab Banking Corporation

⁷ CAGR: Compound Annual Growth Rate

of foreign exchange. It also employs more than 35,000 people and is a reservoir of industrial development projects. Facilities granted by licensed banks to the sector have grown substantially in recent years to reach JD 354.7 million at the end of November 2008, up a huge 39% compared to 2007. At the end of October 2008, the total tourism income reached JD 1.77 billion compared to JD 1.41 billion over the same period of the previous year, registering an increase of 25%”.

Tourism is clearly a very important sector of the Jordanian economy. Jordan’s numerous archaeological sites and well-preserved cultural and religious attractions bring in millions of foreign tourists every year. As suggested in the investment report quoted above, there are few specific statistics relating to the tourists and pilgrims who visit the holy sites in Jordan. According to the World Tourism Organisation, an estimated 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world’s key religious sites every year. According to Wright, 2008 president of the WRTA⁸, perhaps one million of this number visit the holy sites of Jordan. However, according to many of the travel agents interviewed for this study the number of purely religious tourists visiting the holy sites in Jordan is no more than 300,000 per annum.

1.2 Aims of the Study

This research tries to explore the potential of religious tourism for Jordan. First of all, the research aims to deliver a precise description of the current state of religious tourism in Jordan and the future developments and prospects. Thirteen holy sites are treated in detail. Eight Islamic sites were chosen according to their religious and touristic significance as well as the five Christian holy sites recognized by the Vatican in 2000 as official pilgrimage destinations. Another important aim of this research work is to explore the relationship between local communities and holy sites and to estimate the current visitor satisfaction.

The overall target of the study is to find answers to the central question whether religious tourism is or can be used as a tool which may help to bring Muslims and Christians in Jordan closer together through a deeper understanding of their common religious heritage. As means to explore this question, the study aims to:

⁸ WRTA: World Religious Travel Association

- Analyse the present state of religious tourism and its future prospects by evaluating to what extent holy sites are important in promoting tourism and how they could be utilised as a tool for further promotion and overall development of the tourism industry in the future.
- Identify the social, economic, religious, and political factors that influence religious tourism in Jordan.
- Gather socio-demographic data about tourists touring the land in general and in the holy sites in detail, and collect conclusive statistics about their backgrounds.
- Contribute to the development of guidelines for the sustainable development of religious tourism.
- Outline problems and challenges faced by religious tourism and religious tourists by means of interviews.
- Collect tourists' assessments of the level of services and facilities provided at the holy sites and the freedom to practice religious rites.
- Contribute to develop and upgrade the status of Jordanian religious tourism.
- Fill an existing gap in the research concerning religious tourism in Jordan. Despite the growth of religious tourism throughout the world, relatively few studies have explored this topic.

1.3 Background of the Research

The research combines qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative data are drawn from national and international statistics, as well as from indices for tourism in general and for religious tourism in particular. Archival literature on tourism in Jordan in general and religious tourism in particular was summarized. Qualitative methods mainly include personal in-depth interviews which were carried out, too, on the basis of semi structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with officials working in the field, tourists and pilgrims, local people especially in the vicinity of the holy sites and authorities as well clergy (imams⁹ and priests). 211 self-completion questionnaires were distributed to tourists and pilgrims in the study area and subsequently analyzed by using the pro-

⁹ Imam: A religious person who leads prayers in the mosque

gramme SPSS. This activity was intended as an assessment study of the holy sites, and thus tourists were questioned as they departed the site. The researcher verbally asked the questions, filled the questionnaire and also recorded participants' answers.

The research determined that Jordan has not yet recognized the economic potential of religious tourism and at the time of writing the present study in 2011 and 2012 has yet to open its doors freely to this tourist market. Jordan's primary strength as a tourist destination is the richness and diversity of its Christian and Islamic holy sites. Foremost is the common religious heritage of the holy sites. In the course of conducting this study it became clear that this commonly shared heritage within the religious landscape of Jordan and throughout the region is an extremely important factor in attracting visitors as well as bringing Christians and Muslims closer together as communities. Jordan appeals to Muslims, Christians and Jews alike, because as the "Abrahamic" traditions all three recognize religious sites in Jordan. The appeal of these sites is strengthened by the authority and richness of the traditions associated with the Islamic and Christian heritage sites in Jordan. The Christian holy sites, for instance, such as the Baptism Site on the Jordan River, are biblically genuine. The Islamic holy sites are also officially recognized within Muslim tradition as sites historically associated with the companions (in Arabic *Sahabah*) of Prophet Muhammad.

A second potential strength is Jordan's geographical proximity to religious sites in other nations. The geographical location of Jordan as the crossroads between Europe, Africa and Asia makes the country a promising tourist destination (Harahsheh, 2002, p.106). This is especially advantageous to international tourists who want to maximize their travel experience and visit as many sites as possible in a single trip. The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) must take advantage of Jordan's location especially in the programmes of marketing and promotion.

Weaknesses and threats to the market are in many cases contingent on the current global political and economic situation, and thus largely outside the control of the tourism industry. The primary threat is ongoing regional political instability and unrest. This unrest, although it has not impacted Jordan to the extent that it has other Arab countries, has affected the way in which people travel. Tourists are afraid they may become embroiled in regional violence and be harmed or unable to escape.

A major weakness of Jordan's tourism infrastructure itself, however, is the lack of connectivity between the holy sites. Many of the officials and tourism experts interviewed cited the need to create trails that will connect the sites together to make them more accessible to tourists who want to see all the sites in a timely and efficient manner. Travel agencies actually list only a very small number of the existing holy sites, either Islamic or Christian, in their programmes. On an international level, while Jordan's physical proximity to other countries with rich religious heritage is an advantage, this level of connectivity could also bear a considerable potential for improvement. As one of travel agents interviewed said:

"We should connect Jordan religious tourism to other neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Syria, Palestinian Territories and Israel if we want to succeed in this type of tourism."

Jordan's tourism promoters need to work more closely with neighbouring countries to provide necessary linkages and services to enhance religious tourism.

An administrative obstacle which complicates the marketing of the holy sites to tourists lies in the fact that the government ministry responsible for religious tourism is the Ministry of Awqaf¹⁰ Islamic Affairs and Holy Places, rather than the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. The majority of the Muslims interviewed do not accept even the expression "religious tourism" because they view tourism as "entertainment" and religion, in contrast, as a "serious" subject – two concepts unsuitable for coupling. In addition, doctrinally speaking, only the *Hajj* (obligatory pilgrimage) and *Umrah* (the lesser, non-obligatory pilgrimage) to Mecca are recognized as pilgrimage by the conservatives, which creates another disconnect in promoting other Islamic holy sites. The researcher observed that most of the Muslims who were interviewed have only an image about tourism and do not take into consideration reality.

Interfaith tensions also encumber the development of the religious tourism market. Obstructing the potential for promoting Islamic sites to the tourism markets is the tension between Sunna and Shi'a Muslims. 95% of Jordan's population are Sunni Muslims and,

¹⁰ In English Endowments

until recently, Jordan was not freely accessible to Shi'a Muslim religious tourism.¹¹ Many interviewees from Muslims answered the question by the researcher: Why are there restrictions for the Shi'a Muslims to visit the holy sites in Jordan? They answered for example:

“Jordan is a country of security and stability and we don't want any problems, because Shi'a Muslims make some problems with Sunna. They want to use religious tourism and visiting holy sites to control the area. We don't need this type of tourism (i.e. religious tourism, researcher's note) if this will threaten the security and stability in Jordan”.

Shi'a Muslims proselytise of their faith and doctrine in the Sunni Muslim society which Jordan does not accept that according to many officials and because Jordan had the Sunni doctrine: Therefore Shi'a doctrine is not acceptable in Jordan.

There are also obstacles to the development of early Christian holy sites, as many archaeologists and funders are Jews. Jordan does not allow excavation by avowedly Jewish teams on Jordanian land, because of concern that discovery of Jewish religious remains will be marshalled to constitute claims to ownership of Jordanian land.

In sum, while Jordan has undeniable potential as a religious tourism destination, it must seek to address some of the gaps and obstacles facing infrastructure and marketing of the product. Failure to do so will stunt the growth of an industry that has a promising future.

1.4 Research Area

Jordan contains over forty Islamic and more than one hundred Christian holy sites (Piccirillo et al. 1999, p.13). Promotion of these sites has enormous potential for tourism in Jordan, as a window into the attractions that the place has to offer. This research investigates the most important holy sites visited by incoming international tourists. Furthermore, it investigates in detail the Christian holy sites located in Jordan which were recognized by the late Pope John Paul II for pilgrimage visits (see Map 1.6).

¹¹ *Shi'i* is the adjective related to *Shi'a* Islam, which literally means “partisans.” The name refers to the centuries-old rift between Sunni Islam – the vast majority of Muslims – and the “*shi'a*” which followed the leadership of Hussein bin Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, who was killed in battle by the Sunni caliph and his forces in Karbala, Iraq, in AD 680. Hussein is considered to have been “martyred” at Karbala, and since then Shi'a has looked toward his messianic return to this world, and followed practices and theology rather divergent from majority, Sunni Islam. The Shi'a has been an important factor in political conflict in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and most recently Bahrain.



Map 1.6: The five pilgrimage destinations in Jordan recognized by the Vatican in 2000

The Christian holy sites are as follows:

1. **Baptism Site**, also known as Bethany beyond the Jordan (al-Maghtas in Arabic); located on the Jordan River where, according to tradition, John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ.
2. **Mount Nebo** (also known as Siyagha, which comes from the Aramaic word for monastery): The site of Moses' view of the Holy Land and the mountain where Moses died.
3. **Mukawir** (also known as the Fortress of Mukawir): The site of Herod's palace, where John the Baptist was beheaded.
4. **Our Lady of the Mountain in Anjara**: This site is in the north of Jordan in Ajloun governorate. It is believed that Jesus Christ and his disciples including Virgin Mary passed through the town of Anjara and rested in a cave there during a journey between Jerusalem and Galilee.

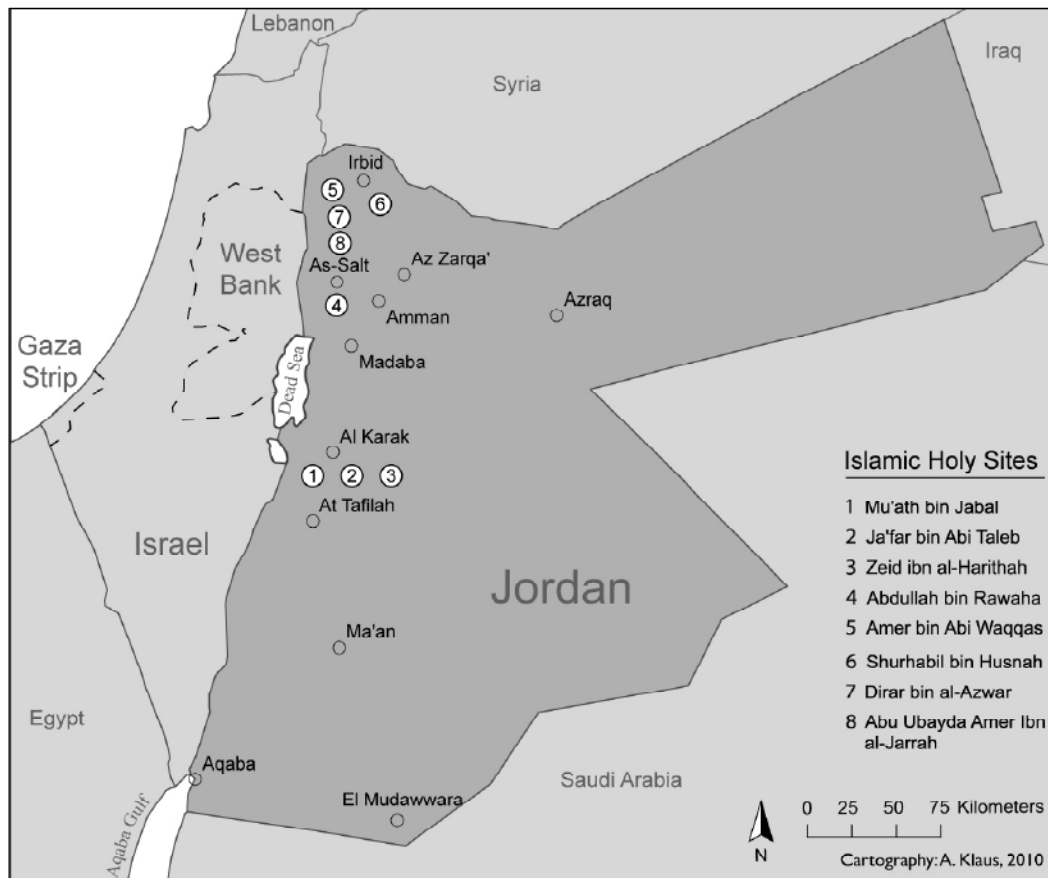
5. **Mar Elijah**, or Mar Elias, known in Arabic as the Tal, or Hill of the Prophet Elijah (in Arabic Elias). This place is mentioned in the Bible as the habitation (hometown) of the prophet Elijah. It is located in Ajloun governorate.

This study also investigates the following Islamic holy sites (see Map 1.7):

1. **Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn al-Jarrah Shrine:** This shrine (*in Arabic* maqaam) is located in al-Ghor, in the Jordan Valley. Abu Ubaydah was considered one of the great Companions of the Prophet Muhammad, and amongst the first to convert to Islam. He was also one of the “*Blessed Ten Companions*” whom the Prophet confirmed that he would go to heaven (Piccirillo et al., 1999, p. 95). This site is the most visited of the Islamic holy sites in Jordan. The majority of visitors are school trips and Jordanian families. The majority of international visitors come from Islamic countries, such as India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and many Arab countries.
2. **Dirar bin al-Azwar Shrine:** This shrine is located in al-Ghor, in the Jordan Valley. Dirar bin al-Azwar was one of the early Companions of the Prophet Mohammad. He is remembered as a wild and fierce warrior who loved combat. He died during the great plague in the 18th year after the Hijra. The shrine lies in the town of Deir Alla about 5km from the shrine of Abu Ubaydah.
3. **Shurhabil bin Husnah Shrine:** This shrine is also in al-Ghor 20km north of the shrine of Abu Ubayda. It is a new building, inside of which is located the tomb attributed to Shurhabil bin Husnah, another companion of the prophet. He died from the great plague on the same day as the venerable companion Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn al-Jarrah.
4. **Amir bin Abi Waqqas Shrine:** It is located in the town of Waqqas in the northern Jordan Valley, about 91 km from the capital, Amman, and 15 kilometers from the shrine of the Companion Shurahbil bin Husnah. Amir bin Abi Waqqas was the maternal cousin of the Prophet and brother of Sa’ad bin Abi Waqqas. He died during the great plague.
5. **Mu’ath bin Jabal Shrine:** It is located in the town of North Shunah (in Irbed Governorate). The building, surmounted by five domes, dates back to the Turkish period and includes a tomb attributed to Mu’ath bin Jabal and another tomb to his son. Tradition holds that he died at this site at the age of thirty-eight.
6. **Ja’far bin Abi Taleb Shrine:** It is located in the town of al-Mazar in al-Karak governorate. It is a large mosque, built recently. Archaeological inscriptions indicate that

the Ayyubids and Mamluks were interested in the site. Inside the mosque there is the tomb of the great Companion Ja'far ibn Abi Taleb, second in command at the Battle of Mu'tah and famous in Islamic history. He is revered by Shi'a Muslims because he is the brother of their founder, Ali bin Abi Taleb.

7. **Zaid bin Harithah Shrine:** This shrine and the shrine of Ja'far bin Abi Taleb are located at the same site in the town of al-Mazar in al-Karak governorate. Zaid ibn Harithah was a prominent figure in the early Islamic community and the only one of companions whose name is mentioned in the Qur'an. He was an early convert to Islam and later a military leader. He died at the Battle of Mu'tah.
8. **Abdallah bin Rawahah Shrine:** It is located in the town of al-Mazar in al-Karak governorate. Inside the holy site there is the tomb which is attributed to the great companion Abdallah bin Rawahah. He was the third in command at the Battle of Mu'tah, and is famous in Islamic history. The shrine is about 2 km from the two shrines of Zaid bin Harithah and Ja'far bin Abi Taleb.



Map 1.7: Study Area of Islamic Holy Sites

Many holy sites whether Islamic or Christian lie in the area of the Jordan River Valley which runs from the Dead Sea to the ancient Roman city of Umm Qais in the north. The area is approximately 100 km (about 60 miles) long and 10 km (6 miles) wide. The Jordan Valley is part of the Great Rift and includes a varied environment that encompasses the Dead Sea, the fertile Jordan River, the Yarmouk Plain, and the Ajloun forests. The valley enjoys a diverse ecology, including the Dead Sea, the Jordan River Valley, mountains, forests, iconic monuments, lakes, hot springs and panoramic views. Christianity, Islam and Judaism claim holy sites along the length of the Jordan River Valley area. This area also features the Bronze Age sites of Deir 'Alla Hill (in Arabic Tal), and Saeyidiya Tal (historic Abila) and monuments, churches, shrines, graves and ruins that span the Greek, Roman, Early Christian, Byzantine and Islamic periods. Small villages along the length of the valley provide visitors with a glimpse into contemporary rural life (Shunnaq et al., 2008, p.5). Shunnaq and many other researchers investigated that this area could be an interesting destination which encompasses many types of tourism. The researcher suggests that the holy sites should be connected to each other by trails. This will activate the local economy and create good job opportunities.

In the present research work the study sites were selected on the basis of their popularity and their potential as a tourist network. The most-visited sites are al-Maghtas (the Baptism Site), Mount Nebo and the shrine of Abu Ubaydah. All five Christian sites were recognized as pilgrimage sites by the Vatican in 2000. The Islamic sites are related to the companions (*in Arabic* Sahaba) of the Prophet Mohammed and are of important significance to Muslims. Another criterion for the selection of the sites was proximity to a community, to enable the researcher to investigate local attitudes towards religious tourism. Holy sites located near communities provided information regarding existing economic benefit to local communities and the involvement of locals in the tourism process.

What is today the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is part of the area known as “Bilad al-Sham” in the early centuries of Islam, which once comprised most of today’s Syria, all of Jordan, much of Palestine and eastern Lebanon. The Muslim sacred geography includes an extensive network of shrine sites (*in Arabic* maqamaat) which comprises tombs of biblical figures and important historical figures in Islam, as well as significant events associated with two main time periods – the ancient period from the early Abrahamic prophets (e.g. Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Elijah et al.) to early Christianity, and the formative period of Islam (7-8 AD) during which the Prophet Muhammad and his

“Companions”, founding figures of Islam, were active. This network includes the three most holy sites of Islam – Mecca, Madina and Jerusalem. Today, a larger part of these Islamic holy sites are situated in Jordan and not in any other country. Jordan lately began to pay attention to the subject of religious tourism and invested 300.000 JD for the programmes of marketing and promotion. Specialists from private and public sector agreed that religious tourism can save the tourism sector from the crisis due to the Arab revolutions (Arab Spring) that began by the end of the year 2010.

1.5 Research problems and challenges

The religious tourism market in Jordan is still in its initial stage of development. The sector has been plagued with obstacles and problems which have resulted in the minimization of its role in economic and social development and the absence of clear strategic perspectives and means of development thereof. Until now the subject of religious tourism in Jordan wasn't placed in the strategic development plans; this contributed to a continuous decrease concerning the importance of this type of tourism.

Along with the general lack of data and information regarding this special aspect of tourism, historical religious sites are poorly managed, maintained and interpreted. There has been little support or encouragement for archaeological research which would contribute to the fund of information and interpretation. Most importantly, the industry lacks set itineraries that could enhance and attract tourists and pilgrims to these sites.

Many of the problems which face religious tourism and holy sites in Jordan are cultural and political: There are conflicts regarding doctrine and interpretation between Shi'a and Sunna Muslims, and of course deep political conflicts between Christians and Jews concerning the status and interpretation of the Holy Land. These religious and political conflicts present a set of challenges which are not within the range of the tourism industry to address.

This study is significant because it is the first academic study treating religious tourism in Jordan and to explore the complex changes which have taken place since the country's borders changed in 1967, dramatically affecting tourism. By examining analytically the religious tourism sector, including its infrastructure and superstructure, the study aims to shed light on issues critical to the development of the tourism sector in Jordan. As will be

shown, religious tourism generates investments and boosts related industries, such as handicrafts.

The research presented here is based on certain assumptions about the relationship between the tourism industry and religious tourism destinations:

- Promoting religious tourism as a product, especially the various Islamic and Christian holy sites, would lead to an increase in national income from tourism.
- Neglect of proper services and facilities provided to the tourists adversely affects the growth of the tourism industry; concomitantly, development of facilities and services for tourists would contribute to increase growth in the industry.
- Modern media, such as the Internet, play an important role in attracting tourists to Jordan and promoting the many attractions that it has to offer.
- The common religious heritage between the three monotheistic religions in the holy sites can be a factor in promoting dialogue and positive relationships between these religious traditions.

1.6 Outline of the Research

Chapter 1: Introduction

The study begins with a brief introduction concerning religious tourism and holy sites in Jordan and how the research will be conducted. Strengths and weaknesses are also discussed in brief. The vital role of tourism in the Jordanian economy which contributes substantially to the Kingdom's GDP is introduced. Aims of the study, research problems and challenges, and the study area are discussed. The geographical scope of the research is defined and the selection of focus sites is discussed.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Context

This chapter deals with the varying concepts of tourism in Jordan as viewed from different perspectives. Past studies and research concerning this matter are surveyed. The impact of religious tourism on the tourism sector, definitions of religious tourism and motivations of this type of tourism are reviewed. A discussion of the development of tourism in general from religious pilgrimage over many centuries illuminates the motivation behind religious tourism. The influence of politics on religious tourism is also addressed.

The chapter summarizes some studies about religious tourism worldwide weighing the significance of religious tourism in general and how it is viewed in different areas across different cultures.

Chapter 3: Research Approach and Methods

This chapter describes the methods used to achieve the research objectives. It covers in detail the survey process, the targeted study sample, data collection methods and the research instruments such as reports, interviews and questionnaires.

Chapter 4: Jordan's Religious Tourism Sector: Basic Facts and Framework

In chapter 4 the background and context of religious tourism in Jordan are addressed, including an introduction to tourism and religious tourism, an overview of Islamic and Christian holy sites, stakeholders in religious tourism, the implications of Jordan's common religious heritage and the significance of papal visits to Jordan. Chapter 4 culminates in suggestions for the development of Jordan's religious tourism product.

Chapter 5: Religious Tourism in Jordan: Present State, Development and Prospects

This chapter analyses the data gathered from the questionnaires and in-depth interviews used in the survey. The results of the thesis are placed in the context of previous studies. These results provide the raw material for a SWOT-Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) concerning religious tourism in Jordan by using this strategic planning method presented in the next chapter. In addition, this chapter culminates in suggestions from visitors, tourists and pilgrims especially from Arab countries how to develop religious tourism in a positive way.

Chapter 6: SWOT Analysis of Religious Tourism in Jordan

This chapter contains the above mentioned SWOT-Analysis of religious tourism in Jordan. It may be seen as another basis concerning suggestions for a better development of this type of tourism in the future.

Chapter 7: Conclusions, Assumptions and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the main findings of the research work. The chapter outlines a set of observations relevant to the general objective of improving religious tourism in Jordan. Finally, further areas for future research based on the material in this study are suggested; in addition, recommendations are made to address weaknesses and threats in the religious tourism industry in Jordan.

Chapter Two

Conceptual Context

2.1 Introduction

Religious tourism is generally portrayed as a particular tourism niche. If one defines the customary delineation of niche as a “*distinct segment of a market*” it is appropriate to say that religious tourism is a niche of the worldwide travel market. Religious tourism has, however, developed into a very significant, multi-billion-dollar “niche”. Although it is not self-evident to think of missionary travel in economic terms, there are currently some two million missionaries abroad in the world, whose travel costs per person average roughly USD 1,500 (lodging, airfare, food, transport etc.), representing a conspicuous financial presence in the tourism market. Pilgrimage travel, too, is a multi-billion-dollar market. Another sector of religious tourism is religious meetings and conventions. Christian camps and conferences constitute another multi-billion-dollar market (data according to Wright, 2008, p.35). Given the scale and financial power of religious belief in the tourism market, religious tourism is more than just a niche.

Today religious journeys, tourism and hospitality are a dynamic USD 18 billion international business with 300 million travellers: In North America alone its business value is approximated at USD 10 billion. According to Wright, (2008, p.33) in the past three decades people of belief have altered their purchasing patterns and now tend to buy first-class goods and services: “first-class travel is in, economy travel is out”. Religious tourism is an important economic resource, particularly in many Middle Eastern countries which have a rich and diverse heritage of pilgrimage and religious sites shared by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For example in Saudi Arabia the contribution of religious tourism amounts 12% of GDP (WTTC¹² statistics, 2012). For many of these countries the permanent wealth and treasure represented by religious sites may even exceed oil over the long term, as it is an almost infinitely renewable resource. Religious tourism has attracted millions of Muslim visitors since the advent of Islam and its obligatory pil-

¹² WTTC: World Travel and Tourism Council

grimage, and pilgrimage sites of all three Abrahamic traditions continue to attract hundreds of millions of Muslims and non-Muslims today (al-Shakiry, 2008, p.6).

According to Wright (2008, p.35) “religious travel is poised for a spectacular growth in the near future. With many of the world’s largest travel companies entering the field of religious tourism, tens of thousands of travel agents now selling to the religious market, and tourist boards from around the world beginning new, major religious market initiatives, it will not take much time for the global industry to double or triple in size”.

Much of the recent economic interest in religious travel has come from the realisation that such activities are of major economic importance, although the undoubted relationship between religion and tourism has also received attention from articles, including publications by Bywater (1994), Vukonic (1996), Rinschede (1992), Coleman and Elsner (1991, 1995), Fernandes et al. (2003), Olsen and Timothy (2002). These publications and studies concentrated on the visits of the holy sites and making a clear definition for religious tourism., In his book “Tourism and Religion” Vukonic (1996) presents and analyzes the relationship between religion and tourism from sociological, economic and anthropological perspectives.

Many writers who have provided overviews of the development of religious tourism, including Homberg (1993), Olsen and Timothy (1999, 2006) and Russell (1999), project a significant increase in religious tourism in the future. Even so, it is still rare for mainstream tourism providers to offer a range of choices and holiday packages for the religious tourist.

2.2 Past Research

Studies of religious tourism, especially in Jordan – which, along with Israel/Palestine and Syria, is traditionally considered a part of the “Holy Land” – are very limited. The world of Arab religious tourism and studies of this sector in the Arab world are underrepresented. The subject of religious tourism, however, is covered in a variety of studies dealing with destinations and services across the globe. A comprehensive work is that of Fernandez (2006), entitled “New Trends in Religious Tourism Development” which investigates a variety of emerging themes in religious tourism. Presented at the International Conference on Religious Tourism held in Nicosia, Cyprus in 2006, the publication was used as a basis to attract visitors from new markets, generate longer stays, increase

the expenditure of each visitor, extend the tourism season and attract niche/special interest tourists. Some of the interesting results of the research included the following conclusions:

- Pilgrims and worshippers visit sacred places with the aim of purification, salvation, healing, or as an act of penance or thanksgiving.
- Pilgrims and worshippers seek significant experiences not only while reaching the final destination, but also along the sacred route, in ceremonies and in a series of interactions at the shrine or destination site.
- For pilgrims it is the route that matters and not the final destination.
- For the secular tourist it is not the route that matters, but the arrival at the final destination.

A work with a different, but broad scope of interest is “Religion and place attachment: A study of sacred places” by Mazumdar et al. (2004). This study revealed the multilayered connections between people, religion and place, to the experience of “sensing” the sacred in the air and water, and to “doing” the sacred through ritual acts and purification and, ultimately, to “creating” the sacred in the mind at home and in places of worship. Attachment to the sacred, forged through visits, rituals, stories, and artifacts, transcends national, racial and ethnic boundaries. Travel to sacred sites can link a diverse and dispersed community of believers by means of collective bonds and citizenship in a sacred place. Though sacred places define one’s individual identity as a Hindu, Jew, Muslim, Sikh, or Christian, one also connects with the consciousness of one’s religious collective and the identity of the place, as associated with such places as Banaras, Jerusalem, Amritsar, and Mecca.

Another group of studies examined more narrowly different aspects of tourism services, often concentrating on specific sites. Taleb (2006) investigated and assessed the quality of religious tourism services from the visitors’ point of view. He asked whether providers are recognizing and taking into consideration visitors’ expectations of and preferences regarding characteristics and features of the tourist service sought. The aim of the publication was to assess the quality of the tourist services from the customers’ view. The research concluded with the following findings:

- The tourist is the best person to assess the quality of the service according to his perceptions and in comparison to visits in other countries.

- Religious tourism services are not attended to with adequate interest and care by those responsible, because the services are presented from the point of view of the provider rather than appealing to the desires of the tourists.
- There is a disparity in the perception of the quality of service provided to religious tourists depending on whether one consults the provider or the consumer: some services deemed acceptable by the provider are in fact deemed the opposite by the tourist.
- Religious tourism services require more development, taking tourist perspectives into consideration.

The thesis by Pernecky (2004) entitled “The Dawn of New Age Tourism” studied the phenomenon of new age tourism in New Zealand. Spirituality, religious tourism, pilgrimage and sacred sites are covered in this study. The work also provides an overview of New Zealand as a new age tourist destination. Shinde (2006) investigated “Tourism and the Roots/Routes of Religious Festivity” covering pilgrimage, tourism and religious tourism at sacred sites in India. The paper studies Vrindavan in North India, a sacred site visited by more than 3.5 million people annually, and explores the development of pilgrimage into an organised and formal industry of religious tourism.

In “Tourism, Religion and Religiosity: A Holy Mess” Poria et al. (2003) write about tourists’ visitation patterns to a cultural heritage site which also has deep religious significance to certain communities: the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. The researchers pointed out that “although religion and religiosity are well-known factors for influencing behaviour in different social settings, there is very limited research that explores the links between them and visitation patterns of tourists” Poria et al. (2003, p.340). After a theoretical investigation of heritage tourism, Poria et al. found distinctions between tourist responses to the site linked to their respective religious affiliations and religiosity. They found that religiosity takes different forms and has different effects depending on religious affiliation. They presented a sophisticated argument that relationships between a given tourist’s religious affiliation and the intensity of his or her religious devotion in relationship to the site itself must be considered in any effort to understand the tourist’s perception of the site and its perceived meaning.

An interesting group of studies focuses on local perceptions of tourism to their sites. Baedcharoen (2000) in his thesis attempted to understand local residents’ attitudes to the

economic, social-cultural and physical impacts of tourism development in Buddhist temples in Thailand. It was found in this study that residents tend primarily to recognize tourism benefits and are less interested in its costs or impacts. The purpose of research by Chmielewski (2005) was to determine the likely effect of cultural tourism, particularly religious tourism and ecotourism, on human subjects of tourism to the ethnically Tibetan village of Jisha in Yunnan, China, which plans to open and run its own tourism enterprise. In a study by Collins-Kreiner (2006), field observation of the Galilee holy sites, Nazareth and Jerusalem, was carried out in the summer and autumn of 2003 to determine the effects of the declining number of tourists on the Christian sacred sites in the Galilee area and Jerusalem.

Two selected studies on the famous pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela explore the relationship between tourism and pilgrimage, and distinctions amongst self-identified pilgrims. Post, Pieper & Uden (1998) write about the pilgrims' journey to Santiago de Compostela and their spiritual experiences. The authors used a research method which may be called "trigger-words" gathering several concepts potentially meaningful for pilgrims walking to Santiago de Compostela, such as backpack, stamp, tiredness, landscape, feet, prayer, and staff. The results showed the different types of pilgrims and their different spiritual experiences. Santos (2002) examined pilgrimage and tourism at Santiago de Compostela and argued that there was a little difference between pilgrims and tourists, despite efforts by religious groups to make this distinction and to set an abstract definition of pilgrim in this context. Santos found that the majority of visitors to Santiago de Compostela and travellers along the Way of St. James were simply tourists curious about the route and the city of Santiago de Compostela.

Another work on pilgrimage is Greathouse-Amador's 2005 publication on "Religious Tourism in Mexico: The Journey to Tepeyac". This study reviewed comments made by pilgrims travelling on foot to Mexico City days before the big celebration of the patron saint of Mexico. The study tried to answer the following questions:

- Who are these pilgrims?
- What does this trip represent to them?
- How do they prepare themselves for this journey?
- What do they seek?

- Is this journey equivalent to the Muslim's pilgrimage to Mecca or the Bahai's trip to Haifa, Israel?
- What does the journey and celebration in Tepeyac entail?

There are, as mentioned above, only a few studies about religious tourism and pilgrimage in the Arab world or with respect to Jordan. A study by Harahsheh, Morgan & Edwards (2007) treats religious tourism in Jordan by focussing on the British and Swedish image of Jordan as a tourist destination. The paper examines the construction of the image according to the respective religious beliefs and traditions of the tourists. The survey was carried out in Sweden and England and is part of a doctoral dissertation by Harahsheh (2009) entitled "An evaluation of the image of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the British and Swedish markets and the implications for marketing the country as a tourism destination".

The results of the dissertation showed the influence of religious belief and practice on the ways Jordan is perceived by potential and actual British and Swedish tourists. Those who admitted higher levels of belief and practice were more likely to rate Jordan highly as a tourist destination across a range of attributes, including historical sites, religious sites, beaches, scenery, nightlife, tourist information, accommodation, quality of service, cost/price levels, airport facilities, adventure and cleanliness. The results also showed significant positive image modifications in terms of safety, people and atmosphere; whilst, they revealed other significant negative image modification towards beaches, cleanliness, tourist information, shopping and nightlife, which may have serious consequences in terms of repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations. Religion appears to be a more significant factor than the other cultural allegiances used as a control. The research identified religious tourism as an important niche for future development.

Al-Amin's (2002) paper "Religious tourism in Islamic heritage" examines Islamic heritage tourism (by definition of religious tourism) and explains different concepts of religious tourism, including how tourists get to know Islamic countries in this case, through religious tourism. In this paper al-Amin declares that "the position of religious tourism in the past was different to that of today. However, governments then did not sponsor tourism – tourists themselves had to undertake financial responsibilities in addition to the difficulties and risks they took upon themselves".

The book of the Holy Sites of Jordan (1996) is not a piece of scientific field research, but it has had an interesting impact on religious tourism in Jordan. Published under the patronage of Prince Ghazi bin Mohammad of Jordan, a famous and unusually devout member of Jordan's royal family, the book presents a survey of Islamic and Christian holy sites of Jordan. The book was published by TURAB¹³, whose name is an acronym for *Turath Al-Urdun Al-Baqi*: "Jordan's everlasting heritage" (*turab* literally means "earth" or "soil" in Arabic). TURAB is an officially registered, tax-exempt Jordanian cultural charity organisation. It was founded in 1994 and its official purpose is to protect, preserve and propagate traditional Jordanian, Arab and Islamic culture and heritage. The book surveys more than forty Muslim tombs in Jordan which memorialize the Companions of the Prophet Mohammad and the prophets before him, and it presents over a hundred Christian Sites in Jordan mentioned in the Bible by name. This book is the first comprehensive guide published on the subject of pilgrimage sites in Jordan and the first to include both Islamic and Christian sites. It is also designed to be an attractive but practical "field guide" to all these sites. The book inspired television documentaries and academic studies and it has contributed significantly to religious tourism in Jordan. Finally, it has brought Muslims and Christians in Jordan even closer through a deeper understanding of their common religious heritage.

In sum, the literature on religious tourism seems in some ways to reflect its perceived niche status in the industry. The scholars, academics and researchers do not reflect the activity's huge global constituency (over 300 million travellers per year) or its economic significance (USD18 billion). The sparseness of the research on religious tourism in the Arab world is even more surprising: In 2010, 2.8 million people attended *hajj*¹⁴ – 1.8 million of them international travellers (Saudi Embassy 2010). Due to the shortage especially in the Arab World of studies on the subject, it becomes important to define "religious tourism" more carefully.

