

Tourism Planning Challenges and Prospects in A Destination with Political Conflict: The Case Study of Nablus City, Palestine

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of tourism is a direct pathway to economic growth and international peace. It is a highly political-sensitive sector to such as wars, protesting, partisan conflicts, crises and terrorism, which will result in a distorted image of the destination leading to an alienation of tourists. The state of Palestine particularly Nablus city suffered from the volatility of the tourist situation due to the ‘Zionist Occupation’ who considers Nablus as ‘The City of Terrorism’, as it has a unique geographical location and high potentials, which led to the creation of challenges and pressures on the city and its people. This study aims to shed the light on the political challenges that beset tourism development and its adequate planning.

This research is also tries to provide an overview of Nablus city including the demographic characteristics, explaining its touristic status and exploring the city’s potentials. This study is also exploring the constraints facing the Palestinian tourism in Nablus city. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative/inductive method was employed. Data collection and analysis involved an in-depth interview with various respondents who are associated with the tourism related institutions. Overall, 20 respondents were located and interviewed. The study revealed that lack of adequate infrastructure is curtailing the development of tourism. The study also explored that the occupation is one of the major hindrance to the establishment and consolidation of a productive tourism sector. Another important finding of the research is lack of trained human resources and inadequate services, especially in accommodation sector. A novel solution is also suggested that could become a pathway to revive the tourism sector in Nablus. The implications and limitations of the study is also discussed.

Keywords: Tourism planning, Political conflict, Occupation, Palestine, Nablus

ÖZ

Turizm olgusu, doğrudan ekonomik büyümeye ve uluslararası barışa giden yoldur. Bu sektör, savaşlara, protestolara, partizan çatışmalarına, krizlere ve terörizme siyasi olarak hassas olduğu için gidilen destinasyonun imajını bozar, bu da turistlerin bu destinasyondan uzaklaşmasına sebep olur. Filistin devleti ve özellikle Nablus şehri turist durumundaki süreksizlikten dolayı zarar görmüştür. Bunun sebebi "Siyonist İşgali"nin Nablus'u "Terörizm Şehri" olarak saymasındandır. Nablus şehrinin benzersiz coğrafi konumu ve yüksek potansiyelinden dolayı Siyonist İşgali'nin bu şehir ve insanlarını baskılayıp zorluk çıkarmasına sebep olmuştur. Bu çalışmanın amacı, turizm gelişiminin ve bu turizm gelişiminin uygun planlamasını saran siyasi zorluklar hakkında konuyu aydınlatmaktır.

Bu araştırma aynı zamanda Nablus şehri'nin demografik karakteristikleri, şehrin turistik durumunu açıklayan ve şehrin potansiyeli hakkında genel bilgi vermektedir. Ayrıca, Nablus şehrindeki Filistin turizminin karşılaştığı kısıtlama ve baskıları da incelemektedir. Araştırmanın amacından dolayı niteliksel/tümevarım metodu seçilmiştir. Veri toplanması ve analizi için turizm sektörü ile alakalı kurumlardan çeşitli katılımcılarla derinlemesine görüşme olarak mülakat yapılmıştır. Toplam olarak 20 katılımcı tespit edilip, mülakat yapılmıştır. Bu çalışma, yetersiz altyapının olması turizmin gelişmesine engel olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Aynı zamanda, bu çalışma bahsedilen işgalin, üreten turizm sektörünün tesis edilmesinde ve kuvvetlendirilmesindeki en büyük engellerden biridir. Bu araştırmanın bir başka önemli bulgusu da, özellikle konaklama sektöründe yetiştirilmiş insan kaynaklarının eksikliği ve yetersiz hizmetin oluşudur. Araştırmada, Nablus'taki turizm sektörünün

canlanmasında yenilikli bir çözüm yolu olabilecek bir çözüm önerilmiştir. Çalışmanın çıkarımlarına ve sınırlamalarına da yer verilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Turizm planlaması, Siyasi çatışma, İşgal, Filistin, Nablus

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Tourism has become a hotly-debated topic among academic scholars as it is considered a unique economic phenomenon where researches were highly spotted in this area and increased in the previous century especially when economic recession became one of the most top worldwide concerns. It is not easy to define such an unusual-fast growing phenomena with simple words as it is affiliated with different aspects in terms of economic, political, social, cultural and environmental conditions. It has a direct and magnificent influence on the country's economy, thus, reflected positively the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). International tourist arrivals reached more than 1,323 million in 2017 (UNWTO, 2018). Also, according to the same resource 393 million people travelled internationally for tourism between 2008 and 2017, thereupon, this made tourism sector to grow widely across the globe above the average, 4% per annum for eight consecutive years.

In reference to the United Nations World Tourism Organizations, it estimated in 2017 that Middle East countries with no exceptions, have received minimum 58 million visitors with an average of 4% in the world's total tourist arrivals. However, Middle East countries are very well renowned for being rich in culture, fruitful in different civilizations and peculiar history that went throughout several skirmishes, yet tourism has regained its strength in the zone. It is worth mentioning that tourism is a highly

sensitive industry to different dimensions including environment, economy, education, culture and particularly to political commotions such as wars (occupation), protesting, conflicts, crises and terrorism which will consequently give a distorted image of tourism in the region and immediate decrease in tourist numbers. Therefore, this statement gives a clear realization that tourism field has a direct and obvious interest in international peace and security at travel destinations. Surprisingly, researches have scarcely ever shed the light on how tourism mainly functions towards safety within lands that have suffered from intense dissension and political chaos throughout the ages and what are the possible challenges faced by the nations under these harsh circumstances.

One of these countries is the holy land of Palestine, the home of three main religions Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The primary obstacle for the rapid development of tourism in Palestine is that it is put down to its 'non-state' context or being in a volatile political situation virtually since 1948 due to *'The Zionist'* occupation. As a consequence of this very old and still-going occupation, almost 78% of the Palestine's lands have been under the domination of Israel and several cities have been marginalized such as Nablus city. In contrast to other cities such as Jerusalem and Bethlehem where they received high attention from the Palestinian government, Ministry of Tourism and municipalities since they are the most known for religious tourism pilgrimage. Yet, Nablus has high touristic potentials -naturally and culturally- as it is one of the world oldest cities found in 72 CE. Few studies have been conducted to explore tourism in Nablus city have pinpointed major challenges and problems that the city faces under political conflict which in turn obstruct further developments and hinder looking for possible solutions to overcome these obstacles.

1.2 Problem Statement

Since tourism is very susceptible to political chaos and prolonged wars, Nablus is one of the most cities that has suffered from a great damage that hit its rich-archeological, historical and cultural heritage sites. The main source of Nablus economy is tourism, whether it is internal or external. Nevertheless, Nablus city has been marginalized being under harsh conditions of occupation particularly in 2002 due to its distinctive geographical location –heart of Palestine– which led to ceasing the activities of tourism sector and its surrender because of the fully Israeli control on the touristic areas, primarily, the tourist trails. As a result, it caused a decrease in the number of tourists in the region and negligence to many touristic areas. Besides that, due to inadequate control on the area, it led to incompetence of tourism planning, lack of long term planning approaches and absence of sustainable principles. This has brought to surface a real struggle in further tourism development in Nablus city.

1.3 The Significance of the Study

The relevance of this study is to review the potentials for tourism development, to discuss the constraints and challenges of tourism planning in Nablus city as well as the future prospects. Many authors considered that the policy of repression and persecution of Palestinian tourism was a sufficient mean to find other ways to develop tourism and allow Palestine to flourish from its doomed political status. This has encouraged multiple touristic organizations to delve deeper into unorthodox means of tourism. By applying this fact of statement on Nablus city and exploiting the current political situation, this might inaugurate many prospects for launching a unique style of tourism at the local level. Thus, to suggest what solutions can be proposed to the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and Nablus Municipality for further

improvements regarding the tourism sector which will lately provide a significant strength to the economic situation in the area.

1.4 The Purpose of the Study

This study aims at providing an overview of Nablus city including the demographic characteristics, explaining its touristic status and discussing the city's potentials. Second, to shed the light on the political challenges that beset tourism development and right tourism planning in the area, what are other constraints facing the Palestinian tourism in Nablus city. This academic context intends to signal out how future prospects of the political situation would affect on tourism development. In short, this study expects to address the following questions: (i) what are the characteristics of Nablus city that make it a good choice for tourists? (ii) what are the main tourism planning challenges that Nablus city faces under the occupation? (iii) what are the future prospects of tourism in Nablus? (iv) what are the probable proper solutions to develop and foster the tourism sector in Nablus city?

1.5 Methodology

Briefly, for the purpose of this research, this study is based on qualitative data of 18 semi-structured interviewing questions- for an open- ended approach and in-depth interview, which will allow the interviewee to talk freely. According to (Riley & Love, 2000), the qualitative research methods basically related to spontaneous events that deal with real life conditions, besides, it refers to obstacles, circumstances and society-based objects. However, research methods, such as participant observation, are used so that they develop and engender further concepts and theories during the investigation phase (Bryman, 2012, p. 12). The data analysis is based on different qualitative analysis procedures including listening carefully to interviewees, identifying words, phrases or issues that might recur, noting down the most important

stories or experiences they went through. This method-style was chosen, as it requires no large samples and has no limitations of variables (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

1.6 Organization of the Study

This academic research is based on five chapters. Chapter one consists of introduction where it encompasses the general idea of the research that tourism is a highly-sensitive industry to political anarchy. Therefore, this academic piece carries out the case of Nablus city by imposing the problem statement, significance of the study, aims and objectives and methodology. Chapter two is the literature review that incorporate an overview of tourism, its impacts, types, changes and evolution. Since this research is selected to discuss tourism planning challenges in Nablus, this chapter involve the history of tourism planning and what are the models have been used in past and present times. Besides, theoretical framework will be conducted and originated. The third chapter will be focusing on the case study of Nablus city by generally focusing on Palestine and Nablus in terms of history, geography, economic situation, political conflicts and how it affected the socio-economic structure. In addition, this chapter is performing the general situation of tourism in Palestine and particularly in Nablus and what are the tourism resources, attractions and institutions in Nablus with the help of maps and pictures. Chapter four illustrates the methodology by explaining the different stages from selecting the research methodology, sampling technique, data collection procedure, analysis, and eventually discuss the findings to reach the aim of the study. Lastly, chapter five is the conclusion part along with the implications, suggestions, limitations and future studies. It will also include the references and appendices.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tourism: An Overview

Tourism has become one of the known industries across the world which is also viewed as a part of the economic sector. Nowadays, tourism is evolving expeditiously both globally and locally since it has an explicit influence on multiple parts including environmentally, economically, and socially. Not only has tourism played a major role in supporting sustainable development, but also urged emerging countries to establish and stimulate tourism strategies (UNWTO, 2013). This industry promotes a large mass of activities and events among diverse divisions meeting varied selections to ensure the satisfiability of tourists. In 2003, Goeldner and Ritchie put forward a figure describing the touristic constituents that recognize the range of services used by tourists including transportation, food services, housing, travel trade, cultural activities, sports and recreation, attractions, retail trade and other tourism services. Attractions field covers a significant part in tourism since it is considered as the foundation of every industry and service (Sedarati, P., Santos, S., & Pintassilgo, P. 2019).

In both low and middle earning countries, tourism is highly acknowledged as the footpath to the advancement of the economy. For instance, in 2017, the World Bank Group published a list of twenty reasons why the tourism industry amounts to progress and prosperity. This series is contained by the agenda of sustainable tourism which

concentrates on the essential foundations of sustainable economic progression; social completeness, employment, and poverty depletion; resource efficacy, environmental fortification, and climate; cultural standards, diversity, and custom; and mutual understanding, harmony, and safety. In the same year, the United Nations has emphasized a broader alternative position for tourism in influencing and evolving economies and societies (Harilal, V., Tichaawa, T. M., & Saarinen, J., 2018).

2.2 Mass Tourism

For years, tourism has been a prominent topic among academic discussions. Yet, theoretically speaking, tourism continues to be an ‘equivocal’ expression since it requires an evident approved meaning. Overall, the universal essence of tourism is seen as diversified due to its multitudinous character that urges different definitions among people. Conversely, scholars have been more involved in concentrating on the subdivided types of tourism that reveals postmodern times in which independence is idolized over the idea of mass. Recently, it is recognized that tourism’s needs and sources are turning more autonomous, vigorous, discrete, and flexible, which is comprehended as the expiration of mass tourism or its alteration into a complex structure.

The purpose of mass tourism has been perceived as damaging since it takes advantage of treasured areas and turn them into ‘pleasure peripheries’ and hurriedly constructed hotels, resorts, and vacation urban areas that provide the same service or product which in return standardizes the residents. Generally, mass tourism is deemed as the opposite of what tourism is interpreted as which holds an eloquent ideology that is to be solicitous to the residential, economically-friendly, and non-commercial. This being said, mass tourism embraces larger developmental scales, unlike the alternative

development which represents smaller measures; however, in some cases, other entertaining activities occurring further than the sun and sand is classified as a substitute including mountaineering and golfing.