¹³ In February 2001, TURAB became part of the Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought

¹⁴ *Hajj* is the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is obligatory for the Muslims to make at least once in his/her lifetime.

2.3 Defining Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is an ancient practice, although it has not been called this for very long. For millennia, individuals have travelled alone or in groups for religious reasons. These travels have included pilgrimages, or visiting places that they considered to be holy, and making missionary trips, in which people travelled to tell others of the nature of their faith. People have also travelled simply for their own pleasure or for other personal reasons while incorporating religious sites or duties as a part of a longer trip. All three of these activities are rightly called religious (or faith) tourism (Timothy & Olsen, 2006, pp. 17-8).

Religion and tourism share a close relationship: Religion often motivates travel and serves as a source of assorted visitor attractions. Sharpley et al. (2005, p.161) define religious tourism as: “*travel that is motivated by faith or religious reasons*”. We will examine the issue of motivation more closely below.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation recognises that religious tourism is the segment that has grown most in recent years, with a significant increase in visitors/pilgrims to countries, which are home to sacred places (Moura, 2006¹⁵).

Travel is often described as a way in which to enlarge one’s perspective on the world, in part as a way of giving one a new perspective on one’s home and daily routine. This is certainly one of the reasons behind religious tourism: Travelling to learn more about one’s faith helps deepen and make more meaningful one’s religious faith when one returns home.

Religious tourism often referred to as “belief” or “faith” tourism, is a pattern of tourism whereby people of religious belief travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary purposes, and leisure (also called “fellowship” purposes) or to visit shrines, religious buildings and other sacred places. Religion has played a key role from the earliest days of the development of leisure and travel over the centuries, and has influenced how people utilize their leisure time. It is relevant to the Judaeo-Christian traditions that leisure time has been emphasized in the Bible. Old Testament (Genesis, 2:1-3) reads:

¹⁵ cited in Chattopadhy, 2006, p.173

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made”.

As we will discuss in some detail below, religious pilgrimage has long been combined with other reasons for travel, e.g. leisure, business, even war. Today the expression “religious tourism” covers a wide range of travel segments and activities:

- Pilgrimages
- Missionary travel
- Faith-based cruises
- Leisure/“fellowship” getaways
- Conferences/conventions with a religious background
- Religious destinations/attractions such as themed fun parks and historical sites
- Retreats, monastery visits and guest-stays
- Faith-based camps
- Adventure or active tourism with religious themes
- Faith-based volunteer vacations
- Student/youth travel motivated by religious devotion
- Family/intergenerational travel practices on the basis of religion

According to Wright (2009, p.18), President of the World Religious Travel Association (WRTA), religious tourism today embraces three definitions:

- travel to a religious destination (*religious pilgrimage*)
- travel to a religious gathering (*religious meetings, events, conventions*)
- travel for leisure purposes by a religious group (*cruise, sightseeing, group touring, entertainment, adventure, safari, visits to attractions etc.*)

Rinschede (1992, p.51) defined religious tourism as a form that is exclusively or strongly motivated by religious reasons. It is one of the oldest types of tourism and a worldwide phenomenon of religious history and it can be differentiated into various forms. Rin-

schede also argued that religious tourism today is closely associated to holiday and cultural tourism.

Religious tourism is solely or powerfully motivated by religious considerations and goals. It is a tourist activity which depends on the movement of tourists from their places of residence to sacred destinations inside or outside the country on religious visits and/or journeys for a specific period of time. Ibrahim (1997) cites religious tourism as one of the oldest types of tourism, practiced by humans over the ages to present sacrifices and offerings to the gods. In an interview one travel agent in Jordan gave his own special definition for religious tourism:

“Religious tourism is a type of tourism undertaken by those who get to know their God in the last days of their life.”

The idea that the people who come to visit the holy sites are elderly is still a common one, unfortunately, and persists in the minds of many of those who are responsible for developing and promoting religious tourism in Jordan. Wright (2009, p.19) states:

“It is a myth that religious tourism comprises only the ‘older’ population. The fact is that it comprises all age groups”.

We will explore this point further in the analysis chapter. According to an interview with the vice director of the Baptism Site:

“Religious tourism is very important to Jordan and I am sure it is from the most important types of tourism for many reasons: First it is very suitable to our traditions and customs. Second religious tourism is suitable for families. And Third people in the East like to visit the holy sites. They are places which belong to their religion in general and to the prophets in specific”.

2.4 Motivations for Religious Travel

For any given human activity, the individuals involved will have a range of motivations, for no two people ever do the same thing for exactly the same reason. This is certainly true of religious tourism, which is subject to the same range of motivations as any other activity. It is also the case that motivations, even for the same person, will differ from trip to trip and also even within the same journey. The specific religion practiced by the person as well as the historical moment and place also affect motivation.

Some individuals engage in religious tourism because they authentically believe that it is an essential and perhaps even imperative aspect of their faith. Others may participate because of the pressure of family or friends to do so. Still others may participate in religious tourism to make other people believe that they are religious when they are not.

According to Tepanon (2006, p.25) tourist motivation for travel is driven by the desire to get away from a tourist's daily environment. Tourism is a modern phenomenon which provides modern people with exciting and gratifying experiences.

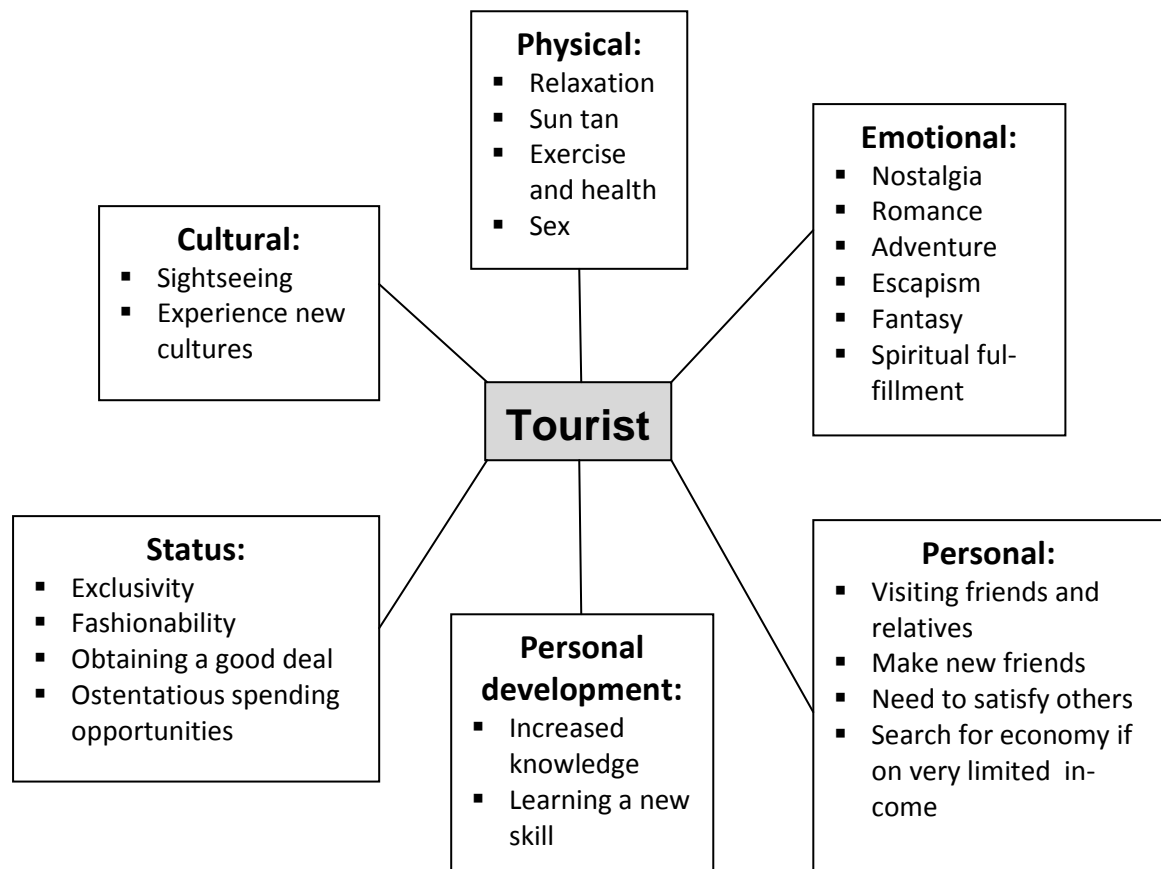


Figure 2.1: A typology of motivators in tourism (Source: Swarbrooke, 1999, p.54)

One of the most significant proponents that leads someone toward his goal is the drive known as motivation. Motivation is a zest and enthusiasm, a kind of exhilaration, that directs one to persevere, to achieve a specific action or certain behaviour, in whatever avenue of one's life, be it personal or professional.

According to Swarbrooke et al, (1999, p.53) "motivating factors in tourism can be split into two groups, namely: those which motivate a person to take a holiday, and those

which motivate a person to take a particular holiday to a specific destination at a particular time. No widely recognized way exists of categorising the main motivating factors in tourism”. However, some of the major ones are outlined in figure (2.1)

The above descriptions of the psychological reasons or motivations for religious tourism provide a basic idea of why people engage in the process. They are also motivated by liturgical tenets: Islam places a very great importance on pilgrimage, while for other religious groups like Taoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism much less so. And, finally, there are a number of practical issues involved: Those without sufficient resources cannot travel, and those with significant disabilities may also find it impossible. But while many cannot or do not engage in religious tourism, many others do it as one of the most important act of their lives.

	Element	Explanation
1	The role of the theory	Must be able to integrate existing tourist needs, reorganize the needs and provide a new orientation for future research.
2	The ownership and appeal of a theory	Must appeal to specialist researchers; be useful in tourism industry settings and credible to marketers and consumers.
3	Ease of communication	Must be relatively easy to explain to potential users and be universal in its application.
4	Ability to measure travel motivation	Must be amenable to empirical study. The ideas can be translated into questions and responses for assessment purposes.
5	A multi-motive versus single-trait approach	Must consider the view that travellers may seek to satisfy several needs at once. Must be able to model the pattern of traveller needs, not just consider one need.
6	A dynamic versus snapshot approach	Must recognize that both individuals and societies change over time. Must be able to consider or model the changes that are taking place continuously in tourism.
7	The roles of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation	Must be able to consider that travellers are variously motivated by intrinsic, self-satisfying goals and at other times motivated by extrinsic, socially controlled rewards.

Table 2.1: The seven elements of tourist motivational theory (Source: Pearce, 2005)

Pearce (2005) shows that motivation studies are of interest to businesses and commercial analysts because sound market analyses can be built on such appraisals. Table 2.1 shows seven elements that have been identified as important for a tourist motivational theory.

In sum and according to Konu et al. (2009, p.2) motivations of tourists are important in explaining why tourists are travelling and in tourism theory they are considered as a tool for the segmentation of the tourism market.

2.4.1 Religious Motivation

Religious tourism comprises a number of different types of motivations. There is the motivation to travel itself, to broaden and deepen one’s sense of how the world works. This can be seen as a basic psychological motivation. Beyond this there is the specific element of religious motivation: Some people are deeply motivated by their religious faith and practice and this underscores much of what they do. Those individuals affected by both these sets of motivations are most likely to become religious tourists.

Travels motivated by religious impulses are deeply rooted in the history of mankind, as well as in the history of tourism. Their most frequent form – pilgrimage – is, indeed, thought to be the predecessor of the phenomenon of modern tourism (Vukonic, 1998, p.84).

In table 2.2, we can see how Smith (1992, p.4) divides the differences between pilgrims and tourists into five types. Type 1 is the “pious pilgrim,” who is strongly motivated by his religious beliefs.

Pilgrimage	Religious Tourism			Tourism
1	2	3	4	5
Sacred	Faith / Profane Knowledge-Based			Secular
Pious pilgrims	More pilgrims than tourists	Pilgrim-tourists or religious tourists	More tourists than pilgrims	Secular tourists

Table 2.2: The Pilgrim-Tourist Path (Source: Smith 1992, p.4)

The middle of the continuum is comprised of three mixed types: the pilgrim who is motivated by faith, but interested in cultural sites or other activities as well; the tourist with a combination of religious and other interests; and the tourist who is motivated by cultural interest including an interest in getting to know the religious tradition. At the opposite end of the continuum from the pious pilgrim is the secular tourist, upon whom religion wields no influence at all when choosing the tourist destination. What is evident from these efforts to describe and classify motives and types of tourists is that religious mo-

tives for travel are complexly interwoven with other activities, beliefs and goals, and that pilgrimage and tourism – like the sacred and profane – are not distinct and separate categories. In sum, Smith 1992 identified five types of tourists to the holy sites:

1. Pious pilgrims
2. More pilgrims than tourists
3. Religious tourists or pilgrims-tourists
4. More tourists than pilgrims
5. Secular tourists

Table 2.2 above provides a concise summary of how any individual may be subject to different motivations in setting off on a trip, with most people falling in the large area between those who travel exclusively for religious and those who travel exclusively for mundane reasons. This is to be expected: People are complicated and thus religious life is complicated and few people do anything without a complex network of motivations.

2.4.2 Cultural Motivation

In accord with UNWTO (2011, p.33) practically all Asian archaeological monuments have some connotation to religion and form the backbone of tourist circuits. Therefore, it is difficult to differentiate between the cultural and the religious tourist.

Closely aligned with the practice of religious tourism is that of cultural tourism. In both cases, individuals and groups travel to “better” themselves, in one case to deepen their faith and in the other to deepen their intellect. However, these two goals are not necessarily exclusive from each other, and individuals may well combine the two. Moreover, a religious destination for one person may be a cultural destination for another: Visiting the Wailing Wall is different for a Jew than for a Buddhist.

According to data collected in France almost 40% of individual cultural tourists have visited a religious monument in the previous two years (AFIT¹⁶, 2002). Religion is an important aspect of nearly every culture, and thus many religious sites fall naturally into the itineraries of cultural heritage tourists. A suggestive example of this fact is elicited by an online search of the top ten non-sponsored tourism links to Italy and Israel, respec-

¹⁶ French agency for tourism development (Agence Française de l'Ingénierie Touristique)

tively. For Italy, certainly famous as one of the great culture capitals of world, 50% mentioned or pictured the Vatican on their homepage – none in specifically religious terms. One company listed “Christian Rome” as an attraction under their first tour category, “Culture & History” (Pure Travel, 2011). Not surprisingly, a search for “tours to Israel” makes this point even more strikingly. Apart from the “Holy Land” epithet, which occurs on 100% of the sites, much more explicit religious references appear on 100% of the top ten sites, many of which refer to “heritage” tourism virtually indistinguishably from explicitly religious references. It is interesting that all of the sites also refer to or show images of resort activities as well, regardless of how explicitly religious the orientation of the site. In sum, religious sites and activities are clearly considered “cultural,” religious sites are regularly portrayed on the same page, and undifferentiated from a variety of other tourism destinations, and culture includes religion.

From an anthropological perspective, there is no clear distinction between religion and culture, because culture is all encompassing: It is all of the actions, beliefs, and possessions of people. Certainly, people set off some of these as purely or at least more purely religious, but in fact it has always been the case that religious and cultural sites have always referred to both.

2.4.3 Pilgrimage Motivation

In modern speech, the term “pilgrimage” is often used in a lay sense, that is, a sense entirely disconnected from formal religious practice: One may talk of going on a pilgrimage to the ocean, or even to a soccer game. Even when the reference is something so clearly secular as a sports event, there remains the idea that a particular event can only be truly experienced by going to a specific place and acting in a specific way.

Although we will return to the subject of pilgrimage in more detail below, it must be mentioned here as an important motivation for religious tourism. Weidenfeld’s 2006 study proposed that if hospitality businesses desire to evolve a win-win scenario in the pilgrimage market, they should focus on the exceptional desires – motivations – of pilgrims throughout their sacred journeys.

Motivation to undertake pilgrimage in the Western tradition is primarily underpinned by the following three reasons: *one’s own will, to complete a vow and/or in penance*. Fleischer (2000) recognizes six kinds of pilgrims with distinct motivations for their

excursions described in terms ranging from “devotional” to “wandering.” Heritage motivation and pilgrimage motivation, though distinct from one another, may still often support one another. This is amply demonstrated in the Israel websites mentioned earlier, for example, wherein “Jewish heritage tours” are suggested as *bar* and *bar mitzvah* presents. The religious motivation, as suggested above, by implication encompasses a heritage dimension. Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, for example, or Christians’ visits to Jerusalem, Rome or to walk the Way of Saint James, which is in itself a religious endeavour, may lead to a religious experience though motivated by heritage interests. To give an example, according to Dominguez 2010 the motivations to walk the Way of St. James are diverse, particularly at the beginning:

- To find oneself.
- To find significance in one’s life.
- To find a favourable natural environment in which to believe and reflect.
- To fulfil a promise.
- To meet other pilgrims.
- To follow in the footsteps of numerous others that have finished the way over the centuries.
- In chronicled remembrance and because of tales told by other pilgrims.
- To experience the heritage along the Way.
- To improve the belief in one of the Apostles who lived with Jesus.
- To give a significance of belonging to life or to prayer.
- To apply and make offerings for our varied needs.

Saint Augustine wrote, “*It is aims which give worth to human actions.*” Likewise it is the aim or genuine motivation which makes a pilgrim a pilgrim and not merely a tourist.

According to Mansfeld et al. (2006, p.3) the motivations for undertaking pilgrimages include the following:

- To fulfil a commandment of the religion, usually also resulting in enhanced status after the return home (the name Hajj is attached to the Muslim pilgrim on returning from Mecca).

- As an act of devotion to be close to the site of a miraculous or religiously significant event, for example, an “epiphany” (the appearance of a deity, e.g. Lourdes).
- To perform a deed of gaining remission of sins by visiting a place of grace (e.g. Roman Catholics).
- To meet particular needs such as health (e.g. at Lourdes; often at a thermal or mineral spring).
- To appease a deity in the face of misfortune.
- To be at a site where miraculous events are expected in the future (e.g. the place of Christ’s return in glory).
- To attend a prayer meeting with a religious leader (e.g. with the Pope in Rome or abroad), a saintly person, or a sage.
- To attend a religious ceremony (e.g. a bar mitzvah at the Western Wall in Jerusalem).
- To join others in visiting a folk-religion site.

According to Vukonic (1996, p.120) for Roman Catholics, a powerful motivation to undertake a pilgrimage is the concept of indulgence, or absolution. Indulgences, which started developing in the 11th century, gave a strong impetus to the growth of the number of Catholic pilgrims.

The stereotypical image of the pilgrim – someone dressed in rags and driven by unreasoning faith – is hardly comprehensive. Pilgrims travel to a certain place, often at a certain time, because they wish to have a certain experience. For some this is to strengthen faith, for some to cast off doubt, for some to cast off faith.

2.5 Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a ritual aspect of all of the universal religious traditions – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism – as well as most known small-scale traditional religions, and its history is at least as long as historical records of religious traditions have existed. According to Stausberg (2011, p. 53) “the category pilgrimage refers to a wide range of travel practices. The following are merely some of its main varieties. Pilgrimages can be:

- Short term or long term
- Local, regional, national, or international
- Compulsory or voluntary
- With open or limited access
- Bound to specific dates or undertaken anytime
- Undertaken alone or with smaller or larger groups
- Organized individually or as part of packages tours
- Made with a variety of means of transportation
- Made for a variety of motives such as accompanying others, leisure, seeking healing, vows, etc”.

Due to pilgrimage’s historical importance as essentially religious travel, and in a technical sense it qualifies as a form of tourism (Stausberg, 2011, p. 53), it is worthwhile examining pilgrimage more closely.

2.5.1 Definitions of Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is not a new event; it is as old as e.g. Christianity itself. Christian pilgrimage is rooted in visiting the holy sites. It started in the 2nd century AD when the veneration of saints became popular. There are three types of pilgrimage:

- Shrines are places serving as goals for religiously-motivated journeys.
- Religious attractions are significant from a historical view point.
- Festivals with a religious significance (Nolan and Nolan, 1992, p. 68)

A pilgrimage may be a very long journey or search of great moral significance. Often it is a religious journey to a shrine or sacred place of importance to a person’s belief and faith. Pilgrimages might be said to be the “heart” of the faith-based travel industry. At its simplest, pilgrimage is a journey to a holy site for a religious purpose (Wright, 2007). The American Heritage Dictionary (1995) defines pilgrimage as: “A journey to a sacred place or shrine. A long journey or search, especially one of exalted purpose or moral significance. A usually long trip undertaken for religious purposes, such as to visit a holy place.”

Implied in the idea of the length of a pilgrimage is the equally important idea of a journey that comprises great difficulty and often pain, even the potential of permanent dis-

ability or death. A pilgrimage, using this model, is something that should mark an individual for life, whether psychologically or physically, or both. A pilgrim can never go back to who he/she was before.

A more complex definition for pilgrimage is Richard's (2007, p. 218): "An excursion produced from religious determinants, externally to a holy location and internally for religious reasons and interior understanding." Murray and Graham (1997, p.514) defined pilgrimage as "a religious phenomenon in which an individual or group sets forth on a journey to a particular cult location to seek the intercession of God and the saints of that place in an array of concerns."

The two key elements of a pilgrimage can be defined as the following: First, the trip must be arduous in at least one way. Second – and this arises from the first – the trip must change an individual forever. There is no going back from a pilgrimage, and the pilgrim will carry that identity forever.

For Muslims the *hajj* pilgrimage to the Ka`aba in Mecca is a lifetime obligation, one of the so-called "Five Pillars of Islam" (along with the testimony of faith, prayer, fasting and charitable alms-giving). There are several levels of religious intent which characterize travel to Mecca: There are devotional trips and Umra, for which religious intent is primary but may not be the sole activity. The ideal *hajj* pilgrimage which fulfills one of the five basic obligations of Muslim life, however, is a solemn and focused affair, during which every day is fully scheduled with explicitly religious ritual (Denny, 2005, p. 46).

In Hinduism pilgrimage tradition predates even that of the Abrahamic traditions and Buddhism has inherited many of its practices – though significantly rethought and reformulated – from Hinduism. The famous pilgrimage to the Ganges, however, in which millions participate every 12th year, is widely understood to be a project of commerce and strengthening of social bonds which are interwoven with the journey to the ultimate submersion in the river (Gesler & Pierce, 2000, p.229). Such ritual journeys may also serve profound political functions, as evidenced by the immersion of Mahatma Gandhi's ashes in the Ganges in 1997 – 49 years after his death (Burns, 1997).

In sum, pilgrimage refers to a journey motivated by religion and it plays a significant role in almost all world religions (Rajinder, 2006, p.206).

2.5.2 Distinctions between Tourism and Pilgrimage

Theologians say that the pilgrim steps gently onto holy soil; whereas the tourist overruns holy places and photographs their remains. A pilgrim travels with humility and patience, whereas a tourist travels arrogantly and in a hurry. The tourist is a semi-pilgrim, if the pilgrim is a semi-tourist.

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei of Iran declared in 2009 that he has “emphatically cautioned Mr. President that the merger of this organization (the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization) with the tourism organization is not right” in a Tehran Times article entitled “*Hajj is Hajj, Tourism is Tourism*” (ETN, 2009). It is evident that many of the devout do not accept the conflation of religious motives and tourism. Their opinion appears to be that tourism is a subject of entertainment (a leisure activity) and religion is a serious subject. They reject the idea that travel with religious motives and visits to holy sites are, in effect, religious tourism.

It is understandable why the above distinction would be appealing to many people, especially to those who have a conservative religious faith. But to argue that travel and pilgrimage are entirely different is to ignore not only millennia of human behaviour but also to ignore key elements of human psychology and emotion.

The fact that travel and pilgrimages are not entirely different from each other in no way should be seen as demeaning to either one, because they are both authentic expressions of humanity. To argue, as some religious leaders do, that pilgrimages must be kept pure, misunderstand the nature of humanity if not also the nature of religion.

Religion has the task of elevating humanity to its best and highest, and this can be accomplished in very different ways. For some it is accomplished through prayer, for others in bearing witness, for others in becoming a pilgrim. Each of these actions can be profoundly spiritual, but they need not be exclusively religious to be profoundly so.

Even pilgrims have to return to their ordinary lives at some point, for life includes both moments of immersion into faith and into daily life. For many, these two kinds of immersion come together in travel that is also pilgrimage.

A pilgrim is a dedicated follower of a religion who has set out on a religiously motivated journey, or pilgrimage, usually travelling to a sacred monument or place important to his religion. A tourist is someone who travels to an area to, for example, view the landmarks

and sights, and possibly sample the lifestyle of the people of the country to which they travelled. In a sermon Bethune in 2002 suggested a useful set of heuristic distinctions between a pilgrim and a tourist as follows:

- A tourist makes a trip for his or her own personal satisfaction, seeking only what entertains amuses or relaxes.
- A pilgrim understands the journey as a spiritual quest. The purpose is not just to see and to enjoy, but to receive and to absorb, to do something good, to find a destiny, or to draw closer to God.
- The pilgrim remains alert, because any experience on the way may turn out to be an encounter with God – an epiphany – in disguise.
- For the tourist, people and sites are interesting diversions.
- For the pilgrim, the destination is filled with a Divine Presence. It is filled with mystery, miracles and grace.
- For the pilgrim, the inward journey is as important as the outward journey and they must always go together.

The phenomenon of pilgrimage had existed many hundreds of years before the phenomenon of tourism appeared in human behaviour (Fleischer, 2000, p.311). In fact, distinguishing between the pilgrimage and tourism is difficult enough, but the distinction between pilgrimage and religious tourism is even more controversial, since the boundaries between them are naturally much more blurred (Santos, 2003, p.39)

2.6 Conclusion

People throughout history and across time have been called by their faith to travel from their home to places that speak to them of the most important beliefs of their religion. This inclination of humanity to go on spiritual quests has been summarized in this chapter under the rubric of “religious tourism”, a phrase that describes how many people today combine their desire to come to know their faith more deeply with the secular desire of seeing more of the world.

Several important distinctions have been made about the kinds of travels that religious tourists engage in. Some are primarily tourists, motivated by their desire to see places that are new to them. These tourists visit holy places as simply one kind of attraction –

like castles or wonders of nature. They may well even visit holy places of other faiths, drawn by the historical importance of beauty of such places.

The fact that travel and pilgrimages are not entirely different from each other in no way should be seen as demeaning to either one, because they are both authentic expressions of humanity. To argue, as some religious leaders do, that pilgrimages must be kept pure, misunderstand the nature of humanity if not also the nature of religion. To discuss that travel and pilgrimage are entirely different is to ignore not only millennia of human behaviour but also to ignore key elements of human psychology and emotion.

Religion has the task of elevating humanity to its best and highest, and this can be accomplished in very different ways. For some it is accomplished through prayer, for others in bearing witness, for others in becoming a pilgrim. Each of these actions can be profoundly spiritual, but they need not be exclusively religious to be profoundly so.

As mentioned before which is very important, even pilgrims have to return to their ordinary lives at some point for life includes both moments of immersion into faith and into daily life. For many, these two kinds of immersion come together in travel that is also pilgrimage.

Another group of religious tourists are missionaries. For them, they travel to places often very far from their homes to try to convert other people, i.e. to convert them to the missionaries' religion. Sometimes such conversion activities are done peaceably, sometimes they carry with them the threat (or actuality) of force.

Finally, there is the group of religious tourists who may best be characterized as pilgrims. Pilgrims travel to a place away from their homes to visit a place or person that the pilgrims believe is central to their faith. A pilgrim travels because s/he wishes to have her/his faith deepened or renewed, to make a promise to a deity or to thank a deity for a promise kept by heaven. While the missionary is intent on bringing others into his fold, the pilgrim is on a personal quest, the pilgrim is focused on his own path to enlightenment or salvation.

Chapter Three

Research Approach and Methods

3.1 Introduction to the Methodology

According to Rifa'i, 2007¹⁷ “trips for religious reasons and purposes have multiplied over the past decades - for pilgrimage, the fulfilment of pledges, religious celebrations, and includes visits to notable buildings or monuments of a religious nature and offerings to divinities, among others.” Not only on the basis of this citation it has become once more evident that religious tourism is a complex and difficult field of research. Therefore it needs a methodological approach which has to be as sophisticated as possible. The following paragraphs will include a focus on the most vital aspects of the method in which the study was conducted. According to the researcher's belief it was highly important to be methodologically as flexible during the empirical part of the work as possible. In this chapter it will also be shown and discussed which aspects of the study object were investigated and which instruments were utilized. The following pages will also show the most important setbacks or limitations in the present study, which must be evidenced in order to avoid them in future research studies. The limitations will include personal limitations which faced the researcher during the field work, as well as potential limitations for future researchers.

3.2 Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative study methods. Qualitative research refers to that of written data, verbal testimony and interviews to ascertain how people think and how they do certain things. Participant observations, in-depth interviews, and artifact collection of documents are the most common methodological strategies that distinguish this style of inquiry. According to Joubish et al. (2011, p.2086) qualitative research is distinguished by:

- Preferring words and not numbers,

¹⁷ Taleb al-Rifa'i: Secretary of the UNWTO

- Flows from concreteness to abstractness,
- Compared to quantitative research it is relatively new. Thus, new techniques and strategies are emerging.
- Data collection occurs concurrently with data analysis.
- It is evident that the researcher influences the individual being studied to varying degrees. In turn, the researcher is influenced by those being studied.

Quantitative research looks at numerical data, statistics, the study of trends, and survey results. Both of these methods have their own strengths and weaknesses. Thus, combining the two can be very useful in order to get to a more accurate in-depth thesis (Fardell, 2011).

The basic aim for the study is to analyse the present state of religious tourism and its future developments and prospects by evaluating to what extent holy sites are important in promoting tourism and how they could be utilised as a tool for further promotion and overall development of the tourism industry in the future. The most important and the overall target of the study is to find answers to the central question whether religious tourism is or can be used as a tool which may help to bring religious groups in Jordan closer together through a deeper understanding of their common religious heritage. As means to explore this question, the study has many other aims (see aims of the study in section 1.2).

The significant consideration in selecting methods to accomplish the aims of the study was to ensure the ability to gather data in the field from a variety of sources. The researcher found that he needed to be flexible and creative in the field and in the way the various interviews were scheduled. Gathering data on the number of visitors touring the holy sites, determining whether they were local (of Jordanian descent) or international visitors/tourists, determining and observing problems faced by religious tourists, and gathering their own assessments of services provided at the holy sites required a variety of approaches to collect relevant data. This data then served as the background on which observations and recommendations pertaining to religious tourism were presented not only to a scholarly audience, but also to the Jordanian governmental and authoritative bodies.

The methodology employed in the study combines the following qualitative and quantitative approaches:

- Collecting and reading relevant studies and academic literature on the research topic and related subjects, in order to build on a considerable knowledge base and grasp the state of current research and thinking concerning the subject.
- Extensive stays in the field for the purpose of observation, interviews and field research regarding the holy sites themselves.
- Close observation of Muslims, Christians, Jordanian and non-Jordanian participants at holy sites.
- Documentation of various interactions and interviews with visitors/participants at holy sites (questionnaires which formed the basis for interviews can be found in appendices 1 and 2, below).
- In-depth interviews with tourists, expert and selected stakeholders concerning the field of religious tourism.
- Analysis of primary and secondary data sources, official statistics and gray literature, including statistical processing of questionnaires and interviews utilizing programmes SPSS 17.0 and MAXQDA 10, respectively. These programmes and their application are discussed in more detail below (in section 5.4, Quantitative Analysis).

Quantitative methods included broad-sweep questionnaires and the statistical processing thereof (see section 5.4). Qualitative methods included participant observation and in-depth interviews. These approaches were given further depth by analysis of field observations and background archival research concerning both academic publications as well as gray literature. Qualitative research methods frequently refer to quantitative measurements in order to “triangulate” the data gathered from more subjective individual narratives and observations (Glesne, 2006, p.36). Likewise, broad-sweep questions which provide scope can be given more texture and depth by referring to in-depth, information-rich interviews (Olsen, 2004, pp.15-22): “*The mixing of data types, known as data triangulation, is often thought to help in validating the claims that might arise from an initial pilot study. The mixing of methodologies, e.g., mixing the use of survey data with interviews, is a more profound form of triangulation*” (Olsen, 2004, p.3).

According to Condelli et al. (2004, p.2) “the researcher can get a better understanding by combining the two methods. Through the quantitative methods, the researcher can reach

the point *what works*, while through the qualitative methods, the researcher can reach the point *how it works*".

Flexibility of methods is vital to this study, because it focuses on human subjects who are not completely "quantifiable", "objective" or particularly consistent. Flexibility allows one to adjust the framework of study which is suitable for the situation and human objects. The methods employed in this study are mainly primary research instruments. As with any human-based studies, the most vital part is to find out as much about the culture and the people as possible. Since the researcher is Jordanian, he has a good background concerning the study. He knows the culture and the language and he is also able to understand how certain things function.

The researcher has nurtured a lifelong interest in religion and is a practicing Roman Catholic Christian. The researcher had taken part in religious pilgrimage at many holy sites in Jordan and for many years had considered the potential for positive interfaith experience available particularly at Jordanian holy sites.

Jordan is unusual amongst the "Holy Land" countries because, unlike Syria, for example, it is easy for almost any of the major outbound tourism countries to get visas. Furthermore, a considerable part of the Jordanian population speaks English as a second language. In contrast to Israel/ Palestine, Jordan is politically stable and secure, Muslims and Christians have been living there peaceably side by side since the advent of Islam. Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christianity as they are practiced in Jordan are very tolerant forms, as is most of the predominantly Sunni Islam typical to Jordan.¹⁸

The researcher has countless times encountered Christians at the Islamic holy sites and Muslims at Christian holy sites. As we will see, many holy sites of Jordan have a common religious heritage: They are shared as heritage common to the three monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Not only is shared material culture such as the holy sites rare elsewhere in the world, the common practice – visible daily – of sharing them amicably is a powerful testament to the potential for interfaith community.

¹⁸ There are pockets of extremist Islam in the greater Amman area, primarily in densely urbanized, less affluent neighborhoods of east Amman and Zarqa. By and large this inclination is not supported by most Jordanian Muslims, who have deplored the few incidents of extremist activism that have occurred over the past decade.

Thus in his own experience as a pilgrim the researcher began to think that through this common heritage people might be brought together to decrease the tensions between Muslims and Christians related to religious conflicts; that it might be possible to use religious tourism as a tool of cultural diplomacy. He began to reflect on this process academically during his master's work in tourism studies in Jordan.

As we have seen in chapter 2 above and we will explore at several points below, the combination of the two concepts/fields of action – religion and tourism – evokes different responses from different subject groups. Either Christians or Muslims are often reluctant to accept the idea of conflating the two activities. In the Arabic literature there is virtually no treatment of the subject, especially pertaining to Jordan. As the researcher pursued the academic study of religious tourism, the overall target of his work came to be to find answers to the central question of whether religious tourism is or can be used as a tool which may help to bring Muslims and Christians in Jordan closer together through a deeper understanding of their common religious heritage.

While, as a researcher, the status as an observant, Catholic, Jordanian male renders the author an “insider” researcher, particularly at Christian holy sites, the Jordanian context tempers the way that “insider” status should be understood. Over centuries Christians and Muslims have developed a cultural *modus operandi* for coexistence in what was once “Greater Syria” and is today Jordan and Syria. In Jordan's entire history there is no example of sectarian violence between Christians and Muslims. Unlike other contexts in which a Christian researcher might experience hostility from the Muslim community, or vice versa (or even, in some contexts, inter-Christian conflict, as in Lebanon), in Jordan Muslims and Christians interact day-in and day-out – and have done so over many centuries. This cultural interaction over the *longue duree* softens or blurs the boundaries of “insider” and “outsider” status in these religious contexts. However, sometimes tensions happen between Muslims and Christians because of some problems whether they are from inside or outside Jordan which affect directly the relation between them. The researcher hopes through this research to bring Muslims and Christians closer together through understanding that they have a common religious heritage in many holy sites in Jordan and their religions have the same roots.

In an important sense the researcher's very academic perspective places him “outside” all of these subject groups: In his role as interviewer and observer, he is neither tourist, pil-

grim nor stakeholder. A complete “outsider” researcher, however, would face considerable obstacles in this research: An enormous amount of field time would be required to gain the familiarity even with relatively concrete matters of language and geography, much less cultural nuance. Language is the most important component of culture through which people can interact with each other. Without Arabic it would be nearly impossible to interact with the stakeholders in Jordan – not only because of language barriers, but due to security issues which will be discussed below. In addition to language are the countless non-verbal cues important to conducting oneself at religious sites, but also as matters of etiquette within the society at large and in dealing with religious and government officials. One of the effects of the centuries of coexistence described above is that most Christians are reflexively aware of Muslim customs and comportment, “manners” that an outsider to the Jordanian context would have consciously to acquire. The details of everyday life of the society, the traditions of both the Arab-Islamic and Arab-Christian communities, familiarity with the components of culture such as attitudes, beliefs, customs, traditions, art, clothing, food, language – which allow access especially to religious attitudes and practices require a lifetime of acculturation.

The author of the present research study worked on the scholarly background of the study – method, literary review and case studies – in Germany. Focused fieldwork in Jordan took place from May to August 2009 and from April to June 2010. Without existing “insider” status and language proficiency the fieldwork could hardly have been conducted in seven months. During the first field trip the quantitative research – broad-sweep questionnaires – was conducted. Fieldwork was scheduled to coincide with the high season for Jordan tourism and with two important annual pilgrimages in northern Jordan: at the Shrine of our Lady of the Mount on June 10 and at Tal Mar Elias on July 21. Because of these events the researcher was able to conduct a lot of questionnaires at these two pilgrimage sites.

The second field trip took place from the beginning of April to the end of June 2010. During this period in-depth interviews were conducted as a qualitative component of the research. Once again the field season coincided with the high season in tourism – important for interviews with tourists and visitors. While the interviews with stakeholders and officials could be conducted at any time, more users visit the thirteen targeted holy sites during these months.

3.3 Initial Background Reading

The writings on holy sites in Jordan and how these have been explored recently were drawn from both Arabic, English and some German sources. Arabic sources are sparse. Key English language studies on Jordan, specifically, are Moaddel's "*Religion and State. The Singularity of the Jordanian Religious Experience*" (2002) and "*The Impact of Tourism on the Bedouin of Petra*" by Shoup (1985). Shoup explains how tourism has been utilized by the Jordanian government as a "*major source of foreign currency*". The government has "*chosen to capitalize on the country's rich archaeological and biblical sites*" and attract "*large numbers of western tourists and Christian pilgrims*" (Shoup, 1985). In this article the Jordanian government's practical approach to religious sites is already abundantly apparent over a quarter of a century ago. This fact provoked the researcher to ask whether this is still the case as we enter the second decade of the 21st century, and what the population thinks and feels about this focus on religious sites as a practical means of income for the country. Shoup's article elucidates how the government's stance has deeply affected the Bedouin, and not always in a positive way. Given the relative lack of recent analyses following up on Shoup's observations it was interesting to pursue whether and how attitudes and effects have developed vis-a-vis religious tourism.

Moaddel's recent article explains how the government of the Jordan has evolved in relationship to religion, and it sheds light on the cultural, political and social geography in which attitudes to religion have developed, providing an understanding of the context in which religious tourism takes place. The article explores the secularization and the rationalization of religion in an Islamic country, which the author maintains is quite a singular phenomenon in the Middle East. Moaddel's analysis motivated the author of the present study to develop concrete recommendations to help the Jordanian government to fully utilize religious tourism as a means of promoting tourism in other areas of the Jordanian economy. Now in Jordan in 2012 religious tourism is used as a tool to get out of the crisis that is facing Jordan's tourism sector from Arab Spring demonstrations and the international financial crisis. 300,000 JD have been specified from the budget of the Jordan tourism board for marketing and promotion of the holy sites. This step shows that Jordan began to perceive and understand the importance of religious tourism which would lead to an increase in national income of tourism.

3.4 Primary Data Collection

In order to collect current, live data, the researcher made as mentioned above two field visits to Jordan to interact in person with the local communities, tourists, pilgrims, and authoritative bodies who are stakeholders in tourism and specifically in religious tourism. The sample of the study that the researcher chose prior to both visits was represented by 13 holy sites of Christian and Islamic significance. The Oxford English Dictionary (2010) defines a holy site as “*a place kept or regarded as inviolate from ordinary use, and appropriated or set apart for religious use or observance*”.

These 13 holy sites include Christian and Muslim sites: There are five Christian holy sites which were recognised by the Vatican in 2000 as pilgrimage places; two of these places, baptism site and mount Nebo, were visited by two Popes of the Vatican, John Paul II in 2000 and Benedict XVI in 2009. These two visits mean a lot to the Jordanian religious tourism as they recognize the importance and holiness of these places. The Christian sites are the Baptism Site, Mount Nebo, Mukawir, the Shrine of Our Lady of the Mountain and Tal Mar Elias.

Included in the study are eight Islamic holy sites which are related to the companions of the prophet Mohammad. These Islamic holy sites are as follows: the Shrine (*in Arabic maqaam*) of Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn al-Jarrah, the Shrine of Dirar bin al-Azwar, the Shrine of Shurhabil bin Husnah, the Shrine of Amir bin Abi Waqqas, the Shrine of Mu'ath bin Jabal, the Shrine of Ja'far bin Abi Taleb, the Shrine of Zaid ibin Harithah, and the Shrine of Abdallah bin Rawahah.

Religious tourism means visiting the holy sites whether they are for Christians or Muslims. The visits to the holy sites not only made financial returns for the local communities and the tourism income but also there might be – main aim of the present study – a significant impact in building bridges between Christians and Muslims or Muslims and Christians which could reinforce national unity and the concept of religious pluralism in Jordan in an atmosphere of brotherhood and mutual respect and acceptance of others as an equal part and a brother in the humanity.

In Jordan we still require to better develop the culture of knowledge and recognition that the holy sites do not only belong to a certain religious group only but also to other human beliefs and religious groups. However, from the researcher's participant observations

there are Muslims who visit the Christian holy sites and Christians who visit the Islamic holy sites. Visiting the holy sites makes the person know and recognize the identity of the other related to his belief and teachings of the religion.

In an interview with a Christian religious man (a priest), this person asserted that when a Christian delegation visits Jordan they always arrange a programme to an Islamic site like the Mosque of the King Abdallah or the Mosque of King Hussein in Amman or to meet official Islamic religious men to transfer the tolerant teachings of Islam and the importance of accepting the other and working together to build and further develop the Jordanian society. We should reach a point where everybody can say “the homeland is to all but religion is to God”.

The educational institutions should include in the curricula suitable material which helps to get to know the other through the holy sites whether they are Christian or Islamic. This subject is of great significance and importance because it constitutes an important step on the road to building bridges of communications between Christians and Muslims. Defining the importance of place from historical and religious sides contributes to building bridges of communication and to remove ignorance about the other. This will open the door to a fraternal dialogue on concepts, beliefs and practices. What about the interfaith dialogues fail to deliver to the concept of normal people, holy sites may be able to do. The greatness of a holy place may be able to pronounce what words fail to say. For this reason, we should encourage visiting the holy sites to give freedom to the place to talk about itself and its history and spirituality. Visiting the holy sites reflect positively on the appreciation of the other and his customs, traditions and beliefs.

According to the same interview with the priest who accompanied a German delegation, he commented about the visit:

“I can’t describe the influence of the visit to an Islamic holy site Mosque of King Hussein on a German delegation from Hamburg before some years ago. Every lady wore a long black cloak and a head scarf as a kind of decency and respect for the place as well as hearing from the Sheikh about the mosque. The delegation was very influenced and inspired by the visit and I am surely they will transfer this good experience to their country. Jordan is full of Islamic and Christian holy sites. Therefore, we should encourage religious tourism because it has a special importance in knowing the other. The common religious heritage we have in our sites in Jordan can play a good role and promote the

acceptance of the others, respect and cooperate with him (the other) in building a society based on justice and equality without any religious, ethnic or political discrimination.”

Many of the Islamic holy sites in Jordan are, in fact, also revered by Christians and Jews because many of the prophets and messengers are recognized by all three Abrahamic religions. In all there are in Jordan more than 100 Christian and around 40 Islamic holy site. As noted in Chapter 1, these sites were selected for their popularity and for their potential as a tourist network. The most-visited sites are al-Maghtas (the baptism site), Mount Nebo and Maqaam Abu Ubaydah. The Islamic sites are related to the companions of the Prophet Mohammed and are of shared significance to both Christians and Muslims. Also considered was proximity to a community, in order to enable the researcher to investigate local attitudes towards religious tourism. Shrine sites located near communities provided information regarding existing economic benefit to local communities and the involvement of locals in the tourism process.

As the overall target of this study is to determine whether religious tourism can be used to bring Muslims and Christians in Jordan together through a deeper understanding of their common religious heritage, the next step in the research was to define each of these sites' significance to tourists, the local population and the government, respectively. In order to gather primary data from these sources, the researcher chose to interact closely with the local communities, visitors, tourists and authoritative bodies by means of broad-sweep questionnaires, in-depth interviews, group discussions and participant observations. The researcher managed 211 questionnaires and conducted 30 interviews. These questionnaires and interviews are discussed in more detail in sections 5.2 and 5.4. Subsequent to the field research interviews and field notes were analyzed for dominant themes. Questionnaires were analysed by the programme SPSS 17.0 and the interviews were analysed with the help of the programme MAXQDA 10.

3.5 Research Limitations

3.5.1 Population and Gender

The biggest challenge in the fieldwork was to obtain as wide a variety of informants as possible, including visitors, tourists and pilgrims, both from within and outside Jordan,

both from local communities and government officials. The researcher speaks both English and Arabic fluently, as well as some German, so he was able to cover a wide sample of interviews with tourists and pilgrims, especially during the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Jordan on May, 2009. Most tourists were reluctant, however, to stop and speak or listen to the explanations the researcher had to offer them, especially when they were asked to fill in a questionnaire or to participate in a short interview. The researcher was, unfortunately, limited by language barriers from interviewing tourists who spoke neither English, Arabic nor German. While it might have broadened the sample to employ translators in other languages, the researcher then would have lost the immediacy of the exchange as well as a secure sense that the translator is refraining from interjecting his own subjective outlook into the study and into the responses of the participants.

During preliminary research and from previous experience the researcher had ascertained that most Muslim men, especially those who are very religious, do not accept the expression “religious tourism” as something natural or as something that has evolved over time as a logical resource upon which the government might capitalize. Observant Muslim men view “tourism” as an essentially superficial entertainment activity, while “religion” is highly regarded and considered a very serious subject. Thus, in the exchanges with Muslim subjects the researcher avoided associating religion and tourism together as a type of tourism. Muslim subjects state that there are Hajj and 'Umrah pilgrimages, on the one hand, which are distinct from tourism, on the other: They are separate subjects entirely.

On the social level an important consideration when visiting the holy sites was the inherent possibility of raising awareness and understanding between Christian and Muslim individuals, especially in Jordan, by showing them a common religious heritage between the holy sites. This common religious heritage has the potential to be a positive factor in bringing people together. It has, furthermore, potential for positive impacts on community development (Shunnaq et al. 2008, pp.1-14). Over-generalizing sacred interpretation could, however, be problematic amongst various Islamic denominations (e.g. Shi'a and Sunna), and the researcher had to be sensitive to these differentiations.

A further limitation to the investigation of this aspect of the study was the difficulty in obtaining data from female side. Women's participation in tourism in Jordan is limited in general. Only 5% of the total employees in the tourism sector in Jordan are women, even

though there is a clear difference between the proportion of females to males enrolled in university tourism studies (al-Masallah paper, 2007).

3.5.2 Foreign and Official Perspectives

Bias of one kind or another is endemic to the practice of ethnography. While all opinions expressed by research subjects are framed within their own experience, foreign tourists and official Jordanian government opinions exhibited particular and typical perspectives as groups.

Many tourists exhibit relative inexperience in and lack of knowledge about both the country and the religious sites. A tourist is more likely to rely on emotions and received “facts” rather than his own critical analysis or primary research. Some of the tourists refused to fill out questionnaires, either because they “did not have time” – which may only have been an excuse or from a personal reasons. This may well have been a legitimate reason, however, because the tourists were asked to complete the questionnaires after the visit so as to obtain assessment answers about their experience of the holy sites.

While official perceptions are important to the study, it was difficult to obtain a wide variety of official government opinions. Many officials did not have time or had professional or personal reasons to decline invitations to sit down for interviews. In other cases the frankness with which officials expressed their views may have been constrained in view of constituent opinion. As in some other countries in the Arab world, Jordanian officials are not free to be entirely candid about their real opinions, especially on sensitive subjects such as religion and its relationship with tourism. Indeed one encounters this problem even in the United States and Western world: It is relatively hard to obtain an official’s honest opinion.

The other limitation related to gaining official input is the general lack of organization in Jordanian work schedules. Particularly in the bureaucracies delays are constant: it is virtually impossible to make and/or keep an appointment. Also, all information gathering is perceived as a security threat. Though the researcher is Jordanian, he did not know, for example, that he had to obtain a permit to distribute questionnaires and to conduct the fieldwork in the study area. During the visits to the study area, the tourist police at holy sites made it clear that if the researcher wants to distribute any materials or to make interviews with tourists, he must first go to specific governmental ministries and depart-

ments, such as the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Department of Intelligence, the police stations etc., to obtain various permissions. This unexpected element was extremely time consuming and surprisingly expensive especially as the study area consisted of 13 holy sites not near to each other. Addressing this obstacle was greatly facilitated by being a local (i.e. Jordanian) researcher. The complexities of the bureaucracy and security factors might have been insurmountable for a foreigner.

In spite of all the problems and obstacles that faced the study, the researcher was capable to get the results referring to the aims of the project; most important are the notes and recommendations that the researcher gave to the concerned authorities according to the results of the study. The recommendations are the conclusion reached by the researcher, as they represent the potential and proposed solutions for the problem of the study.

Chapter Four

Jordan's Religious Tourism Sector: Basic Facts and Framework

This chapter presents an overview about Jordan's religious tourism sector dealing with the basic facts and the framework. First of all the Social, political and economic conditions were outlined and how they affect the tourism product in Jordan. The second part of this chapter is about tourism in Jordan followed by some important Jordan tourist bodies such as the ministry of tourism and antiquities through which Jordan conduct the tourism process. The two national tourism strategies (2004-2010), (2011-2015) were also discussed concentrating on the new points in the national tourism strategy NTS (2011-2015). In the third part of this chapter religious tourism and the study area of Christian and Islamic holy sites were discussed in detail. Finally the role of the royal Hashemite family in protecting and developing the holy sites in Jordan was presented.

4.1 Social, political and economic conditions as a framework

4.1.1 Social Conditions

Jordan values human development and has made it a national priority. It ranks ninth out of the nineteen Arab countries in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI). Interesting is that the main contribution to this strong HDI ranking is Jordan's orientation towards women. One improvement in women's rights is the reservation of 20% of seats by quota for women in municipal councils since 2003. The government of Jordan has also set an ambitious goal of 100% health insurance coverage by 2012.

Despite having a strong HDI, Jordan faces a number of threats to social stability. The most important threat is that 38% of its population is under the age of 14, and approximately 70% is under the age of 29, making it one of the youngest populated regions in the Middle East. If this large young population remains unemployed, it can result in a potential long-term deficit in intellectual capital (Prusher, 2005). The so-called "youth bulge" also poses a potential threat to political stability. Cincotta et al., in a 2003 study

for Population Action International report: “The demographic factors most closely associated with the likelihood of an outbreak of civil conflict during the 1990s were a high proportion of young adults (aged 15 to 29 years)—a phenomenon referred to as a youth bulge—and a rapid rate of urban population growth ... Countries in which young adults comprised more than 40 percent of the adult population were more than twice as likely as countries with lower proportions to experience an outbreak of civil conflict” (Cincotta et al., 2003, p. 10).

According to Abu Ghazaleh¹⁹ 2011 “in terms of labor market development, the sector will work towards creating 25,000 new direct jobs in tourism, increasing female participation in the workforce by 15%, getting 5,000 students trained at the 11 VTC centers, and enhancing hospitality skills of 40,000 employees working in tourism” (eturbonews, 2011).

Concerning the context of the present study it is interesting to know about the distribution of religious groups in Jordan’s population. Estimates in 2001 set religious affiliation in Jordan at 92% Sunni Muslims, 6% Christian (majority Greek Orthodox, but some Greek and Roman Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Protestant denominations), and 2% other religions (Shi’a Muslim and Druze populations) (data according to CIA, 2012).

As one of the most open economies of the region according to the report from World Bank 2012, Jordan is well integrated with its neighbours through trade, remittances, foreign direct investment (FDI), and tourism and has especially strong links to the Arab Gulf economies. Jordanian policymakers seek to use the demographic opportunity of a well educated, young population to build a dynamic, knowledge-based economy (CIA, 2012).

4.1.2 Political Conditions

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy ruled since 1999 by King Abdallah II. The monarchy is hereditary – the Crown Prince is King Abdallah’s eldest son, prince Hussein. The legal system balances civil and Shari’a (Islamic law) with a traditional system of tribal law which is shared by many hereditary Jordanians, both Christian and Muslim. The gov-

¹⁹ Former minister of tourism and antiquities

ernment is headed by a Prime Minister, appointed by the King, and a cabinet appointed by the Prime Minister in consultation with the Royal Court. The legislative branch, National Assembly (in Arabic *majlis al-Umma*) consists of two houses: An upper house (Senate, in Arabic *majlis al-a'yaan*) which is appointed by the King and a lower house (House of Representatives, in Arabic *majlis an-Nuwaab*) elected by universal suffrage. Political parties were legalized in 1992. A quota system sets aside certain seats in the 120-member lower house for women (12), extra seats for the urban centers of Amman, Zarqa and Irbid (4), Christians (9), Bedouin (9) and the Chechen/Circassian minority (3). Jordan is governed at the local level by twelve governorates (Map 4.1). The governor of each is appointed by the monarch. These governors are solely responsible for government departments and development projects under their jurisdiction (according to CIA, 2012).

Because the Senate, Prime Minister, cabinets and governors are appointed by the King and the entirety can be dissolved by the monarch at any time, power is effectively concentrated in the Royal Court. At the time of writing the government has changed ten times since King Abdallah II took the throne in 1999 (BTI²⁰, 2012). Although Jordan has been significantly quieter than neighboring countries during the so-called “Arab Spring” and its aftermath, weekly protests for democratic reform and greater government accountability continued throughout 2011.

The late King Hussein ruled Jordan from 1953 to 1999, a forty-six year reign which was tumultuous at times both within Jordan and beyond its borders. King Hussein is still, however, revered – and perhaps romanticized – by most Jordanians as a symbol of stability and unity. Again, compared to the rest of the region Jordan’s regime transitions and Hashemite rule have been smooth and the country’s internal politics stable. Since King Abdallah II’s accession to the throne his main foci have been economic reform, normalizing relations with Israel based on the 1994 peace treaty and consolidating Jordan’s relationship with United States. Though political development and poverty alleviation are high profile concerns, failure to address growing unemployment, particularly amongst young adults, and to address the growing gap between rich and poor, along with increasing concerns about corruption, have fueled “Arab Spring” protests.

²⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index



Map 4.1: The twelve governorates of Jordan

King Abdallah II responded to the uprisings and demonstrations with a variety of reforms which he referred to as milestones. Among these were wide-ranging constitutional amendments, discussed and promulgated by Parliament and ratified in September 2011. 42 of 131 articles – basically one third of the entire Constitution – were amended.

Another was the political parties draft law submitted to Parliament in January 2012. One of the main pillars of the reform strategy is to strengthen political parties, with the objective of developing a mature and efficient party system. Related to this is the new elections law, expected to be submitted to parliament in March 2012. This and other laws will pave the way for holding more transparent, freer and fairer municipal and parliamentary elections. The King signalled the preparatory nature of these reforms by saying, “These changes and amendments are the beginning, not the end” (Göksel, 2012).

4.1.3 Economic Conditions

Jordan's economy is export-oriented and has enjoyed stability on a macro-economic level since the 1990s. Trade in the country increased when it signed a number of agreements with Europe and the United States of America, along with the World Trade Organization, in 2000. The main exports of Jordan include fertilizers, clothing, phosphates, vegetables, potash, and pharmaceuticals to Iraq, USA, UAE, India, Syria, Saudi Arabia and other countries. As the global economic crises have affected the demand for exports from the United States, in the short-term, Jordan will have to rely on the fast rising demand from Iraq to remain economically stable. Jordan's primary imports of machinery, oil, iron, cereals, and transport equipment come from China, Saudi Arabia, USA, Egypt, and Germany. Although the country has sustained a real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of approximately 6%, the government deficit has also grown and measured up to 17.5% of the GDP in 2007. The sectors responsible for economic growth in 2007 were real estate, manufacturing, agriculture, business services, and financial services. Other sources of revenue are remittance (21% of GDP), foreign aid and, most importantly, taxes (21% of GDP). However, the figure of foreign aid is not comprehensively accounted, as the US aid received in 2004 was accounted in 2007 (Mac, 2002).

Jordan's expenditures total 5% of its GDP on defence, 4.85% on education and approximately 7% on refugees. Jordan's cumulative domestic investment in 2008 was 34% of the GDP. Jordan also borrows from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Islamic Development Bank, European Investment Bank, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, and the World Bank. The total public debt in 2010 was USD 9.2 billion, and the Ministry of Finance of Jordan indicates that it will increase in the coming years. According to the Central Bank of Jordan, the country has managed to control the rate of inflation and has a projected a decrease from 14.9% (2008) to 2.8% (2010).

The main concern for the Jordanian government has been the steady and high unemployment rate, which was officially recorded at 12.6% in 2008; unofficial resources, however, say it is 30% (Nimeh, 2012). Tourism is of vital importance to the national economy of Jordan. It is the Kingdom's largest export sector, the second largest private sector employer and the second highest producer of foreign exchange. Tourism contributes more than USD 800 million to Jordan's economy and accounts for approximately 10% of the country's GDP.

A study by Kreishan entitled “Tourism and Economic Growth: the Case of Jordan” (2010) uses two different economic models to analyze the relationship over the long term between tourism expansion and economic growth in Jordan. Kreishan finds that there is indeed a long-run relationship between these factors, and that the relationship is uni-directional: Tourism revenue leads economic growth. Kreishan closes the article by saying that “the results of this study suggest that promoting tourism via developing a long-term tourism strategic plan will contribute to economic growth in Jordan” (Kreishan, 2010 p.1).

4.2 Tourism in Jordan

The head of the state, King Abdallah II, expresses his view about tourism which shows a good care concerning the tourism sector in Jordan: “*Through tourism, we’re able to open people’s eyes to what a magnificent land and nation we have here, and the tremendous surprises and treasures that Jordan holds*” (National Tourism Strategy, NTS 2011, p.1).

As it has been throughout the world, tourism is playing an increasingly significant role in Jordan’s economy as a major source of income and employment (Table 4.1). Tourism is considered for Jordan as the largest export sector, second largest private sector employer and second highest producer of foreign exchange (MoTA, 2010). Concerning the importance of tourism to the economy of Jordan, in 2005 tourism generated JD 1,021.6 million in income, 8.3% more than the value of 2004, which was JD 943 million and the increase reached to 2,423.0 million in 2010. 29,394 jobs were provided as direct employment by the tourism sector, 24.8% more than the 23,544 jobs offered in 2004 (MoTA, 2005). Tourism accounts for approximately 12.7% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Central Bank of Jordan, CBJ, 2009). Tourism has generated 2,423 million JD in 2010 as revenue (1 JD = 1.408 USD), 42,034 jobs were offered as direct employment in this sector (MOTA, 2011).

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of tourists	5,817,370	6,573,669	6,528,626	7,100,483	7,084,552	8,247,135	6,600,0
Tourism Receipts (million JD)	1,021.6	1,164.1	1,638.9	2,088.9	2,066.9	2,423,3	2,000,0

Table 4.1: Increase in the receipts and the number of tourists – except year 2011 (MoTA, 2011)

According to Darabseh (2010, p.54) tourism uses free natural, cultural and heritage resources which do not need extensive infrastructure support. In Jordan the remains of Nabatean, Roman, Greek and Muslim civilizations from the past 5,000 years constitute one of the largest concentrations of iconic archaeological sites in the whole world. Jordan is also known for its diverse geography and ecology ranging from the Dead Sea, mountains, highlands and the deserts. In addition to this Jordan is at the crossroad for three monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism. This of course, puts the country among the preferred tourist attractions worldwide.

In 2008, Jordan received 7,100,483 million international and domestic arrivals. Revenues generated from the sector reached JD 2,088.9 billion. Credited with more than 38,000 direct employees, the sector is the largest private sector employer in the country. Jordan's tourism revenue rose 17% in 2010 compared with the previous year as the number of visitors increased. Revenue climbed to 2.42 billion JD (USD 3.4 billion) from 2.07 billion JD in 2009. Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) Director General Nayef Fayez told *The Jordan Times* that credit for the increase in revenues and tourists' number should be attributed to the promotion campaigns organized in 2009. He added that these are "positive indicators" that would have an impact on the economy in general as the tourism sector is considered "one of the main pillars of the country's economy" (Jordan Times, 2010).

That having been said, fluctuations in regional political stability have a profound effect on Jordanian tourism. Jordan lost nearly US\$1 billion in revenue in 2011 due to the ripple effects of the Arab Spring: The total tourism revenue in 2010 was around 2 billion JD, down 400 million JD (16.5%). In 2011 the number of tourists to Jordan dropped by 20% compared to the previous year (MoTA, 2011).

4.2.1 Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA)

The government of Jordan established the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) in 1988. The main purpose of MoTA is to develop National Tourism Strategy, to encourage cooperation and coordination across the different agents of the tourism supply chain and to create tourism policies. MoTA also supports tourists with a number of resources and information. It has, for example, designed online maps categorized by type of destination and accompanied by a photo gallery along with embassy, car rental and airline information. All these resources help tourists to efficiently access tour guides and locate

sacred and historical sites, among others. Furthermore, MoTA also offers statistics and information on tourism receipts and numbers of visitors by places visited and nationality. MoTA also initiated e-licensing along with employee training, an employee programme, and quality control and monitoring activities. It also works with the Jordanian Tourism Board to promote tourist sites (MoTA, 2011).

4.2.2 Jordan Tourism Board (JTB)

The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) was established by MoTA in 1998. JTB is a cooperative institution whose purpose is to increase tourism in Jordan via international marketing and promotion. JTB represents all associations of guides, travel agencies, airlines and hotels. JTB has established offices in the key tourist markets of Europe, the United States and the Arab countries. It participates in tourism fairs and exhibitions and supports its members, especially hotel managers and travel agents, with the purpose of entering international markets. The JTB website operates an online shop for tourists and provides services in eleven languages including weather information, accommodation and itineraries. The website generates a pull strategy for customers and has generated push strategy by providing the most relevant information to the tourism consortiums and travel agents around the world. The JTB also works with travel consortiums such as American Express to promote Jordan as a preferred destination (Theodoulou, 2001, p.7). According to Harahsheh, (2002, p.60) the main purposes of JTB include:

1. Marketing and promoting Jordanian tourist products to worldwide markets via a variety of channels.
2. Putting Jordan on the map for international tourism by offering new and competitive products such as medical tourism, religious and eco-tourism.
3. Increasing the number of tourists entering Jordan through quality marketing strategies, policies and programs.
4. Increasing the length of tourist stays by offering more tourist products and by improving infrastructure.

4.2.3 Jordan National Tourism Strategy 2004–2010

King Abdallah II launched the Jordan National Tourism Strategy (NTS) in 2004. The strategy was designed to bring about the following results by 2010:

- Increase tourism receipts from JD 570 million in 2003 to 1.3 billion (USD 1.84 billion).
- Increase tourism-supported jobs from 40,791 in 2003 to 91,719, thus creating over 51,000 new jobs.
- Achieve taxation yield to the government of more than JD 455 million (USD 637 million).

Maha al-Khatib, former Minister of Tourism and Antiquities introduced, the next Jordan Tourism Strategy covering the period 2011–2015. At the same time she assessed the results of the first strategy that ended. In 2010, in one of her interviews with the website Marcopolis included below, she remarked:

“One of the positive highlights of the results from the 2004-2010 strategy is that the tourism sector has surpassed its target for revenues by 35% by reaching JD 1.9 billion. We surpassed the target and at the end of 2010 we will reach JD 2.2 or 2.3 billion.”

In general the National Tourism Strategy targets the following segments and priority niche markets:

- Cultural heritage (Archaeology)
- **Religious tourism** (*researcher’s emphasis*)
- Eco-tourism
- Health and wellness
- Adventure
- Meetings, incentives, conferences, and events (MICE)
- Cruises

For the purpose of the present research study the significant points here are that tourism is growing substantially in Jordan, and that NTS has indentified religious tourism as a niche market and market segment.

4.2.4 National Tourism Strategy 2011-2015

On July 28, 2011 the National Tourism Strategy has been launched under the title: “Toward increasing the competitiveness of the Jordanian tourism sector in the coming five years” under the guidance of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in cooperation with the private sector and in partnership with the Tourism Promotion Authority and the De-

partment of Antiquities and the Union of Tourist Associations and the Tourism Development Project in Jordan financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The four strategic domains:

- 1- Reinforcing the tourism promotion and marketing
- 2- Developing tourist resorts
- 3- Enhancing human resource
- 4- Providing an institutional framework and effective regulatory system to support the tourism possible environment

This new strategy aims to develop the tourism sector over the coming five years. The overall goal is to increase tourism revenues to reach Jordanian 4.2 billion JD in 2015, meanwhile the previously announced revenue for the year 2010 was 2.2 billion dinars.

The Strategy includes the approving of a new law for tourism and the modernization of tourism professions in order to improve the quality of services offered to tourists.

One of the most important comments on this strategy is what Professor Awni Kawar wrote in the World Tourism Newspaper on March 8, 2011 “Despite the comprehensiveness of National Tourism Strategy, it still lacks an emergency plan which can be ready in case of unexpected circumstances that may affect the tourism sector as what we are witnessing of instable political situations in the surrounding countries since 2011, which has caused a decline in the number of tourists resulting in a decrease in the national outcomes from tourism”.

The strategy has been prepared by specialized committees of the public and private sectors, but it is noticed that the participation of the private sector was the largest, which could be a big factor for the success of this strategy.

4.3 Religious Tourism (Faith Tourism)

The term “faith tourism” is sometimes used as a synonym for religious tourism (Stausberg, 2011, p. 156). According to Knyszewski (2004, p.1) there are three aspects of religious or faith tourism:

- The spiritual aspect: Religious tourism is one of the ways people get closer to God as a devoted or observant religious person or as a potential believer whose faith might be realized in the process of travel or a visit to a holy place.
- The sociological aspect: Religious tourism is a means by which the believer can discover or enhance knowledge of the history of his or her religious tradition.
- The cultural aspect: A visit to a sacred space or religious destination is one way that believer and non-believer may encounter the cultural heritage of the religions which have shaped and continue to shape societies.

In accordance with Bauer (cited in Knyszewski, 2004, p.3), lecturer at the University of Savoy, a typology of religious tourism might include:

- The pilgrim seeking a purely religious experience;
- The traditional religious person;
- The liberal religious person, witnessing his or her faith;
- The enthusiast of art, of culture or ethnology;
- The secular ideologist seeking to reinforce skepticism.

Bauer (cited in Knyszewski, 2004, p.3) suggests that standard approaches to marketing the religious or faith tourism product are:

- The marketing of a service (welcome, influx management, etc.);
- The management of an organization (working with site administrators and church representatives);
- Pragmatic solutions to reconcile various needs (meditation, knowledge and learning, leisure, etc.); and
- Cohabitation and market segmentation.

According to Wright (2007, p.8), for the travel professional or scholar, the expression “religious travel” evokes several immediate associations: niche market, pilgrimages, budget travel, and senior citizens. Contradicting this stereotype, religious travel, tourism

and hospitality is a vibrant industry grossing approximately USD 18 billion and about 300 million travellers a year around the globe. A revenue of USD 10 billion is estimated for North America alone. Travel Industry Association of America reports that one in four travellers is more interested in “spiritual vacations” (Schott, 2008 p.14). This response was obtained from every age group. Many studies show that over 50,000 churches and religious firms arrange spiritual travel for people. Religious people have changed their habits and have started to buy better quality products and services: They tend to seek high quality accommodations, they travel in business class and they seek and pay for amenities to facilitate their journeys (Wright, 2007).

Religious tourism is one of Jordan’s most important tourist products, a pillar of the Jordanian tourism industry. Recently Jordan has begun to use religious tourism as a tool to address the crisis which has struck the tourism sector since the beginning of the Arab uprisings: JTB dedicated JD 300,000 in 2011 to promote and market religious tourism specifically for this purpose. According to Wright (2008) one million from a total number of nearly six million tourists visited the holy sites in Jordan. Jordan is blessed with important religious heritage sites belonging to the three monotheistic faiths of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. It is widely known as part of the biblical landscape, or Holy Land, a location that links the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Lot, Moses, Elijah, Ruth, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and many other prophets and messengers. According to Piccirillo (1999, p.13) and as already mentioned above there are around 100 Christian and around 40 Islamic holy places in Jordan. These sites make Jordan a potentially strong competitor with Israel for Holy Land tourism.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan lost Jerusalem – the core of Jordan’s claim to the Holy Land – as well as the West Bank, a consequence of Israel’s occupation in 1967. In the wake of that situation, a new competition emerged – this time among Jordanians, Israelis and the Palestinians, represented by the Palestinian Authority since its establishment in 1994 – over claims to the Holy Land (Katz, 2003, p.1).

For outbound Christian religious tourism, many Christians travel to other countries than Jordan to see the holy sites, especially the Holy Land sites in Israel and in the Palestinian territories. Others travel to places in Europe, such as Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal, among many others. There are many travel agencies in Jordan, too, that arrange travel to religious sites in many different areas of the world.

Most Islamic tourism from Jordan to other countries concentrates on Saudi Arabia for *Hajj* and *Umrah* pilgrimages. Many of the pilgrims visit the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem and other sites in Israel and in the Palestinian territories. However, the Islamist movement in Jordan opposes peace with Israel and refuses to recognize Israel as a state. In recent years anti-normalization activists in Jordan and Palestine have urged Jordanians to refrain from visiting Jerusalem and other sites in Palestine for religious purposes, but travel agents have insisted that they are within their rights to offer tour packages to these sites. *“We noticed an increase in the number of visits to Israel under the pretext of seeing holy sites in Jerusalem and other places. This must stop because it is an act of normalization,”* declared Hamzah Mansour, President of the National Committee for Anti-Normalization. He insists that obtaining visa from the Israeli embassy in Amman is recognition of Israel’s existence. In a statement posted on the Islamic Action Front website, Mansour criticized travel agents who promote tours to Jerusalem and called for an end to this practice (Jordan Times, 2010).

A travel agent from the Jordanian town of Fuhais, who preferred not to be named, replied that the decision about whether or not to travel to Palestine should be left up to individuals.

“We don’t force anybody. This is a personal decision. People have the freedom to do what they want. Moreover, even if these places are under Israeli occupation, we must see them because they belong to us, not the Jews” (Jordan Times 2010).

Muslim individuals themselves are often positive about tourism. In his study of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, Hejazeen (2007, p.156) states that

“Tourism does not contradict religion or traditional customs but on the contrary, encourages its followers to travel to the world in search of learning and to interact with other peoples and cultures”.

In the Arab Middle East many different faiths meet and overlap. Though the religion that is associated with this geographical area is Islam, other religions are also very much present. Mecca is famous as Islam’s most important place of worship, in the same way that Jerusalem and the Baptism site, among other Jordanian sites, are known as centres for Christian pilgrimage. The Arab world also hosts a large number of holy places where religious tourists devote themselves to remembrance of prophets, saints and messengers.