Mass tourism is deemed as a different shape of tourism that can be separated from the others according to its linkage to mass production, mass consumption and mass tourist destinations. Mass tourism only exists under upheld four conditions: the holiday is ‘standardized’ and ‘rigidly packaged’, it is mass produced, it is mass marketed to an ‘undifferentiated clientele’, and it is ‘consumed *en masse*’ unconsciously, without considering the local norms or culture (See Figure 2.1).

Poon (1993) has stated that when the course of change is moving towards a more open-ended and independent means of traveling results in an alteration further away from mass tourism, which is entitled as ‘new tourism’ instead of ‘new mass tourism’. Thus, as indicated by deterministic discussions, mass tourism is defined by its nature as constant and analogous (Vainikka, V., 2013).

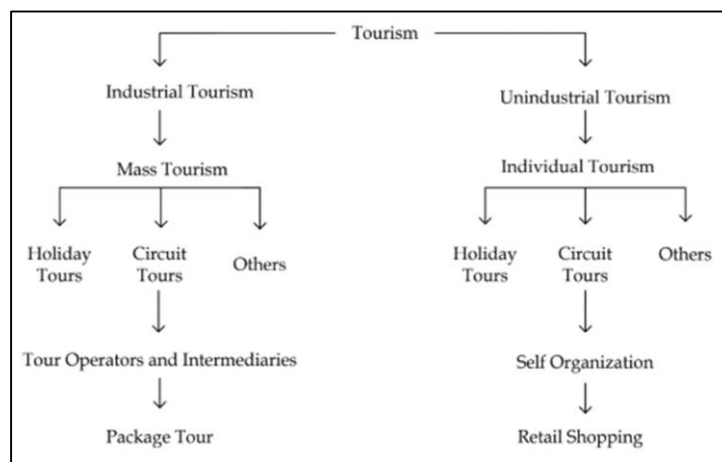


Figure 2.1: Mass tourism in tourism network (Source: Sezgin, E., & Yolal, M., 2012)

2.3 Alternative Tourism

Surprisingly, until this day, there has not been any clear and solid definition of alternative tourism to be agreed on, nor among the unambiguous context of its different types. As a result, this tactic will generate less unfavorable effects on the targeted destinations and their populations, and at the same time it will appreciate the progressive effects on the economy which are perceived as the ideal resolution. This ‘new’ type of tourism that has aroused as an alternate/solution to the most unfavorable form of tourism, ‘the mass tourism’ or also known as ‘the conventional/commercial tourism’ and ‘the traditional tourism’. In the years 1970s and early 1980s, these newly developed types of tourism were quickly integrated in emerging countries in hopes to challenge mass tourism. At the beginning of preparation and expansion, priority and significance was given to the natural and cultural sources during which those newly types of tourism were discovered. Despite the fact that each type has its own name and model, but they all had common beliefs and standards and that is to enhance the situation and reserve the original rural demand of the touristic destination. It has been identified that alternative tourism plays a major role is forming direct personal and cultural communication and acceptance between the residents and the guests (Dernoi, 1988). According to Donald Macleod, he stated several principles to create a clearer imagine and definition of alternative tourism. These principles are as follow: a) it must be built on a discourse with the residents whom should be educated of it impacts, b) it must support the environment and show respect to the residential beliefs and religious traditions, c) the rate of tourism must be modified to the capability of the residential area to manage regarding ecological terms (Triarchi and Karamanis, 2017).

The 'New Tourism' form has established eight main principles: 1) distinctive heritage and environment, 2) developing unique quality of attractions, 3) invest in enhancing other residential attractions, 4) improvement of culture and economic opportunity, 5) local services, 6) marketing communication, 7) modification of assets to local carrying ability, and 8) avoidance of energy-losses. Using the expression 'alternative tourism' can be considered tricky to some people, since these days it is interconnected to the principle of sustainable development. Hence, using the phrase 'sustainable tourism' is more precise in portraying the 'new' types of tourism (Smith, V. L., & Eadington, W. R., 1992).

According to UNWTO "sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability" (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005).

Alternative tourism consists of multiple perspectives that direct and encourage societal and ecological reformations, naturally of interest would be ecotourism, sustainable tourism, pro-poor tourism (PPT), fair trade, community-based tourism, peace through tourism, volunteer tourism and justice tourism (Isaac, 2010). Other than that, research tourism or educational tourism and scientific tourism.

2.4 Tourism Impacts

Despite the fact that tourism generates major positive outcomes in advancement, it also causes negative effects. One example is the immense production of carbon dioxide

emissions due to transportation, housing, and other services that rank tourism as a main cause to climate change. Similarly, the existence of tourists in a specific place contributes to an increase in composing solid and liquid wastes. This issue can lead to critical issues especially if there is an absence of appropriate and hygienic infrastructures in the occupied place.

Just like any other profession, tourism generates both negative and positive impacts. Owing to the fact that there are varieties of welfare in the industry might lead to dense issues in the tourism systems. To guarantee an efficient maintenance of the targeted destination, a well-planned, inclusive, and methodical strategy must be adopted to improve and stimulate the purpose as a whole. Sustainable tourism does not only serve protection to the environment, but also enhance the source of revenue societal, and financial aspects of investors in the touristic expanse.

Despite which form of tourism is established, either mass tourism or alternative tourism, eventually a concatenation of effects will result on social and environmental standing which has been ascertained by the international practice of tourism. Definitely, when addressing negative effects regarding a destination level, mass tourism is considered accountable for such profound and noticeable impacts.

On the other hand, tourism plays a significant role in providing several job opportunities. Those jobs, varying from low-income to high-income specialized positions in administration and mechanical sectors, offer adequate income and increase the quality of life. In the same way, as tourism advances, other possibilities are shaped such as investment, development, and infrastructure expenditure. Most importantly, tourism prompts advancements in public services including water, sewage, pavement,

parking lots, lighting, public washrooms, litter regulations, and landscaping. In addition, tourism sheds light on transportation substructure enhancements which contain improved roads, airports, public transportation, and non-traditional transportation (e.g. trails). Most organizations that work under the tourism sectors can be unpredictable and involve risky pursuits which can be untenable. For instance, an increase rate of requests including goods, services, land, and accommodation can result in an escalation of prices which in turn will increase the living expenses. Some tourism industries can possibly assert a piece of land that possess a greater worth or serves multiple purposes. Moreover, international landlords and companies may transfer revenues to other places outside the community. This being said, a tough responsibility lies within the community in yielding money to help develop public transportation infrastructure and roads that immensely used. In fact, communities can increase taxes as a potential solution to help generate funds (Kreag, G.,2001).

Attractive touristic scenes especially those of natural sources such as oceans, waterfalls, mountain, unique flora and fauna are what most tourists and immigrants strive for since it provides an emotional, mental and spiritual comfort and serenity. Since people highly appreciate Mother Nature, particular natural locations are conserved, secured, and reserved from any additional environmental deterioration. Areas that could be improved can produce an income by integrating entertaining activities that are suitable for different ages among the tourists. With an increase in tourist earnings, there is a chance to maintain and reinstate ancient structures and memorials. In contrast, environmental degeneration can also result from tourism. For instance, tourists can produce litter and pollution including air, water, solid waste, sound, and visual. Also, lands with natural resources could be threatened from

inappropriate uses or overuse. Similarly, scenery's appearance can be changed through the services provided to tourists.

The consequences of tourism on social and cultural level must be closely observed provided that the effects can be either an advantage or a disadvantages to community and its people. The inundation of tourism in a particular destination can impacts the manners and lifestyle of the people and assimilate various beliefs within the community. The inundation of tourism in a particular destination can impact the manners and lifestyle of the people and assimilate various beliefs within the community (Kreag, G.,2001).

For years now, leaders have indicated that tourism has been a main force of peace and safety through acceptance. In the current century, advancement is thoroughly interconnected with tourism, allowing an evolving amount of different destinations. Also, tourism enhances communal pride by urging the participation in agriculture and exchanging of local foods, customs, culture, and holidays. Since ancient times, private exchanges between landlords and visitors has been incorporated within societies which resulted in nurturing a cultivated comprehension. To present a genuine and remarkable experience, tourism promoters must direct their interest towards observational travel tendency. Although tourism generates multiple positive effects on the social and cultural perspective, it also brings along mysterious and adverse impacts. For instance, destinations that occupy several beach, festivals, and ski village areas could result in an increased rate of illegal or underage drinking. In addition, hotels, restaurants, and retail shops can issue an expansion within residential zones which can result due to a developing tourism leading to an alteration of public households and structures. This

being said, tourism can be main reason of overpopulation, rising of taxes, and congestion.

Apart from the definition of tourism and its positive impacts on several aspects, as mentioned previously, the unfavorable effects can be summed up by a simple statement, namely, the lack of smart and correct tourism planning, which in turn takes a major part in this controversy as it is marginalized in most cases of tourism development issues.

2.5 Tourism Planning: An Overview

There is no doubt that the policy of tourism planning plays an important role in impacting how tourism improves, who wins and losses, and how benefits and impacts of tourism are divided (Dredge, D., & Jamal, T. 2015). It is widely acknowledged that planning is crucial to successful tourism development and management; and planning has been a widely adopted principle in tourism development at both regional and national levels (Lai, K., Li, Y., & Feng, X., 2006). Generally, planning is seen as a multitudinous activity that strives to be amalgamative. This being said, tourism planning comprises multiple factors including social, economic, political, psychological, anthropological, and technological. Not only is tourism planning concerned about the past and present, but also the future (Gunn, 2002). According to Murphy (1985), to stimulate a systemic improvement in means of increasing the social, economic, and environmental advantages of the entire development procedure, planning has to be focused on predicting and maintaining any alterations in the system. To achieve this, the planning process establishes a well-ordered series of operations that are specifically constructed to guide to the accomplishment of a certain, single goal or to stabilize between multiple goals (Andriotis, K., 2007).

Planning is defined as the procedure of forming a deliberate vision for an area that portrays the society's aims and ambitions, and executing this plan by the selection of chosen patterns of land usage and suitable forms of development. Since tourism has not been perceived for its wholeness due to the involvement of a broad range of interconnected land use, it has been categorized based on advantageousness. Yet, the incitement that triggered resident to become associated with destination preparation and administration, originates from the alterations that have taken place in the occupation over the past few years. There have been several issues that have influenced how planners' regard their consciousness and occupation such as sustainable development and public consultation. This being said, planners are gradually disregarding the insular bureaucratic role and pay attention on a broader variety of other options such as protection of the environment, moneymaking and business interests and community outlook, which beforehand have been identified outside their field (Dredge, D. 1999).

Tourism planning was firstly defined by Gunn (1979) in which he stated it is a tool used for the development of targeted destination areas and that it is recognized as a mean for identifying and evaluating the wants and needs of the tourists. Moreover, Gunn (1994) stated that the main purpose of tourism planning is to increase income and rate of employment, and guarantee the preservation of resources and the contentment of the travelers. In details, with the help of tourism planning, emerging or under-developed areas can obtain strategies for tourism enhancement. On the other hand, advanced countries tourism planning can be efficiently used 'to rejuvenate' the tourism field and sustain future viability. To successfully execute a planned development design, it is significant to establish a clear understanding of the goals to

be accomplished on several ranks including national, regional, and local (Andriotis, K., 2007).

Nowadays, there are three main categories for planning tools. The first group is the process tools that are focused with the nature of the preparing process which are strictly associated with the sectors of decision-theory and strategy analysis. The second group is known as the functional tools that incorporate a wide scale of concepts, figures, and ideas that describe how settlement configurations appear and function. The third and last group is called normative tools that works with the general relations between people's beliefs and settlement procedures. Each of these three groups are not independent; instead, they are strictly and inseparably interconnected with one another. This being said, a single tool on its own cannot approach issues that occur during preparation in a specific region. During the planning process, planners engage a selection of the mentioned tools at different phases in order to identify the process, to classify and define the issue undergoing the analysis, to create alternate solutions, and finally, to recognize the ideal possibility (Dredge, D., & Jamal, T. 2015).

Despite the fact the most of the countries worldwide have arranged plans for tourism development, the majority of these schemes are not executed and some are implemented to some extent. Gunn (1988) believed that this is because of 'conventional planning' which is defined as "has too often been oriented only to a plan, too vague and all encompassing, reactive, sporadic, divorced from budgets and extraneous data producing" (Andriotis, K., 2007).

During the past 30 years, a number of figures have unfolded that were used to help in destination planning and designing. Throughout decades, Gunn (1972, 1988, 1993)

was able to achieve a significant progress in identifying the physical aspect of destination areas. Although Gunn's work and research has been widely noticed, he remains one of the few handful researchers that have investing his time into paying close attention to explaining and advancing figures and concepts of the favorable destination configurations. In 1993, Gunn created his own local planning idea that describes five main foundational features which emphasize the connection among them must be inspected closely to destination scheming (See Figure 2.2). These elements are a definable regional boundary, access from markets and internal circulation corridor, community attraction complexes, a non-attraction hinterland, and entrances or gateways to the region (Dredge, D. 1999).