Faith tourism or religious tourism can be promoted as one of the most important activities contributing to tolerance and peace. One of the main objectives of this type of tourism, also called the “mother of tourism,” is to decrease the differences among cultures and societies. Faith tourism is a kind of cultural tourism whose purpose is to familiarize people with different communities, holy places and religions. Cultural and religious journeys or pilgrimages have the potential to build bridges between cultures and promote peace by providing a better knowledge of history, nature, religious traditions, and different ways of life. People can thus have an intercultural and inter-religious approach to other societies. The Middle East is an ideal place for a person to meet people who belong to distinct religious communities that are living together, but have completely different beliefs and places to worship (Dajani, 2009).

An important common point of this century and the next centuries will be the acquaintance of the members of different religions with each other, to exchange information, to recognize common ground and differences, and to continue to live in peace. Religious tourism can facilitate this important human recognition. The technological changes occurring in the world have provided human beings much easier access and ability to become acquainted with different cultures, countries and societies, thereby potentially establishing relationships with them as they visit natural and cultural sites as well as holy places. Because it is home to such a large number of places sacred to Christianity, Islam and Judaism, Jordan possesses a very dense spiritual atmosphere in this particular geographical location. Precisely because so many religions coexist in this region where East meets West, there is the possibility to meet and accept each other and spread a message of harmony.

It is very important for the context of the present study to know that in Jordan Islamic holy sites are not administered by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, but rather by the Ministry of Awqaf, Islamic Affairs and Holy Places. As will be detailed in the following, interviews revealed that most Awqaf employees oppose the concept of “religious tourism,” at least as they understand it. Part of the discussion below suggests ways in which the Awqaf might develop Islamic holy sites to attract tourists and pilgrims, despite this negative perception.

Christian holy sites, in contrast, are often administered by MoTA, who consider these sites like any other tourist site. Some Christian holy sites in Jordan are a Christian *waqf*,

however, and MoTA has no responsibility for these. Awqaf is an unassailable religious endowment, usually a bequest, usually of a building or land to be used for religious or charitable purposes. One such site is the extremely popular pilgrimage destination and cultural heritage site at Mount Nebo, about which more information will be given in Section 4.4.1.2 below. For the most part MoTA has been assiduous in preserving and developing religious sites under its jurisdiction to maximize the religious purposes of these sites and to accommodate the increasing numbers of tourists who come to Jordan (Marcopolis, 2010).

The vast majority of those who responded to questionnaire for this study (83.3%) believe that understanding common religious heritage is a factor upon which dialogue can begin to take place. Less than 1% of the respondents answered "No" to this question. These results indicate that there are strong positive feelings toward understanding and building relationships based on common religious heritage.

Religious tourism is on the rise, and this suggests an opportunity to encourage this sense of dialogue and understanding. As already noted, Wright (2007, p.9) gives three primary reasons explaining the explosive growth especially in American religious tourism. First, there is an increase in the overall number of Americans travelling and vacationing. To be exact, Americans travelling overseas has grown by almost 50% in the past ten years alone. Second, there are more people of faith. Although the percentage of North Americans claiming or belonging to a faith has not necessarily increased in the past ten years, the overall faith population has expanded: For example, the Christian population size has increased by about ten million during the past decade. Third, people of faith are now finding ways to integrate their beliefs into their everyday lives.

The astounding success of faith-based movies, books and music bears witness to this fact. Successful films such as *The Passion of the Christ*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *The Purpose-Driven Life* are evidence of a popular demand for faith-based entertainment and inspiration. These faith-based tales have become top national sellers. Christian music, too, has climbed to the top of the charts and today outsells even classical and jazz combined.

4.4 Religious Sites of Jordan

As noted, Jordanian tourism includes some of the most unique religious and holy sites of three of the major religious traditions in the world. Though most of the sites are explicitly Christian or Muslim, Jews share interest in most of the sites because they refer to Jewish prophets also revered by Christians and Muslims (e.g., Moses/Musa). All three traditions have deep-rooted historical backgrounds in Jordan, where many of the most important events of each religion are believed to have taken place.

Five Christian pilgrimage destinations in Jordan were formally recognized by the Vatican in 2000: The Baptism Site (Bethany beyond Jordan, al-Maghtas), Mount Nebo (*al-Siyyagh*), The Fortress of Mukawir, Our Lady of the Mountain and Mar Elijah (*Mar Elias*). Three of these, the Baptism Site (Photo 4.1), Tal Mar Elias and the Shrine of Our Lady of the Mount are particularly popular amongst pilgrims in Jordan and neighbouring countries, who visit them every year on a day designated particularly for that site. For the Baptism site the pilgrimage day for Catholics is the second Friday in January; for Eastern Orthodox the third Friday in January. The annual day of pilgrimage to Our Lady of the Mountain in Anjara is June 10. July 21 is the annual pilgrimage day for Mar Elias.

The eight most popular Islamic pilgrimage sites in Jordan are the Shrine of Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn al-Jarrah, the Shrine of Dirar bin al-Azwar, the Shrine of Shurhabil bin Husnah, the Shrine of Amir bin Abi Waqqas, the Shrine of Zaid bin Harithah, the Shrine of Ja'far bin Abi Taleb, and the Shrine of Abdallah bin Rawahah. These sites enjoy an almost constant stream of visitors, but they are particularly popular on Fridays, which is both the Muslim day of congregational prayer (*Salat al-jum'a*) and the nationwide secular "day off," rather like Sundays in Europe and the Americas.

Jordan is full of holy sites whether they are for Christians or Muslims. People visit the holy sites which are related to saints, messengers, prophets and pious religious men, who are seen as mediators between them and God, to ask for blessings, help, and support etc. The study area is divided into two groups the Christian and Islamic holy sites.

4.4.1 Christian Holy Sites (see map 1.4)

4.4.1.1 The Baptism Site

The Baptism Site, also known as Bethany beyond Jordan or al-Maghtas (photos 4.1,4.2). The site is about 50 km west of Amman, the capital city, a 45 minute drive, and about 10 km north of the major resort area and tourist attraction of the Dead Sea. The Baptism Site is a unique site because it is considered by many Christians to have been the birth-place of Christianity.



Photo 4.1: Pilgrimage day at the Baptism Site (Source: JTB 2008)

According to an interview with the vice director of the Baptism Site: *“The site was a military place and full of mines before the peace treaty with Israel in 1994. After that they discovered this place depending on religious and archaeological sources. The most important thing was two of the royal family persons responsible for this site and they have a good experience. John the Baptist is the saint of Jordan. The committee of site depends on a lot of resources to prove that this is the right place where Jesus was baptized:*

1. *The archaeological discoveries.*
2. *The holy books.*
3. *The writings of Rahala, travelers and pilgrims.*
4. *The mosaic map of the holy land in Madaba.*
5. *And above all the acceptance of all the heads of churches all over the world.*

Baptism site is from the three most important sites in the world. I think it is a miracle from God that for a long time the place was closed as a military place. I mean away from the people. This area still is virgin and we want to keep it as it is”.

Though Jesus was born at Bethlehem, he is understood in Christian doctrine to have begun his ministry – the teaching of what would become “Christianity” – after having been baptized by the messianic prophet John the Baptist. Al-Maghtas is thus considered to be one of the three holiest Christian sites in the world. The late Pope John Paul II visited the Baptism Site and formally recognized it as a pilgrimage destination, in addition to four other holy sites in Jordan. ‘Bethany beyond Jordan’ is believed to be the place where John the Baptist lived and is considered one of the most significant religious discoveries in biblical archaeology (baptismsite, 2010). The site is now a legally protected National Park.

Every year pilgrims from Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine visit the Baptism Site. In 2010 approximately 5,000 Roman Catholic pilgrims and some 12,000 Eastern Orthodox prayed and performed the rituals of pilgrimage at the Baptism Site, according to the statistics of MoTA.

Based on the interviews conducted at the study sites, pilgrimage to the holy sites creates positive tourist movement and, of course, promotes economic revenue, especially for the local communities living around the holy sites. The site is equipped with some services, but at the time of writing the present study they were insufficient to its status. There are eight tourist guides on the site, all of whom interpret the site in English, except one bilingual guide who also speaks Russian. Recently electronic audio interpretation available in seven languages has been distributed to individual tourists due to the shortage of multi-lingual guides.

According to Diaa al-Madani, director of the Baptism Site Commission (BSC), 65% of visitors to the site come from European countries, including Italy, Britain, Germany, and France, followed by North and South America with 20%. The number of tourists from East Asian countries are around 5%, while the percentage of Arab and Jordanian visitors may be at around 10% (eturbonews, 2010).

In October 2011, the commission of the Baptism Site and the Department of Antiquities in addition to the representative of Jordan in UNESCO started the preparatory steps to enlist the site on the World Heritage List. Former General Director of the Department of

Antiquities of Jordan, Ziad al-Sa'ad, explained in a Jordan TV interview in 2011 that: *“One of the benefits of enlistment as a World Heritage Sites is that it enhances the tourism product”*.

In addition to World Heritage Site (WHS) status, the late Pope John Paul II visited the site in 2000 to confirm the authenticity of the site in Jordan, and the current Pope, Benedict XVI, visited the site in May 2009, which identifies the divinity and religious importance of the site for Christians worldwide (Harahsheh, 2009). In 2008 RCI Group²¹ signed an agreement to market and promote Jordan's premier religious tourist destinations globally. RCI has formed a strategic alliance with the Levant Heritage Resort to market and promote Jordan as a leading area for tourist timeshare development. Abdul Aziz al-Laham, General Manager of Levant Heritage Resort commented:

“Jordan is truly the Holy Land, and is the one country in the region to offer a one-stop location that can meet the needs of faith-based travellers. We're delighted to conclude this agreement with Group RCI to showcase the uniqueness of the Levant Heritage Resort across the globe (Parsippany, 2008)”.



Photo 4.2: Pope Benedict XVI with the King and Queen of Jordan during the opening of a church at the Baptism Site, 2009²²

²¹ RCI is Resort Condominiums International. In July 2007, RCI joined Holiday Cottages Group, a branch of Wyndham Worldwide. In 2010, they changed the name to Wyndham Exchange and Rentals.

²²(Source:<http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.abc.net.au/reslib/20>).

The Baptism Site is one of the most important religious sites in the world and has been recognized by Vatican and all Christian churches as the place where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. This site has a greater potential than is currently recognized by the Ministry of Tourism, Department of Antiquities and especially JTB: Promoting it more aggressively would attract many more tourists and pilgrims, contributing to this important income generating sector for Jordan.

Bethany, the site of two papal visits in a decade, is the centrepiece of Jordan's effort to court religious – primarily Christian – tourism as an economic driver for Jordan (Seeley, 2009, p.1).

4.4.1.2 Mount Nebo (The Memorial of Moses)

Mount Nebo (photos 4.3, 4.4) located 10 km west of the Roman Byzantine town of Madaba, rises 800m above sea level and overlooks the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley. It was first developed as a religious site in 1933 when the Franciscans, a Catholic monastic order, purchased it from the custody of the Holy Land in 1932 (Franciscan Archaeological Institute, FAI, 2010). From its summit on clear days one can see the Dome of the Rock and church towers in the city of Jerusalem. According to the Old Testament Moses viewed the Promised Land from Mount Nebo before his death. In Deuteronomy 34:1 this mountain was mentioned by name:

“Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the Lord showed him the whole land – from Gilead to Dan”.

Mount Nebo is thus one of the most important historical religious sites in the Middle East, if not the world. Since 2000 Mount Nebo has become a destination for pilgrims internationally.



Photo 4.3: On the top of Mount Nebo (Source: JTB 2009)



Photo 4.4: Tourists and pilgrims entering Mount Nebo, Moses Shrine (Source: JTB 2009)

According to Christian tradition Mount Nebo, in Arabic *Jabal al-Siyyagha*, is the mountain mentioned in the Bible. The site is also traditionally believed to be the site where Moses was buried, but at the time of writing of the present study there is still no archaeological confirmation of this belief. The writings of the pilgrim Egeria, a 4th century European traveller who visited Mount Nebo as part of an extended Christian pilgrimage, is the earliest literary source on the site. She wrote:

“On reaching the mountaintop we came to a church, not a very big one right on the summit of Mount Nebo and inside, I saw a slightly raised place about the size of a normal tomb. I asked about it and the holy man replied: Holy Moses was buried here by angels” (Egeria, 2010, p.22).

The site as a structure was uninhabited by 1564, though pilgrims still visited its ruins. In 1963 it was purchased by the Franciscan monastic order. The order began a long-term archaeological mission there, which continues today, and rebuilt the church. According to an interview conducted with a Franciscan priest working there, the mission of the Franciscans responsible for the site is to transform the mountain and the surrounding area into a sanctuary. More will be said concerning preservation and development in the analysis, results and recommendations chapters, but it is worth noting the success of Mount Nebo as a tourist destination for Muslims, Christians and Jewish visitors to Jordan.

4.4.1.3 Mukawir

The Fortress of Mukawir (Photo 4.5) lies about 32 km west of the city of Madaba, near a village called Mukawir. The holy site is located in a steep mountainous terrain 730m above sea level, overlooking the Dead Sea and the Herodian port at Zara. Mukawir (Machaerus) is the site of the Herodian fortress where according to tradition John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded. The identification is based on the literary and toponymic evidence of the 1st century AD Roman-Jewish historian, Josephus. Josephus identified the awe-inspiring site of Machaerus (modern-day Mukawir) as the palace/fortress of Herod Antipas, the Roman-appointed ruler over Galilee and Perea from AD 4-39. According to Biblical tradition, Herod imprisoned John the Baptist at his fortress and beheaded him upon the request of his step-daughter, Salome. According to Matt. 14:6-11:

“But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask of him. But she being instructed before by her mother, said: Give me here in a dish the head of John the Baptist. And the king was struck sad: Yet because of his oath, and for them that sat with him at table, he commanded it to be given. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a dish: and it was given to the damsel, and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came and took the body, and buried it, and came and told Jesus” (Matt, 14:6-11).

Mark 6:29 corroborates this story of John the Baptist's burial at Mukawir: *“And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb”.*

Thus Mukawir is revered as the burial site of John the Baptist. One of the interviewees from the local community remarked that “tourists and pilgrims from all over the world come to see this holy site more than Jordanians” (he expressed that with a lot of regret and sorrow).



Photo 4.5: On the top of the Mountain where John the Baptist was beheaded²³

²³ (Source: http://t1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQuaTYag4TK7CRV3M M_V6etK1egCGOKwJIQdCUffqkUatdsVN3)

Indeed, by comparison with Mount Nebo for example, Mukawir is underdeveloped, with few services. It is relatively far from other well-known sites, and requires intelligent networking with the King's Highway tourism corridor to make it worthwhile for tour operators to include it in itineraries. On 22nd of June, 2012 Christians in Madaba went to this Mount and held a mass, prayed and performed their pilgrimage rituals. They took this day as a yearly pilgrimage feast. Some governmental authorities participated in this pilgrimage day, among them the secretary general of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the director of the directorate of tourism in Madaba. Wael al-Ja'neeny, director of tourism in Madaba, confirmed that the importance of the feast in Mukawir is to show the historical and archaeological significance of the place, to work on the local tourism and, most important, to encourage investment among local community in the holy site of Mukawir.

4.4.1.4 Our Lady of the Mount

The site of Our Lady of the Mount (photo 4.6) is located in the town of Anjara in Ajloun governorate east of the Jordan Valley. Anjara is believed to be a town which is mentioned in the Bible and it is believed that Jesus, his mother Mary and his disciples passed and rested in a nearby cave. The cave, which has long been a holy place for pilgrims, has now been commemorated with the modern shrine/church of Our Lady of the Mountain. The cave was also designated and recognized by the Vatican as one of the five pilgrimage sites in 2000.

It is believed by some that in 2010 a miracle occurred at this site (Photo 4.7), when the statue of the Virgin Mary wept tears of blood. July 21 is the annual Christian pilgrimage day for Our Lady of the Mount. The director of marketing religious tourism at JTB remarked in an interview that these miracle occasions attract a lot of tourists and pilgrims. As at Lourdes, where the tradition of a miracle attributed to Mary attracts as many as five million pilgrims a year, the miracle tradition at Our Lady of the Mount is another powerful attraction for religious tourists. However, there are no reliable statistics concerning numbers of visitors and tourists to the site.



Photo 4.6: Shrine of the Lady of our Mount (Source: researcher's photo)



Photo 4.7: Icon in the shrine of Our Lady of the Mount depicting miracle in which a statue of Virgin Mary wept blood (Source: researcher's photo)

4.4.1.5 Tal Mar Elias (Shrine of the Prophet Elijah)

Tal Mar Elias, “hill of Saint Elias” (Photo 4.8), approximately 80 km northwest of Amman and 11 km northwest of Ajloun, includes extensive architectural remains that are scattered across the summit of the hill which rises above the ruins of the village of Listib to the southeast. Christians believe that Tal Mar Elias was formerly Tishbi, the home of Elijah, a native of Gilead (2 Kings 17:1). The belief that the site has a long association with Christian hagiography is substantiated by the two churches that were built on the Tal (hilltop) in the late Byzantine period. Tal Mar Elias has long been of interest to archaeologists due to a series of Byzantine-era mosaics discovered in various homes near

the Tal. Its proximity to other important sites has led experts to theorize that Tal Mar Elias could have been an important stop on the pilgrimage trail (visitjordan, 2010).

“Elias” is the Arabic version of the biblical name Elijah. In the Qur’an he is referred to as “an honourable man” and a “messenger of God.” It also says, “We left mention of him among later men,” which refers to Elijah’s association with Moses, John the Baptist and Jesus (also “messengers”). As a sign of respect, Jordanian Muslim and Christian populations gather on the hill (in Arabic *Tal*) each June 21 every year to commemorate Elijah and celebrate their shared history (Luck, 2010).

According to an interview with the director of Ajloun tourism directorate “The holy site of Mar Elias has a religious, historical and archaeological importance and there are many old ruins in this site which attract many tourists and visitors throughout the year from different religious and cultural motivations. He indicated that the cost of maintenance and improvement in 2010 by the ministry of tourism and antiquities reached 200,000 JD. The director called all the interested sides to provide the site with the necessary services and facilities to attract more tourists to the site and because this site is a symbol of shared faith for the three monotheistic religions Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Therefore, there should be more care and interest of the site.



Photo 4.8: Shrine of the Prophet Elijah, the entrance of the site (Source: researcher’s photo)

4.4.2 Islamic Holy Sites (see map 1.5)

Jordan also hosts the tombs of many of the Prophet Muhammad's companions, who were martyred and buried there. In fact, Jordan has a special place in the history of Islam, as it was the first territory to which Islam spread outside of the Arabian Peninsula. It was also the site of the first contact between Islam and the non-Arab world. In the 1990s Muslim holy places were the object of an extraordinary Jordanian effort to promote Islamic sites. The effort was mainly marked by newly renovated "tombs of the Companions of the Prophet" (Maqamat al-Sahaba) and a campaign to increase public awareness about these sites (Katz 2003, p.182).

4.4.2.1 The Shrine of Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn al-Jarrah

This site (Photos 4.9) located in the Jordan Valley, hosts a modern mosque which embraces a much older tomb attributed to the great companion Abu Ubaydah the "Conqueror of Sham" (ancient "Greater Syria") and famous in Islamic history. Prophet Muhammad named him the "Trustee of the Nation" because of the knowledge he acquired. When the Prophet died Abu Ubaydah was among the candidates for the Caliphate. At the age of fifty-eight Abu Ubaydah fell victim to the great plague that spread through Greater Syria (Picirillo et al. 1999). His tomb is a major Islamic centre with a prayer hall, museum, library, cultural centre and garden. Local benefit from the site is considerable, as it supports nine employees. Lively economic activity thrives around the site, especially on Fridays. Friday is the main congregational prayer day for Muslims and the beginning of the Muslim weekend. According to (Surat al-Jum'ah²⁴:9) of the Qur'an, Muslims are obligated to participate in Friday prayer:

"O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed to Prayer on Friday hasten earnestly to the remembrance of God, and leave off business. That is best for you if you but knew".

The local population around most of the holy sites set up an informal market (in Arabic *souq*) outside the mosque and sell goods to the congregation when people they leave the prayer service. The mosque is an integral part of the holy site.

²⁴ In English: Friday

Maqaam Abu Ubaydah is the most visited of the Islamic holy sites in Jordan. The majority of visits are school trips and Jordanian families. The majority of religious tourists who visit the holy shrine come from countries with significant Muslim populations, e.g., India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and other Arab countries.

Year	Jordanian visitors	Foreign visitors
2003	32,834	3,614
2004	61,570	4,512
2005	59,779	3,509
2006	48,175	5,744
2007	53,163	5,620
2008	49,906	3,993

Table 4.2: Number of tourists from 2003–2008
(Source: Statistics of the holy site of Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn al-Jarrah)



Photo 4.9: Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn Al-Jarrah Shrine (Source: researcher's photo)

4.4.2.2 The Shrine of Mu'ath bin Jabal

The shrine of Mu'ath bin Jabal is located in the town of North Shunah in Irbid Governorate (Photos 4.10, 4.11). The site consists of a building surmounted by five domes dating to the Turkish occupation. It includes a tomb believed in tradition to be that of

Mu'ath bin Jabal, and another shrine to his son. According to tradition Mu'ath bin Jabal died at this site at the age of thirty-eight. This companion was the governor of the Prophet in Yemen.

4.4.2.3 The Shrine of Shurahbil bin Husnah

The shrine of Shurahbil bin Husnah is located in the Jordan valley, 20 km to the north of the shrine of Abu Ubaydah (Photo 4.12). As at the Abu Ubaydah site, a modern mosque has been built to encompass the ancient tomb attributed to Sharhabil bin Husnah. He is famous in Islamic history for his victories in battle and for adding the considerable territory of *bilad ash-sham*, what is today roughly modern Jordan and southern Syria, to the rapidly expanding empire. He died from the plague on the same day as the venerable companion Abu Ubaydah Amir bin al-Jarrah.



Photo 4.10: The tomb inside the shrine
(Source: researcher's photo)



Photo 4.11: Mu'ath bin Jabal Shrine
(Source: researcher's photo)



Photo 4.12: Shurahbil bin Husnah Shrine
(Source: researcher's photo)

4.4.2.4 The Shrine of Amir bin Abi Waqqas

The shrine of Amir Ibn Abi Waqqas (photos 4.13, 4.14) is located in the town of Waqqas in the northern Jordan Valley, about 91 km from the capital of Amman and 15 km from the shrine of the Companion Shurahbil bin Husnah. Amir bin Abi Waqqas was the ma-

ternal cousin of the Prophet and brother of Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas. He, too, died during the great plague which claimed the lives of many of the other Companions.



Photo 4.13: Amir bin Abi Waqqas Shrine (Source: researcher's photo)



Photo 4.14: The services which can be found in most of the Islamic holy sites (Source: researcher's photo)

4.4.2.5 The Shrine of Dirar bin al-Azwar

The shrine of Dirar bin al-Azwar (photo 4.15) is also located in the Jordan Valley. Dirar bin al-Azwar was one of the early companions of the Prophet Muhammad. He is remembered as a wild and fierce warrior who loved combat. He died during the great plague in

the 18th year after the Hijra (migration) in 622 AD. The shrine lies in the town of Deir Alla, which is about 5 km from the shrine of Abu Ubaydah.

4.4.2.6 The Shrine of Ja'far bin abi Taleb

The shrine of Ja'far bin Abi Taleb (Photos 4.16, 4.17) is located in the town of al-Mazar in al-Karak governorate. A large mosque, built recently, displays archaeological inscriptions which demonstrate that the Ayyubid and Mamluk occupiers of the region were interested in the site. Inside the mosque is the tomb of the great Companion Ja'far ibn Abi Taleb, who was second in command at the Battle of Mu'tah, the first – and victorious – confrontation with the Byzantine Empire. He is especially revered by Shi'a Muslims because he is the brother of Imam Ali bin Abi Taleb.

4.4.2.7 The Shrine of Zaid bin Harithah

The shrine of Zaid bin al-Harithah (Photos 4.16, 4.17) is located on the same site as the shrine of Ja'far bin Abi Taleb. Zaid bin Harithah was an early convert to Islam and later a military leader. He was a prominent figure in the early Islamic community and the only one of Sahaba whose name is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an. He died at the Battle of Mu'tah.



Photo 4.15: Dirar bin al-Azwar Shrine
(Source: researcher's photo)



Photo 4.16: Ja'far bin Abi Taleb Shrine and Zaid bin Harithah Shrine within a single wall
(Source: researcher's photo)



Photo 4.17: A multi-lingual sign post used in the two shrines
(Source: researcher's photo)



Photo 4.18: Abdallah bin Rawahah Shrine
(Source: researcher's photo)

4.4.2.8 The Shrine of Abdallah bin Rawahah

Maqam Abdallah bin Rawahah (Photo 4.18) is located in the town of al-Mazar in al-Karak governorate, about 2km from the shrines of Zaid bin Harithah and Ja'far bin Abi Taleb. Inside the holy site is the tomb attributed to the great Companion Abdallah bin Rawahah, who was the third in command at the Battle of Mu'tah.

4.5 Effects of Common Religious Heritage

Jordan has been blessed with a rich religious history and is a religiously significant location, situated between Mecca, the holiest place on earth for Muslims, and al-Quds (Jerusalem), which is sacred to all three religious beliefs, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Jordan has played a central role in the history of the People of the Book (*in Arabic Ahl al-Kitab*)²⁵ – which includes all religious groups who revere a text “revealed” by a “messenger” and most particularly Christians and Jews (kinghusein, 2001).

The land around the Jordan River Valley and the Dead Sea plain is revered as a blessed topos by Muslims, Christians and Jews. It is referred to as “the Garden of the Lord” in the Old Testament (Genesis 13:10), and in the Qur'an it is claimed that God blessed the land “for all beings”. It is no understatement to say that almost half of humanity views the land and the river of Jordan as the geographic and spiritual heartland of their faith. According to Piccirillo (1999, p.13) there are over 40 Islamic sites – several of which we have just reviewed – pertaining to the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad who were martyred and buried in Jordan and over 100 Christian sites mentioned in the Bible by name lie within the borders of modern Jordan.

Many of these sites, both Christian and Islamic, share a common religious heritage. It seems that this common heritage might act as a bridge to better understanding, coexistence, respect and acceptance of two traditions with many things in common. Here may be a strong opportunity for intercultural and interfaith dialogue during visits to the holy places, the intent of what is known as religious tourism or faith tourism. A wide range of other goals can also be served by religious tourism (Figure 4.1).

²⁵ In Islam “people of the book” are Christians and Jews.

Today intercultural and interfaith dialogue is a lively subject worldwide, especially in the Middle East. There exist many examples of coexistence and mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians, affected through common religious heritage (Bathatho, 2006).

Two examples from Jordan are immediately relevant. In August 2009, specialists from the tourism field and from religious affairs met at the Baptism site, where according to tradition Christ was baptized by John the Baptist, and decided that a small Islamic shrine – to be the “Shrine of Christ” – and a conference center should be built in the vicinity of the site: symbols for the fraternity and coexistence between Muslims and Christians. The conference center is specially designed to hold meetings and conferences related to the subject of intercultural, interfaith and coexistence between religions²⁶.

The second example is located in the city of Madaba neaby Mount Nebo where Saint George Orthodox Church contains a world-famous Byzantine mosaic map for Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the 6th century AD. In Madaba, Christians and Muslims have agreed to build a mosque dedicated to Jesus, to be named the “Jesus Christ Mosque” (in Arabic *Masjid al-Maseeh ‘Issa ibn Mariam*). The mosque was financed by both Muslims and Christians. The construction of such a mosque is an outstanding example of cooperation, coexistence and mutual respect between Christian and Muslim communities which have inhabited the “East Bank” for over a millennium and a half years.

In Jordan coexistence and mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians has existed for many centuries. There, mosques and churches – some very old – are standing beside each other (Photo 4.19). Pope Benedict XVI, during his last visit to Jordan, expressed his admiration when he saw that the mosques and churches are beside each other. From this common religious heritage Muslims and Christians can set an example to the world and address a pressing set of political and religious tensions.

²⁶ In 2012 they finished building the conference center and hosted the first event between Muslim and Christian theologians. The conference was organized by Aal al-Bayt Institute and the Eugen Biser Foundation.

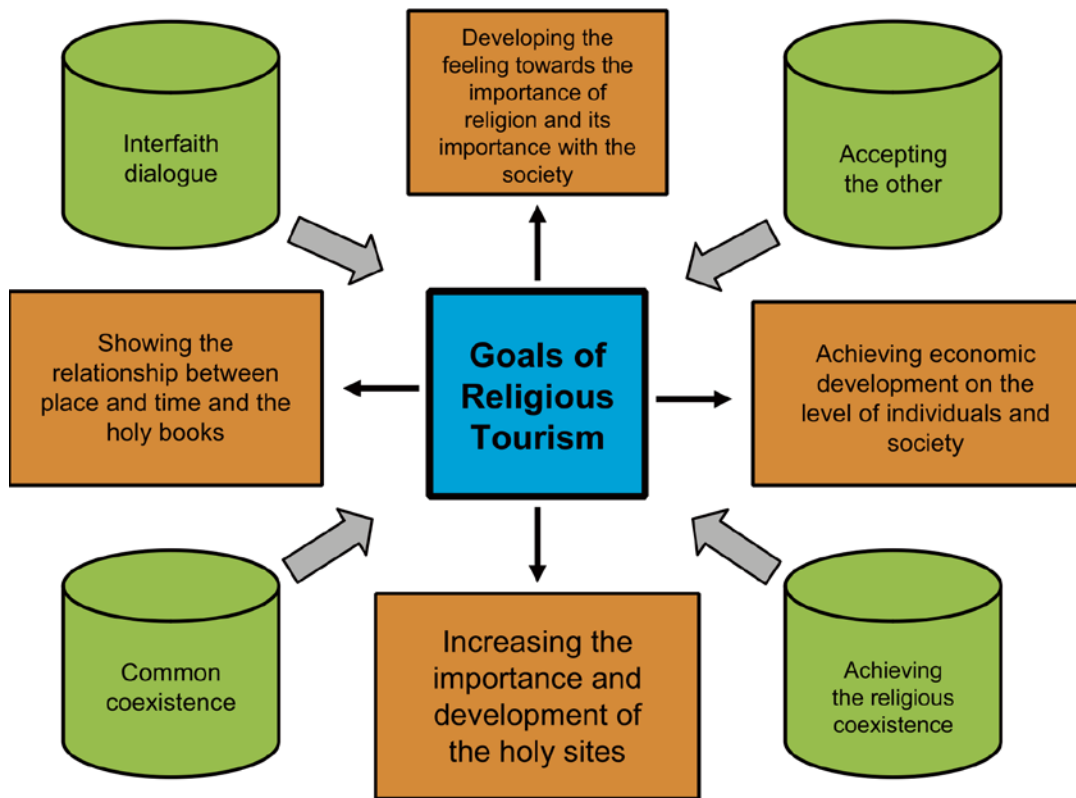


Figure 4.1: Goals of religious tourism (Source: Bathatho, 2006)



Photo 4.19: Churches beside mosques in Jordan²⁷

²⁷ Source: http://www.informaworld.com/ampp/image?path=/713424660/915073057/cicm_a_419663_o_f0005g.jpeg

4.6 Papal Visits to Jordan

Three Popes have visited Jordan throughout history in 1964, 2000 and, most recently, in 2009. The first papal pilgrimage to the Holy Land was by Pope Paul VI in 1964 who visited biblical sites which were then under Jordanian Control in the West Bank. 2000 was a Jubilee year in the Catholic Calendar and Pope John Paul II made a pilgrimage to Jordan, the second visit by a Pope. Between 1964 and 2000 much had changed in Jordan in terms of both geography and politics. The West Bank was under Jordan control from 1948 to 1967. The Hashemite Kingdom lost Jerusalem only three years after the first papal pilgrimage. Jerusalem was a core part of that which Jordanians claimed as the Holy Land for their state. Because of this, competition began among Palestinians, Jordanians and Israelis over the claim to the Holy Land. There were Christian holy places in Jordan which gave Jordanian leaders an opportunity to improve their position by insisting a claim that they serve as protectors of these sacred Christian sites.

Thus, in the period between the two papal journeys, Jordan started planning to improve its identity. During these landmark journeys, the Jordanian authorities presented the sacred holy sites as symbols of their national identification. These were important symbolic references in official speeches and were exhibited visually on cultural markers such as tourism promotion material, currency and postage stamps. Because of the competition of the claim to the Holy Land, Jordan “discovered” and developed sacred sites and marked them as national treasures, with the intent of conveying the message that Jordan is indeed the true historical Holy Land, though not exclusively for either Christians or Muslims.

Pope Benedict XVI visited Jordan most recently in May 2009. The visit helped Jordanian tourism officials to promote religious or so-called faith tourism and sharpen Jordan’s image as the “Guardian of the Holy Places”. Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) appropriated the Pope as the symbol for representing the Holy Land, reinforcing Jordan’s status as an authentic part of the Holy Land. By the time Pope John Paul II visited Jordan in 2000, he recognized five holy sites as pilgrimage places and Jordan had been accepted as a part of the “Holy Land”.

The core of the Pope’s message to the Christian community during the papal visit of 2000 was that Christians should come to Jordan to perform pilgrimage and to see the Holy Land as their Mecca for Christianity. The pilgrimage should nourish a direct connection with the land, environment, history and faith in the physical location of Christi-

anity's beginnings. The papal message had a huge impact on Jordanian Tourism as well as on religious tourism. Christians from all over the world started coming to Jordan for pilgrimage. In 2000 the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) promoted the Pope's tour with the slogan "The Sunrise of Christianity". Since then, Jordan's status as a Christian pilgrimage destination has continued to improve. The year before the Pope's most recent visit to Jordan saw an increase in the number of visitors to the holy sites in Jordan. According to MoTA, there was a 54% increase in the number of visitors from 2007 to 2008. A large number of visitors were expected during the Pope's visit in 2009, and it was hoped that the papal pilgrimage would enhance both tourism and peace in the region. There was also a direct effect on religious tourism specifically, as people from a wide array of cultures began visiting Jordan.

It is notable that Jordanian Muslims have warmly welcomed both the Popes and Christian pilgrims on the occasions of these landmark visits. Jordanians are traditionally hospitable and this tolerance and warmth creates a positive context for tourism. The papal visits heightened the visibility of Jordan's holy sites internationally and effectively "advertised" them to religious tourists and pilgrims. According to Katz (2003, p.2) the Popes' visits to Jordan served as an occasion for Jordan's tourism officials to promote religious tourism to the country and enhance its self-image as 'Guardian of the Holy Places'.



Photo 4.20: The Pope Benedict XVI visited Jordan in 2009

(Source:<http://www.zimbio.com/pictures/HBQR45uFz6F/Pope+Benedict+XVI+Visits+Jordan/QyFNWFYUUp/Abdullah+II+of+Jordan>)

4.7 Role of the Hashemite Family concerning the Holy Places in Jordan

The Hashemite dynasty ruled Arabia from 927-1925 AD. Since their ascendance as leaders of the region called 'Transjordan', the Hashemites have played a very important role in the restoration and development of the holy sites in the whole area, including the holy sites of Jerusalem which were included within Jordan's borders until 1967. Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca, King of Arabs, commander of the Arab Revolt against the Turks/Ottomans (1853-1931) took a personal interest in the administration of the restoration of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, Islam's third-holiest site, and contributed generously to the project, whose first phase was completed in 1924.

Sharif Hussein's son King Abdallah I was the first ruler and King of Jordan (then called Transjordan). King Abdallah I contributed significantly to the development and restoration of Jordan's holy sites, especially the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. King Abdallah I assumed his father's responsibilities as *sharif*, guardian of the Muslim holy sites; when, during the war of 1948, al-Haram al-Sharif (the compound in which the Dome of the Rock and Masjid al-Aqsa are located) was damaged, he called for restoration of Zakaria's tomb. Not only was King Abdallah keen to restore and conserve the Islamic holy site, he also personally helped to extinguish a fire which almost destroyed the famous Christian site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. He held the role of the guardian throughout his reign until his assassination in 1951. Six days after King Abdallah's death, his son King Hussein assumed the throne and took further action to restore the Dome of the Rock. This restoration focused on the exterior of the Dome which, by the late-1980s, had become dull, and had sustained damage both within and out due to regional violence. King Hussein initiated work to rebuild the Dome in 1993 plating the exterior with gold. The King invested more than US\$8 million of his personal wealth to finance the project, and it is acclaimed as one of the most ambitious religious restoration works in history.

Care for and development of the holy sites on the so-called "East Bank," now the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was slower in coming, beginning after Jordan lost the war with Israel in 1967. The numerous tombs, shrines of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad and holy places for Abrahamic faiths of Jordan and its position as the gate of the Islamic conquests and site of many historic battles of early Islam (e.g., Mu'tah,

Yarmouk and Tabaqat Fahl) render the country nearly as significant to Islam as it is to Christianity. Jordan and its Hashemite leadership have belatedly recognized this importance and the need to maintain and preserve these sites. In 1984 His majesty of the late King Hussein bin Talal formed a special royal committee for the restoration and maintenance of tombs, shrines and holy sites and to build mosques in the places of shrines. In 1992 a new stage of work has begun on the restoration and maintenance of the holy sites and shrines in different areas of Jordan.

Since His majesty King Abdallah II assumed his constitutional powers as the leader of Jordan in 1999, he has continued on the steps of his late father and directed concerned authorities to complete the rest of these projects of restoration and maintenance. The royal committee for the reconstruction of mosques and shrines of the Companions and martyrs developed a comprehensive plan for the process of reconstruction, maintenance and repair and completed many of the projects on the 13 holy sites which constitute the research area for the present study.

Chapter Five

Religious Tourism in Jordan: Present State, Development and Prospects

5.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 3 the research method for this study involves the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods to create a mixed method approach. In the past, this approach was viewed as experimental, but in recent years this approach has become widely accepted as a comprehensive and effective research design. Weinreich (1996) explains that quantitative research uses methods which have been taken from the physical sciences. The quantitative research was developed to guarantee objectivity, reliability and generalizability (Hopkins, 2000). Such techniques are evident in the manner in which participants are randomly selected from the study population in a way that is unbiased. Objectivity, reliability and generalizability are also reinforced by the use of a standardized questionnaire. Additionally, the person conducting the research is viewed as external to the actual research, and, as such, the results of the research should be replicable regardless of who carries out the research (Weinreich, 1996).

There are several strengths associated with utilizing quantitative methods: the results that are created are normally quantifiable and reliable. This data is also useful because it is generalizable in the context of the larger population. Weinreich et al., (2006) further explain that:

“Quantitative measures are often most appropriate for conducting needs assessments or for evaluations comparing outcomes with baseline data. This paradigm breaks down when the phenomenon under study is difficult to measure or quantify. The greatest weakness of the quantitative approach is that it decontextualizes human behaviour in a way that removes the event from its real world setting and ignores the effects of variables that have not been included in the model”.

For the purposes of the present research study, the part of the quantitative research will involve the statistical analysis of a questionnaire collected from 211 visitors, tourists and pilgrims at various Christian or Islamic holy sites in Jordan.

As indicated in the quotation above, qualitative research is also important because it is designed to grant the perspective of the target audience members. This is accomplished through immersion in a culture or situation and direct interaction with the people who are being studied (Weinreich, 1996). For the purposes of this study, this part of the research design is carried out through interviews and participant observations at Jordanian holy sites. Weinreich explains that the primary advantage of using qualitative methods is that they create “*rich, detailed data that leave the participants’ perspectives intact and provide a context for health behaviour. The focus upon processes and ‘reasons why’ differs from that of quantitative research, which addresses correlations between variables.*” (Weinreich, 1996).

According to Ebrahim et al. (1995, p.196) qualitative and quantitative research are not in contrast to each other. The researcher can gain access to knowledge through these methods. Qualitative and quantitative research approaches have to be thought of as complementary and are to be used to generate a richness of understanding and interpretation.

5.2 Results from the quantitative part of the analysis

Questionnaires were administered to a total of 211 visitors, tourists and pilgrims at Christian and Islamic holy sites in Jordan. Either the subjects filled them out or the researcher himself completed them after asking the questions. The questionnaires were made available in both Arabic and English. Each questionnaire began with a question about common religious heritage and its effect on the people, and continued with three additional sections including information about the visit, demographic information, and satisfaction about the facilities and services and how to decrease the problems the tourists faced during visiting the holy sites.

Studying the characteristics of the tourist movement in the holy sites helps to provide the necessary services which are suitable for tourists from many nationalities. This will increase the number of tourists which supports the national income from foreign currencies.

5.2.1 Tourists' Perception of Common Religious Heritage

The first question in the questionnaire was:

A lot of sacred tourist sites in Jordan have a common religious heritage between the three monotheistic religions. Do you think this common religious heritage will be a factor in dialogue and convergence between religions?

The table (5.1) shows that 83.3 % of the tourists answered by yes. 16.1 % answered by maybe and only one person answered negatively to this question. The figure 83.3 % from the total answers 100 % shows a good opportunity for the visitors, tourists and pilgrims in the holy sites to come into contact with each other through the common religious heritage. This is an important finding because it reiterates the role that common religious heritage has in the promotion of religious sites and the opportunity to bring people together from different religious backgrounds.

Do you think the common religious heritage can bring people together?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	155	73.5%	83.3%	83.3%
No	1	.5%	.5%	83.9%
Maybe	30	14.2%	16.1%	100.0%
Total	186	88.2%	100.0%	
NA ²⁸	25	11.8%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.1: Tourists' Perception of Common Religious Heritage

The opportunities for the Jews to get into deeper contact with Muslims and Christians in the holy sites of Jordan are low in comparison with the opportunities between Muslims and Christians themselves. The reasons behind this:

1. The conflict between Israelis and the Palestinians as well as the Israeli occupation of the Arab land in Palestine.
2. More than 40% of Jordan's population is from Palestinian origin and they don't accept any contact with the Jews.

²⁸ NA: No Answer

3. Most of the Israeli tourists who visit Jordan pretend to be Americans and this makes the coexistence and mutual understanding difficult.
4. The mental image in the minds of Jordanians whether they are Christians or Muslims about Israel is that Israel is an occupier of Arab homeland in Palestine.

5.2.2 The Purpose of Visiting the Holy Sites

The purpose of pray and worship (religious reasons) is the main aim and also the main incentive for the tourists and visitors to visit the holy sites. 53.6 % checked this answer from the total percentage 100 %. The second purpose is relaxation and entertainment. It is obvious that the factor of religion plays a main role in the lives of tourists who head for the holy sites. For this reason the government should take a good care for the worship places inside the holy sites. According to the researcher's observation the worship places inside the Islamic holy sites are better than in the Christian holy sites.

On the other hand, only 32.7% of the respondents felt that relaxation and entertainment were the reasons for the visit. The answer to this question illustrates that most people who tour the holy sites have religious motivations for doing so. Those who promote tourism in Jordan should take this into consideration when advertising the holy sites. Perhaps emphasis needs to be placed on the holy sites as places of prayer and worship which also provide some form of relaxation and entertainment.

Do you visit the holy sites for the purpose of pray and worship?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	113	53.6%	100.0%	100.0%
No (other purposes)	98	46.4%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.2: The purpose of the visit – pray and worship

Do you visit the holy sites for the purpose of relaxation and entertainment?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	69	32.7%	100.0%	100.0%
No (other purposes)	142	67.3%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.3: The purpose of the visit – relaxation and entertainment

5.2.3 Repeat Visits to Holy Sites

67.3 % answered we visit the holy sites more than once a year and in another question about revisiting the site 92.5 % answered by yes we would like to revisit the holy sites again. This shows a good potential of visiting the holy sites in the future. In spite of the problems and difficulties they faced, many tourists said we would like to revisit. Again this shows religion which plays a main role in the lives of people especially for Muslims because there are many contexts in Islam religion that encourage people to visit the holy sites and for some Muslim groups are obligatory. This is an indication that the visitors are very connected to the holy sites that they have visited.

Number of times you visit a holy site	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Once a year	45	21.3%	23.0%	23.0%
More than once a year	132	62.6%	67.3%	90.3%
I didn't visit - this was my first visit	14	6.6%	7.1%	97.4%
Depends	5	2.4%	2.6%	100.0%
Total	196	92.9%	100.0%	
NA	15	7.1%		
Total	211	100.0 %		

Table 5.4: Number of times you visit a holy site

5.2.4 Constituents of Groups on Visits to Holy Sites

When asked with whom visitors usually go to the religious sites it was reported that 58.8 % usually go to the holy sites with their families especially for Jordanians and the Arab tourists. We can conclude from that religious tourism is also connected to family tourism. For this reason the government and officials should take care to provide the needs and services that are suitable for families at the holy sites. This finding can also be correlated with why many of the respondents would like to return to the holy sites more than once in a year. This result indicates that spending time with family at these sites is vitally important to respondents.

Do you visit the holy sites accompanying your family?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	124	58.8%	100.0%	100.0%
No	87	41.2%		
Total	211	100.0 %		

Table 5.5: Going to the holy site with family

5.2.5 Means by Which Visitors Learned of Holy Sites

It is important for the promotion of the various holy sites to know how people actually found out about the sites. Knowing this information can assist future promotional efforts. The questionnaire found that 64.5% learned about the holy sites from general information. The most important mass media is the Internet, through which 40.8% of the tourists learned about the holy sites. The Internet has become the most important tool in advertising and promotion. According to Shukla 2011, internet is the fastest growing and largest multimedia tool with over 55 million people on-line in the United States and Canada alone.

According to Alexander Felsenberg, “Germany is number one in Europe in terms of Internet usage and market reach, and number two, just behind the UK, when it comes to total online advertising spends. It is the logical continuation of the overall positive trend that Germany will soon become Europe’s top market for online marketing and advertising.” (Richmond, KY.2008).

Do you learn about the holy sites from general information?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	136	64.5%	100.0%	100.0%
No (other means)	75	35.5%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.6: Learning about holy sites – general information

Do you know about the holy sites from Internet?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	86	40.8%	100.0%	100.0%
No (other means)	125	59.2%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.7: Learning about holy sites – internet

5.2.6 Holy Sites Most Visited in Jordan

Mount Nebo (Moses' Shrine) is the most active religious site in all the holy sites whether they are Islamic or Christian. 82.5 % from the sample visited Mount Nebo. The reason behind this is that this site was open since a long time before all the other sites and it is on the Jordanian tourist map. Above all this site is from the itinerary that is arranged by the tourist offices in Jordan. And also we should not forget that this site lies on the King's Highway which is very famous and one of the oldest trade routes in the world and many tourists like to have their destinations on this highway.

Baptism Site comes in the second place with 80.6 %. Mount Nebo is more important than Baptism Site in the tourism movement in Jordan, many reasons are behind this, Baptism site is somehow newly opened and because there are another Baptism site on the other side of Jordan River which is in Israel. Although the Vatican and the late Pope John Paul the 2nd acknowledged that this is the official place for Jesus Baptism and also all the archaeological excavations proved that this is the right place. Many of the Christian sites including the pilgrimage places were military and security areas before signing the peace treaty with Israel and the visit of the Pope John Paul the 2nd. And also it was very difficult to improve and develop these sites which they were not on the Jordanian tourist map. After signing the peace treaty with Israel in 1994 and the visit of the pope in 2000 the tourism movement increased in these places.

The most active Islamic religious site is the shrine of Abu Ubaydah Amer bin al-Jarrah . 54% from the sample visited this site. The reasons behind this are that this place lies on the main way to the Dead Sea. Almost everyone who comes to Jordan visit the Dead Sea and most of the tourists visit this holy shrine on their way to the Dead Sea. The investigation also found that most visitors to sites were likely to be members of the same religion with which the site is primarily identified. Most of the visitors to the Baptism Site, for

example, were Christians, visitors to Abu Ubaydah Shrine were most likely to be Muslim and visitors to Mount Nebo were most likely to be Christians or Jews. This of particular question indicated the importance of these sites to religious tourism in the area. Promotional efforts should reflect the popularity of these particular sites. Christians were also found among the Muslims at the Islamic holy sites and vice versa, which supports the conclusion about the importance of common religious heritage and its effect on the lives of the people.

Did you visit Baptism Site?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	170	80.6%	100.0%	100.0%
No	41	19.4%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.8: Did you visit Baptism Site?

Did you visit Abu Ubaydah Shrine?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	114	54.0%	100.0%	100.0%
No	97	46.0%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.9: Did you visit Abu Ubaydah Shrine

Did you visit Mount Nebo?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	174	82.5%	100.0%	100.0%
No	37	17.5%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.10: Did you visit Mount Nebo?

5.2.7 Length of Stay at the Holy Sites

Nearly half (49.8%) of the tourists who visited the holy sites stayed more than one hour. It is known that the increase of the duration of stay of tourists will increase the spending on the services (food, beverages, souvenirs.etc) which means support to the local community and for other different sectors.

The time which is spent by the tourists in the sites should be very important for the classification of the respective sites according to their attractiveness; however, many tourists answered that the amount of time spent depends on the time and the programme of the visit. Two other main factors are important for this classification: the number of tourists and the distance between the tourists' home and the site itself. The period of time which tourists spend in a region is one of the most important factors influencing their total expenditure, and variations in tourists' length of stay have significant repercussions for the economy of the area (Archer, et al. 1975). The following table (5.11) depicts the amount of time spent at the site.

Length of Stay at the Holy Sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
less than one hour	57	27.0%	27.0%	27.0%
more than one hour	105	49.8%	49.8%	76.8%
more than two hours	18	8.5%	8.5%	85.3%
more than three hours	3	1.4%	1.4%	86.7%
more than four hours	7	3.3%	3.3%	90.0%
depends on the programme of the visit	21	10.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Total	211	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 5.11: Length of Stay at the Holy Sites

5.2.8 Recommending the Holy Sites to Others

According to the research, the majority of respondents would recommend the holy sites to their relatives and friends. In fact, 98.1% of the tourists replied that they would recommend others to visit the holy sites. A small minority answered *No* due to the problems they faced and the lack of facilities and services. According to the director of religious tourism directorate in Awqaf Ministry of Jordan, most Muslim tourists who visit the holy sites from south Asia are from clergy men and by their return to their countries they can talk and preach in their mosques about the holy places they visited in Jordan and they will be the best promotion tool.

Do you recommend the holy sites to others?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	207	98.1%	98.6%	98.6%
No	3	1.4%	1.4%	100.0%
Total	210	99.5%	100.0%	
NA	1	.5%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.12: Recommending the holy sites to others

According to another question on the questionnaire, the main problems and obstacles that tourists faced when visiting the holy tourist sites were associated with the lack of services at the holy sites; others cited the inadequacy of the traffic signs to the holy sites, high prices, rough roads, absence of guides, absence of brochures in different languages and many other shortcomings. The most important point to take away from this information is that the government and planners should attend to these problems and try to find solutions for them.

5.2.9 The Best Season for Visiting the Holy Sites

47% of the sample believed spring was the best season to visit the holy sites. The weather in Jordan is very moderate, especially in spring, and it is the best time to go out for tourism. Springtime in Jordan is the high season for Jordanian tourism. This finding is also consistent with some of the findings from the interviews.

In which season do you prefer to visit the holy sites?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Spring	94	44.5	47.0	47.0
Summer	13	6.2	6.5	53.5
Autumn	3	1.4	1.5	55.0
Winter	20	9.5	10.0	65.0
I don't know!	1	.5	.5	65.5
More than 1 answer	69	32.7	34.5	100.0
Total	200	94.8	100.0	
NA	11	5.2		
Total	211	100.0		

Table 5.13: The Best Season for Visiting the Holy Sites

5.2.10 Demographics

1. The age of the tourists:

Most tourists who visited the holy sites from the sample are from 25-44 years old. This is surprisingly because they are youths. There are also a great many tourists between the ages of 45 and 64. This information is important, because it identifies who visits the sites and suggests modes by which the sites might be promoted and marketed. The general idea who visits the holy sites is only tourists from old ages but it is not the truth as we have seen from the questionnaires. According to this result we can surely say that time is changing and the desires of the people are also changing. It is very important to mention that every age has its own mode of relating to the sacred (Tomasi, p.20).

Knowing the age of tourists in the study area helps the people who put the strategic tourist plans of knowing the needs of every group of tourists.

The Age of the Tourists who visited the holy sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Less than 24	22	10.4%	10.6%	10.6%
Between 25-44	97	46.0%	46.6%	57.2%
Between 45-64	73	34.6%	35.1%	92.3%
More than 65	16	7.6%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	208	98.6%	100.0%	
NA	3	1.4%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.14: The age of the tourists

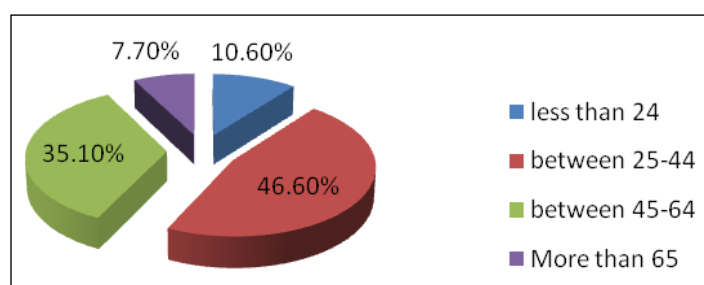


Figure 5.1: The Age

2. Marital status:

The most tourists from the sample who visited the holy sites are married 62.3% which came with their families especially the Jordanians and the other Arab tourists from Gulf States. Religious tourism in Jordan can be described as family tourism. The services and facilities should be adapted to suit the needs and comfort of families.

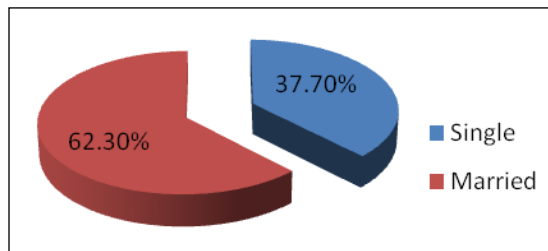


Figure 5.2: Marital Status

The Marital Status	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Single	75	35.5%	37.7%	37.7%
Married	124	58.8%	62.3%	100.0%
Total	199	94.3%	100.0%	
NA	12	5.7%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.15: The marital status

3. Gender:

The majority of the visitors to the holy sites were men. In fact, 65.9% of the visitors were males especially from the Jordanians and the Arab tourists. The freedom of travel and tourism for the males in the Arab societies is more than the freedom for females. This is due to the Islamic and Arab customs and traditions.

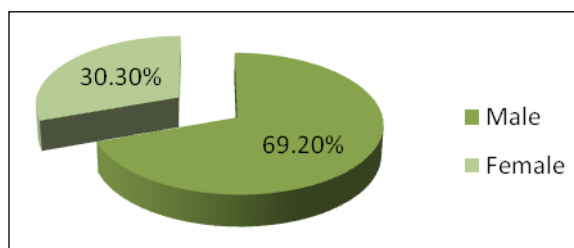


Figure 5.3: The Gender

The Gender	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Female	61	28.9%	30.3%	30.8%
Male	139	65.9%	69.2%	100.0%
Total	201	95.3%	100.0%	
NA	10	4.7%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.16: The gender

4. The Educational Qualification:

Most tourists who visited the holy sites from the sample are educated and have a university degree education. 56.0% have a bachelor degree. 14.2% have a higher education degree (Master or PhD). 10.9% have diploma. The other tourists 18.0% have the secondary education certificate. This doesn't show that there should be a relationship between the level of education and the activity of tourism.

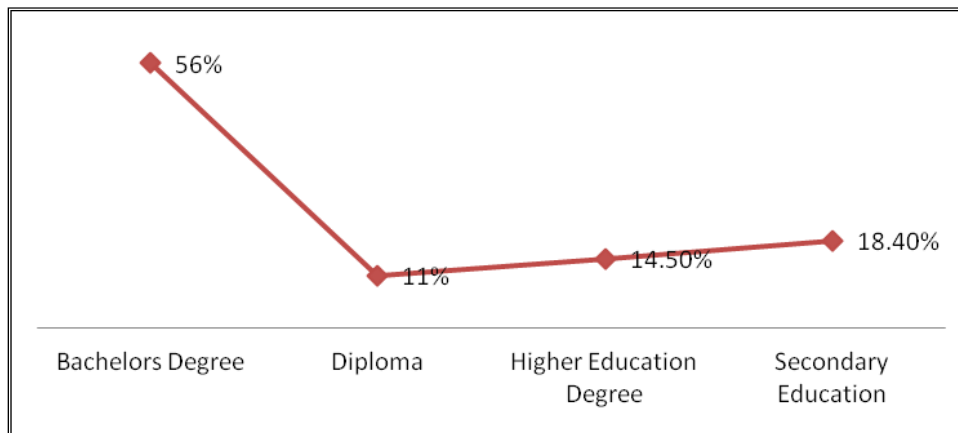


Figure 5.4: Education Levels

The Educational Qualification	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
bachelor degree	116	55.0%	56.0%	56.0%
diploma	23	10.9%	11.1%	67.1%
Higher education degree	30	14.2%	14.5%	81.6%
secondary education	38	18.0%	18.4%	100.0%
Total	207	98.1%	100.0%	
NA	4	1.9%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.17: The educational qualification

5. Nationality:

The chart (5.5) shows that most visitors and tourists who visited the holy sites are Jordanians with 44.6 % from the whole sample. The questionnaire shows that the Islamic holy sites are important to the tourists who come from the East Asia countries with 18.2% from the sample. The Arab tourists came in the third place with 15.1%. Most of them came with their families. 11% of the sample are tourists from the European countries who visited the holy sites especially Mount Nebo in Madaba followed by the Americans and Canadians. The proportion of the Israeli tourists who came to see the holy sites amounted 2%. This percentage of the Israeli tourists is not accurate because most of them pretend that they are Americans.

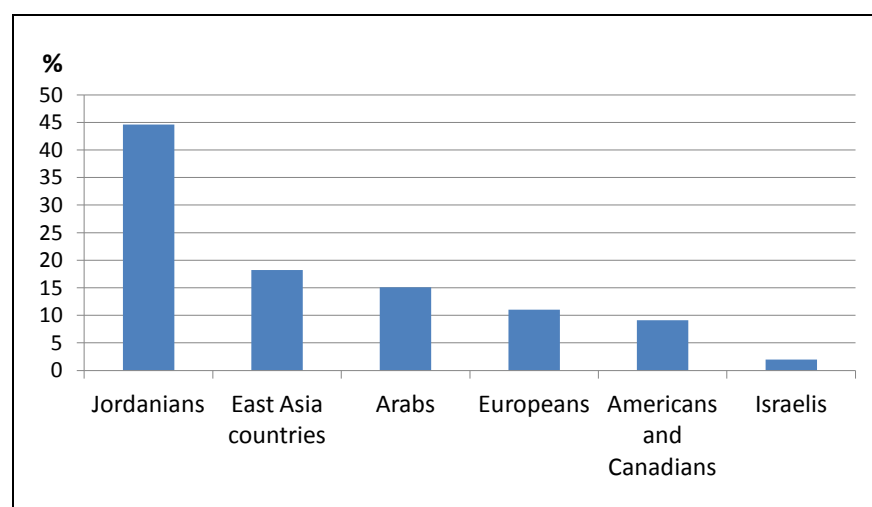


Figure 5.5: Nationalities of Tourists

6. Religion:

There is no wonder and it is very logical that the most tourists who visit the Christian holy sites are from Christians and the most tourists who visit the Islamic holy sites are from Muslims. Tourist's religion and strength of religious belief plays an important role in visiting the holy sites. The results show that Muslim tourists visit the Christian holy sites and also Christian tourists visit the Islamic holy sites.

The existence of the tourists from different religions in the holy sites supports the main aim and one of the main assumptions of the study. The assumption talks about the common religious heritage and its role to bring people from different religions closer together.

Also tourists with no religion or they are not from the monotheistic religions visited the holy sites, contrary to its name, religious tourism can include people of many religious faiths and those with secular views.

Religion of tourists in the holy site of Baptism Site	Number of Tourists
Atheist	2
Christians	83
Christian catholic	3
Christian Methodist	1
Christian orthodox	3
Christian Protestant	2
Hindu	2
Jews	0
Muslims	70
Muslim Shiite	2
Shi'a Bohra	0
No religion	0

Table 5.18: Tourists and their religion in Baptism site²⁹

²⁹ This question was done about religion in one of the days during the fieldwork in 2010 to see if there are tourists from different religions in the holy sites.

Religion of tourists in the holy site of Abu Ubaydah Shrine	Number of Tourists
Atheist	0
Christians	6
Christian catholic	0
Christian Methodist	0
Christian orthodox	0
Christian Protestant	0
Hindu	0
Jews	0
Muslims	32
Muslim Shiite	0
Shi'a Bohra	0
No religion	0

Table 5.19: Tourists and their religion in Abu Ubaydah Shrine

Religion of tourists in the holy site of Mount Nebo	Number of Tourists
Atheist	2
Christians	73
Christian catholic	3
Christian Methodist	1
Christian orthodox	1
Christian Protestant	2
Hindu	1
Jews	3
Muslims	78
Muslim shiite	2
Shi'a Bohra	3
No religion	2

Table 5.20: Tourists and their religion in Mount Nebo

7. Profession:

Most of the tourists didn't write their profession. According to the previous chart most tourists have a good level of education and consequently have good jobs and professions. However, it can be ascertained that these individuals have good professions as they are able to travel.

5.2.11 Satisfaction with Services

Services are considered one of the main factors in lengthening tourist stays, and thus for the success of tourism in any country. Regarding the adequacy of services there were three alternative answers on the questionnaire: good, acceptable and bad. In general, tourists reported that the main services at the holy sites which from the sample were bad. This shows that the government should take a good care about the services in the holy sites and they should be suitable especially for families because most tourists come with their families especially the Jordanians. 52.7% of the sample answered that their visit in general was good. This is a good indicator that most of the tourists were satisfied about their visit to the holy sites in Jordan in spite of the bad services. The following graphs explain whether or not the tourists believed that the services were good, acceptable or bad. Many different services were evaluated, but the most important were accessibility, tourist information centre, entrance fees, safety and security, cleanliness, places of worship inside the site, and tourist guides inside the site. The findings about the services are as follows:

How did you find the service of signs to the holy sites?	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	67	31.8%	32.2%	32.2%
Acceptable	66	31.3%	31.7%	63.9%
Bad	75	35.5%	36.1%	100.0%
Total	208	98.6%	100.0%	
NA	3	1.4%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.21: Signs to the sites

The service of parking in the holy sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	109	51.7%	52.7%	52.7%
Acceptable	73	34.6%	35.3%	87.9%
Bad	25	11.8%	12.1%	100.0%
Total	207	98.1%	100.0%	
NA	4	1.9%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.22: Parking

Tourist information centre of the holy sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	25	11.8%	31.3%	31.3%
Acceptable	47	22.3%	58.8%	90.0%
Bad	8	3.8%	10.0%	100.0%
Total	80	37.9%	100.0%	
NA	131	62.1%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.23: Tourist information centre

Most tourists viewed the information centre as acceptable and a decent percentage also viewed the centre as good. The services offered in the information center are important to guaranteeing that tourists feel comfortable and are likely to come back to the site. The table below illustrates that there was good accessibility for 50.7% of the respondents.

Accessibility of the holy sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	105	49.8%	50.7%	50.7%
Acceptable	94	44.5%	45.4%	96.1%
Bad	8	3.8%	3.9%	100.0%
Total	207	98.1%	100.0%	
NA	4	1.9%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.24: Accessibility

Availability of information about the site	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	39	18.5%	19.4%	19.4%
Acceptable	110	52.1%	54.7%	74.1%
Bad	50	23.7%	25.9%	99.0%
Total	201	95.3%	100.0%	100.0%
NA	12	5.6%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.25: Availability of information about the site

Entrance fees	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	37	17.5%	45.1%	45.1%
Acceptable	42	19.9%	51.2%	96.3%
Bad	3	1.4%	3.7%	100.0%
Total	82	38.9%	100.0%	
NA	129	61.2%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.26: Entrance fees

Cleanliness of the holy sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	133	63.0%	64.3%	64.3%
Acceptable	59	28.0%	28.5%	92.8%
Bad	15	7.1%	7.2%	100.0%
Total	207	98.1%	100.0%	
NA	4	1.9%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.27: Cleanliness

Most of the respondents viewed the entrance fees as either good or acceptable. Entrance fees are important for tourism promoters to take into consideration particularly because some sites in other countries are known to be less expensive than Jordan's sites.

Security and safety	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	149	70.6%	71.0%	71.0%
Acceptable	58	27.5%	27.6%	98.6%
Bad	3	1.4%	1.4%	100.0%
Total	210	99.5%	100.0%	
NA	1	.5%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.28: Security and safety

Cleanliness and Security are also important issues that must be taken into consideration. Through the interviews we learned that cleanliness can be a major issue at certain sites. The respondents found the cleanliness to be good and acceptable most often. However around 7% of the respondents believed that the cleanliness was bad. This is definitely an issue that should be addressed if Jordan wants to continue to attract tourists to the area. In addition the participant felt safe at the religious sites. This is consistent with the efforts of Jordan's tourism sector to keep *“a close eye on regional political developments while assuring its international partners that the Kingdom remains to be a very safe destination (JTB 2011)”*.

Prices and quality of gifts and souvenirs	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	23	10.9%	26.1%	26.1%
Acceptable	51	24.2%	58.0%	84.1%
Bad	14	6.6%	15.9%	100.0%
Total	88	41.7%	100.0%	
NA	123	58.3%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.29: Prices and quality of gifts and souvenirs

Food and drink services	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	21	10.0%	23.9%	23.9%
Acceptable	47	22.3%	53.4%	77.3%
Bad	20	9.5%	22.7%	100.0%
Total	88	41.7%	100.0%	
NA	123	58.3%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.30: food and drink services

Hospitality	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	52	24.6%	26.3%	26.3%
Acceptable	143	67.8%	72.2%	98.5%
Bad	3	1.4%	1.5%	100.0%
Total	198	93.8%	100.0%	
NA	13	6.2%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.31: Hospitality

Facilities inside the holy sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	112	53.1%	55.7%	55.7%
Acceptable	80	37.9%	39.8%	95.5%
Bad	7	3.3%	3.5%	99.0%
Total	201	95.3%	100.0%	
NA	10	4.7%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.32: Facilities inside the site

Social life at the holy sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	45	21.3%	29.4%	29.4%
Acceptable	102	48.3%	66.7%	96.1%
Bad	6	2.8%	3.9%	100.0%
Total	153	72.5%	100.0%	
NA	58	27.5%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.33: Social life at the holy site

Places of pray and worship inside the holy sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	133	63.0%	67.9%	67.9%
Acceptable	46	21.8%	23.5%	91.3%
Bad	17	8.1%	8.7%	100.0%
Total	196	92.9%	100.0%	
NA	15	7.1%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.34: Places of pray and worship inside the holy sites

Having a place to pray and worship inside the sites is essential for holy site tourists. We have already found that the vast majority of people who visit these sites do so for the purpose of prayer and worship. With this understood 68% of those questioned found that the sites had a place to pray and worship.

Tourist guides accompanying the tourists to the holy sites	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	41	19.4%	58.6%	58.6%
Acceptable	20	9.5%	28.6%	87.1%
Bad	9	4.3%	12.9%	100.0%
Total	70	33.2%	100.0%	
NA	141	66.8%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.35: Tourist guides accompanying the tourists to the holy sites

Lastly, tourist guides assist people in being able to have an enjoyable experience while learning historical and religious facts about the holy sites they are visiting. The research found that 58.6% of respondents found their tourist guides to be good and 28.6% found the tourist guides to be acceptable.

The visit in general	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Good	109	51.7%	52.7%	52.7%
Acceptable	97	46.0%	46.9%	99.5%
Bad	1	.5%	.5%	100.0%
Total	207	98.1%	100.0%	
NA	4	1.9%		
Total	211	100.0%		

Table 5.36: Your visit in general

5.3 Suggestions collected from the quantitative part of the study

There was also a space on the questionnaire to allow respondents to make their suggestions and comments concerning improvement and development of religious tourism in Jordan. Interestingly, the Arab tourists were more likely to write suggestions than other tourists. A summary of suggestions is as follows:

- Take better care of the roads and traffic signs that lead to the holy sites.
- Encourage investment between the public and private sector including local communities.
- The government should take the same care of Christian holy sites as the interest and care of the Islamic holy sites.
- More promotion and scientific research about the holy sites.
- Provide free brochures in many languages at all the holy sites.
- Reconstruct the religious prophets' trails, such as the Abraham Path.
- Allow more freedom to practise rituals in the holy sites, especially for the Muslim Shi'a.

- The employees in the holy sites should be educated and with the ability to speak many languages and to deal appropriately with tourists and pilgrims.
- Develop a marketing plan for the Islamic and Christian holy sites.
- Educate local communities regarding the importance of tourism and its role in developing the local society.
- Allow tourists access to the other bank of the Jordan River (the Palestinian Territories and Israel) freely in order to complete pilgrimage itineraries.
- Provide permanent tourist guides at the holy sites.
- Encourage domestic tourism to the holy sites by package tours with quality and lower prices.

5.4 Results from the qualitative part of the research:

Interviews

The main objective of this research was to analyse the present state of religious tourism and its future potential development and prospects, evaluate to what extent the holy sites are important in promoting tourism and how they could be utilized as a tool for further promotion, and overall development of the tourism industry in the future. For the purpose of this analysis, each interview³⁰ will be evaluated with a view toward the present state of religious tourism and its potential future development. After each interview is evaluated as it relates to these two aspects of the objective, all of the interviews will be evaluated collectively regarding to what extent the holy sites are important in promoting tourism and how they could be utilized as a tool for further promotion and development of the tourism. After taking into consideration both the quantitative and qualitative analyses, the discussion will return to the assumptions established in chapter one of the discourse. These assumptions are as follows:

- Promoting religious tourism product, especially at Islamic and Christian holy sites, will increase national income.
- Neglect of proper services and facilities provided to the tourists adversely affects the growth of the tourism industry.

³⁰ The interviews in Arabic were translated to English by the researcher

- Development of facilities and services for tourists and pilgrims will lead to multi-faceted developments in the industry.
- Modern media, such as the Internet, play an important role in attracting tourists to the holy sites and promoting the attractions they have to offer.
- The common religious heritage shared by the three monotheistic religions represented at the holy sites has potential as a positive factor for dialogue and socio-religious tolerance.

The subsequent discussion will explore interviews conducted with various directors, archaeologists, tourism and heritage specialists and clergy, Christian and Muslim, throughout Jordan and the neighbouring areas. All in all, 30 interviews and many other short interviews with visitors, tourists and pilgrims at the holy sites were carried out during the different empirical phases of the present study.

5.4.1 Present situation, actual problems and prospected development of Jordan's religious tourism sector

In an interview with Dr. Akram Al-Rawashdeh³¹ of the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, University of Yarmouk, Jordan, he remarked that:

“Most experts predicted that the number of tourists from the west to the Arab Islamic world after September 11, 2001, will decrease, but the number of tourists increased. And we have now what we call Islamic tourism from the Islamic countries to other Islamic countries or between them. Muslims face a lot of problems when they want to go to the west, and for this reason they head to Arab Islamic countries. I can divide Islamic tourism, according to Dr. Alaa Hamarneh, like this: Islamic tourism as a product, Islamic tourism as an approach, Islamic tourism as a movement”.

Al-Rawashdeh also explained that it is important to maintain the cultural and religious integrity of Jordan while also promoting tourism. He asserted that tourists should be respectful of the customs and traditions of Jordan, including wearing the appropriate attire in public. Rawashdeh opposed transforming culture into commodity in the interests of the tourism market. While Rawashdeh was concerned with the way tourists behave in

³¹ Specialist in Geography of Tourism.