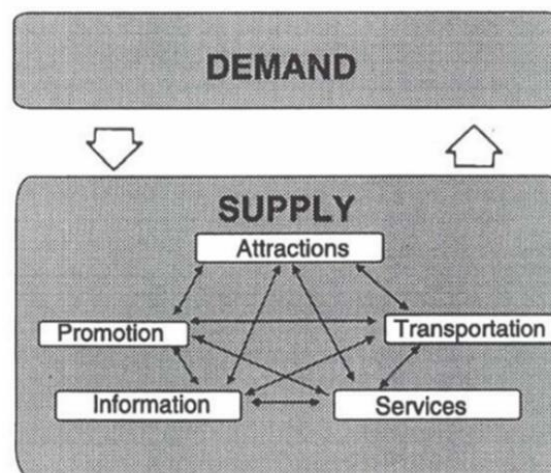


Figure 2.2: The tourism functioning system (Source: Gunn, Claire, A., *Tourism Planning, Basics, Concepts, Cases*, Routledge, New York, 2002)

Figure 2.2 shows one way of modeling the operating tourism system. There are two major motives of tourism which include demand and supply aspects. To achieve success, all planners and developers must closely inspect the details that are contained within these two drivers of tourism. Yet, other planners and developers may use other expressions, except this connection is now similar to what it was in 1972 (Gunn, 2002).

There are several shapes in which tourism planning and regional planning takes form into. Most are immensely directed in the direction of promotional schemes, while others are indecorously branded marketing schemes since their main concern is how more travel can be vended. In some places, marketing schemes are created which contain both enhanced supply side development and how to sell it.

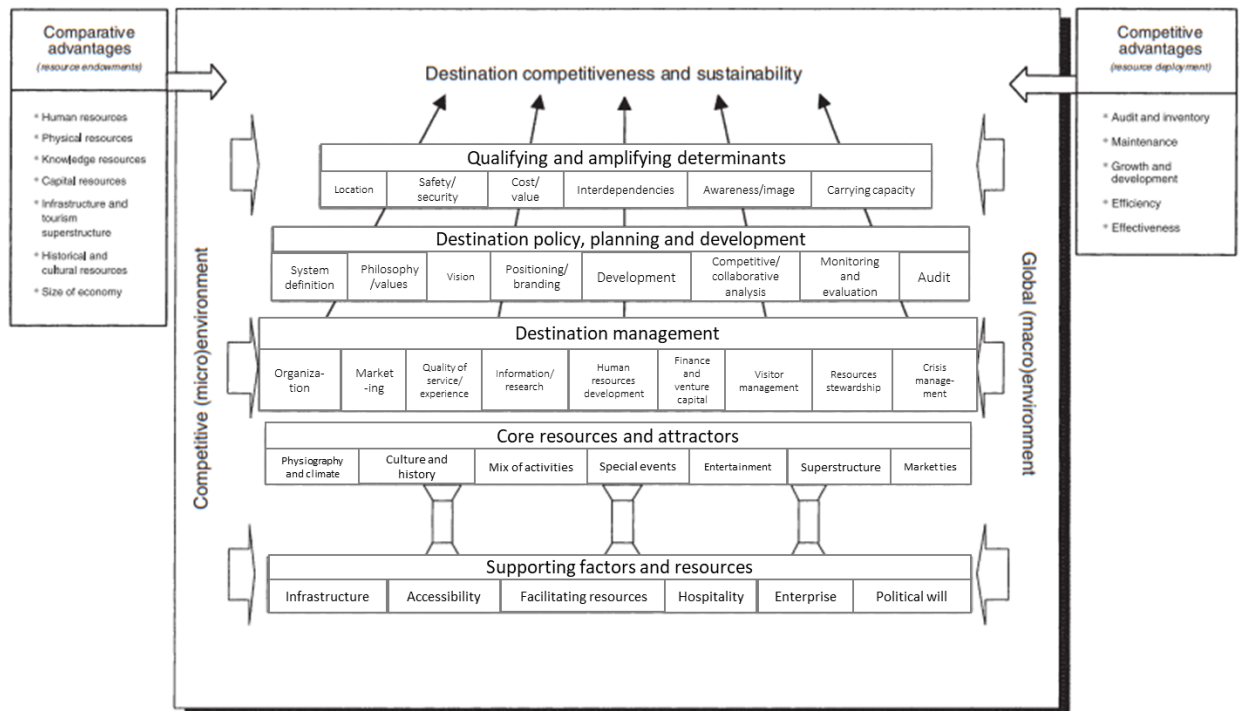


Figure 2.3: Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability Model (Source: Ritchie and Crouch, 2003)

Figure 2.3 shows how tourism science is strongly related to our lives where it is strongly intended to improve our capability to run a destination successfully and constructively, by doing so, to enrich the well-being of the tourist destination residents. Also, it portrays the intense complexity of the preparation and development of tourism. Due to the unique system of tourism sector, every tourist destination additionally involves various forces to compete among others including social, cultural, political, technological and environmental. To put it briefly, being a competitive destination

must be the prime aim to all destinations, where they have the “ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so in well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations” (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003:2). According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, compete is to gain or win something or to strive for superiority of quality. However, to fulfill an effectual tourism management, it is a key step to be able to measure the success of any tourist destination, thus, to figure out the main elements responsible of helping to acquire or stabilize the success. The destination competitiveness and sustainability model gives an illustration of both comparative advantages and competitive advantages. The concept of comparative advantage focuses majorly on the variety of endowment of the elements of production. Not only does comparative advantages deal with naturally provided resources, but also manufactured ones. While comparative advantages include the resources provided to a destination, competitive advantages comprise to the capability of a destination to fully use its resources efficiently over a long period of time. A touristic destination is not considered to be competitive by its abundant resources, rather by its ability to utilize these resources constructively. A competitive destination is deemed successful when it embraces a tourism vision which shares it among all stakeholders, recognizes its strengths and weaknesses, creates and executes a smart marketing plan, more than the destination that has never considered how tourism plays a major role in its social and economic advancement. When multiple methods of deployment have one mutual outlook concerning a destination’s policy for tourism improvement, tourism resources are more likely to be utilized successfully and entirely. With the theories of comparative and competitive advantages, an

academically sound basis is provided for the development of a model of destination competitiveness.

Based on many evaluations of multiple national attitudes to tourism planning at the national rank, the World Tourism Organization states a generic planning procedure which consists of numerous main stages: 1- study preparation, 2- determine goals and objectives, 3) make surveys, 4) analysis and synthesis, 5) policy and plan formulation.

The foundational features of today's tourism planning strategies and procedures are:

- Regional tourism planning concepts reveal much similarity
- Planning concepts now include more environmental concerns
- Regional tourism plans must have a clear and acceptable vision
- Implementing agents and their responsibilities need early declaration
- Planning often requires new public-private cooperation and collaboration
- Destination zone identification requires local follow up

Planning theories and procedures are carried out at three different geographical ranges including region (nation, state, province), destination (community and surrounding area) and site (land for development). In all three different levels, the plans and recommendations involve incorporation, usually requiring unique collaboration and partnership.

Uncontrolled tourism development easily diminished the image of many destinations, to the extent that they attract only low-spending mass tourism. As a result, serious socio-economic and environmental problems have emerged. Since tourism activity relies on the protection of environmental and socio-cultural resources for the attraction of tourists, planning is an essential activity for the success of any destination.

Many destinations thrived into mature touristic spots through an early introduction of a correct and adaptive management plan along with suitable infrastructure. In order to maintain the high quality of a destination it is necessary to observe and control the activities and elements of the place. However, this can be a difficult task, as tourism destinations are complex systems, with numerous interactions between the sectors operating within the destinations, and there are multiple stakeholders, with varied and at times conflicting interests.

Against the above backdrop, this research is basically focusing on tourism in Nablus city, particularly, that is located in Palestine. In the past decades, Nablus has experienced relatively weak and poor tourism growth, but, somewhat surprisingly, the country does not have supporting and guiding tourism policies in place. In addition, although tourism-related researches in Palestine exist, but relatively scarce and scattered in relation to Nablus and its tourism, while most of the published articles were in Arabic language, so that, it does not support a knowledge driven policy formulation of tourism planning and development. Thence, the current research provides an overview of tourism in Nablus. By doing so, the paper aims to outline the key issues, tourism planning challenges and future prospects in relation to tourism governance and policymaking that need to be commenced with the help of Ritchie and Crouch model in order to capitalize on the potential of growing tourism for development.

Chapter 3

THE CASE OF NABLUS

3.1 Introduction

Middle East has always had a prestigious place among the several economists, politicians and ideologists. Its presence goes back to the ancient eras and being recognized for millennia. It occupies a very distinct position due to its vital strategic location from all sides -North, South, East and West- natural assets and indubitably gas and oil resources which gave the Middle East the value and more strong political position, yet, it created such an anarchy in the zone. However, within its large area, the Eastern Mediterranean region in particular enjoys high competitive features which has been called by different several names such as: Bilad al Sham, Levant, Near East and many other names. Furthermore, the map of the Middle East is very idiomatic. It passes through three main continents, centered in the Western Asia, Turkey (both Asian and European) and Egypt (North Africa). Middle East countries includes: Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Cyprus, Iran and Egypt, where Saudi Arabia is the largest country and Bahrain is the smallest.

Tourism in Middle East has received very high attention in the field of English literature and academic research specifically the political and economic status of the region. In contrast, more or less, focusing on tourism in Palestine has been circumscribed and underrepresented throughout the years. Noted that, tourism

guaranteed Palestine's economic and religious status the significance as key factors, support in resolving or pruning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and keep the relations stable and under control, more importantly it contributes to the preservation of the Palestinian identity and giving the value to the State in context of political disruption.

3.2 Overview of Palestine

Palestine (Arabic: فلسطين-Filastin). Officially recognized as the State of Palestine by 137 out of 193 United Nation members in 2018. The historical Palestine (pre-Israel conquest) occupies almost 26,000 sq. km. with Jerusalem (Arabic: القدس-Al Quds) as the capital of the county and Ramallah (Arabic: رام الله) is the city of the administrative center. Yet, post-occupation area which is close to 6000 sq. km. is divided into two regions: West Bank with 5800 sq. km. and Gaza strip the largest city with 360 sq. km. The West Bank cities are classified into three main zones, zone 1 is located in the north (Jenin, Tulkarm and Nablus), zone 2 in the middle (Ramallah/Al-Bireh, Jerusalem and Bethlehem) and zone 3 in the south (Hebron and in the Jordan Valley Jericho). The mother language in Palestine is proudly Arabic. Doubtless, considered the core of the Middle East. Further, it is the heart the of Arab world that is geographically distinctive, as it is a meeting point between three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe (See Figure 3.1). The genuine area of Palestine is marked from the Lebanese mountains in the north to the Gulf of Aqaba (Arabic: خليج العقبة) in the far south. However, it is delimited by the Jordan Valley in the east and Mediterranean Sea in the west. Gaza strip is bordered with the Mediterranean Sea from the west and Egypt from the south through Rafah crossing (Arabic: معبر رفح). Palestinian borders are only from Jericho city (Arabic: أريحا- Areeha) to Jordan through the Sheikh Hussein Bridge. The Dead Sea side is deemed as the lowest point in Palestine and even the lowest on the earth, 408 m below the sea (Abahre, J. S. H., & Suleiman, A. S. 2016). The Dead Sea area offers an

exceptional kind of experience for the visitors or swimmers due the high concentration of salt, 290 grams per liter at the surface (Alternative Tourism Group, 2012). Whereas, the highest point is at Jabal Al Assur 1,015 m above the sea level in Ramallah. Additionally, Palestine is very well known for its desert and rocks landscape at Negev Desert (Arabic: صحراء النقب - Naqab) in the south.



Figure 3.1: Geographical location of Palestine

3.3 The Importance of Palestine

Palestine is the holy land of the prime three world monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism where their main temple sites are found and born in the region. However, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Nablus, Hebron and Jericho are the major religious cities where many tourists from all over the world are attracted to these cities because of its unique holiness and to conduct their religious rituals. (e.g. Dome of the rock, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the wailing wall in Jerusalem, Joseph's Tomb and Jacob's Well in Nablus, Church of Nativity in Bethlehem) (See Figure 3.2 & 3.3). Besides, since it overlooks the Mediterranean Sea to the west, this in turn plays an important factor in attracting tourists to the region for either leisure, business, cultural or religious intentions. Furthermore, Palestine is quite rich in natural green spots, minerals-lush areas and gas fields that support the state's economy, the cradle of cultures and civilizations with respect to prodigious history including Roman ruins which give a special character to the state. Whereas, some believe that these special features are the main 'Why' for this country has being the site for the most constant-frequent political conflicts.