Jordan, an interview with the Director of Antiquities in al-Karak District Khalid al-Tarawneh revealed concerns about the way Jordanians treat tourists. He explained that:

“The culture and the mentality of the local societies in Jordan until now are not ready to have the tourists freely in their regions. We still have a lot of time to go. We should first of all educate students in the schools and local communities. Until now we have looked at the tourist as if he has come from another planet (many people look at them, what they are wearing and how they speak, for example). We should respect the traditions and the culture of the tourists if we want them to respect our culture and traditions”.

Despite the concerns he expressed, Rawashdeh was optimistic about the future development of Jordan’s religious tourism. He explained:

“The future of Islamic religious tourism is good. Our religious tourism is connected to heritage and cultural tourism and many other types of tourism. The tourist who wants to see the holy sites will visit most other sites on his way”.

The Director of Awqaf in al-Mazar al-Janoubi, al-Karak governorate, Firas Abu Khait, pointed out that:

“At the current time the amount of tourists to the shrines is about 50,000 per year from all nationalities. The most common nationalities who visit are from Iraq, India, Arabian Gulf, al-Maghreb al-Arabi (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania) and South Africa”.

The interviewee explained that until now the area lacks many services, e.g., restaurants, hotels, cafes, souvenir shops and other tourist services. He expressed his hope that:

“when we finish the stages of building, all the other infrastructure services will be provided which attract the tourists to this area in the near future. I am sure of expecting economic return in the future for the local community”.

An interview was also conducted with the Director and Vice-Director of the Baptism Site (al-Maghtas). As mentioned above this site is located on the Jordan River, just north of the Dead Sea. The Baptism Site is amongst the most important holy sites in Jordan. The interview with the Director and Vice-Director of the site illuminated the importance of this area to religious tourism in the region. Al-Maghtas is important to local tourism because it enriches the people who visit while at the same time it helps to promote economic growth for the people of the region. They also pointed out that the Baptism Site

was not adversely impacted by the global economic crisis post-2008. People from all over the world frequent the site and such pilgrimages have not much slowed as a result of the economic difficulties that currently exist.

In accordance with the objective of the research, this interview also demonstrated the importance of future potential development and prospects. The directors even revealed plans to invest in the area outside the pilgrimage site. In addition, they expressed vehement opposition to altering the actual Baptism site in any way, wanting to keep it the way it has been for centuries. The directors were also clearly against turning the site into an amusement park; they want to keep the authenticity of the site and they are against the commercialization of the holy sites. According to Mckercher & du Cros, (2002)³² inappropriate tourist activities and commercial development around a heritage religious site can lead to the trivialization of the site. When heritage religious sites and practices are commercialized and changed for easy tourist consumption, the site often loses its importance and authenticity. The vice director confirmed that:

“The number of tourists is increasing but we should ask ourselves whether we are ready or not. What should be done to be ready for that? We should not change the site to Disneyland like other countries in the world. We should keep our holy sites as they are and keep them for the other generation. This is what we call sustainable tourism”.

The site should remain a place of holy pilgrimage. They acknowledged the existence of another site on the West Bank that is believed by some to be the actual site of Christ’s baptism. They asserted, however, that *“we do not compete but we complete each other as a Holy Land.”* They viewed both sites as a part of the Holy Land experience of the region. The Directors also believed that all the religious sites should be connected to one another by trails. This assertion is consistent with the suggestions made by other interviewees, including Abeer Hattar from the Ministry of Tourism (MoTA). Hattar explained that

“MoTA had worked to make religious trails but was faced with a lot of political and religious problems because most the holy sites are biblical from the Old Testament and not from the New Testament ... We can through the tourist trails develop the product as a whole. These trails have economic return to the local society”.

³² Cited in Levi, D. & Kocher, S. (2009, p.17-18): Understanding Tourism at the Heritage Religious Sites.

Indeed, such connectivity would encourage more people to come to all of the sites. In addition, it would assist the region in its future development.

In sum and referring back to the Director and the Vice-Director of the Baptism site, too, both were aware of the spiritual importance of the site and its significance for Jordan tourism. They understood the economic benefits of the site, but were unwilling to commoditize the site for monetary gain. They were also optimistic concerning the future potential of the site and anticipate hosting a million tourists annually in the future. The Director of the Baptism site remarked:

“We began with tens of thousands of tourists in 2002 and now, in 2009, we have 250,000 tourists”.

The ancient city of al-Salt, about 30 km northwest of Amman and once the capital of Jordan, is the centre of al-Balqa' governorate. Salt has historically been a place where Christians and Muslims coexist. Tourism statistics for this region were not readily available, but in an interview with the Director of Tourism of al-Salt Hussam Maharmeh remarked that, unlike other places in the region that are open to visiting tourists, Salt has not yet become accustomed to the presence of tourists like other areas of Jordan in Petra or Jerash for example and this issue is often exacerbated by the existing language barriers and local community's unfamiliarity with tourists.

While the staff at the Baptism Site and MoTA expressed interest in developing interpretive trails as an aspect of visiting holy sites, al-Salt had already begun to create trails that link the most holy sites in the city. The Director of Tourism had also been in contact with Christian leaders and was committed to organizing Christian tours to the city. Overall, the director believed that the future of tourism in al-Salt is promising. The results of this interview indicated that al-Salt could become one of the most prominent destinations in Jordan for religious tourism. However, the tourism director and the locals will have to adjust to the presence of tourists, but making such adjustments will likely lead to a great deal of benefit for the people in the region and the tourists who are able to visit these holy sites.

An interview was also conducted with several people who work in the vicinity of Mount Nebo, including some visitors and an archaeologist. Mount Nebo is important to Christians, Muslims and Jews because it is the location where, according to the Old Testament, Moses first saw the Promised Land. According to the archaeologist, also a priest at

the site, there are three types of tourism that are prevalent at Mount Nebo at the present time: *cultural tourism, religious tourism and general tourism*. As did others interviewed for the purpose of this study, the interviewee expressed his impression that the visit made by Pope John Paul II in 2000 was extremely important to the promotion of religious tourism in the area but Jordan couldn't invest the visit well because of the instability in the region (e.g. the war on Iraq). According to this archaeologist, thousands of people came to Mount Nebo as tourists and pilgrims following the visit of the Pope. The interviewee also felt that the effects of the Pope's visit would have been even more striking if Israel had cooperated to promote the event better.

The future potential of the site largely depends on restoring the church and the mosaics, and working to restore all the ruins in the vicinity. The interviewee also revealed the desire to improve the experience and enjoyment of pilgrims, tourists and the visitors to the area. The archaeologist and the other monks want to conserve the whole area. Their primary goal was to make the area a national park and archaeological nature reserve.

According to Ajloun Tourism Director Dr. Bassam al-Tobat, the present situation of religious tourism in Ajloun, where the two pilgrimage sites Tal Mar Elias and the Shrine of Our Lady of the Mount are located, would need improvement.

“The situation is good but we need more care and attention from all the sides for this type of tourism. The two main sites in Ajloun are Mar Elias and Our Lady of the Mount and they are important pilgrimage sites in Jordan”.

Al-Tobat reports there are several problems and obstacles facing religious tourism in Ajloun area:

“The main problem which faces us in this type of tourism is that most travel agencies don't put the religious sites on their programmes. We hope that the trail projects will combine most of the important holy sites in the area. Another problem is that most of the holy sites don't have enough infrastructure services”.

Providing trails – connectivity and infrastructure – emerged as an important issue for many of the people interviewed. They saw the addition of trails as a way to promote the existence of the holy sites better at the present time and in the future. Another prevalent concern was the fact that travel agencies neglect to suggest or include religious sites on itineraries. Thus, many people who are unfamiliar with the region are prevented from

touring holy sites simply because they are unaware of them. Both of these issues are problems for religious tourism in the Ajloun area, too.

However, al-Tobat explained that there is a great deal of optimism regarding future development in the region, too. He presented the following ideas to assist development:

- Establish associations and institutions concerned with tourism, antiquities and heritage preservation.
- Create magazines, newspapers and other related media to promote tourism.
- Organise awareness sessions for the media, to identify the concerns of tourism and its problems.
- Maintain the cleanliness of the environment and provide the services and facilities at the tourist sites.

An interview with a Muslim sheikh, a religious man Dr. Nuh al-Faqeer, confirmed that Islam as a religion encourages visiting holy sites. Pilgrimage is particularly important, and pilgrimage and tourism are deeply intertwined with one another. Jordan has several locations recognized as holy sites for both Muslims and Christians, such as the shrines of the companions of the Prophet Mohammad and the pilgrimage sites that were recognised by the Vatican. There are many places in Jordan which, according to tradition, the Prophet Muhammad visited, such as the ancient *Pistacia atlantica* tree in Safawi (photo 5.1) under which, as a young man, the Prophet was reputed to have rested on his way to al-Sham (Syria) and engaged in a prophetic conversation with the Nestorian monk Buhaira. In the interview al-Faqeer confirmed that Christians and Jews are also welcome at the Muslim sites, emphasizing that Muslims welcome visitors at the sites. He spoke of the Qur'an's message that Muslims and Christians are brothers and should be in fellowship with one another.

Al-Faqeer also claimed that Muslims visit holy sites in greater numbers than Christians do. However, there are no accurate and full statistics about tourists and pilgrims who visit the holy sites. According to the interviewee, the majority of the tourists visiting Islamic holy sites are from Sudan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Germany, America, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon. Al-Faqeer also noted that Islamic tourism is most prevalent amongst Shi'a Muslims, and that only Shi'a visit the holy site

of Ahl al-Bait. A German travel agent, however, who works in Jordan, offered a differing opinion:

“I can say 90% or more from religious tourism in Jordan is Christian religious tourism. The Christian holy sites are definitely on the tourist map. After the Pope's visit to some pilgrimage sites in Jordan it is now more prominent and giving more profile. And it is easier to sell. For Islamic holy sites it seems there is no good push for this type of tourism”.



Photo 5.1: The tree that is believed to have provided shade for the Prophet Muhammad when he travelled to Damascus with his uncle Abu Taleb ³³

The particular interview with Dr. al-Faqeer above highlighted some of the obstacles that stand in the way of tourism to Islamic sites in Jordan. One of the primary problems with Islamic tourism in Jordan is that MoTA does not play a large enough role in promoting religious tourism in the region. Rather, the Royal Committee for the Building and Restoration of the Tombs of the Prophets and the Companions has been the organisation most responsible for promoting and maintaining the Islamic holy sites. All of the mosques built at tomb sites were built by this committee.

³³ Source: http://www.nawiseh.com/deen/pistacia_atlantica2.jpg

Though al-Faqeer acknowledged the problems facing to Islamic tourism in Jordan, he was hopeful about its potential. He placed a great deal of emphasis on the co-existence of Christians and Muslims and the need to unite around a shared heritage.

An interview with the local community at the site of al-Mazar al-Janubi³⁴ disclosed that, prior to 2003, most of the tourists coming to the area were from Iraq, especially during the day of Ashura³⁵ and other Shi'a feast days. The most frequent visitors were Shi'a Muslims who also visited Ahl al-Bait to remember for Ali bin Abi Taleb and his sons, Hassan and Hussein. Due to mass immigration and financial crisis resulting from the war in their home country, subsequent to 2003 Iraqis have stopped coming to the region in significant numbers as tourists.

The locals reported that there are also many Shi'a tourists from Bahraa (a Shi'ia region in India) and from other countries, such as Pakistan. Many emigrants from Bahraa are now residents of Yemen. The interviewees reported that tourism of the holy sites in the region yields little benefit to the local population. Stores near the holy sites benefit to some extent, especially during the holidays, but even these benefits are minimal.

This interview above was an important one because it illustrates the problems of local communities which these face with religious tourism. Very evident is how war and financial crisis affect tourism in the region. The local residents know better than many others the advantages and disadvantages associated with the presence of tourists. In this interview, it can be very clearly seen that currently tourism to the holy sites does not appear to be as beneficial to the local community as it could be. Although some of those interviewed were optimistic about the current general state of tourism in the region, others, such as the Director of Tourism in Irbed, had serious concerns related to financial problems and the current state of tourism from his point of view. The director expressed his dissatisfaction with the current situation of tourism for the following reasons, claiming that tourism initiatives are only ideas on paper without any finance or implementation. Annual plans were not implemented due to lack of funding. On the one side the

³⁴ Al-mazar means "the shrine" and al-janubi means "of the south."

³⁵ Ashura is the 10th day of Muharram in the Hijri calendar. It marks the day when al-Hussein bin 'Ali the grandson of the prophet Muhammad was killed in the battle of Karbala. For Shi'a believers this day is for mourning and grief.

Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities tends to approve proposed projects, but on the other side, when funding is requested, the answer is “don’t do anything or manage yourself!”

The director continued by saying that there have been instances in which he paid for educational projects related to tourism from his own pocket. He viewed lack of financial means as the primary problem hindering tourism growth in Jordan. He also maintained that in order to encourage tourism there must be a more concerted effort to clean tourist areas, and pointed out that such efforts require money and the cooperation of the local community. He concluded by saying:

“We have a lot of ideas with a lot of ambitions, but we don’t have any approval. We should have a yearly budget and they should give us independence from the control of the Ministry. The main problem we have is the finance. We have a lot of things to do but all the surroundings make you feel pessimist”.

The interview with the director of Irbed Tourism Directorate was important because the interviewee is one of the few who brought up the financial issues involved in developing tourism to the holy sites. This is a major issue not only for promotion, but also for the education and awareness of the local community regarding the importance and value of the sites. Education is needed in order to involve the community maintaining the sites for tourists to enjoy. If the community were involved, site maintenance would become less burdensome for the Ministry of Tourism.

5.4.2 Perspectives from Travel Agents

Several interviews were also conducted with travel agents from the region as well as from Europe and other parts of the world. From an interview with Salem ‘Odeh, a travel agent from Golden Crown Agency, emerged the interesting fact that there is no seasonality factor in religious tourism in Jordan. Odeh explained that, for tourism in general:

“The most significant tourism comes in summer and spring. There is no seasonality in religious tourism. Every holy site has its season, but when we combine all the places with all the seasons we will not find seasonality. Whoever comes to visit the holy land do come to Jordan. There is no low or high season in religious tourism in Jordan. We should depend completely on this type of tourism. We should pay more attention to this type of tourism”.

In contrast to the opinion of 'Odeh, a German travel agent gives his opinion about the seasonality:

“Yes there is seasonality in Jordan tourism. The high season is March, April, May and September, October, November. And between them it is not completely without tourists but not as the high seasons. There is a big dip between these months. For the religious tourism is the same, I mean there is seasonality. They come in these months because it is not very hot”.

Salem Odeh and a German travel agent interviewed at the ITB 2010 and who works in Jordan have a point concerning the potential of religious tourism to mediate seasonality. Both explained that there are many Christians all over the world and many of them want to see the Holy Land. This should be enough reason to encourage the promotion of the holy sites in the future, and also attract greater appeal for the sites through education and the special media activities. In addition, they pointed out that the Christian holy sites need to be more open to Muslim tourists as well. Another travel agent, however, insisted:

“If Jordan wants to open the country and especially the Islamic holy sites for all Muslims from all countries and especially Shi'a this will confront the security in the country which is the most important thing in the tourism process.”

Another major issue in the region is the law that prohibits Jordanian travel agencies to own travel buses. The travel agent cited above explained that:

“This is a unique law that exists only in Jordan. One of the main obstacles for inbound religious tourism is that you cannot buy a travel bus. The transport is a problem. And in the season of Hajj and Umra to Saudi Arabia another problem exists: That is lack of buses entirely”.

Another travel agent, Saleem, is optimistic about the current state of tourism to holy sites in Jordan. He remarked that:

“Religious tourism depends on the retired people. We don't have in Jordan what is called entertainment tourism: parties, discos and bars like in Europe. Our tourism depends on the elderly. We should promote Jordan for the ages from 40 or more unless people have curiosity to see Jordan. We can't separate our religious tourism in Jordan from Israel and Palestine because all the places from Christianity are not only in Jordan but also in Israel”.

This assertion also illustrates the importance of cooperation throughout the region because of the important interrelationship of the religious history of all three countries (and Syria as well). Were these nations cooperating more fully with one another, it is likely that larger mutual benefits would be realized from religious tourism for all countries involved. Regarding future tourism development Saleem asserted that the

“building of capacity in human resources concerning travel guides and all people who work in the field of tourism is absolutely necessary.”

He continued that

“the promoting and marketing of religious tourism is vitally important for the future of the Jordanian tourism industry. The guides should have the ability to explain to the tourists about the holy sites. Tourists are the best people to promote Jordan’s holy sites because they bring other tourists”.

Hanna Sawalha, a travel agent working in Nebo Travel Agency and interviewed at the ITB International Tourism Fair in Berlin explained the current situation of religious tourism in Jordan with a strong focus on regional cooperation:

“Jordan can’t be separated from Palestine and Israel. We can’t sell Jordan as a religious tourism place, i.e. marketing apart from Israel or Egypt. Our religious tourism should be connected with Israel or Egypt. The three should be together.”

This point illustrates the importance of neighbouring countries creating policies together that will assist one another in the future as it relates to religious tourism. Very decisively he also pointed out that:

“The holy places in Israel and Palestinian Territories are more important than the places in Jordan. Jerusalem is the most important holy place for all three religions, and we should not forget that in marketing and promotion Israel controls religious tourism”.

His point is that Jerusalem, as the vortex of devotion and religious travel for all three monotheistic traditions, asserts dominance over all other sites. In addition, Israel has a long- and well-developed tradition of religious tourism for both Jews and Christians. Thus Israel’s market currently shapes Jordan’s, and it is unrealistic to operate in ignorance of that fact.

5.4.3 Importance of Tourism Promotion and Future Development

Tourist guide Firas Dababneh, who at the time of the interview (2010) had fifteen years of specialized experience guiding American tourists to biblical sites, discussed the weakness of tourism promotion in Jordan. He explained that:

“Promotion for Jordan tourism is very weak – it could be strong, but they don't know how to promote it best. The problems for our tourism are political and religious”.

In Dababneh's opinion, most of the tourists that come to the region are Americans³⁶ and, because of their fear of extreme Islamists, American tourists will not purchase things from Jordan because they feel that the money will be used to support terrorism. So, although these holy sites are used to promote tourism as a whole and attract tourists, he believes that tourists are apprehensive about spending their money, which is problematic for the local economy. The interviewee also asserts that

“a great deal of the future of tourism in Jordan is dependent upon American tourists because they have the buying power... American tourists stay in Israel for the most part and only venture into Jordan to see Petra and maybe Mount Nebo.”

If this is the case, future development might be enhanced by raising awareness of tourists regarding where their money goes when they purchase souvenirs and other goods.³⁷

When the German travel agent mentioned above was asked about problems and obstacles facing the promotion of tourism in Jordan he replied:

“It's a bit tricky. Most promoting is done by JTB. The responsibility of promoting is on JTB. They do a lot of work towards it. As a travel agency we can push religious tourism in Jordan if we send other holy sites to JTB to promote them. Why not to say to them there are a lot of places deserve visiting between places A and place B. Why they do not stop to visit this church or that school? It is hard to promote the sites through the consumer. We can promote it in many ways”.

³⁶ In fact this is not the case: Europe has for decades dominated inbound tourism – numbers only appear to favor the U.S. if Europe is broken down by country. In 2010, for example, Europeans constituted 62.7% of visitors to Petra, vs. 12.8% from the U.S. For the rest of the countries the U.S. percentage drops further because of the importance of Arab tourism to Amman (Strategic Master Plan, SMP, 2010, p.23).

³⁷ The recent Strategic Master Plan for the Petra Region suggests a less political reason for low tourist expenditure on souvenirs and services: low quality and lack of selection (2010, p.53).

According to the Managing Director of the Jordan Tourism Board, Nayef al-Fayez³⁸, the promotion of religious tourism is essential because it encourages tourism in Jordan as a whole. Jordan's location means that it is considered a part of the Holy Land. Jordan's National Tourism Strategy (2004–2010), shows how important religious tourism is. Al-Fayez pointed out that:

“We concentrate on the tourists from Europe and America for the type of Christian religious tourism. The main site for Christian religious tourism is the Baptism Site on the Jordan River. This site gave Jordan a religious importance. There are a lot of holy places extended throughout Jordan from the north to the south. The product of religious tourism exists and is aware of all sides and this product is distinguished”.

We can gather from this insight that religious tourism promotion is most important for American and European tourists, because these are the people who are most likely to visit Jordan for religious purposes. In most cases, people who come to Jordan from these regions of the world are Christians. In addition, Christians are more likely to visit that area than Muslims. Even though it is less likely that Muslims will visit the area, there is some promotion of the region in the Muslim world. The interviewee continued by saying:

“We promote our Islamic religious tourism in the Arab and Islamic countries, like Indonesia, Malaysia and many other countries. The promotion is very limited. Our markets after the Arab countries are Europe and America. It is a new thing for us to enter the Asian markets, and we are promoting the Islamic tourism especially in Asia”.

This insight demonstrates the importance of promotion of religious sites. Al-Fayez was well aware of who the most likely tourists are and a great deal of the promotional efforts has been undertaken to encourage these individuals to come to the region. The JTB director was also aware that there are untapped markets for the religious sites.

This particular interview also shed light on the need for investment. The interviewee explained that Israel has long been famous as a destination for religious tourism and has benefitted from both promotion and investment. On the other hand, he claimed,

³⁸ Since October 2011, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan.

“Tourism is a subject very new to Jordan, since only ten years or fifteen years ago. We can't compare ourselves with Israel, especially in religious tourism. They began to promote themselves from the beginning of the state in 1948. After we lost the West Bank during the war with Israel in 1967, we lost all the holy sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and many other places. Most of our holy sites have opened more recently.”

Obviously, the issue of promotion is a delicate one in Jordan when compared to Israel. It appears that promotion is very much needed but underutilized in Jordan. On the other hand, Israel has promoted tourism of its holy sites for many decades and has been able to attract many tourists to the country as a result of such promotion. Although promotion of holy sites is a newer concept in Jordan, al-Fayez explained that there are promotion programs in every country in which there is a market. However, there are significant restrictions related to Jordan's promotional budget. In addition, there is more promotion for cultural tourism than for religious tourism. The interviewee asserted that Jordanian tourism is not based on religious tourism, because people view the holy sites in different ways. Some view them as historical in nature, while others view them from an archaeological standpoint. The interviewee further explained:

“We do not promote only the holy places to pilgrims, but also other places in Jordan, in order to make the tourists stay longer. This is from our main aims in the JTB. The holy sites are religious before any other thing. We divide the budget between our types of tourism. Every type should take his role in the promotion. For example, cultural tourism comes in number one in Jordan: I will spend more money on this type and so on. Archaeological tourism, which is a part of cultural tourism, is number one in Jordan. Religious tourism is a new subject which took off after the visit of Pope John Paul II in 2000. A website is, from my point of view, like a brochure. It is only to show that we have holy sites from a religious point of view. The website is not promotion. We can reach many groups all over the world through electronic promotion on the Internet. We have succeeded in the electronic promotion”.

This point illustrates the role that the internet plays in promoting religious tourism in Jordan. Promotional efforts must be geared towards media that are utilized by as many people as possible. The Internet provides this medium.

There are efforts to promote the tourism of Jordan in other parts of the world. There is, for example, a Jordanian tourism office in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. However, there

is no coordination between the Frankfurt office and Jordanian officials. Fayez explains that the Frankfurt office conducts religious promotion because there are many Jordanian experts in Germany and they know a great deal about the area and understand how to direct tourists around the area.

The presence of the tourism office in Frankfurt is evidence that promotion can be non-traditional. It appears that German experts have taken it upon themselves to promote the area because they understand the value of the holy sites and the role that Jordanian tourism can play in the overall tourism in the region. Indeed, promotion is an important way of increasing the number of tourists who visit the area. During the interview, Fayez was asked about the number of tourists who visits the area. The conversation went as follows:

Interviewer: "Are you satisfied with the tourists' numbers?"

Fayez: "If we are satisfied, we fail people. We should always be ambitious. Are we developing and achieving progress? This is the question. We want more and more tourists. In Jordan we don't have the quantity of tourism like in Egypt and Turkey. We want the quality tourism and not the quantity. Jordan limited the type of tourism that we want: It is the quality tourism. There must be exchangeable benefit between the tourist and us as a country. He must have a good qualified experience and, on the other hand, we benefit from his expenditure. We are satisfied with our performance but we hope for more. In spite of the financial crisis that we had, the number of tourists from Germany in 2009 is more than in 2008. I admit the services were very weak, but there is a big difference between 2000 and now: for example the services at the Baptism site."

The interviewee also explained that Jordan has been able to achieve all the tourism goals that were established by the Jordan Tourism Strategy 2004–2010, which encourages the promotion and marketing of the holy sites in Jordan. In fact, the anticipated goal for 2012 tourism numbers was actually realised in 2007. In addition, Fayez stated that he hoped to update promotional strategies in the future.

Overall, the interview with Fayez confirmed the importance of promotion in Jordan and the efforts being made to ensure that such promotion takes place in a timely manner. The Jordanians also realise that religious tourism is new territory for them, because they have become more accustomed to promoting cultural tourism. They have already made great strides and they hope that modernisation efforts will more effectively promote religious tourism, attracting a greater number of tourists to the region.

Another interview was held with Dr. Saed Zawaideh, the director of promotion for educational, religious and medical tourism at JTB. Zawaideh noted that JTB participated in a religious tourism fair in Mainz, Germany, the primary purpose of which was to promote and market the holy sites of Jordan. The main site featured was the Baptism Site. Fayeze and Zawaideh both acknowledged the role that Germany has played in promoting the holy sites of Jordan. This type of collaboration seems useful and can help Jordan to better understand the tourists who visit the holy sites. Zawaideh also noted that promoting tourism in countries neighbouring Jordan is also important. The most significant number of tourists to the Christian holy sites occurs during religious celebrations and during the days of pilgrimage.

Dr. Ahmad Hilayel, former Minister of Islamic Affairs, was asked his opinion of religious tourism. He asserted that:

“‘Religious tourism’³⁹ in Arab and Islamic countries is still at the beginning and needs more care, improvement and development in order to define it and to become a real religious tourism which can develop the religious and historical knowledge for Muslims first, and linking the past and heritage of the Islamic nation to the present, and to utilize from the past to light the present and future.”

This assertion is consistent with what other interviewees have said about tourism in the region. Neighbouring countries, such as Israel, have a long history in the area of tourism. Jordan has to begin its promotion of tourism in a way that connects it to the neighbouring countries so that the religious sites of Jordan can enjoy the same level of tourism as other areas.

The German travel agent cited above gives his view about the future of religious tourism in Jordan:

“Our religious tourism is very promising. We have a lot of sites. The most important they are genuine. The prospects are very good. Holy sites will be very important in the package beside the main sites. In order to develop we need infrastructure. The quality of services in some sites for guides need to be improved, especially the local guides in the sites. Promotion is very important. We should change the promotion Petra, Petra, Petra. Jordan is Petra. We haven't manage to push through the message. There is another pas-

³⁹ He expressed these quotation marks using his fingers to gesture inverted commas.

sage to Jordan. There is another point to make Jordan unique which is these sites, the religious sites. I am very sure that we will be developing”.

5.4.4 Promotion and the Common Religious Heritage

The common religious heritage shared by the three monotheistic traditions emerged as a central theme throughout the interviews. Many of those interviewed believed that common religious heritage could be utilized as a promotion and coexistence tool; indeed in many instances this theme is already being used to promote religious sites in Jordan. Ajloun tourism director Dr. Bassam al-Tobat explained, for instance, how important it is to remember history and the common religious heritage that is present at the holy sites. The interviewee explained that this common heritage can play a factor in creating a greater bond between the “sons of religions.” This is a sentiment held by others who were interviewed. One interviewee expressed his opinion:

“I am of the idea that the common religious heritage can be a positive factor in bringing individuals of the religions more closely to each other. Now they have finished the conference centre in the Baptism site which will help to bring the people of the religions together through the place and the conferences about the interreligious dialogue. All the holy sites whether they are for Christians or Muslims, are for all religions and can all people meet and come into contact with each other”.

The German director of the Jordanian promotion office in Frankfurt had the following to say about common religious heritage in Jordan:

“It is a good idea for the interfaith dialogue in Jordan. There are many different religious groups who have lived peacefully from a long time ago. When you see many holy sites in Jordan this shows that we have a lot of cultures in this land. When you pick a stone in Jordan you see that many different religions and cultures lived there. The holy site is very important to religious groups. There are a lot of groups from Israel who come to Jordan to see the holy sites and they have no problem to tell that we are Israelis. People can travel freely between Jordan and Israel. The people you met and said, ‘We are Americans’, are a special case. It is not the usual case in Jordan. Although Jordan is a small country but you can find many great things in it. Jordan is a country where they are very tolerant”.

Other individuals interviewed expressed similar opinions about common religious heritage. In fact a Muslim religious man, Dr. Noah al-Faqeer, expressed the following opinion:

“Most of our holy sites in Jordan are of common religious heritage and they have a good effect in coexistence. These holy sites have a good effect on the point of views closer together between the people. From the holy sites we remember that we have no enmity between us and remind us of our same roots. Because the religion is from the same origin and it is one. There is no coexistence between Islam and Christians that exceeds the coexistence a Muslim can take a wife from Christians”.

Bassam al-Tobat asserts that a commonly held opinion about common religious heritage and promotion is that:

“It is wonderful to remember our roots and the common religious heritage in our holy sites. This heritage can play a good factor in convergence between the sons of religions.”

The German travel agent’s opinion about the common religious heritage:

“If it is done properly it is ok. It can be a good initiative. The trails are a very good idea. Naturally people come together. I see lately that a lot of NGOs involved in faith tourism and coexistence and multi cultural and multi faith tourism in Jordan like in Al’uyun path in Ajloun governorate and Abraham path they are trying to push. This is a good idea to make the local societies involved in the process of tourism”.

According to many interviewees the common religious heritage between the holy sites of Jordan can play a good role in convergence, coexistence and can bring Muslims and Christians closer together.

5.4.5 Promotion and the Trails

Some of the individuals interviewed recognised the importance of trails not only as a means to attract more visitors, but also as way to promote the holy sites of Jordan. In fact, al-Tobat asserted that Ajloun Tourist Trail will help to increase the number of tourists who visit the holy sites by:

- Lengthening the stay of the tourists in the area.

- Providing new job opportunities for members of the community and increasing their income. This would reflect positively on tourism in the region.
- Stimulating domestic tourism, especially families and school groups.

Such factors suggest that the addition of trails will help Jordan to promote its holy sites to the world. The trails also increase connectivity and accessibility of the sites. According to Salem 'Odeh a travel agent concerning the trails:

“It is a good idea and it is not very expensive but the planners don’t depend on scientific bases. The trails can develop the local society.”

As mentioned above, Germany plays an important role in the promotion of holy sites in Jordan. An interview with the director of the Jordanian promotion office in Frankfurt reveals that there was a great deal of growth in Germany for Jordan Tourism in 2009. However, there is still room for growth in awareness of what the area has to offer in the way of holy sites. Many people, for instance, are aware of Petra, but not the other holy sites that are accessible to them in Jordan.

A positive answer came from the German travel agent who was asked to estimate the German market for religious tourism to Jordan:

“Yes sure about that. There are German tourists who do visit the holy sites. Most of the tourists from Germany who come to visit the holy sites in Jordan are from old age and they are well educated. A lot of them like to visit Madaba and Mount Nebo. We should concentrate on this market because in Germany they have 30 days in the year to have a holiday and the population is 83 million. We should promote well for Jordan tourism. Egypt is a big destination for Germans we should convince them to visit Jordan after that.”

Former Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Maha al-Khatib in one of the interviews talked to al-Arab al-Yaum newspaper (20.08.2010) about the trails as follows:

“The tourist trails help to raise the level of the positive impression for tourists and they will give this experience to their countries which achieves greater promotion to Jordan. The trails help the Jordanian visitors to get to know eco-tourism and the holy sites which will be on the way of the trails and create a greater trend towards practices and new patterns of domestic tourism which is suitable for the environment and to preserve the

cultural heritage and cultural sites. Above all, it will be a good way for the local communities to involve in the process of tourism and to benefit them economically”.

5.4.7 Results from the qualitative part of research:

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a qualitative method with roots in traditional ethnographic research, whose objective is to help researchers learn the perspectives held by study populations. Participant observation typically takes place in community settings, in locations believed to have some relevance to the research questions. The method is distinctive because the researcher approaches participants in their own environment rather than having the participants come to the researcher (Mack, et al. 2005).

The researcher conducted observations at various holy sites, e.g., Abu Ubaydah Amir bin al-Jarrah shrine, where locals did not often see many tourists. One of the visitors observed seemed disturbed to see a woman (a tourist) entering the shrine without covering her body as traditionally expected by Muslims. It is worth recalling remarks quoted earlier regarding mutual respect for different cultures. The perceived disrespect of this visitor for Muslim culture may be one of the reasons why religious tourism is not as strong as it might be. In this context, Dr. al Rawashdeh, some of whose views were noted above, expressed his opinion that:

“The tourist should not only respect the holy site but he should respect the country as a whole. We should not sell the culture as a commodity or article. It is very wrong to make the culture a commodity. We want tourism to serve the culture not the opposite.”

On a visit to the Baptism Site, one of the first observations was that there was very little variation in language amongst the tourist guides. Only one speaks another language, Russian, besides English. This is problematic because people from all over the world visit these sites and they want to enjoy themselves without having to worry about language barriers.

Other observations at the Baptism Site were that the Spanish tourists were the most likely to buy souvenirs, the majority of souvenirs come from Syria and these are cheaper than souvenirs made in Jordan. There seems to be a lack of connection between the religious tourism industry and the local community, which is not producing souvenirs which can compete in price with the Syrian products.

At Tal Mar Elias there were people visiting the site and the site was very clean. However, there was a lack of parking, and the road leading up to the site was narrow. These are issues that need to be addressed in the future in order to encourage tourism. At Mount Nebo, the observer found that there was no proper visitors' centre. The absence of an adequate visitors' centre is problematic for this particular site because it is one of the most visited sites in the region. There were other issues that should be addressed, e.g., absence of transportation to take tourists to the site from the main city Madaba, lack of food and beverage outlets. The observer also felt that there might have been some corruption related to the sale of tickets. One tourist, for instance, explained that:

“He had visited Mount Nebo with five friends and paid the price for the tickets; he did not get five tickets, but was given only one ticket for the five, and he said,⁴⁰ ‘We are five, why do you give me only one?’ The attendant replied that he didn’t have enough tickets. We waited some time to see what happened with other visitors and saw that he gave one ticket for every four people.”

Whether in fact there was dishonesty involved or there was indeed a shortage of tickets, the matter should be addressed.

At Mukawir in Madaba governorate one of the locals reported that:

“The population in this area hopes to develop of the reality of tourism in their region for its religious and tourist importance. This will make a fertile area for establishing tourist projects which will employ the local community. The local community should be educated in the matters of tourism. And they asked about using the information centre to market their handicrafts.”

Although the people of the area are hopeful, there are many factors that currently prevent the area from becoming a major religious site. Namely, the area lacks the proper facilities and services to absorb the presence of a large number of tourists. However, if the area is able to improve this issue, Mukawir has potential as a tourism destination.

Regarding the overall condition of religious tourism in Jordan currently, the observer noted that there is often a lack of hotel lodging, services, food and drink at the various holy sites, which is problematic for tourism.

⁴⁰ The people who sell tickets (researcher's explanation).

One disturbing incident, which suggests a serious obstacle to the development of religious tourism, results from the failure to perceive the common heritage. The roots of the problem are between Shi'a and Sunna Muslims. According to the paper *al-Quds al-Arabi* in 2007:⁴¹

“In 2007 the people of al-Karak governorate, south of Jordan, where many Islamic religious sites are situated, prevented Iraqi and Lebanese Shi'a tourists (it was a Shi'a pilgrimage group) from getting out of their buses to visit their city and the shrine of Ja'far bin Abi Taleb on the occasion of the anniversary of the martyrdom of Hussein ibn Ali. The reports from local media in Amman said that a large number of people of Karak had gathered since morning at the site of the tomb revered by Shi'a and caused the prevention of Shi'a pilgrims from entering the site. They forced them to return without visiting the site. The police were very careful not to allow any clashes between them. According to the paper the overwhelming public anger at the role of the Shi'a in support of the U.S. occupation was reflected in this year's ceremony on the observance of the Shi'a Iraqis in Jordan who go to shrines of companions in the southern shrine at this time every year.”

The potentially abrasive relationship between Shi'a and Sunna Muslims could become a big obstacle in the way of Islamic religious tourism. This incident represents the political issues that can arise in Jordan in the midst of religious practice and pilgrimage. This is a difficult issue to tackle as there are strong feelings about the issue on both sides. If religious intolerance persists, religious tourism in Jordan will not be successful.

The researcher experienced the following illustrative incident at the Christian site of Mount Nebo. He was sitting and watching tourists and visitors conducting interviews when four people from Lebanon entered the site. One of them (later it was determined that he was the taxi driver who was with them) came suddenly up to the researcher and he was confused. As he was a Muslim he asked if it is forbidden to enter this place because it was for Christians. The researcher asked him who had told him that. He replied that his girlfriend had told him, *“if you go to this place you will become Christian because this is a pilgrimage place for Christians.”* The researcher explained to him that this is not forbidden and that one can visit all the Christian sites without becoming a Christian. The conversation illustrates that there is still mutual confusion and ignorance between the religions, whether it is from the side of Christians or Muslims. This lack of

⁴¹ The news was translated from Arabic into English by the researcher

knowledge affects local lives in many ways. It is clear that there is a need to educate the local communities, beginning with the school pupils, to know each other's religions.

In addition to that, most of the people from local communities in the vicinity of the holy sites confirmed to the researcher that they only see the tourists and they don't have any economic benefits from them because of the lack of tourist services and facilities like hotels, restaurants etc.

Overall, the observations seem to point to some disconnection between the tourists and the local community. There is also a lack of awareness of how to operate some of the holy sites. However, there is also a great deal of hope that Jordan will begin to realise the potential that it has as a major tourism attraction. If some changes are made, there is no reason for Jordan not to succeed in the area of religious tourism.

5.5 Conclusion

The following points are some results from the analysis part:

- The majority of tourists and interviewees accept the idea of dialogue. A small minority refused this idea but most of them come only for a short time just to see the biblical sites and then leave.
- The opportunities for the Jews in this mutual understanding and coexistence with the Arabs (Muslims or Christians) through common heritage are low in comparison with the opportunities between Muslims and Christians themselves.
- In the holy sites of Jordan dialogue and mutual understanding between tourists in general is something natural and without any difficulty.
- Holy tourist destinations can create the possibility of developing shared understanding and dialogue despite differences of politics and religious faith.
- Jordan until now has not found a solution how to combine commercialization and spirituality in the holy sites.
- Holy sites are places of meeting and connection for people of all faiths and cultures inviting everyone to remember our common origins and to respect our cultural differences.
- Holy sites may be taken as a means to reduce tensions and promote a peaceful living together in the region.

Chapter Six

SWOT-Analysis of Religious Tourism in Jordan

6.1 Introduction

The well-known technique of “SWOT”-Analysis was developed by the business community to aid in determining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats present within an organisation (Jackson, 2003). The analysis evaluates both the internal and external factors that contribute to these four qualities.

“Principally, it is not easy, sometimes, to distinguish between strengths and opportunities, weaknesses and threats, where strength can be seen as an opportunity and a weakness can be a threat, also” (Harahsheh, 2002, p.106).

Jordan’s religious tourism industry, like any other business or organization, has strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that are likely to affect the industry for years to come in both negative and positive ways. These factors are analysed in the following paragraphs.

6.1.1 Strengths

The richness and diversity of Jordan’s holy sites are major strengths for its potential in the religious tourism market. The most important strength to note is the common religious heritage shared by the sites. In the course of conducting the present study it became evident that the common religious heritage in the holy sites of Jordan and throughout the region is extremely important to attracting visitors and bringing Christians and Muslims closer together. Jordan appeals to Muslims, Christians and Jews because each of these faiths has religious sites in Jordan. At the current time, the majority of tourists who visit religious sites in Jordan are Christians who come from America and Europe. However, there are also significant numbers of Muslims and Jews who visit the sites. The valuable commonalities amongst these Abrahamic religions have been and can continue to be exploited for the purpose of attracting tourists and pilgrims.

The Jordanian officials interviewed for the study recognised this reality and are striving to bring the religious communities together to strengthen religious tourism in Jordan. In addition, the tourists who participated in the questionnaire also understood the importance of the common religious heritage and the dialogue that needs to take place around this common religious heritage.

A second strength is the proximity of Jordan to religious sites in other nations. Not only is it close to Judaism's most important cultural and religious destination, Israel, and the New Testament sites of Christianity, but even the "hajj trail" of Islam runs all along the length of the country, as the path to Mecca for many Muslims. Jordan's location is important on a more practical level for people who live throughout the world and want to make a single visit to the region and view all of the sites on the same trip. Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) must take advantage of Jordan's location. The geographical location of Jordan at the crossroads between Europe, Africa and Asia makes the country a promising tourist destination (Harahsheh, 2002, p.106).

There is another strength associated with the richness of Islamic and Christian heritage sites in Jordan: The Christian holy sites, for instance, are biblically genuine, such as the Baptism Site on the Jordan River. Islamic holy sites are genuine, too, as they are related to the companions of Prophet Muhammad.

The government's enthusiasm and willingness to invite foreigners into the country is also a strength for religious tourism in Jordan. The various officials who were interviewed for the present study seem to recognise the treasure that lies in Jordan's religious sites and the profound appeal that these sites have for religious tourists. They also seem eager to capitalise on the appeal of the sites while still respecting the sacred nature of the sites.

6.1.2 Weaknesses

A major weakness of Jordan's tourism industry is the lack of connectivity between the holy sites. Many of the officials and tourism experts interviewed cited the need to create trails that will connect the sites to make them more convenient for tourists who want to see as many of the sites as possible in a timely and efficient manner. Additionally, the ministry which is responsible for religious tourism is the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places and not the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. This creates a further disconnection as it pertains to promoting holy sites which has its deficiencies.

Moreover, there are weaknesses associated with some of the sites relating to appropriate signage, adequate parking, tour guides, information centres, cleanliness, and infrastructure as a whole. One of the main complaints of some of the tourists and officials who were interviewed was the lack of cleanliness and shortage of services at some of the sites. The lack of cleanliness and the shortage of services may keep some tourists from returning for another visit, or from recommending the site to others. The absence of directional signing on roads leading to specific sites and shortage of adequate parking are also serious weaknesses. Visitors must feel assured that they can access the sites they have come, often from very far, to see, without difficulty or delay. In some areas, there is little accommodation and few places to eat and drink. This is also a major weakness for tourism in the area because most people are travelling with their families and they will need a place to stay and eat meals. Jordan's lack of appropriate accommodation, food and drink services around the holy sites often keep people from spending money in Jordan at the same level that they spend in neighbouring countries.

The lack of community involvement is also a weakness associated with Jordan's religious tourism. At the current time, some Jordanians who live in the vicinity of the holy sites do not understand the role they can play in the upkeep and development of the holy sites. In addition, there are sometimes issues that arise pertaining to the cultural differences between Jordanians and some foreigners. Both Jordanians and foreigners must learn to have a mutual respect for each other. Failure to do so lessens the likelihood that foreigners will visit the area.

Offsetting the advantages of common religious heritage is a certain amount of sectarian discord. One example discussed in this study is the serious tension that exists between Sunna and Shi'a Muslims. 95% of the Jordanian population are Sunni, and until recently, Jordan was not entirely open to Islamic religious tourism for Shi'a. There are also tensions related to Christian religious tourism, which suffers due to problems with Jewish excavators. This tension is present as Jordan will not allow excavation by Jews on Jordanian land because there is fear that the Jews will find religious ruins and will then attempt to claim ownership of Jordanian land.

Yet another weakness for religious tourism in Jordan is the fact that some of the Muslim commentators heard from in this research do not accept the concept of religious tourism.

This really is a major challenge concerning the concept and planning of tourism in Jordan that has to be solved.

A profound weakness for the religious tourism sector in Jordan is associated with extremely poor marketing and promotion. Travel agencies put only a very small number of holy sites in their programmes whether they are Islamic or Christian. Related to this is the fact that many travel agents tend to concentrate on promoting religious tourism only amongst older clients, though research demonstrates that young people are also likely to visit the holy sites. This greatly reduces the potential market for Jordan's holy sites.

The final weakness is the lack of cooperation and collaboration with other countries relevant to the marketing of Jordan as a destination for religious tourism. This is a major weakness for Jordan's religious tourism because many people around the world are not aware of the many holy sites in Jordan and, thus, they have not visited the sites. To improve tourism to Jordan relevant organizations and institutions must make a concerted effort to improve communication and collaborative efforts with other nations around the world. It is also important for Jordan to work more closely with neighbouring countries to provide all the necessary services to improve its product of religious tourism. One of the travel agents said this very succinctly:

“We should connect Jordan religious tourism to other neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Syria, Israel and Palestinian Territories if we want to succeed in this type of tourism”.

The lack of public as well as private awareness of the importance of this type of tourism is one of the most important weaknesses that face religious tourism in Jordan.

6.1.3 Opportunities

The primary opportunity lies in the growth potential that Jordan has for religious tourism. There should be a more concerted effort to attract Christian tourists because there is a large Christian population in the West, Jordan's strongest tourism market. In years to come the country must develop a strategic plan designed to attract more (religious) tourists to the country. This plan must involve a strategy of addressing issues associated with community involvement and participation, cleanliness, accessibility to holy sites, and cross-cultural respect and dialogue involving common religious heritage. The condition of the sites is important to many tourists. This is particularly true because most people

visit the sites for religious reasons. Tourists, regardless of their religious affiliation, do not want to see sites that they consider sacred in a degraded state. Not only does the lack of cleanliness affect tourism, but it also damages Jordan's reputation for keeping its holy sites clean. However, the nation has the opportunity to develop and implement plans that are designed to guarantee the cleanliness of the sites.

Another opportunity lies in the development of connecting trails that will allow tourists to visit several different sites and the other main attractions in one journey. These trails are an important opportunity to assist the kingdom in attracting more tourists. Through the creation of trails, Jordan will enable tourists to see sites that are in close proximity to one another simultaneously. This can drastically reduce travel time, while also allowing tourist to see many different sites on the same trip.

Jordan also has the opportunity to utilize the Internet and modern technology in a manner that is more effective. A significant portion of the individuals surveyed reported learning of the holy sites in Jordan through the internet. The Internet is an important tool because people can search for information at their own pace and time. The use of the Internet to promote tourism in Jordan is also important because it allows tourists to book hotels and other services from the convenience of their homes. Jordan has the opportunity to exploit the services provided by the Internet in a manner that is more consistent and more effective. This will likely increase the propensity for tourists to visit Jordan's holy sites.

6.1.4 Threats

The primary threat is the current situation of worldwide political instability and unrest. This unrest, although it has not impacted Jordan to the extent that it has other Arab countries, has affected the way in which people travel. People are more reluctant to travel to areas where there is political unrest because they fear that they may be harmed or unable to escape whenever there are serious problems.

Moreover, even though the global economic crisis currently confronting the world has not too much affected Jordan in the recent past, a continuous global economic crisis will eventually have an impact on the nation's tourism product as a whole and of course on the religious tourism sector of its own. Natural disasters and increases in fuel prices in turn inflate the prices of airline tickets, food and other essentials. All of these issues, combined with the fallout from regional political upheaval following the "Arab Spring"

have drastically decreased the number of tourists who come to the entire region, including Jordan. According to Diaa al-Madani, Managing Director of the Baptism site, concerning global crisis and religious tourism:

“Religious tourism is the only type of tourism that had not been affected by the global crisis. The number of tourists to the holy sites increased, contrary to the other tourist sites in Jordan. Therefore, there should be more focus and attention to this type of tourism”.

The regional competition in the field of religious tourism in the Middle East area is another threat that faces this sector of tourism in Jordan. Saudi Arabia is situated in the south of Jordan and it is number one in the world concerning the type of Islamic religious tourism. To the west of Jordan lies Israel and there are the Palestinian Territories. Both are very famous for their Christian religious tourism from a long time ago.

6.2 Conclusion

Jordan’s strengths as a tourist destination for religious sites are many and significant, and provide the country with many advantages. The Jordanian tourism industry must fully exploit the opportunities that are available, as its stakeholders hope to compete with other tourist sites in the region. The weaknesses and threats that Jordan faces are temporary but recurring; their impact depends to a great extent on the actions that Jordan takes and on the political and economic issues that currently affect much of the world. Overall, Jordan’s tourism industry must strive towards closing some of the gaps that exist in its religious tourism. Jordan should benefit from SWOT tool to maximize strengths, limit weaknesses, take advantage of opportunities and avoid or reduce threats. Failure to do so will stunt the growth of an industry that has a promising future.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions, Assumptions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

The main objective of this research was to analyse the present state of religious tourism in Jordan and its development and prospects, evaluate to what extent the holy sites are important in promoting tourism and how they could be utilized as a tool for further promotion and overall development of tourism industry in the future. The research indicates that there are both strengths and weaknesses related to present day tourism of holy sites in Jordan. The strengths include the presence of some of the most important Christian holy sites which are biblical, including Mount Nebo and the Baptismal Site, and many Islamic holy sites that are important to the Islamic world. These can attract a lot of tourists and pilgrims in the future if Jordan takes good care of and pays attention to planning, strategies, providing services, marketing, and promotion, etc. The weaknesses of the current state of tourism involve the lack of proper services and facilities to attract and retain the presence of tourists in the region. In the future, one of the primary goals is to create trails that connect the holy sites together and also to connect them with the main tourist sites. It is believed that this is needed for both practical and promotional purposes. As it stands, such trails do not currently exist but plans are afoot to proceed in this direction.

There are also some opportunities and threats associated with the development of religious tourism in Jordan. The opportunities include the development of trails that will help to improve access to the sites. These trails will also aid in the ability of the tourism industry to better promote the sites. The threats to religious tourism include the state of the global economy and the difficulty that exists in certain areas of the country concerning keeping the holy sites clean and also remaining open and friendly to the presence of tourists. These are issues that can be resolved if the tourism ministry takes a more hands-on role in ensuring that the sites are kept clean and provided with the necessary services, and that the Jordanian people are more open to foreign tourists, especially for the type of Islamic religious tourism. As it was shown in the analysis chapter, many experts and

academics emphasised that Jordan until now has not been able to open its doors freely for Islamic religious tourism.

The research study, which consisted of interviews, observations and a questionnaire, reveals a great deal about the state of religious tourism in Jordan. Through the interviews, for example, it was revealed that religious tourism in Jordan is an industry that could grow a great deal if the proper mechanisms were in place. Mechanisms such as a Jordanian government committed to ensuring that all of the holy sites in Jordan were properly cared for so that tourists would be attracted to visiting the sites and returning. Furthermore, there was a great deal of evidence to suggest that Jordan needs to do more to capitalise on the common religious heritage that exists in the region and is present at each of the religious sites in Jordan. Indeed, Muslims, Christians and Jews all have holy sites in Jordan that are important to each religion. As such, these sites can be a good factor for visitors, tourists and pilgrims to come into contact with each other.

Interviewees also seem frustrated from the lack of trails connecting the holy sites. They believe that these trails will assist in the further development of religious tourism in the region. However, efforts to construct such trails have been slow. Overall, according to the interviews, it seems that religious tourism in Jordan could be a major asset to the Jordanian tourism industry. However, there has to be a concerted effort from all the stakeholders to devise a strategy associated with the proper marketing of religious tourism in Jordan.

The interviews also reveal that there must be a concerted effort to advertise religious tourism throughout other parts of the world, particularly in the West for the type of Christian religious tourism, and in the Arab world and Islamic countries worldwide. Promoting in the West is advantageous because of the number of Christians who live in Europe, North and South America. Through proper promotion, there could be a great deal of growth experienced in Jordanian tourism.

The observations made at the various religious sites throughout Jordan are also telling. The author of the present research study was able to experience firsthand both the negative and positive aspects of touring religious sites in Jordan. There were some issues associated with access, the cleanliness of sites, concessions, the manner in which tickets were sold and, most importantly, the lack of necessary services in most of the sites. It seems that the more popular sites were more convenient and accommodating for tourists

and pilgrims. This finding demonstrates the importance of providing the appropriate type of access and other services so that tourists could be attracted to the various religious sites.

The questionnaires were also quite revealing regarding who visits the religious sites and why. Most of the people who were surveyed recognised the need for dialogue as it pertains to the common religious heritage. This finding reflects the need that human beings have to connect with one another even when they have different religious beliefs. This also reveals that Jordanian religious tourism would likely benefit a great deal from having an open and honest dialogue about the common religious heritage which can bring people of religions more into contact with each other.

Most of the people who answered the questionnaires visited the holy sites for religious reasons and motives including prayer and pilgrimage. This demonstrates just how sacred the holy sites in Jordan are to Christians, Muslims and Jews alike. In addition to going to the sites for religious purposes, many respondents also reported that they visited the sites for leisure and entertainment purposes. Whether the sites are visited for religious or leisure purposes, promotion must incorporate the reasons for visiting into advertisements for Jordanian religious tourism. In doing so, the religious tourism industry in Jordan is likely to flourish and progress.

The questionnaires also revealed many different issues related to the quality of the various religious sites in Jordan: The Baptism Site, for example, was good at providing information about the site and there was good access. On the other hand, there were sites that were not as clean and were not very accommodating regarding religious tourists. However, the tourists felt safe and secure at all the holy sites they visited. Feeling safe is extremely important because some tourists are reluctant to visit the region because they fear it is not secure. The quality of tourism depends on safety and security which are very important to the success of tourism. However, the respondents put to rest any worries that tourists might have concerning the safety of the sites.

The questionnaires also revealed the importance that the modern media, such as the Internet, plays in the development of religious tourism in Jordan. A majority of the participants found information about religious sites on the Internet. Not only were they able to find information about the sites on the Internet, but they were also able to book airline tickets and hotel rooms through the same medium. Technology has been instrumental in

the development of tourism in the region and throughout Jordan. The Internet has become the primary information source for most of the travellers. Religion's role in tourism continues to grow, and the Internet has become a key tool for travellers—Muslim and non-Muslim—seeking destination information Hashim, et al. (2007).

The questionnaires also revealed that people who visit the sites normally come at least once a year. This is an important factor because it reveals that the sites really are popular for tourists. The religious tourism industry in Jordan must take into consideration the importance of making these repeat tourists feel comfortable while in Jordan.

Another result from the research study is that the future of religious tourism in the region can be successful and promising if the proper trails, facilities and services are built to meet the needs of the tourists and pilgrims. There is also a need for mutual respect of cultures, so that Jordanians and tourists are more comfortable with each other. Issues related to the proper amount of transportation and visas also need to be addressed.

7.2 Testing Assumptions

Five assumptions were introduced in the present research. The first assumption was that *“Promoting the religious tourism product, especially towards the various Islamic and Christian holy sites, leads to an increase in national income.”*

This assumption was found to be valid. It is apparent throughout the interviews that Christian holy sites and Islamic holy sites are popular in Jordan, neighbouring countries and worldwide. Holy sites should play an important role in increasing the national income. As we have seen, there have been increases in the numbers of tourists in the main holy sites, such as the Baptism Site as a Christian site, and Abu Ubaydah Shrine as an Islamic site. The increase in the number of tourists will surely lead to increase in tourism revenues. Full exploitation of the popularity of religious sites would increase national income. The second assumption stated that

“Neglect of proper services and facilities provided to tourists and pilgrims adversely affects the growth of the tourism industry.”

This assumption also proved valid. According to the observations, interviews and the questionnaires results, visitors place great emphasis on the services and facilities that are provided at and around the holy sites in Jordan. There are instances where cleanliness is

a major issue at these sites. In addition, some observations noted that the facilities for tourists are limited, and this has an impact on the desire of tourists to visit these sites. Providing services at the sites is the key in tourism growth for this type of tourism. Jordan should provide all the necessary services at the holy sites if it wants to improve its position as a major religious tourist destination. Most tourists and pilgrims who negatively answered the question, “*Do you recommend and encourage people (family, friends and relatives) to visit the holy sites of Jordan?*” faced problems related to services and wrote suggestions to that effect. Providing services and facilities surely affects the number of tourists who come to visit the sites, the length of stay, and probably their likeliness to visit again. The third assumption stated:

“Development of facilities and services for tourists and pilgrims will lead to a manifold development of the religious tourism industry.”

This was also a valid assumption. The development of facilities, such as hotels, rest areas, restaurants and concessions would likely attract more tourists because they will feel more comfortable at the sites. In addition, there needs to be great emphasis placed on tour guides and their ability to speak multiple languages. The tour guides must also have the ability to fully and thoroughly explain the history of the site. The research also shows that modes of public transportation need to be properly developed to ensure that people can get to the sites in a simple and accessible manner. At the current time, the lack of development in these areas has been detrimental to the development of tourism in Jordan.

The fourth assumption stated:

“Modern media, such as the Internet, plays an important role in attracting tourists to the state and promoting the many attractions that it has to offer.”

The questionnaires and the interviews indicated that the Internet is vitally important to the promotion of Jordan as a religious tourism area. More participants in the questionnaires reported that they found out about the religious sites through the Internet than any other medium. It is likely that many of them organised their entire trip to Jordan via the Internet. With this understood, Jordan has to utilize the Internet more aggressively to expose the world to the presence of the holy sites in Jordan. According to the General Director of the JTB concerning modern media, such as the Internet, he said,

“We can reach many groups all over the world through electronic promotion. We have succeeded in electronic promotion.”

The fifth assumption stated:

“The common religious heritage between the three monotheistic religions at the holy sites can be a factor in dialogue and convergence between religions.”

Common religious heritage was a dominant theme in almost all of the interviews. The interviewees recognised that one of the strengths of tourism in the area is the ability to appeal to Christians, Muslims and Jews simultaneously. This common heritage allows tourist from all over the region and all over the world to come to Jordan and enjoy what it has to offer by way of religious sites. At most of the holy sites (study area), visitors from different groups of religions were encountered, suggesting strongly the validity of the assumption that common religious heritage can play a positive role in bringing religions together.

The vast majority of those who responded to the questionnaires (83.3%) believed that understanding common religious heritage is a factor upon which dialogue can begin to take place. Less than 1% of the respondents responded negatively to this question, which indicates that there are strong feelings for understanding and building relationships based on common religious heritage. This is an important finding because it reiterates the role that common religious heritage has in the promotion of religious sites and the bringing together of people from different religious backgrounds.

7.3 Recommendations

Overall, the research indicates that the promotion of tourism in the region is necessary. Greater promoting and marketing is essential if Jordan wants to see an increase in religious tourism. It is recommended that promotion and marketing should be used to advertise tourism from neighbouring countries and throughout the world. It is also recommended that modern technology plays a major role in promoting the region because the Internet makes the holy sites accessible and allows for the organisation of trips and/or pilgrimages. Such promotion can be utilized as a tool for further promotion and marketing for the overall development of tourism industry in the future. It is also recommended that the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) should take a stronger lead in religious tourism promotion and marketing in Jordan. At the current time, the JTB has not taken the lead and, as such, Jordanian tourism has suffered. The future of Jordanian religious tourism is

extremely promising, but only if the recommended steps are taken into consideration. The following recommendations are also necessary.

The Directorate of Religious Tourism and Islamic Antiquities should be linked to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities instead of the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places. There is also a lack of cooperation between the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and tourism professionals has limited the appeal of tourism for foreigners and consequently decreased accurate foreign perceptions of the kingdom (Neveu, 2010, p.155).

Additionally, there must also be a directorate for Christian religious tourism in the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as many tourists and interviewees especially from religious men (priests) asked for. The Christian holy sites treated as any other tourist site in Jordan not as the Islamic holy sites which have a directorate in the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places and the royal committee for the restoration and maintenance of mosques and shrines which receive more attention and other financial support. In other words there should be more attention and care from the governmental bodies and authorities of Christian religious tourism and its holy sites. In order to develop the religious tourism product, holy sites should be connected with trails which will enrich the tourist experience and prolong the length of stay and there will be direct contact with the local communities. Trails can also provide new job opportunities for members of the community which there will be an increase of income and development of the infrastructure which will reflect positively on local communities and the tourism in general. Religious tourism can play as an economic driver for the Kingdom.

Within Jordan, there is a need for greater collaboration between Christians and Christian travel organisations and agencies, so that more Christian tourists and pilgrims can be drawn to Jordan. There should also be greater cooperation between Christians and Muslims, helping them depending on the common religious heritage in the holy sites. Institutions of higher learning and schools should also make a concerted effort to visit the holy sites, which encourages tolerance amongst the various religions. Holy sites may be taken as a means to reduce tensions and promote a peaceful living together in the region.

The rehabilitation of human resources is absolutely necessary from all different sides who are working in this type of tourism, especially the directors of Islamic holy sites⁴².

More involvement and participation of the local communities in this type of tourism, especially the people who are living around the holy sites, is necessary.

Until now from all holy sites in Jordan there are only four sites which count the number of tourists. Therefore, studying the size of religious tourism market is very important to improve the promotion and marketing strategies which can be used in the type of holy tourist destinations. The tourism statistics in the tourist sites help in planning for the future of tourism product. Due to the importance of statistics in our life, the world celebrates every year of the World Statistics Day on 20th of October which is initiated in 2010 by the United Nations Statistics Division and proclaimed by UN General Assembly. This day is dedicated to raise awareness of the many achievements of official statistics⁴³. The researcher urges for more care and interest in statistics especially for the holy sites because of the importance of statistics as an active tool in the social and economic development.

Tourist guides also need to be better trained especially in the field of religious tourism so that the information given is accurate and in more languages. The activities provided at the holy sites should be family friendly because most people who visit the sites are with their families. Religious tourism in Jordan also needs to be more open to Muslim Shi'a. There needs to be greater emphasis placed on the economic benefits of holy sites as it pertains to educating the Jordanian people. Public awareness of the importance of religious tourism and its economic benefits as a pillar for the Jordan tourism industry is one of the most important recommendations.

Documentation and registration of the holy sites of Jordan are important whether they are Islamic or Christian by computerized systems and programmes for example by the GIS programme because of the importance of reservation and conservation of these sites.

⁴² Most of the directors of the Islamic holy sites did not accept giving interviews because as they have said that they do not have good and enough information about the field of tourism.

⁴³ Source: <http://www.ced.travel/en/destinations-news/99-underlining-the-value-of-tourism-statistics-on-world-statistics-day.html>

From all the study and the collected material it has become evident that Jordan has done a lot for maintaining, restructuring and repairing its famous holy sites. At the same time it became evident, too, that the management of religious tourism in Jordan has a lot of deficiencies. In order to help to improve it the following suggestions, resulting from the present study, can be of interest for all the stakeholders of tourism, especially religious tourism in Jordan:

- **Positive Image:** Promote the image of a safe Jordan. This can be done by launching an image-building program in the potential tourist generating markets to increase tourism. This will not only help to regain lost numbers of tourists, but will also ensure a steady flow of tourists in the future.
- **Manage Conflict between Local Communities and Tour Companies:** Government should increase its role in managing conflict and improving dialogue, because there is rising tension between the local communities and tour companies. Local companies want to preserve culture, whereas the tourism industry insists on some changes.
- **Specialized Education:** A specialized tourism education should be created whose job is to develop a new approach to educate citizens in the field of the tourism and its economic, social and cultural impacts.
- **Increase in Marketing Budgets:** Marketing budgets should be increased so as to improve the process of marketing and promotion of the holy sites. This should be done by the MoTA and JTB.
- **Upgrading Infrastructure:** Tourism services and facilities should be provided and developed in order to facilitate the smooth, safe and fast travel of the tourists. Airports should be developed and improved in order to increase tourism to the holy sites.
- **Educate Local Communities:** A tourist awareness and community relations programme should be launched so as to educate the local community members and inform them about the benefits of tourism. At the same time it is important to show them how they can participate in the management, operation and ownership of the tourist facilities in their respective areas. The objective behind this programme should be to create goodwill and a positive attitude among the local communities, particularly the landowners who live in that area.

- **Implement Principles of Cultural Resource Management:** These principles will guide the safeguarding, development, heritage, environment, and archaeology of the holy sites. Since the heart of any heritage site is its archaeology, its presentation and conservation is vital. Plans should be made to preserve and restore monuments and buildings and also to keep the character of these sites intact so that it is in harmony with the environment.
- Development of the holy sites should have impact on the employment and standard of living of the local residents.
- To establish a specialized website of the holy sites whether they are Christians or Islamic to be a reference and guide for tourists and pilgrims. Develop the role of the media serve the tourist definition of the holy sites.
- Linking religious tourism with the neighbouring countries.
- **Public and Private Partnerships:** There should be more cooperation between the concerned public and the private sector.
- Promote tourism through public awareness campaigns, back to work campaigns, employee charters, and tourism career centres.
- Recruit people into both studies and work with the tourism industry by positioning tourism and the career of choice through preparatory programmes.
- Employ technological methods to increase productivity and to improve planning.
- **Motivate staff:** Enhance the role of supervisors and managers to do this through learning and development, compensation and benefits, team building, and other methods.
- **Upgrade Accommodation Facilities:** New accommodation facilities should be developed and the quality of the existing ones should be improved.
- **Education:** Develop education in tourism by improving learning resources and facilities; updating, upgrading and increasing the skills of faculties and staff; improving participation and retention rates; reform internships and placements; develop strategic alliances.
- Retain people in the industry by implementing the above initiatives to strengthen the appeal and advantages of the tourism industry.

- To exploit the common religious heritage among the holy sites for the purposes of a better coexistence.

At last but not least and according to most of the interviewees with academics, scholars, tourists and experts emphasized that Jordan until now didn't open the doors freely for this type of tourism i.e. the freedom of access to holy sites is not enough. For this reason, the most important point is to open the doors freely and with open arms to receive the tourists and pilgrims from the entire world and from all religions and cultures to the Jordan holy sites. It is the best way to put Jordan on the map of religious tourism and it is the best way to take religious tourism to new heights.

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What are the holy sites that you have visited in Jordan? (*more than one answer is possible*)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baptism Site | <input type="checkbox"/> Shrine of Mu'ath bin Jabal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shrine of Abu Ubaidah Amer bin Al-Jarrah | <input type="checkbox"/> Mount Nebo (Moses' Shrine) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shrine of Shurahbil bin Hasanah | <input type="checkbox"/> Mukawir Citadel/ Machaerus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shrine of Amer bin abi Waqqas | <input type="checkbox"/> Shrine of Zaid bin Harethah |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mar Elias (Elijah) in Ajloun | <input type="checkbox"/> Shrine of Dirar bin Al- Azwar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shrine of Ja'far bin abi Taleb | <input type="checkbox"/> Shrine of Abdullah bin Rawahah |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our Lady of the Mount in Anjara / Ajloun | |

Other

How long do you usually stay in the site?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 hour | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 1 hour | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 2 hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More than 3 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 4 hours | |

Would you like to visit the holy sites once more if you have the possibility to do so?

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would | <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe | <input type="checkbox"/> No, I wouldn't |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If no: why not?..... | | |

Would you recommend the holy sites to your friends or relatives?

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If no: why not?..... | |

The best season for visiting the holy tourist sites:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In Spring | <input type="checkbox"/> In summer | <input type="checkbox"/> In autumn | <input type="checkbox"/> In winter |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|

The main problems that face you when visiting the holy tourist sites:

2) Demographic characteristics

Age:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 -44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45 - 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 65 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

Marital Status:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single | <input type="checkbox"/> Married |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|

Gender:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Female. |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|

Nationality:

Religion:

The Educational qualification:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor Degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education Degree (MA or PhD) |

Profession:

3) *Satisfaction about the Services:*

Please read the items carefully, and check your answers using (✓):

No.	Item	Evaluation	good	acceptable	bad	Notes
1.	Signs to the site					
2.	Parking					
3.	Tourist information centre					
4.	Accessibility					
5.	Availability of information about the site					
6.	Entrance fees					
7.	Cleanliness					
8.	Security and safety					
9.	Prices and quality of gifts and souvenirs					
10.	Food and drink services					
11.	Hospitality					
12.	Facilities inside the place					
13.	Social life at the holy sites					
14.	Places of worship inside the site					
15.	Tourist guides in the site					
16.	Your visit in general					

Do you have any suggestions? How could religious tourism be further developed in a positive way?-----

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Researcher: Malek Bader

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Hans Hopfinger

Appendix 2: Arabic Questionnaire

واقع السياحة الدينية في الأردن: (الوضع الراهن والتطلعات المستقبلية)

المواطن الكريم

تحية طيبة وبعد.....

هذه الدراسة جزء من دراسة شاملة لواقع السياحة الدينية في الأردن: "الوضع الراهن والتطلعات المستقبلية" استكمالاً لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في الإدارة السياحية من جامعة ايشتات في ألمانيا. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى وصف وتحليل واقع السياحة الدينية سواء الإسلامية أو المسيحية وتقييم التطلعات المستقبلية لهذا النوع من السياحة في الأردن. رأيك سيكون عاملاً مساعداً لإعطاء المعلومة الحقيقية لهذه الدراسة. سيتم استخدام البيانات لإغراض البحث والدراسة فقط.

شاكرًا لكم حسن تعاونكم

الباحث: مالك بدر

- رقم الاستبيان: () - التاريخ:

- اسم الموقع:

❖ كثير من الأماكن السياحية الدينية في الأردن لها إرث ديني مشترك بين الديانات الثلاث. هل تعتقد بان هذا الإرث المشترك سيكون عاملاً في الحوار والتقارب بين الديانات؟

نعم لا ربما

الجزء الأول: معلومات حول طبيعة الرحلة

الهدف من زيارة الأماكن السياحية الدينية: (أكثر من إجابة ممكنة)

الصلاة والعبادة الحج الراحة والاستجمام
 تقوية الإيمان البحث والدراسة التطهر
 الشفاء التوبة الشكر

عدد مرات الزيارة للموقع الديني:

مرة واحدة في السنة أكثر من مرة في السنة لم أزرها قط

تقوم بزيارة المواقع السياحية الدينية: (أكثر من إجابة ممكنة)

منفرداً مع العائلة مع الأصدقاء
 وفد رسمي مجموعة سياحية .

كيف تعرفت على المواقع السياحية الدينية؟ (أكثر من إجابة ممكنة)

الأصدقاء والأقارب وكلاء السياحة والسفر الراديو والتلفزيون
 الجرائد والمجلات المعلومات العامة الانترنت
 أخرى.....

- ما هي الأماكن السياحية الدينية التي زرتها في الأردن؟ (أكثر من إجابة ممكنة)
- مقام أبو عبيدة عامر بن الجراح جبل نيبو (مقام سيدنا موسى)
- مقام شرحبيل بن حسنة مقام معاذ بن جبل
- سيدة الجبل في عنجرة / عجلون مقام ضرار بن الأزور
- مار الياس في لستب / عجلون مقام عامر بن أبي وقاص
- مقام جعفر بن أبي طالب قلعة مكاور
- مقام عبد الله بن رواحه مقام زيد بن حارثة المغطس (مكان عماد السيد المسيح)

أخرى

كم تمكث عادة في الموقع السياحي الديني:

- أقل من ساعة أكثر من ساعة
- أكثر من ثلاث ساعات أكثر من أربع ساعات
- أكثر من ساعتين

هل ترغب بزيارة المواقع السياحية الدينية مرة أخرى إذا كان بالإمكان فعل ذلك:

- نعم لا
- إذا كانت الإجابة بلا لماذا؟

هل توصي بزيارة المواقع السياحية الدينية للأصدقاء والأقارب؟

- نعم لا
- إذا كانت الإجابة بلا لماذا؟

أفضل موسم لزيارة المواقع السياحية الدينية؟

- في الربيع في الصيف في الخريف في الشتاء

أهم المشاكل التي تواجهك أثناء زيارة المواقع السياحية الدينية؟

.....