Figure 3.2: Church of Nativity in Bethlehem (left) & Wailing Wall in Jerusalem (right)

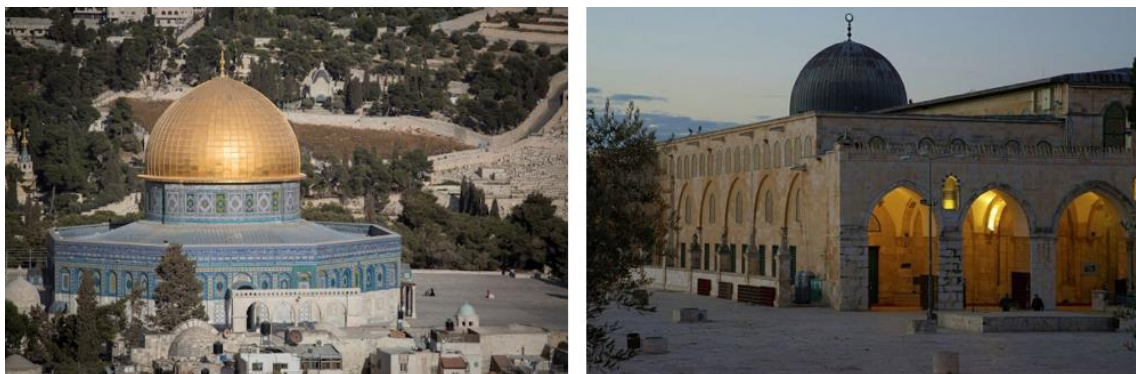


Figure 3.3: Dome of the Rock (left) and Al-Aqsa mosque (right) in Jerusalem

3.4 The History of Political Conflicts

3.4.1 Ottomans Empire and British Mandate

Palestine went through many intermittently harsh historical conflicts for more than 400 years (Afyoncu, E., 2018). It was controlled in modern times by several conquerors including Ancient Ottomans in the 16th century between 1516-1917, where Turkish powers fought for the antiquated land of Palestine. Ottoman dominance resisted for thirty decades consecutively without no obstruction until it was conquered by Muhammad Ali's Egypt in 1832. However, Britain interfered to help Ottomans to restore Palestine to their rule after eight years, but in return, under certain conditions for its own interest and for European citizens and displaced Jewish living in Palestine by granting them some rights. During the 19th century, the state of Palestine undergone terrible changes, most notably the Druze, Bedouin and Circassian encroachment to the Palestinian borders, which reinforced the emergence of Zionism, which in turn brought many Jewish and European refugees to the region where they revived the Hebrew language at that time. Consequently, those historic changes resulted in weakening the Ottomans and at the same time consolidate the European roots in the region indirectly, yet, this made Palestine to become a purely political land, which government contest for under the pretext of policy-making interest first, and possession of the holy places

second. Before the end of the World War I in 1917, perniciously, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon successfully convinced Husayn ibn Ali, the senior figure of Hashemite family and governor of Mecca and Madina to lead the Arab-uprising and to assist British armies against the Ottomans, so Britain will rule Palestine. In return, British government promised ibn Ali to initiate a separate liberated Arab state if he headed the revolution and succeeded in it. Following up, the Turks surrendered to the British armies in 1917, as a result Jerusalem city, its symbolic key and delivery document were handed to them (See Figure 3.4). Unexpectedly, McMahon betrayed the promise and seized many Palestinian territories. Furthermore, secretly, the British Foreign Minister, Lord Arthur Balfour, issued an official resolution on the so-called 'Balfour Declaration', which is literally granting the Jews a "homeland in Palestine". In order to complete the British government's plan to implement the Balfour Declaration, the 'League of Nations' officially issued a British Mandate for Palestine in 1923, where it was a very well-known destination for religious pilgrimage prior this deputation (Hardan Suleiman, J. S., & Mohamed, B. 2012).

It has become a democratic country and converted into more western-fashioned territory during the British Delegate since infrastructure was fostered, more hotels and resorts were built and valuable historical-cultural assets were conserved. The dogmatic struggle between the Arab-Palestinians and the Zionists has begun when the real 'Jewish exodus to Palestine' or 'Jewish mass tourism to Palestine' started under the supervision of British Mandate especially after the Nazi Holocaust against Jews, which brought the international recognition and sympathy to them. Accordingly, with this historic phenomenon, Tel Aviv was stated the first worldwide Hebrew city with thousands of settlements. The Palestinians have conveyed this tragic situation by

marching and holding protest demonstrations to express their strong objection. This contraposition however rationally impacted the political and economic status and lead to generate the sensitivity of the conflict between Zionists and Arabs, thus, ended with a massive Arab Revolt in 1930s. United Nations later on decided by the end of 1947 to divide Palestine into two states, one Jewish and the other Arab. Zionists accepted the partition plan, yet, they asked for more expansion. On the contrary, the neighboring Arab countries besides the Arab Palestinians have expressed their anger at the absolute rejection of UN division plan. Unsurprising, the battle between the Arab armies, Jewish residents and military started days after the UN partition announcement. The Arab military forces were crushed and the Zionist forces ruled the allotted lands to Jewish according to the UN plan (Beinin, J., & Hajjar, L. 2014).

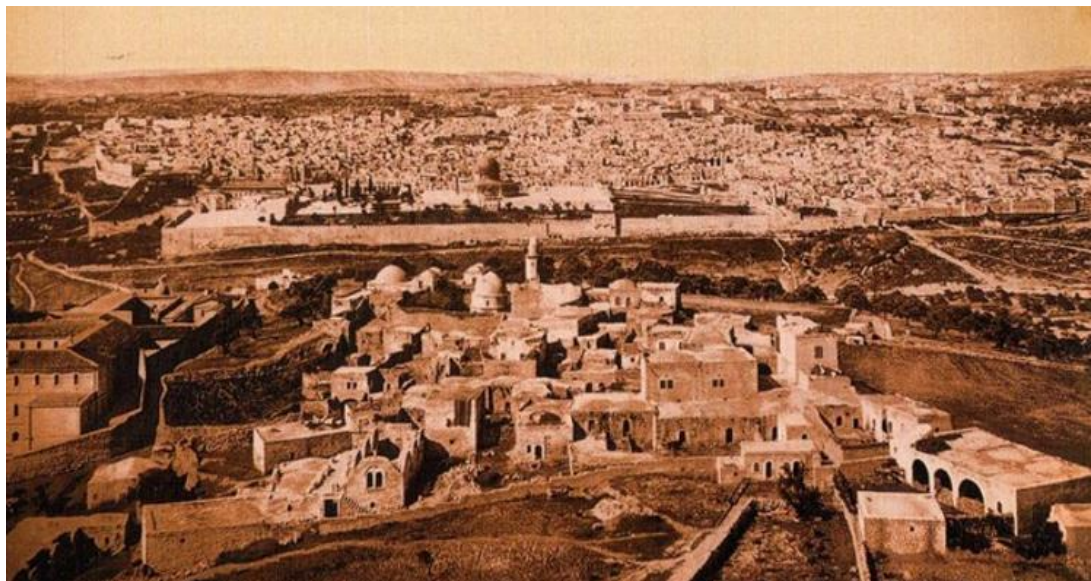


Figure 3.4: Jerusalem towards the end of 19th century

3.4.2 Zionist Occupation

The dispossession phase, the Catastrophe, the beginning to force the Palestinians who lived there since thousands of years to leave their homes and give it to people who had no land. This is known as ‘An-Nakbah’ (Arabic: النكبة) in 1948 after the British Accreditation is over, Palestine was occupied by the ‘Israeli Entity’ to complete what the mandate had begun and to consolidate the idea of the Balfour’s ominous declaration that is based on two pivotal policies to be legislated (See Figure 3.5 & 3.6). The main one is to insure a national-settled home for the stateless Jewish people in Palestine and to establish a separate Arab-Emirate in Transjordan lands. Thanks to its victory, Israel has seized as much as possible from the Palestinian territories in complete violation of the UN partition plan (Isaac, R. K., Hall, C. M., & Higgins-Desbiolles, F., 2015).



Figure 3.5: Mass advent of Jewish for the sake of land

The war ended in 1949 with some concessions and negotiations, prominently is that Israel controls 77 percent of the territory, Jordan rules East Jerusalem and central Palestine (West Bank), lastly, Egypt is in charge of Gaza strip. Due to the speed, accuracy and thoroughness of the Israel's victory achievement, these were sufficient reasons that brought into disrepute the Arab regimes and gave the chance for the occupier the pure opportunity to freely subvert the country completely. There have been many massacres and cases that cannot be overlooked and forgotten, most notably the carnage of Deir Yassin (a village near Jerusalem), where more than 250 Palestinian were killed in cold blood by the Israelis. Another historic atrocity is the massive eviction around 50,000 of Arab residents of their towns of Lydda and Ramle. At that time almost over 700,000 Palestinians ejected from their home with no right and became refugees in the diaspora including the neighboring states such as Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and some went to Gaza for the sake of safe at that time (Mohamed, B., & Suleiman, J. 2011).

After the Catastrophe of 1948, in 1967 war, known by different terms; Six-Day War, June War, Arab-Israeli War and the Setback 'An-Naksah' (Arabic: النكسة) Israel occupied the remaining Palestinian territories including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem. The Six-Day War was basically between Israel, Syrian, Jordanian and Egyptian armies. Decisively, the war ended in a favor of Israel, the vanquished Arab-states militaries withdrew from the region, as a result, Israel apprehended the West Bank from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egyptian government and lastly Golan Heights from Syria. Disgracefully, since the 1948 war to the present day, almost 78% of the Palestine's land has been under the domination of Israel. The Zionist Entity has done so many internationally prohibited acts and policies, seeking to obliterate the Palestinian identity and to suppress and instigate all those who are not

Jews on this land. The Israeli military was restrictively punishing who carries the Palestinian national colors or flag, they proscribed picking the wild thyme (Za'tar) and olives, which are considered one of the most primary and significant elements found in any Palestinian cuisine. Moreover, applying the curfews and tens of checkpoints, destroy houses and storming schools and institutes have been implemented by the usurper policies to forcibly displace Palestinians (Isaac, R. K., Hall, C. M., & Higgins-Desbiolles, F. 2015).

Despite the international objections, thousands of settlements were built between the cities of West Bank by uprooting thousands of olive trees and destroying the natural-green landscape. The Israelis have described the Palestinians as terrorists, even if they have not committed any acts of terrorism -non-violence acts- or destruction, but their presence in a place where Zionists claim to be their land and property in itself is considered terrorism. Meanwhile, after the 1967 war, the Palestinian national movement raised -a political and military groups- which made the other sub political groups, whereas, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was established by the Arab League in 1964 to control the Palestinian nationalism. The PLO consists of different armed groups including Fatah -largest group- under Yasser Arafat leadership as well as the chairman of PLO, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front of the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and lastly the Palestine People's Party (PPP). All of these parties met on the one idea and principle, namely, the victory and liberation of Palestine from the occupier of the usurper (Isaac, R. K., Hall, C. M., & Higgins-Desbiolles, F. 2015).

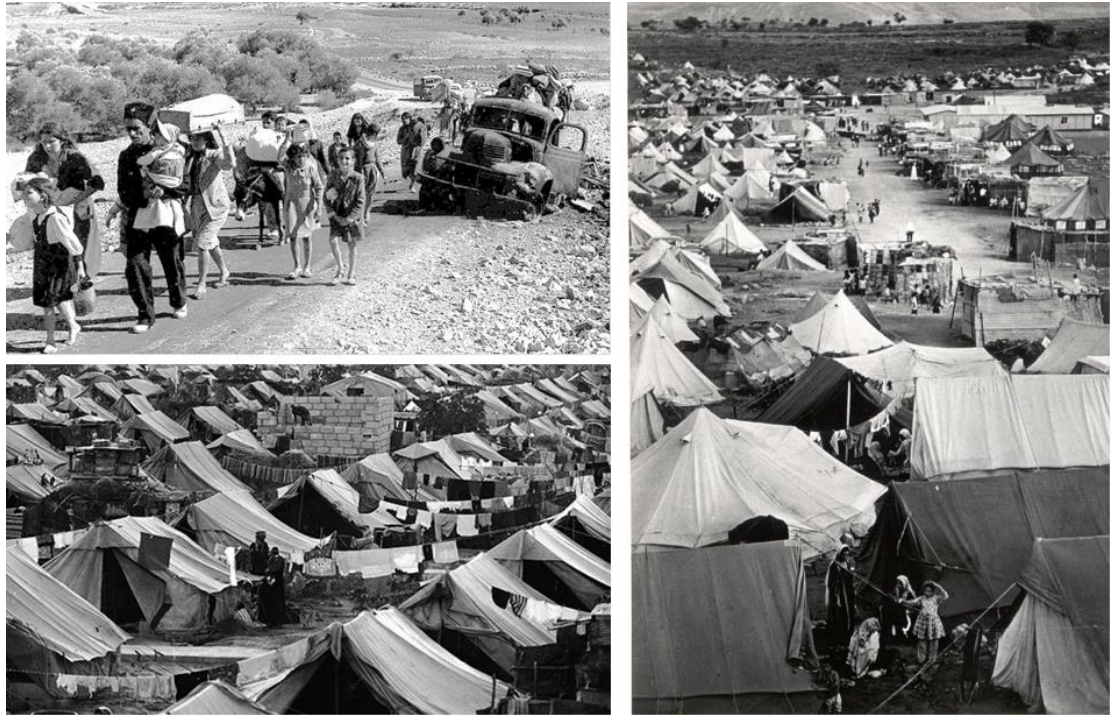


Figure 3.6: From the memory of An-Nakbah in 1948

3.4.3 The First Intifada 1987 and Second Intifada 2000

The situation of the country has remained unstable from massacres, displacement, assassinations, arrests and vandalism until the uprising. The first uprising, classified as the first historic conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, known as ‘Intifada’ (Arabic: انتفاضة), took a place in 1987. As simple, it is a civil war, an insurgency and rebellion of the nation in West Bank and Gaza against the Israeli rule. During this time, the Palestinian residents took the resistance into several forms such as boycott of Israeli products, political graffiti on the walls, commando operations and throwing the army tanks and soldiers with stones (See Figure 3.7). Although it was a very tough and deadly period for the Palestinians, the Intifada did not vanish the occupation nor returning back the stolen territories, however, it brought back Palestine under the spotlight and to international attention. Moreover, the intifada was a significant-enough factor to make the occupation weaken its control, disturb its security and economy, which made the Jews in the diaspora to reconsider the fact that the

occupation of Palestine was illegal (Hammad, S. 2017). This war with those huge impacts, lead to the Madrid peace conference in 1991 and eventually ended in 1993 by Oslo Accords which states that it will guarantee the independent Palestine within five years. In 1994 the PLO have initiated what is known as Palestinian National Authority (PNA) that represents the Palestinian people and to take the responsible in governing the West Bank and Gaza strip (See Figure 3.8). However, the territory was divided into two parts with different rules. West Bank remained under the control of PLO Fatah group under leadership of Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas took over the responsibility for government functions of Gaza strip under the command of Ismail Haniya in 2007 (Sela 2012).