الجزء الثاني : الخصائص الاجتماعية

العمر:

- أقل من ٢٤ ٢٥ - ٤٤ ٤٥ - ٦٤ ٦٥ فما فوق

الحالة الاجتماعية:

- متزوج أعزب

الجنس:

- ذكر أنثى

الجنسية:

.....

الديانة:

.....

المستوى التعليمي:

- أقل من ثانوي ثانوية عامة دبلوم
- بكالوريوس دراسات عليا (ماجستير ، دكتوراه)

المهنة:

.....

الجزء الثالث: تقييم الخدمات

الرجاء تقييم النقاط التالية بالنسبة للموقع السياحي الديني بوضع إشارة √

الرقم	الخدمات	جيد	مقبول	سيء	ملاحظات
١	الشواخص التوضيحية والإرشادية إلى الموقع				
٢	أماكن الاصطفاف				
٣	مراكز الزوار				
٤	سهولة الدخول إلى الموقع				
٥	توفر المعلومات عن الموقع				
٦	رسوم الدخول				
٧	النظافة والمرافق الصحية				
٨	الأمن والأمان				
٩	أسعار وجودة الهدايا التذكارية				
١٠	نوعية المطاعم والاستراحات				
١١	كرم الضيافة				
١٢	التسهيلات داخل الموقع				
١٣	الحياة الاجتماعية داخل الموقع				
١٤	أماكن العبادة داخل الموقع				
١٥	الإدلاء السياحيين في الموقع				
١٦	زيارتك بشكل عام				

هل لك أي اقتراحات؟ كيف بالإمكان تطوير السياحة الدينية بطرق ايجابية في الأردن؟

.....

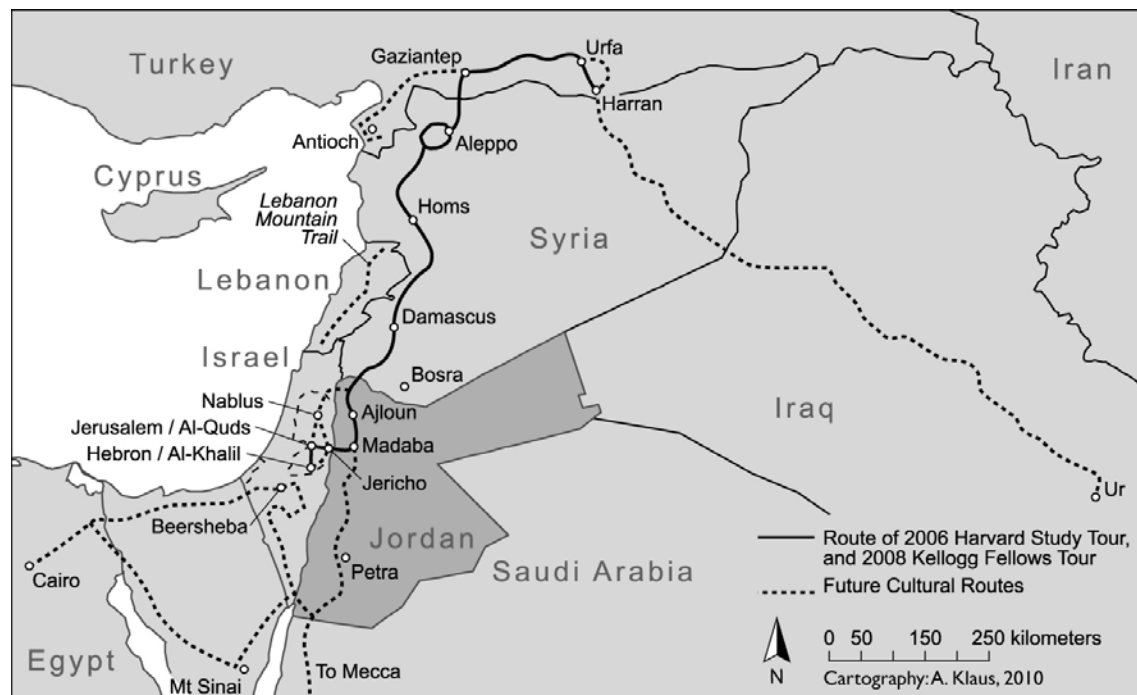
.....

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Appendix 3: Map of Abraham Path⁴⁴



Abraham's Path (*Masar Ibrahim al Khalil*) is a route of walking and cultural tourism which follows the footsteps of Abraham or Ibrahim through the Middle East. It provides a place of meeting and connection for people of all faiths and cultures, inviting us to remember our common origins, to respect our cultural differences, and to recognize our shared humanity.

⁴⁴ (www.abrahampath.org/visit.php)

Appendix 4: Map of the holy sites of Jordan



- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Prophet Issa (Jesus) | 17 Hazzir | 33 Prophet Khadr |
| 2 Battle of Yarmouk | 18 Prophet Shu'ayb (Jethro) | 34 Prophet Suleiman (Solomon) |
| 3 Mu'ath bin Jabal | 19 Bilal bin Rabah | 35 Battle Of Mu'tah |
| 4 Abu al-Darda'a | 20 Prophet Issa (Jesus) | 36 Ja'far bin Abi Taleb |
| 5 Battle of Fahl | 21 Prophet Khadr | 37 Zeid ibn al-Harithah |
| 6 Amer bin Abi Waqqas | 22 Abd al-Rahman bin Auf | 38 Abdullah bin Rawaha |
| 7 Shurhabil bin Husnah | 23 The Cave of the Sleepers | 39 Jabir bin Abdullah |
| 8 Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl | 24 Prophet Muhammad | 40 Al-Harith bin Umayr al-Azdi |
| 9 Prophet Khadr | 25 Prophet Mousa (Moses) | 41 Farwa bin Amro al-Jadhami |
| 10 Dirar bin al-Azwar | 26 Moses' Springs | 42 Sheeth |
| 11 Prophet Hud | 27 Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) | 43 Abu Mousa al-Ash'ari |
| 12 Prophet Daoud (David) | 28 Prophet Muhammad | 44 Prophet Haroun (Aaron) |
| 13 Abu Ubayda Amer Ibn al-Jarrah | 29 Abu Dharr al-Ghifari | 45 Jabal al-Tahkim |
| 14 Prophet Yosha' (Joshua) | 30 Zeid bin Ali bin al-Hussein | 46 Humayma |
| 15 Jadour | 31 Prophet Lut (Lot) | 47 Maysarah bin Masrouq al-Abassi |
| 16 Prophet Ayyoub (Job) | 32 Prophet Nooh (Noah) | 48 Uthman's Mosque al Ayla |

Based on: Ghazi Bir Mohammad (ed., 1994)

Appendix 5: Travel Guide to holy sites in Israel and Palestinian territories (in English and German) English Source: Israel Ministry of Tourism (2007): "Biblical Sites for Christian Visitors"

Touring with a Bible in Hand

Israel Journey Tour - 7 Days

DAY 1

Arrive at the beautiful Ben Gurion Airport outside of Tel Aviv. Visit the nearby Neot Kedumim Biblical Landscape Reserve for a biblical meal and a tour of the site. Or perhaps, visit Mini Israel for a tour of miniatures of Israel's holy sites (either activity may also serve as a finale to the tour). Travel by bus to your hotel in Tel Aviv or Netanya, located on the Mediterranean Sea.

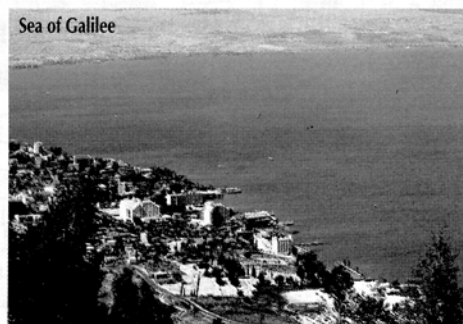
DAY 2

Your journey begins at Jaffa (biblical Joppa), the ancient seaport from which the Prophet Jonah fled from God (Jonah 1:17) and the city where Peter stayed with Simon the Tanner and restored Tabitha to life (Acts 9:36-43). Then you will drive north along the Mediterranean coast to Caesarea, the great Roman port city and one of the largest archeological digs in Israel. This is where the Roman centurion Cornelius was baptized by Peter and became the first gentile convert to Christianity (Acts 10) and where Paul was tried by Festus (Acts 25:6-12). Continue to Mukhraka on Mount Carmel, where Elijah battled the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:25), then to Megiddo (1 Kings 9:15), where you will find a fascinating tel (hill) comprising 26 ancient civilizations superimposed on one another, overlooking the Valley of Jezreel also known as the Valley of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). Next, drive across the valley to Nazareth, the boyhood home of Jesus. Visit the Basilica of the Annunciation and Mary's Well. Then, travel on to Cana where Jesus performed His first miracle, turning water into wine (John 2:1-11). Couples wanting to renew their marriage vows can do so at the chapel. Finally, drive on to Tiberias. Overnight in Tiberias.

DAY 3

This day begins by visiting the biblical sites around the Sea of Galilee: the Mount of Beatitudes, where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12); Capernaum, the town where Jesus lived during

His Galilee ministry (Matthew 4:13, Mark 3:1); Tabgha, where Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes (Luke 9:10-17); and the chapel that commemorates where Jesus instructed Peter to "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). Stop at Nof Ginnosar to see the 2,000-year-old "Jesus Boat" unearthed from the Sea of Galilee. Then, enjoy a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee and a traditional St. Peter's fish lunch. After lunch, view the "Galilee Experience" audiovisual presentation. Then, as time permits, visit the Upper Galilee and the Golan Heights where you can see ancient cities of Caesarea Philippi and Hazor before returning to your hotel in Tiberias or stop by at Yardenit for a baptism service in the Jordan River. Overnight in Tiberias.

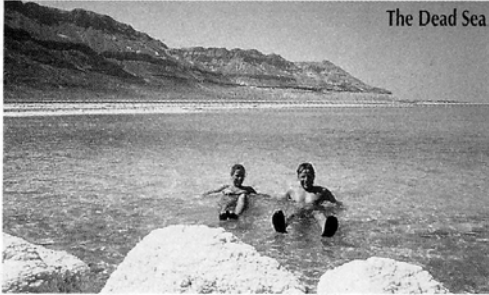


DAY 4

Today you travel down the Jordan River Valley from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. Your first stop will be the Crusader fortress of Belvoir overlooking the Jordan River Valley. Then, drive on to Beit She'an (Judges 7:4-8, 1 Samuel 31:10), the largest and most spectacular excavation in all of Israel. It was here that the bodies of King Saul and his sons were put on public display by the Philistines (also known as Scythopolis during Jesus' time). Next, you travel south via the Jordan Valley to Jericho, the world's oldest city conquered by Joshua (Joshua 6:20). Then, continue to the Dead Sea, travel through the wilderness of Judah to your hotel at Ein Bokek, near the Dead Sea. Overnight in Ein Bokek.

DAY 5

Begin your journey today with a visit to Masada, where you will ascend the mountain by cable car to view Herod's desert fortress. Continue to the beautiful oasis of En Gedi where David hid from King Saul (1 Samuel 24). Stop for a short float on



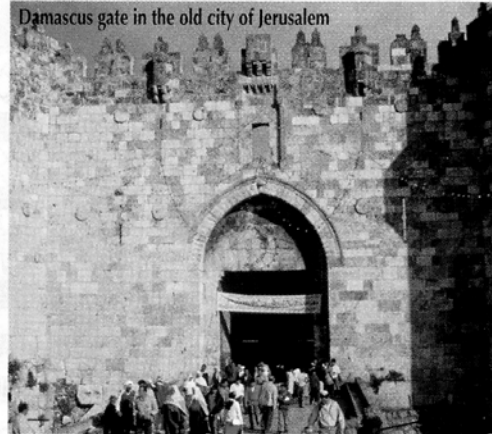
The Dead Sea

the Dead Sea. Then, drive to Qumran, the home of the first century sect known as the Essenes, the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Returning to Jericho, take the cable car from Jericho to Qarantal (the Mount of Temptation, Matthew 4:1-11) and the monastery. Finally, travel from Jericho up to Jerusalem an ascent of 4,000 feet in 13 miles, stopping at the Inn of the Good Samaritan along the way (Luke 10:24-26). Stop at the top of Mount Scopus for your first view of the "Golden City" as the sun sets over Jerusalem. Overnight in Jerusalem.

DAY 6

Today you will begin to explore Jerusalem. Begin with a drive around the old city walls and note each of the city gates. They each contain a wealth of history and significance. Travel by bus to the top of the Mount of Olives and view the entire city of Jerusalem. Then, walk down the Palm Sunday Road to the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30), stopping at Dominus Flavit, where Jesus stopped and wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). See the ancient olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane and visit the beautiful Church of All Nations. Next, the bus will ascend Mount Zion where you will visit the Tomb of David and the Upper Room (Mark 14:12-26; Acts 1:13). Enter the Old City through the Zion Gate, make your way to the Jewish Quarter and visit the Cardo and Hezekiah's Wall, and have

your first glimpse of the Western Wall. Then, leaving the Old City for the day, a short drive takes you to the Israel Museum and the Shrine of the Book, where the Dead Sea Scrolls are kept, then on to the Knesset to view the beautiful Menorah. Continue to Yad Vashem, the site of the Holocaust memorial. Finally, stop by the Model of Jerusalem from the time of the second temple, before returning to your hotel for the evening. Overnight in Jerusalem.



Damascus gate in the old city of Jerusalem

DAY 7

Begin the day by visiting Bethlehem, the Church of the Nativity, and Manger Square (Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-7), as well as Shepherds' Field at nearby Beit Sahour, where the "Good News" was first heard. Then, return to the Old City through the Dung Gate where you can then explore the Southern Temple Excavations and the Western Wall. Visit the Rabbinic Tunnel, which takes you underground to the base of the Temple Mount, and the actual streets that Jesus and His disciples walked upon. Ascend the Temple Mount and visit the Dome of the Rock. Continue with a walking tour of the Old City that includes the Via Dolorosa, Pools of Bethesda (John 5:1-24), St. Anne's Chapel, Lithostrotos, Ecco Homo Arch, Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the Oriental Market. Then, exit the Old City through the Damascus Gate and take a short walk outside, where you will find the site of the Garden Tomb and Gordon's Calvary. There you can enjoy a memorable communion service to conclude your journey. Evening departure or overnight in Jerusalem.

Rundreise mit der Bibel in der Hand

Israel Reise – 7-Tage-Tour

TAG 1

Ankunft am bewundernswerten Ben Gurion-Flughafen außerhalb von Tel Aviv. Besuchen Sie das nahe gelegene Neot-Kedumim-Bibellandschaft-Naturschutzgebiet für ein biblisches Mahl und eine Tour durch die Stätte. Oder vielleicht besuchen Sie Mini-Israel für eine Besichtigung der Miniaturen von Israels heiligen Stätten (beide Aktivitäten können auch als Ausklang der Reise dienen). Busfahrt zu Ihrem Hotel in Tel Aviv oder Netanya am Mittelmeer.

TAG 2

Ihre Reise beginnt in Jaffo (das biblische Joppe). Hier befindet sich der antike Hafen, von dem aus der Prophet Jona vor Gott floh (Jona 1:17). Es ist die Stadt, in der Petrus bei Simon dem Gerber blieb und Tabea wieder lebendig machte (Apostelgeschichte 9:36-43). Dann geht es in Richtung Norden, der Mittelmeerkustenstraße entlang nach Casarea, der großartigen römischen Hafenstadt, eine der größten archaologischen Ausgrabungen in Israel. Hier wurde der römische Zenturio Kornelius von Petrus getauft und war der erste Nichtjude, der zum Christentum konvertierte (Apostelgeschichte 10). Außerdem wurde hier Paulus von Festus gerichtet (Apostelgeschichte 25:6-12). Dann geht es weiter zur Mukhraka auf dem Karmelberg, wo Elia gegen die Propheten des Baal kämpfte (1. Buch d. Könige 18:25). Danach fahren Sie nach Megiddo (1. Buch d. Könige 9:15), wo Sie einen faszinierenden Hügel vorfinden werden, der sich aus 26 altertümlichen Zivilisationen, die übereinander aufgeschichtet sind, zusammensetzt. Die haben einen Ausblick über das Jesreel-Tal, das auch als das Tal von Harmagedon (Offenbarung 16:16) bekannt ist. Als nächstes geht die Fahrt durch das Tal nach Nazareth, die Heimat von Jesus in seiner Kindheit. Besuchen Sie die Verkündigungsbasilika und Marias Brunnen. Anschließend geht es weiter nach Kana, wo Jesus sein erstes Wunder vollbrachte, nämlich die Wandlung von Wasser zu Wein (Johannes 2:1-11); Paare, die ihr Ehegelübde erneuern mochten, können dies in der Kapelle tun. Schließlich geht es weiter nach Tiberias. Übernachtung in Tiberias.

TAG 3

Dieser Tag beginnt mit dem Besuch der biblischen Stätten am See Genezareth: Der Berg der Seligpreisung, wo Jesus die Bergpredigt hielt (Matthaus 5:1-12);

Kapernaum, die Stadt, in der Jesus während seines geistlichen Amtes in Galiläa lebte (Matthaus 4:13, Markus 3:1); Tabgha, wo Jesus das Brot und die Fische vermehrte (Lukas 9:10-17) sowie die Kapelle, die daran erinnert, wie Jesus zu Petrus sprach: "Weide meine Schafe" (Johannes 21:15-17). Halten Sie bei Nof-Ginnosar an, um das 2000 Jahre alte "Jesus-Boot" zu sehen, das aus dem See Genezareth geborgen wurde. Genießen Sie eine Bootsfahrt auf dem See Genezareth und eine traditionelle St. Peter-Fisch-Mahlzeit. Nach dem Mittagessen folgt die audio-visuelle Präsentation "Galiläa-Erlebnis". Dann, falls die Zeit es zulässt, Besuch in Obergaliläa und den Golanhöhen, wo Sie die antiken Städte Caesarea Philippi und Hazor sehen können, bevor es zu Ihrem Hotel in Tiberias zurückgeht. Oder Sie schauen in der Taufstätte Jardenit für eine Tauffeier im Jordanfluss vorbei.

Übernachtung in Tiberias.



TAG 4

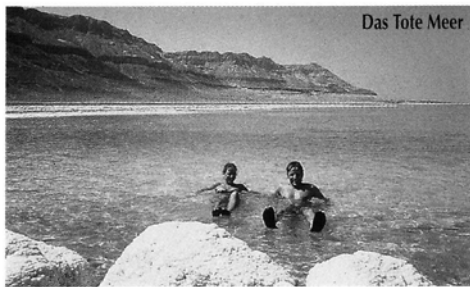
Heute reisen Sie das Jordanfluss-Tal herab, vom See Genezareth zum Toten Meer.

Ihr erster Haltepunkt wird an der Kreuzritterfestung Belvoir sein, mit Ausblick auf das Jordantal. Danach geht es weiter nach Bet-Shean (Richter 7:4-8, 1. Buch Samuel 31:10), die größte und spektakularste Ausgrabungsstätte in ganz Israel. Hier wurden die Leichen von König Saul und seinen Söhnen von den Philistern öffentlich zur Schau gestellt (auch bekannt als Scythopolis, zur Zeit Jesu). Als nächstes geht es gen Süden, durch das Jordan-Tal nach Jericho, die älteste Stadt der Welt, die von Josua erobert wurde (Josua 6:20). Anschließend geht es zum Toten Meer, durch die Wildnis von Juda zu Ihrem Hotel in Ein-Bokek am Toten Meer.

Übernachtung in Ein-Bokek.

TAG 5

Heute beginnt Ihre Reise mit einem Besuch auf Masada. Sie werden den Berg mit der Seilbahn erklimmen, um die Wüstenfestung von Herodes zu sehen. Weiter geht es zu der schönen Oase von Ein-Gedi, wo sich David vor König Saul versteckte (1. Buch Samuel 24). Stopp für ein kurzes Bad im Toten Meer.

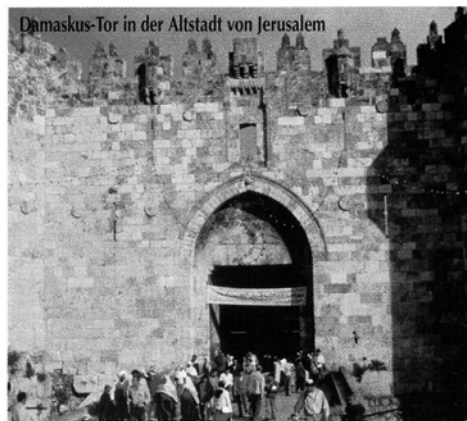


Weiter geht es nach Qumran, Heimstätte der Essener, eine Glaubengemeinschaft aus dem ersten Jahrhundert, die die Verfasser der Schriftrollen vom Toten Meer sind. Auf dem Rückweg nach Jericho fahren Sie mit der Seilbahn von Jericho nach Karantal (der Berg der Versuchung, Matthäus 4:1-11) und zum Kloster. Schließlich reisen Sie von Jericho nach Jerusalem, ein Aufstieg von 1,100 m. in 20 km, mit Zwischenstopp im Gasthaus des Barmherzigen Samariters (Lukas 10:24-26). Haltepunkt oben auf dem Scopusberg für Ihren ersten Ausblick auf die "Goldene Stadt", wenn die Sonne über Jerusalem untergeht. Übernachtung in Jerusalem.

TAG 6

Heute werden Sie anfangen, Jerusalem zu erkunden. Beginnen Sie mit einer Fahrt um die Mauern der Altstadt und beachten Sie die einzelnen Stadttore. Jedes einzelne Tor birgt eine bewegende Geschichte und Signifikanz in sich. Mit dem Bus geht es auf den Ölberg. Hier haben Sie eine Aussicht über die gesamte Stadt Jerusalem. Gehen Sie die Palmsonntag-Straße hinunter zum Garten Gethsemane (Matthäus 26:30), halten Sie an der Kapelle Dominus Flevit (der Herr weinte), wo Jesus hielt und um Jerusalem weinte (Lukas 19:41). Besichtigen Sie die alten Ölbäume im Garten Gethsemane und besuchen Sie die schöne Kirche Aller Nationen. Anschließend wird der Bus den Berg Zion hinauffahren, wo Sie das Grab von König David und das Obergemach (Markus 14:12-26; Apostelgeschichte 1:13) besichtigen werden. Betreten Sie die Altstadt durch das Zion-Tor, gehen Sie durch das jüdische Viertel, besuchen Sie das Cardo und die Hiskias-Mauer und haben Sie Ihren ersten flüchtigen Blick auf die Westmauer (Klagemauer).

Von der Altstadt aus gelangen Sie nach einer kurzen Fahrt zum Israel-Museum und den Schrein des Buches, in dem die Schriftrollen vom Toten Meer aufbewahrt werden. Danach geht es zur Knesset (Israelisches Parlament), um die schöne Menora zu sehen. Weiter geht es zur Holocaust-Gedenkstätte und Museum Yad VaShem. Abschließend halten Sie am Modell von Jerusalem aus der Zeit des Zweiten Tempels, bevor es für den Abend zu Ihrem Hotel zurückgeht. Übernachtung in Jerusalem.



TAG 7

Beginnen Sie den Tag mit einem Besuch in Bethlehem mit der Geburtskirche und dem Manger-Platz (Matthäus 1:18-25, Lukas 2:1-7) sowie dem Hirtenfeld im nahe gelegenen Bet-Sahour, wo die "freudige Botschaft" zuerst vernommen wurde.

Danach geht es zurück zur Altstadt, durch das Mist-Tor, wo Sie die südlichen Tempel-Ausgrabungen und die Westmauer erkunden können.

Besuchen Sie den Rabbinischen Tunnel, der unterirdisch zum Fuß des Tempelbergs führt, und die tatsächlichen Straßen, auf denen Jesus und seine Jünger gegangen sind. Ersteigen Sie den Tempelberg und besuchen Sie den Felsendom.

Weiter geht es mit einer Tour zu Fuß durch die Altstadt, welche die Via Dolorosa, Reservoir von Bethesda (Johannes 5:1-24), St. Anna-Kapelle, Lithostrotos, Ecco Homo-Bogen, heilige Grabeskirche und den orientalischen Markt umfasst.

Danach verlassen Sie die Altstadt durch das Damaskus-Tor und finden während eines kurzen Spaziergangs außerhalb der Stadtmauern die Stelle des Gartengrabs sowie Gordons Kalvaria. Dort können Sie eine unvergessliche Kommunionfeier genießen, um Ihre Reise ausklingen zu lassen.

Abendliche Abreise oder Übernachtung in Jerusalem.

Appendix 6: Biblical Jordan, A programme of a visit to some holy sites in Jordan⁴⁵

Length: 6 Days / 5 Nights

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival Amman

Arrive to Queen Alia International Airport. Meet & assist, then transfer to Amman.

Overnight

Day 2: Amman - Jerash - Pella - Um Qeis

Breakfast at the hotel. In the morning transfer to visit Jerash (named Antiochea or Gerasa in the Bible). According to Mark 5:1f and Luke 8:26 : 39, here Jesus cast the evil spirits out of a man. Today, it is one of the best preserved and most complete of the Greco Roman cities in the world. Then continue to visit Pella. This village, which is only 100-years-old, is named Tabaqet Fahl in Arabic, a name which can be traced back to the 4,000-year-old Semitic name pihilum. The name Pella was used during the time of greatest prosperity in the town's history. The town was originally given the name of Alexander the Great's birthplace in Macedonia. Pella was a member of the city alliance of the Decapolis. After that, arrive in Um Qeis. In the Bible, Um Qeis is referred to as Gadara and was also a member of the Decapolis. This ten city alliance already existed at the time of Christ (Mathew 4:25). According to Mathew 8:28 : 34, here Jesus cast the evil spirits out of two men. Drive back to Amman. Overnight

Day 3: Amman - Hisban - Madaba - Mount Nebo - Mukhawir – Main

Breakfast at the hotel. Full day tour to visit Hisban, named in the Bible, Hesbon-the city of Sihon (4 Moses 21:25f, 32:37) and Heshbon was conquered by the Israelites (Judges 11:26). Then visit Madaba, named Medeba or Madeba, city of Sihon (4 Moses 21:30). The city lies in what was the territory of the race of the Reubens (Joshua 13:15 : 16 or

⁴⁵ The tourists and pilgrims who come to Jordan only to visit the holy sites with the Bible in their hands and to follow the steps of Jesus Christ are 300,000 pilgrims, according to the travel agent Hana Sawalha, who is a specialist in organising visits to Christian holy sites. This is what we can call *pure* religious tourism. Religious motivation is their only motivation.

Isaiah 15:2 and 1 Chronicles 19:7) The main point of interest in Madaba is the mosaic map of the holy land from Byzantine times. Continue to Mukhawir, is referred to as Machaerus. On a mountain which resembles a cone with its top cut off, can be seen the imposing remnants of the fortress Qasr El Mashneqh. The Arabic name means Castle of Gallows. The castle was built by Alexander Jannaeus. The historian, Josephus, reports that it was here that John the Baptist was imprisoned, Salamone danced and John was beheaded (Mathew 14:3:11). 12 Kilometers south of Madaba, Main, an early centre of the Byzant East Jordan Land. Belemunim, the Christian settlement, has a name to which the biblical village Bal Meon is similar. Baal-Meon is mentioned in 4 Moses 32:38 as a city of the Reubens, and is also to be found under the names Beth Baal-Meon (Joshua 13:17) and Bet Meon (Jeremiah 48:23). Overnight

Day 4: Main - Petra visit

Breakfast at the hotel. Then transfer from Main to explore the magnificent Red Rose city of Petra. In the Bible Petra is the city of the Nabateans, the descendants of the Nabajots (1 Moses 25:12 : 18 and 1 Chronicles 1:29 and Isaiah 60:7). The first king of the Nabateans was Bedouin, even though Petra was a focal point for them (2 Makkabar 12). Later Petra became the royal city of the Nabateans. The earliest historical records for the Nabateans date back to the year 312 B.C., and the last signs of life were in the year 328 A.D. Late PM. Overnight

Day 5: Petra - Bethany -Dead Sea

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer from Petra to the Baptism Site, beyond the Jordan, the large loop in Jordan River opposite Jericho, which has long been identified as the spot where Jesus Christ was baptized by John the Baptist. It is called Al-Māgtas in Arabic. Less than two kilometers east of the river is another important place associated with the lives of Jesus and John the Baptist: the settlement of Bethany beyond the Jordan is one of the most recent significant archaeological and religious discoveries. Then arrive at the Dead Sea Area, the lowest spot on earth. Time for bathing and relaxing. Overnight

Day 6: Departure

Breakfast at the hotel. Then drive from the Dead Sea Area to Queen Ali International Airport for the final departure.

Hotels Used

Services Include:

Meet & Assist at Amman Airport upon Arrival & Departure

02 Nights Accommodation in Amman Hotel

01 Night Accommodation in Māʿin Hotel

01 Night Accommodation Petra

01 Night Accommodation in Dead Sea

Meal Plan: BB (Bed & Breakfast)

Transportation in A/C Coaches

English Speaking Guide

Entrance Fees for Sites Mentioned

Services do not include:

Tips for Guide & Driver

Any meals not mentioned in programme

Any personal expenses⁴⁶

⁴⁶ One of the programmes of a travel agency in Jordan (Aqaba Sky Travel Agency).

Appendix 7: Another programme of a visit to the holy sites of Jordan

The Royal Tour of Biblical Jordan⁴⁷

Please note: The following tour is operated on a group basis only (with minimum 10 travellers, travelling together), and it is intended for a Pastor or a Tour Organizer to establish and lead a group to Jordan. This tour is based on special clergy rates, and the proof of clergy status of the tour leader and/or participants may be required.

DAY 1: USA to AMMAN

Overnight flight from JFK to Amman on Royal Jordanian's wide-body jet. In-flight meals served.

DAY 2: ARRIVE AMMAN

Arrival at Queen Alia International Airport, where you will be met by our representatives and assisted with all formalities and customs. Transfer to your first class hotel in Amman. Free afternoon. Dinner at hotel. **(D)**

DAY 3: JERASH / UMM QAIS

After breakfast, we will proceed to the north of Amman for a 45 minute drive to the best preserved example of Roman civilization, the Ancient City of Jerash. Jerash, part of the Decapolis, has been called the Pompeii of the East for its unique state of preservation. The city features theatres, churches, temples (Zeus and Artemis), a Nymphaeum, and colonnaded streets. After lunch, continue on to Umm Qais, also called Gadara of Antiquity. Gadara commands a magnificent view over the northern Jordan Valley, the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias), the Yarmouk River gorge, and the Golan Heights. In the late afternoon, transfer to Kan Zaman Restaurant for dinner. The walled village of Kan Zaman is an old Ottoman settlement. It was transformed into a replica of an old Jordanian village, affording its clientele the experience of the way of life in such a village. The handicraft centre sells only hand-made products, made on-site in various little studios where one can watch craftsmen practice their trade. The main restaurant at

⁴⁷ <http://www.jordanhotdeals.com/RoyalBiblical.html>

the village offers a variety of home-made food and various salads and appetizers. Return to your hotel. **(B-L-D)**

DAY 4: MADABA / MT. NEBO / MUKAWIR

Depart Amman to Petra via the Kings' Road. En route, visit **the mosaic city of Madaba**,



where the oldest map of the Holy Land exists on the floor of **Saint George's Church**. Madaba, (or Medeba in antiquity), features many famous mosaics that exist in public and private buildings. Later a short drive will bring you to **Mt. Nebo**, the burial site of Moses overlooking the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea. Here Franciscans have built a structure that protects a 4th and 6th Century Byzantine church. Lunch at Haret Jdoudna, which is a small village house located in Madaba, with fantastic atmosphere and typical traditional settings and food with the well known touch of Romero restaurant. After lunch, depart to visit **Mukawir**, the ancient hilltop setting for the dramatic last days of John the Baptist. Then onto your hotel in Petra. Dinner at hotel. **(B-L-D)**

DAY 5: PETRA

The soul-stirring, rose-red city of Petra is a Jordanian national treasure and has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Petra was an ancient Nabataean capital and was settled by these industrious Arab traders more than 2,000 years ago. Petra's unique location enabled the Nabataeans to dominate the ancient Arabian trade routes, and the city became wealthy from the toll sit levied on the caravans that sheltered there with their precious cargoes of spices, silks, ivory and animal hides. In the ancient world, Petra was renowned for its refined culture, massive architecture, and ingenious system of dams and water channels. In the years following the Emperor Trajan's annexation of Petra, the city declined and slipped into obscurity until it was "discovered" in 1812 by a Swiss traveler. Petra still forms part of the domain of the Bedouin, and you will see them with



their horses and camels as you begin your unforgettable trip into this cultural landmark. After passing tombs outside the city, you come to the “Siq”, an immense crack in the Nubian sandstone almost one half mile long. This winding fissure separates overhanging cliffs that appear to meet 300 feet overhead. Near the end of the passage, the Siq makes one last turn with great style, and out of the gloom Petra's most impressive monument **Al Khazneh (The Treasury)** appears in the towering brightness. Film buffs will recognize it from its starring role in the final scenes of the movie “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.” Lunch at Basin Restaurant inside Petra. Later transfer to Taybet Zaman for dinner. **(B-L-D)**



DAY 6: WADI RUM / AQABA

In the morning, depart to the magical desert of **Wadi Rum**, home of “Lawrence of Arabia”. Upon arrival, enjoy a mint tea at the resthouse, before you take one of the jeeps owned by the local Bedouins for a trip to the many sites in the moon-like landscaped desert. Lunch will be served at the “Captain’s Camp”. In the afternoon, transfer to Aqaba for dinner and overnight at hotel in Aqaba. **(B-L-D)**

DAY 7: AQABA / DEAD SEA

In the morning, enjoy free time in Aqaba for swimming or relaxation. Lunch will be served at the Hotel in Aqaba. Afternoon transfer from Aqaba to the **Dead Sea** for dinner and overnight at hotel. **(B-L-D)**

DAY 8: BETHANY BEYOND JORDAN

The most significant event associated with the **Jordan River** is undoubtedly the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist. Interestingly enough, this also took place very close to Beit 'Abara, where Joshua, Elijah and Elisha crossed the river. In New Testament times, it became known as **Bethany beyond Jordan, the village of John the Baptist**. This morning you will visit this important site - one of the most significant archaeological discoveries of the 20th Century. Lunch will be served at Reem Al-Bawadi Restaurant in Amman. In the afternoon, you will have a **city tour of Amman**, the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom. Often referred to as the "White City" because of the white stone used to build houses. The tour will take you to the museums, the Citadel, the amphitheater, and the souks. **(B-L-D)**

DAY 9: AMMAN / USA

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your flight back home. **(B)**

Appendix 8: Example of interview questions⁴⁸

1. How do you see the current situation when it comes to religious tourism in Jordan?
2. What are the programmes that JTB have made to promote religious tourism of Jordan?
3. The budget of promotion in JTB was reduced from 12 million JD to 9 million JD, on the other hand, it was increased in the neighbouring countries. Do you think this will influence the programmes of promotion and, of course, the tourist arrivals numbers?
4. In the JTB website we can only find three or four lines about some holy sites. Do you think this is a good promotion through internet for religious tourism and holy sites of Jordan?
5. Is there any coordination between JTB and the representative office in Frankfurt about promotion of holy sites in Germany, and what are the tools you employ to promote religious tourism abroad?
6. I have made a study through questionnaires in the holy sites and the main problem that the tourists are facing is the weakness of services in the holy sites. From your point of view, what is the best way to overcome this problem?
7. From the points of view of many experts, specialists and academics in the field of marketing and tourism, the contribution of the strategy of Jordan tourism (2004-2010) in religious tourism is very low? What is your opinion and how it will be in the new strategy of 2010-2015?
8. A lot of holy sites of Jordan have a common religious heritage between the three monotheistic religions. Do you think this common heritage will be a factor in dialogue and convergence between religions?
9. How do you see the prospects and future of this type of tourism? And how can be developed?

⁴⁸ Interview with the General Director of Jordan Tourism Board (Nayef Al-Fayez).