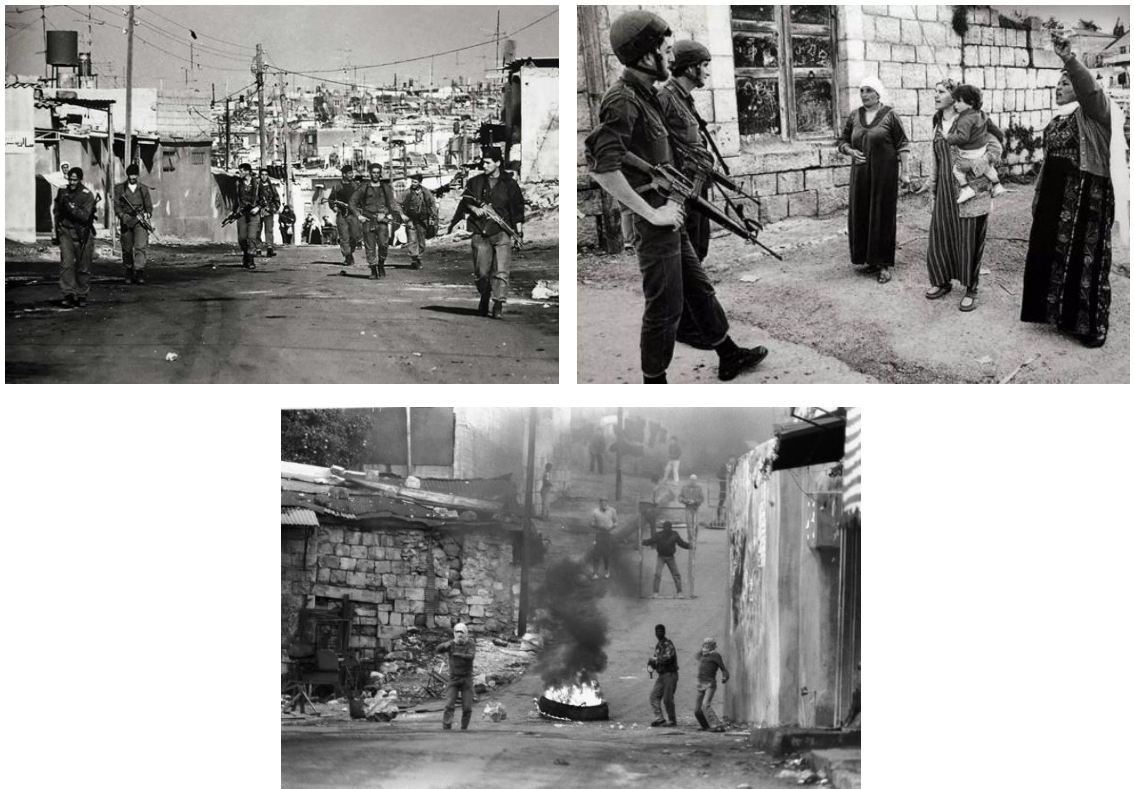


Figure 3.7: From the memory of the First Intifada in 1987

A few years later, after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian territories particularly the West Bank and Gaza Strip were broken down into three main different zones, Area A, B and C. Indeed, Area A especially in the West Bank territory, is under the direct Palestinian Authority control and security, yet, does not involve more than 3 per cent. Typically, this area consists of most eight populated Palestinian cities along with the surrounding areas which are Nablus, Tulkarem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Qalqilya, Jenin, Jericho and 80% of Hebron. Israel government banned all Jews from the entry to this zone, unless if necessary for the Israeli military forces to arrest the suspected militants or political activists, mostly at night. However, Area B is a combination of Palestinian-Israeli security control. This zone in particular rings almost around 440 Palestinian towns and villages that cover circa 26 per cent of the West Bank. Lastly, Area C is thoroughly under the Israel Entity control which comprises more than 70 per cent all along with the Jordan Valley, natural reserves, Israeli settlements and other special military force zones (Isaac, R. K., Hall, C. M., & Higgins-Desbiolles, F. 2015).



Figure 3.8: PLO logo and the previous president of PLO and PNA ‘Yacir Arafat’

The Palestinian people rose again, the Second Intifada took a place between 2000 to 2005 and had the same causal events mainly the repression in its all forms including random shooting, killing, bombing using internationally banned weapons, extrajudicial genocides, forced migrations, house and school devastations and forced migration (See Figure 3.9). The people of Palestine thought that with their victory in the Intifadas, they would bring back the historic Palestine. However, some of the betrayals were the first and main reason for the survival and intensification of the occupation, the first of which was the violation of the Oslo Accords (Institute for Palestine Studies). It became even worse when the Palestinian Authority did not completely fulfill its duties towards a better and safer situation for the nation against the Israel Entity, yet, that frustrated and disappointed them. Positively, the Intifadas were the beginning to flourish Palestine Solidarity Movement. Sadly, since the first Intifada and even before, until 2019, which indicates almost 70 years Palestinian suffer from oppressions, destructions, vandalism, displacement, denial, fake promises, assassination, arresting, unlawful killing, injustice and deprivation of rights. But also, lack of control, constant fear and disquietude, forfeiture of basic freedom, vague and inexplicable future, and mass punishments (Hammami, R. & Tamari, S. 2001).



Figure 3.9: From the memory of the Second Intifada

These events have created catastrophic political, economic and social facts which have deeply affected the life of the Palestinian people, many of whom became refugees dislocated to neighboring states and indeed the world as a Palestinian diaspora. Conspicuously, with the mass departure of Jewish people to Palestinian lands since 1948, with the passage of time, Israel took an advantage of this by making the tourism as a main source of support for its economy. On the other hand, this resulted in Palestine to be more quelled and subdued showing the world that Palestine and Arab-Palestinian as unsafe, precarious, and the historical sites were arrogated and presented as Jewish cultural properties. Consequently, of the latter, slowly, Palestine was extirpated off the map and replaced by Israel with eventually Jerusalem as the capital (Isaac, R. K., Hall, C. M., & Higgins-Desbiolles, F. 2015).

3.5 Tourism in Palestine

The remaining area of Palestine that is under the Palestinian Authority is around 6000 kilometers square covering the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Tourism in Palestine until 1948 was extremely marginalized but disputable, scalable and modernized. It was merely known for its religious sites where thousands of pilgrims come annually or every period of time to perform religious rituals especially in the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Hebron whether they are Muslims, Christians or Jews. The main hindrance that hampered the Palestinian tourism to flourish is the external and internal Middle east conflicts since 1950s unlike other countries in the region (Bethlehem University, 1995).

After 1967, Palestinian tourism field and hotel industry were succumbed and constricted in volume and quality of business. However, the Israeli government utilized harsh curtailments on the physical, institutional and businesses of the

Palestinian tourism. By and large, tourism in Palestine suffered from the recondite changes caused by the conquest of Israel to the region and remained in the lagging phase since ever. For the reason that, Israeli and Palestinian tourism sectors are totally separated, but unfortunately with misfit Palestinian facilities. Surprisingly, until and after Oslo accords in 1994, the number of Palestinian Hotels remained unchanged. Israel government was too strict permitting investors to establish new hotels or to convert to hotels. The State of Palestine provides great touristic assets however this offering has not been duly exploited.

The Intifadas adversely affected the tourism sector by dramatically reducing the average of guest night stays between 2000 to 2002 respectively, and this falling off lasted until the complete end of the uprising in 2008 where things begun to settle down and back to its normal situation. The rate of guest night stays reached almost 1.1 million in 2008 and kept constantly increasing to the present day. Tourism sector in Palestine gave a share of almost 2.5% to Palestinian direct GDP, 1.5% to indirect GDP and 2% of total employment (around 17,000 jobs) both direct and indirect in 2012. Whereas, indirectly it contributed by 1% of employment and 1.5% of GDP. After the extreme economic crisis and tourism depression caused by the Intifadas, the tourism sector rebounded by annual growth of hotel activities accounted for 23% to the GDP, where hotel employment increased significantly at 11% between 2006 and 2012 (Portland, 2013). In 2014, tourism reached its historic peak at that time and was seen as the utmost significant sector in the Palestinian economy and essential income generator (International Trade Center 2013) where around 3.16 million visits were made to tourists and leisure sites in the West Bank in the first half of the same year.

Going back to some statistics by Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, it shows that more than half a million of guests spent 1.4 million nights in Palestine in 2015. More than 484,394 guests stayed in West Bank hotels where the majority were Europeans with 30 per cent, 9 per cent of Americans and Canadians and 11 per cent Palestinians (Abahre, J. S. S., & Raddad, S. H. 2016). In conformity with Ma'an News Agency, interviewing the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Rola Maayaa in 2018 regarding the situation of Palestinian tourism, she stated:

There is a significant increase in the number of tourists and pilgrims this year compared to 2017, yet, the number of tourists reached 2.8 million until now and most of hotels are fully booked. We are highly expecting a further dramatic increase in tourists' number in 2019. Based on the figures and data provided by hotels and tourist offices showing that the situation will be even better despite the daily obstacles imposed by Israeli occupation.

Maayaa continued:

In the past, tourists would stay few hours in Palestinian territories without benefiting from its own local market and hotels due to the Israel's attempts to tarnish the image of Palestinian cities as an unsafe and their hotels are unfit for tourists, but, successfully we refuted the Israeli claims and by following our new strategies, we inclined the tourists to participate in international events, experience the local market and benefit from it. Besides, we stressed on that we did not have any problem with any tourist, but Israel wants to sabotage Palestinian tourism.

More importantly, Maayaa confirmed that tourism has quietly improved in Bethlehem, Hebron, Jericho and Ramallah saying that:

Hotel market and business has been prospered in recent years and expanded since it is highly demanded. Besides, the large number of hostels, there are almost around 250 hotels in Palestinian territories that have 10,100 hotel rooms.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) started a new strategic plan to promote this field since 2014 where number of visits and overnight stays reached the apex. The Ministry worked hardly to show up the real and true Palestinian national

heritage and to foster the service quality in hospitality sector. One of the major events that attracted thousands of tourists is the visit of his Holiness Pop Francis to Palestine Particularly to Bethlehem who practiced some religious rituals and prayed for peace and end of this war in front of the Segregation Wall (See Figure 3.10). These strategies that aim to show Palestine to the whole world from different angles, resulted in increasing the number of visitors to more than 3 million in 2018. According to Wafa Agency, Maayaa confirmed with the help of PCBS, 3,049,753 guests visited Palestine by the end of 2018 with further high expectations in 2019. The number of tourists reached 816,457 in the first quarter of 2019 compared to 621,331 tourists for the same quarter of 2018 with an increase of 31.1% (Ma'an Agency, 2019). With respect to the Minister of tourism, in 2018 Maayaa pointed stressfully that Palestine will celebrate the largest number of visitors with highest rate of occupancy, mentioning the new ministry's slogan "*existence and survival*" (Ma'an News Agency, 2018)

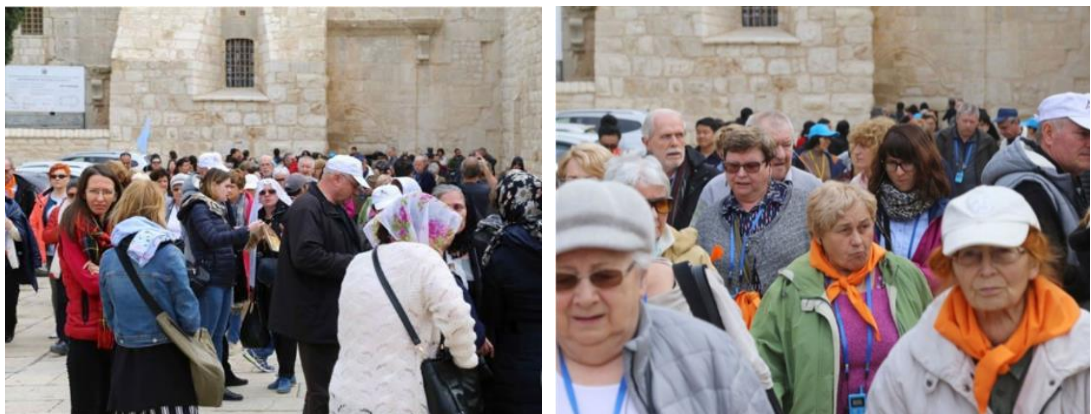


Figure 3.10: Tourists in Palestine, Bethlehem city

Nowadays, MOTA prepares every year to celebrate with residents, tourists, guests and many other inbound visitors for the Christmas Eve, the annual olive harvest festival, Easter celebrations and most recently was the 7th International Palestine Marathon that was held on 22nd of March 2019. Over and above that, MOTA proudly organizes the

largest art festival for children and youth named Bethlehem International Performing Arts Festival, where the city hosts participants from different countries including USA, Libya, Jordan, Tunis, Taiwan, Uganda, Spain, Germany, Palestine and many other countries where all performances are in the section of singing, theater, acting, folk dance and folklore music. Besides, another cultural festival is Jerusalem Nights. The Tourism Daily News-newspaper reported the latest interview with the Minister of Tourism on 2nd of March 2019, in connection with Maayaa, she stated that:

We strive continuously and peacefully to develop the Palestinian tourism and maintain its cultural heritage through promoting for Palestine as an independent touristic destination, along with, participating in the international touristic exhibitions and open new markets for foreign tourism to enhance the number of such delegations and the percentage of hotels occupancy.

Recently, the Minister of tourism hosted the German Parliament Delegation at the ministry's headquarters in Bethlehem to discuss the latest tourism developments. In this meeting, Maayaa reviewed the current preparations for Palestine's participation in the Berlin International Tourism Exhibition, which is one of the most important tourism exhibitions in the world. Palestine participation emphasizes the significance of the Palestinian tourism sector. Besides, it is an influential-major step for direct cross linking between Palestine tourism sector and its global counter parts in order to enhance the number of tourists to Palestine in the years to come. The MOTA promises to carry smarter approaches to boost the absolute number of visitors, average length of night stays and average spend per day. Hence, ameliorate and achieve these three measures would definitely generate the job creation in the sector both direct and indirect, also, support small-scale local businesses (Tourism Daily News, 2019).

Commenting on all of the above, lastly, Rola Maayaa emphasized:

We, at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, seek to make the experience in Palestine worth a king's ransom for tourists to ensure that they bestow a beautiful

and valuable picture of Palestine on their way back home and be acquainted with the injustice and inhumanity that Palestinians have endured over the years (Ma'an Agency, 2019).

3.5.1 Tourist Attraction Sites and Destinations

Palestine has been a holy land for thousands of years where many of prophets were born, most notably Jesus (peace be upon him) and some of them were buried, such as Moses (peace be upon him). More importantly, it has been the land of Israa and Meraaj. It is the main destination for religious and cultural tourism for pilgrims. Moreover, it is the land for main three Abrahamic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism, therefore, it is the home of the religious-orthodox sites such as the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, the Dome of the Rock, Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Wailing Wall in East Jerusalem. Equally important, the attractive touristic destinations in Jericho, which has been classified one of the world-oldest cities continually inhabited, and this includes Hisham's Palace, the Mount of Temptation and Elisha's Spring and much more valuable sites across Palestine that provide a special advantage to the region and it is completely able to keep the tourism sector prosperous throughout the year (See Figure 3.11).

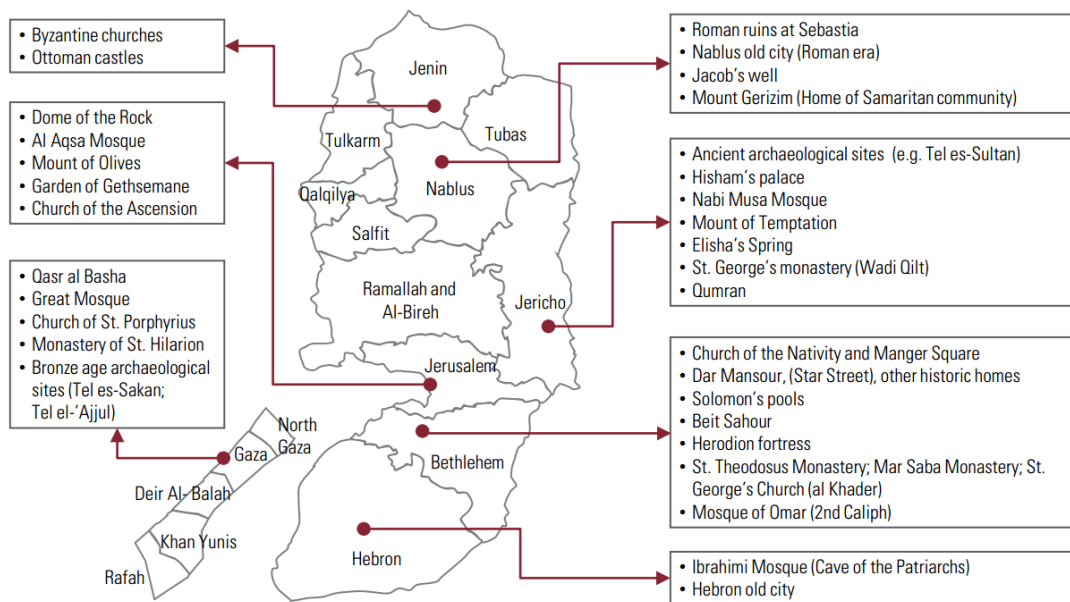


Figure 3.11: Tourist attraction sites in Palestine

3.5.2 Palestinian Tourism Constraints

The non-stop insecurity status impeded the growth of tourism sector in the region. Not only this, but also, apart from the occupation, the State of Palestine faced much more challenges to promote the tourism field. One of which is the insufficient support of investing, followed by the inadequate management and strategic planning to promote this sector. According to Rami Isaac, he believes that the existence of national strategy deficiency is in *-de facto-* related to the complex history of the state, where its partial government has little or no proper control over its territory. The more notable step in Palestinian's history regarding tourism is the establishment of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) in 1993, right after the foundation of PNA. The MOTA was created to take the responsibility of preserving the historical sites rich with invaluable antiquities and cultural sites too particularly in West Bank and Gaza Strip, but unfortunately, the ministry has failed in consummating its vision and mission due to the constant- ceaseless unrest and limited resources. On the contrary, MOTA successfully developed, rehabilitate and reshaped the internal assets including

transportation, hotels, restaurants, sacred sites, tourism agencies and cultural sites (Al-Khawaja 1997).

Academic tourism and hospitality programs are uncommon in the country, hence, this indicates that labors who are formerly educated in this field are very few. What makes it more difficult is that the workers in tourism and hospitality sector in Palestine are not academically and tourist-qualified to work in this field. As a result, the level of restaurants and hotels in the city is not as required according to international standards that must be found and recognized in any country that attracts thousands of tourists annually (Al-Rimmawi, 2003). Until the education and tourism ministries collaborated to offer various academic and diploma programs for those who are interested to explore more about tourism and hospitality area, distinctly, the TEMPUS program in Bethlehem is one of them. Moreover, culinary institutions were established across the country in West Bank.

The number of international arrivals have sharply declined during the political instability situation, however, after Oslo peace agreement and second intifada when the war is over, the rates have increased noticeably (See Figure 3.12).

As well as, the growth of hotel businesses was significantly remarkable during the mentioned period. Indeed, the continuous fluctuation in tourists' rates, indicates that Palestinian tourism status is completely relying on political security. Starting a Hotel business in the West Bank is not an easy step at all as we thought and sometimes stakeholders regret starting this kind of businesses in a country with a non-state situation due to the high costs and expenses, mostly when the tourism status is dormant

during the political conditions, in contrast, guest houses are more flexible concerning the costs and expenses.

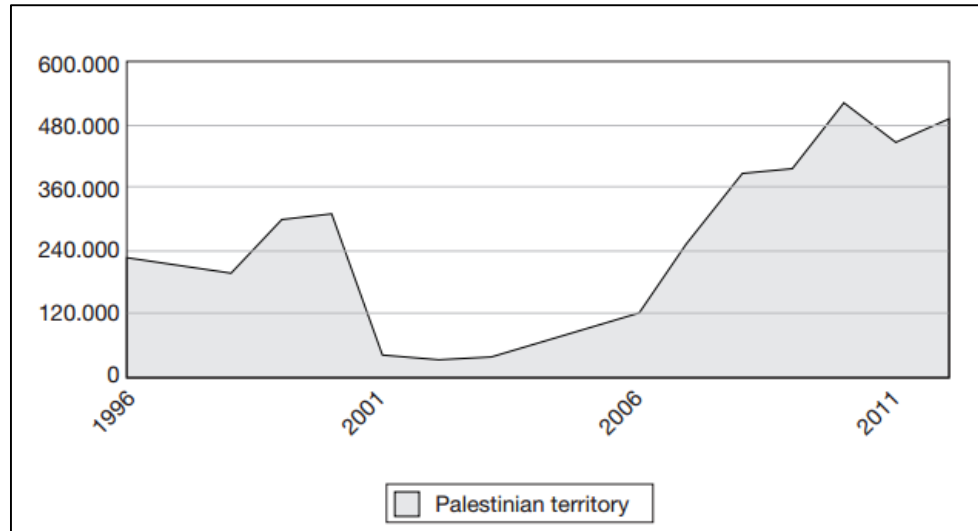


Figure 3.12: International tourist arrivals to Palestine between 1996-2011 (Source: Fact Fish, 2015)

Overall, Israel continues to practice terrorism against the Palestinian people, besides the persistent persecution everywhere and random arrests in order to vanish the word Palestine from the existence. It also works hard to obliterate the Palestinian identity by considering everything as an Israelite heritage and culture, and to obstruct the tourism sector as much as possible by exploiting the Palestinian resources and deprive the residents from the benefits resulting from tourism socially, economically and politically.

3.5.3 Tourism Resources and Institutions in Palestine

In fact, as a consequence of the complex-continuous political clashes in region, which can be summed as a chaotic-tumultuous past, Palestinian tourism industry is facing an uncertain future. Due to this unstable and obscure situation in the country, the industry highly needs disciplined associations and NGOs to keep carrying on operating and developing the tourism, hospitality, cultural and historical related tourist services and

activities, by keeping the people and stakeholders updated about the latest tourism trends, hence, to fulfill one clear and comprehensive vision for the tourism sector in the future.

In the mid of 1990s, the tourism industry in Palestine began to initiate and grow its institutions after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. At the first place, MOTA was basically originated for the purpose as a protective-cushion to keep safe the historical, archeological, cultural and religious unique sites. Moreover, MOTA on an ongoing basis aims to organize various tourist-related services and activities through advertising Palestine locally and globally as a vital tourist destination, with no distinction from others in all respects.

Likewise, the Higher Council for Arab Tourism Industry (HACT) is a private sector organization that was implemented in 1993. The reason for HACT's existence is to preserve the tourism community by reinforcing a strong base and organized structure of the sector both internally and externally, thus to accomplish an acceptable image of the region to the visitors. However, HACT offices were closed in 2003 by Israeli government when it started the frequent stern measures on the local institutions and offices. Palestine has different tourism-related institutions that act as an umbrella for tourism industry. In detail, the municipalities, Chamber of Commerce and other cultural and religious institutions, publishing agencies such as This Week in Palestine, Alternative Business Solutions and VisitPalestine.ps, all contribute primarily in supporting the Palestinian tourism, keep the industry updated to what is trendiest, besides provide the latest statistical data for further correct tourism planning.

Arab Hotel Association (AHA)

The AHA is a non-profit organization found in 1962 centered in Jerusalem. It functions mainly by representing the Palestinian-based hotels currently in the Holy Land and assisting other tourism-related organizations. Uniquely, AHA believes that it is in charge of developing a competitive tourism industry within Palestinian territories and further expansion. The institution is united with other pertinent parties including MOTA, Holy Land Incoming Operators Association (HLITO) and Bethlehem University (BU) (Arab Hotel Association).

Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association (HLITOA)

The HLITOA is seen as a main actor in the Palestinian tourism industry that was established in 2005 and mainly 80 per cent of head offices are located in East Jerusalem. The institution plays an essential key role in strengthening the Palestinian tourism via supporting the tour operators in Jerusalem (Holy Land Operators).

Arab Tourist Guides Union (ATGU)

Within the main bodies of Palestinian tourism industry, ATGU is one major headquarters which is responsible for ensuring the membership for tourist guides in East Jerusalem and West Bank whether they licensed by the Israeli authorities or MOTA respectively (Isaac, R. K., Hall, C. M., & Higgins-Desbiolles, F. 2015).

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

Currently, due to the unstable situation in Palestine, mostly and particularly tourism statistical data are not reliable and accurate for further future planning. This case is seen by many responsible bodies as a main shortage in the sector. Lack of sufficient and accurate statistics lead to insufficient planning in most cases. As long as this

situation is fluctuated, the PCBS is not a reliable source since data are not precise and does not have an adequate-deep interlocutor with the private sector to understand their needs (Isaac, R. K., Hall, C. M., & Higgins-Desbiolles, F. 2015).

Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA)

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities is the first and major government representative to support, finance and market tourism in Palestine. Thanks to its continuous support, the State of Palestine participates annually in the international European tourism exhibitions. In addition, the ministry of tourism has many efforts as it led the Palestinian tourism as soon as Palestinian Authority was established. It also works to develop tourism and tourist facilities in each of the West Bank cities as well as its interest in continuous communication with private tourism sectors and non-profit organizations to reach a clear vision for a brilliant-global touristic future. MOTA carries out distinctive strategic approaches targeting new markets from existing sources, create and diversify new cost-reasonable attractive packages/offers in correlation with tourism agents (Isaac, R. K., Hall, C. M., & Higgins-Desbiolles, F. 2015).

Since this academic piece is focusing on tourism, all of the aforementioned continuous historical and political conflicts adversely affected the correct development of tourism sector in Palestine. Many Palestinian cities were affected by the consequences of the occupation on the tourism sector. Top influenced cities are Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nablus and Hebron. Particularly, the above-stated destinations truly faced difficulties in the field of tourism planning due to the full Israel interferences and the non-stop settlements construction on a very large scale, hence, it led to hurdle in the development of tourism infrastructure and urban prosperity, etc. In relation to tourism

as a political instrument under the domination of Israel, many of Palestinian have suffered from not getting the enough chance to enjoy and profit from their fruitful country on which tourism thrives, most notably Nablus city. These facts of Israeli dominance are the major hindrances towards the proper tourism development. Therefore, this orthodox-theoretical paper will shed the light on the tourism planning challenges and prospects in Nablus city.

3.6 The Case of Nablus City

3.6.1 Nablus City: An Overview

The Canaanite Arab city, Nablus (Arabic: نابلس) known as Shechem or Shekem (Arabic: شكيم) in old days –a Canaanite name- means the high place, and some pronounce it as Shekhim as it is now called in Hebrew (Arabic: شخيم). Indeed, according to the historical documents, the old Shechem city was located in the so-called ‘*Tal Balatah*’ means Balatah Hill (Arabic: تل بلاطة), which is in the eastern part of the city and Shechem is still seen there until this day (See Figure 3.14 & 3.15) (Toukan, 2016). In Byzantine-ancient centuries back to 72 CE, it was named as Flavia Neapolis when found by the Roman Emperor, Vespasian. However, when Palestine and the rest of the Levant were opened by the Arab Muslims during the Islamic Arab Caliphate of Umar ibn al-khattab, since that time, ‘Nablus’ is the common name used so far. It is located in the northern of West Bank and its 50 kilometers north of Jerusalem. Nablus is one of the oldest cities in the world, dating back to 5600 years (3600 BC). The city still maintains its ancient geographical location which lies between the most important two natural landmarks of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal which in turn makes the city to appear uniquely as a valley (See Figure 3.13).



Figure 3.13: The view of Nablus between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim



Figure 3.14: The entrances of the ancient city of Shechem and its archeological sites



Figure 3.15: An overview of the ancient city of Shechem

The city of Nablus is the heart of Palestine, with its distinctive geographical location which amazingly links the north, south and east with its western location. Moreover, what makes Nablus idiosyncratic is being a link in a series of mountainous cities from north to south and it is located at the main crossroads that extend from Nazareth and Jenin to the north, to Hebron to the south and from Jaffa to the west. Due to this specific location of the city, Nablus has dozens of water springs that increase the beauty and splendor of the city such as Ayn Al-Asal, Ayn al-set, Ayn Hussein, Ayn Al-Qaryon and many others (See Figure 3.16).



Figure 3.16: Al-Saqaya water standpipe in the old city

3.6.2 Nablus City: Political Overview

Throughout the history British forces took over the city in World War I and it was confirmed and established in 1922 during the British Mandate of Palestine, later on, by the Arab-Israeli conflict, it was captured by the Transjordan and became a part of Jordan, followed by the Israeli occupation that invaded the city in the Six-Day War. After the first Intifada which ended by 1993, Nablus city has been governed by the Palestinian National Authority as it is classified within Area A since ever, until the present day. Before the Palestinian control, Nablus went through austere, unbearable and bleak days. Back to those days, Nablus was the most suffered among other Palestinian cities. Many Zionist settlements were illegally-built during the Israeli restriction particularly in the First Intifada. Until now, Nablus has been known for being the nucleus of Palestinian nationalists and activists that fought hardly against the Zionist Judaization Project (Al-Masri, 2012). It was stated by the Noa Meir, an Israeli militant and formal speaker, said: *“Nablus remains and will remain the capital of*

terror in West Bank” (Neslen, A. 2011). In response to her statement, rebels named the city by Jabal Al-nar (Mount of fire) since it became the defensive point during confrontation and violent clashes between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Palestinian revolutionaries who sacrificed their souls and defended their lands for the sake of homeland. Besides the city, camps like Balata and Askar, all were shaped as the core of the ‘knowhow’ to manufacture and operate the rockets in the West Bank. Overall, the city of Nablus has occupied an important and a leading position for the Palestinian national political movement. Moreover, the city played a unique leadership role amidst other cities over the years of the Palestinian national strive.

In mid-April 2002 during Al-Aqsa Intifada, Nablus undergone a massive invasion and strict siege by the Israeli military which lasted for almost couple of weeks. The Israeli incursions targeted the steadfastness of Nablus for twenty days, primarily, the so-called operation ‘Defensive Shield’ (Al-Masri, 2012). Nablus remains the most vulnerable to collective punishments, siege and closure by the Israeli occupation authorities, which mainly targets the national movements (See Figure 3.18). During this sudden raid, Israeli forces were centered mostly in the old city of which is the heart of Nablus (See Figure 3.17) (Al-Quds, 2018). The ‘Great Invasion’ as called by Palestinian, was one of the most bitter nightmares where the people of the city witnessed the bombing of aircraft and tanks, the complete destruction of infrastructure, streets and sides walks, as well as commercial buildings, small shops and archeological-rich sites. Not only that, but also, the occupation armies cut off water, electricity and applied curfew for long period of time over successive days (Nobani, 2018). Since most of the gunshot-clashes were condensed in the old city, it became a terrifying small spot, many of historical sites were completely destroyed by Israeli jets bombs including the Jasmine Neighborhood and *Sabaneh* of Salem Nabulsi – a soap

manufacturer– which was the first and best at that time with an area of four donum and later on it was transformed into an archeological site after a period of time (See Figure 3.19) (Al-Betawi, A. 2018).



Figure 3.17: The map of the old city in Nablus



Figure 3.18: The Israeli invasion and siege of Nablus city in 2002



Figure 3.19: The destruction of soap manufacturer in Al-Kasbah neighborhood in the old city of Nablus

Since the beginning of First Intifada in 2002, the Israeli forces carried out a mission which was to suffocate the city by applying a very strict blockade which lasted for almost eight years. This absolute stringent on the city was an enough reason to result in a severe economic crisis which affected many of citizens' daily lives. Followed by, a total collapse of several commercial activities and led to huge cutbacks and some were subjected to complete closure. Furthermore, the Zionist government continued to obliterate the city by practicing brutal measures until it was divided into three areas A, B and C. Nablus province with almost 1.5 per cent of total district lands represent zone A, while zone area covers roughly 20.5 per cent of the total surrounding lands that includes small towns and villages of Nablus (See Figure 3.20). On the other hand, area C constitutes for 78 per cent of total province, covering the rest of all agriculture and mountain lands where Israeli settlements, military barracks and military observation towers were established on it with full Israeli security and control (Nablus Municipality, n.d.).



Figure 3.20: The sign of area A

The governorate of Nablus is surrounded by almost ten Israeli checkpoints from all sides where the deadliest one is Za'tara checkpoint which links Nablus governorate with the middle and southern governorates including Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Hebron. Others such as Huwwara checkpoint, Beit Iba, Beit Furik, 'Asera Ash Shamaliya, 'Awarta checkpoint that is used for goods and commodities moving in and out of the city, Shave Shomron that is located between Nablus and Jenin, At Tur that links Nablus with the Samaritan district of Gerizim and Ma'ale Efrayim that connects Nablus with Jericho (See Figure 3.21) (POICA, 2007).

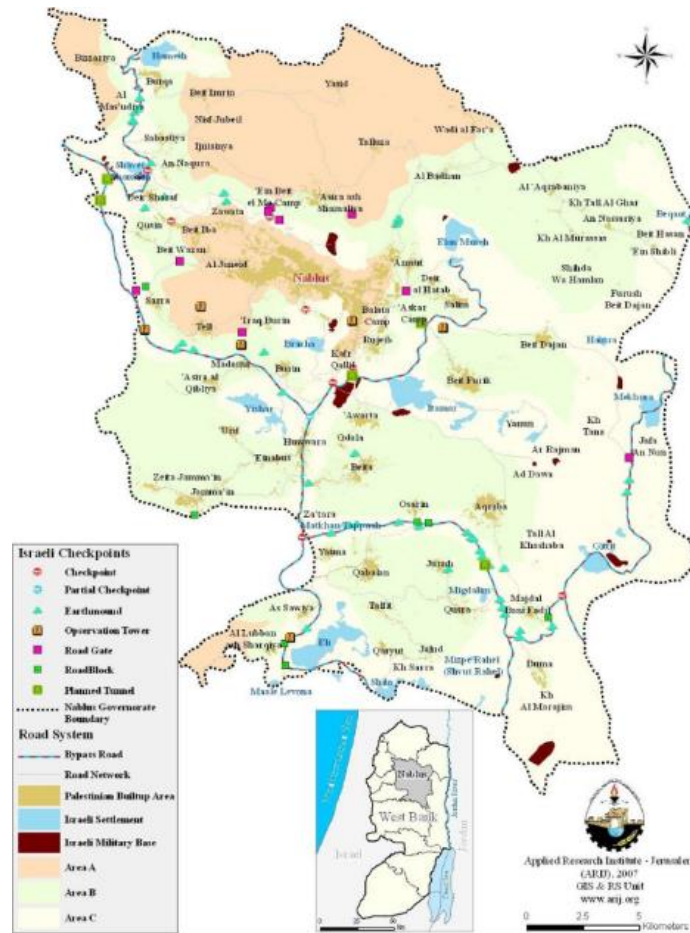


Figure 3.21: Map of the Israeli checkpoints in Nablus governorate

3.6.3 The Importance of Nablus City

Nablus city is a business incubator. Economically, Nablus is seen by many as the core of Palestine and the vigorous trade center since the old Canaanite ages, 2500 BC until this day. Since ever, economists and stakeholders believe that Nablus city is the utmost stable pillars of Palestinian economy. It is due to the availability of plenty famous goods and commodities that include furniture industries and olive oil factories, vintage but high quality of small craft-workshops that produce daily traditional goods including olive oil soap, building stones, aluminum, antique shops which all are exported to regional and global destinations. With no doubt, Nablus city is featured to be leading the Palestinian local industry and commercial activities even under the roughest-berserk political conditions. During the ‘Great Invasion’ in 2002, the city

went through unforgettable depression in all sectors that caused a big loss, estimated by almost \$ 1.2 million of which 42 per cent, 30 per cent, 20 per cent, and 2 per cent in industrial sector, services' sector, agriculture sector and tourism sector, respectively, and lasted until 2008 (An-Najah National University, n.d.).

By Referencing to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in 2009, Nablus district alone comprises of almost more than 13,000 industrial and commercial facilities related to both private and public sectors that are distributed widely across the city. The vintage and still functioning olive oil soap factories are one of the most essential city landmarks which back-dated to the fourth century (See Figure 3.22). The soap industries were increased during the nineteenth century but most of them were refuted by the Israeli raids like Kanaan soap factory and only four manufactories are remaining.



Figure 3.22: A vintage olive oil soap factory

It is worth to mention, that Nablus is very well-known for producing since the very old times the so-called 'Qizha' which is a Black Seed Paste (See Figure 3.23). Nablus city now is the first producer and exporter of this healthy valuable product, regionally and

internationally. The ‘Qizha’ is considered as a second unique signature found in the traditional Palestinian-Nabulsi cuisine.



Figure 3.23: The black seed paste ‘Qizha’

More importantly, the first top signature product in the Nablus cuisine is the Nabulsi Kunafah, which became a genuine part of the city’s culture. It is basically a cheesy dessert with sugar syrup and sometimes is served in a piece of bread topped with sesame seeds (See Figure 3.24). In general, Kunafah became a very famous dish in the neighboring Arab countries, however, if a tourist who has been to Nablus without tasting it, he/she is never been to the city. Besides the Kunafah and ‘Qizha’, Nablusi-cuisine is full of other distinctive tasty products such ‘Zalabia’ dessert and ‘Tuheneh’.



Figure 3.24: The Nabulsi-Kunafah

Apart from Food and desserts, Nablus is the top amidst Palestinian cities in producing the natural stone. The city became professional in this industry for more than 3000 years. Those produced building goods became the most important natural resources that play a major role in Nablus' economy being exported to Palestinian territories and neighboring destinations.

3.6.4 Touristic Sites in Nablus City

The old city of Nablus is the hub of heritage, history, and seen as a national open museum which is characterized by an ancient and unique architectural character dating back to the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic nations. This ancient- treasured city modlized of six quarters of neighborhoods namely; Al-Yasmineh, Al-Gharb, Al-Qaryon, Al-Aqaba, Al-Qisariyyeh and Hableh (See Figure 3.25). Those neighborhoods and squares epitomiz the richness in its prestigious, archaic-historic buildings and beautiful archs at which all symbolize the different eras and civilizations that Nablus city went throughout the ages.

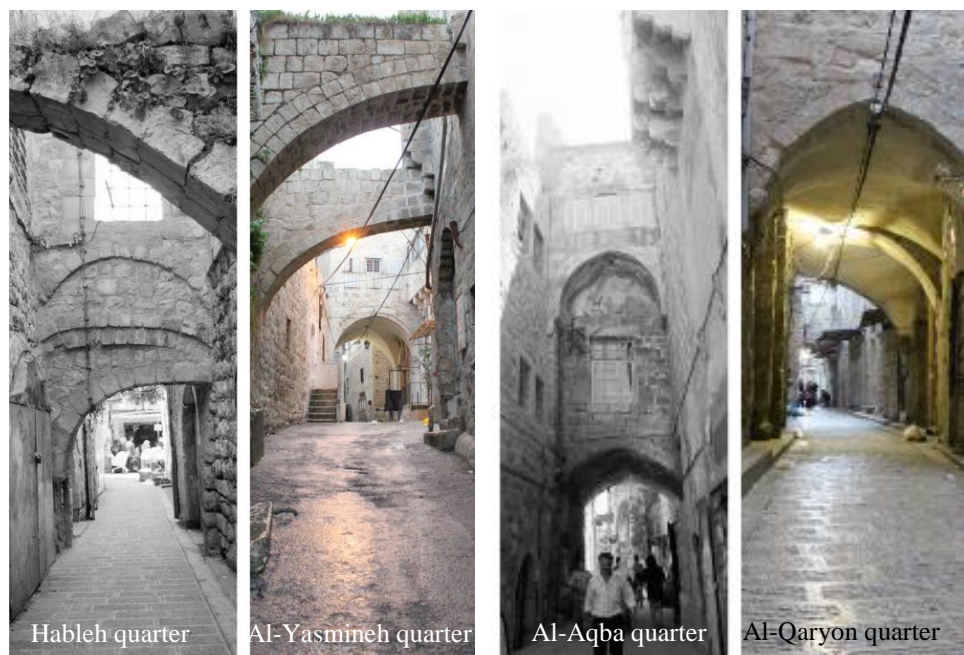


Figure 3.25: Quarters of the old city in Nablus

Nablus, according to many resources and researchers is considered as a sacrist city, in the view of the fact that it contains of mosques of a special religious character, the noteworthy ones include Al-Satoon mosque built 636 BC, Al-Salahi or the ‘Great Moaque’ which was built in 1187, Al-Hanbali mosque, Al-Khadra mosque and An-Nasr mosque where all are located in the old city of Nablus. Besides mosques, the clock tower is one of the famous moument located in Al-Qaryon neighborhood next to An-Nasr mosque that was bulit in 1318 (See Figure 3.26). Likewise, Nablus involves other non-Muslim religious sites such as Jacob’s Well, Jacobs’ Church that both are important to Christians and the holy site of Joseph’s Tomb as the second important holy site to the Samaritans, Jews and Christians at both local or global levels. All of these religious-historic venues are great indicator, that the main three Abrahamic religions followers are peacefully co-existing and living in cohesion since ever.

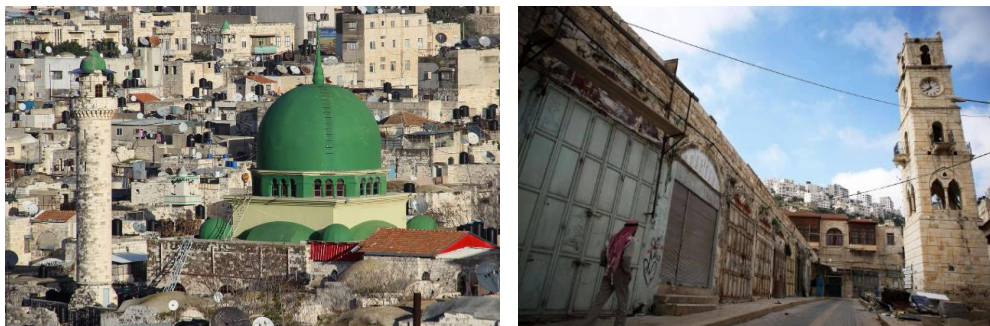


Figure 3.26: An-Nasr mosque (left) and the clock tower (right)

The old city of Nablus it is still densely inhabited by almost 9000 citizens despite its very old houses and buildings, which indicates the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in their land that represents their fathers grandparents sine thousands of years. Its alleyways are crowded by small commercial activities and handcraft shops that are quitey attractive to visitors. Commercial activities include restaurants that serves different traditional Nabulsi food, vintage cafes, ancient pottery and craft shops,

upholstery shops, furniture stores, traditional embroidered costume shops, Nablus Bazaar and hotels such as Khan Al-Wakaleh that goes back to Mamluk era, in 1630 and Al-Yasmeen Hotels, etc. (See Figure 3.27).



Figure 3.27: Ancient pottery and craft shops (left) and Khan Al-Wakaleh Hotel (right)

Jacob's Well and Church are located in eastern part of Nablus city. This historic-religious site illustrates the story of Jesus Christ when he stopped during his journey from Jerusalem to Galilee and asked the Samaritan women for some water. The church was built since the Roman era under the rule of Constantine in the 4th century BC (See Figure 3.28). Nablus municipality applied further expansions and renovated the church as a result of the recurrent high number of tourists visiting the site annually.

Another touristic site in eastern part of Nablus, is the Joseph's Tomb (See Figure 3.29). An age-old site, believed to be referred to prophet Joseph. During the Ottoman rule, a small dome was built at that time on the top of his tomb. Whereas, the whole site was reconditioned and fixed in 1897, and now it receives high number of tourists from all around the world every year.



Figure 3.28: Jacobs' Well (left) and Jacobs' Church (right)



Figure 3.29: Joseph's Tomb site

The old city also encompasses thirty of Turkish baths that are called by '*Hammam*' which are the most important architectural heritage sites of the old city, distributed among different neighborhoods and alleyways (See Figure 3.30). They are named by 'Turkish Baths' referred to Ottomans architectural style such as the Samaritan Turkish Bath established in 15 BC, Al-Shifaa' Turkish Bath built in 1736 CE, Al-Darajah Hammam, Al-Hana Turkish Bath. All of them are still functioning until this day, however, they went through frequent restoration since the establishment.



Figure 3.30: Al-Shifaa Turkish Bath in old city

In the northwest of Nablus city, 10 kilometers away from the city where ‘Sabastya’ village is located (See Figure 3.31). The origin of the name of the modern Sabastiya village referred to the Herodian city of ‘Sebaste’, found in 25 BC by Herod the Great, who instituted it on the site of ancient Samaria on the site of ancient Samaria. The Roman Emperor Augustus granted the city of Sebaste to Great Herod in 30 BC. Later on Herod developed and expanded the city by building a unique temple consecrated to Augustus, a stadium, a theater and he repaired the fortifications of the city with huge walls. Today, this ancient landmark consists of many charming debris including the Basilica, the theater, street columns and the obsolete walls and gates. Interestingly, Sabastya is considered as a religious site as it embraces the grave of Prophet Yahia. However, according to the Oslo Accords, Israel divides the village of Sabastya into three areas A, B and C. The archeological City-Canaanite origin of Roman civilization-falls within the last classification that allows Israel to control and prevent any restoration or excavation at all.

At the recreational level, Nablus is classified among one of the top attractive destinations in Palestine due to its topographic fascinating nature. For example, Sama Nablus National Park which is located on the highest peak of Ebal Mount, became a major destination for all families and tourists who visit Nablus city (See Figure 3.32).

There on the top, you will have the golden chance to experience calm atmosphere, magic scenery, relax and enjoy the mild breeze far from the crowded down town. Visitors can also enjoy the taste of Palestinian cuisine up there and events that are organized by Nablus Municipality.

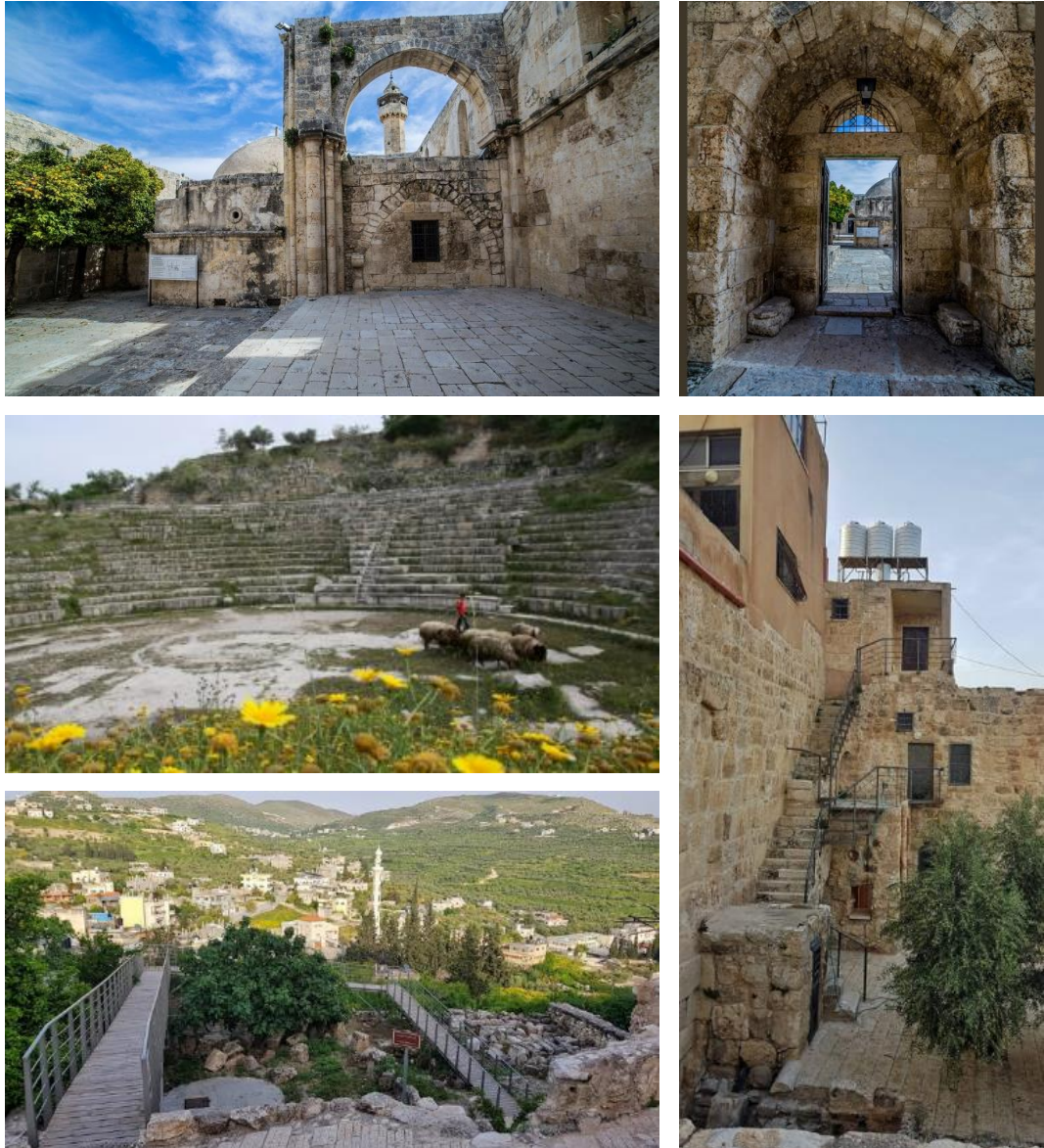


Figure 3.31: The historical village of Sabastya



Figure 3.32: The view of Nablus city from Sama Nablus National Park

Besides Sama Nablus National Park, there is Gamal Abdul Nasser Park which is Located in middle of Nablus city, and deemed as the largest public parks in the city with an estimated area of about 80 dunums. Nablus municipality is working smartly on developing this park in order to preserve the value of the gardens of Gamal Abdul Nasser as a public-distinctive recreational facility. Besides, it works on rehabilitation process to create a social, recreational environment for the visitors and an attractive one for investors to hold exhibitions in various subjects (Abu Alrub, S. 2018).

Nablus receives annually domestic tourists more than international or inbound tourists compared to other districts which receive more international visitors and high rated in overnight stays. The table below (See Table 3.1) illustrates the number domestic visitors of each district and how it fluctuated from 2014 to 2018. Nablus city's internal tourism or domestic visitors reached the highest proportion in 2018 with 755,252 amidst other districts. However, Nablus city was classified the third in the overnight stays of domestic visitors with 21,777 nights, while the first one is Ramallah district

with 76,164 overnights stays followed by Jericho district with 26,979 as a second place (See Table 3.2).

Table 3.1: The domestic visitors of Palestinian districts 2014-2018 (Source: MOTA annual report 2018)

District	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Jericho	292280	224928	329340	603671	521875
Hebron	322189	391333	219560	197840	166240
Bethlehem	73212	67191	84934	92071	81795
Jenin	518673	467908	732633	749030	562470
Ramallah	99930	55165	153776	351610	255600
Tubas	-	26185	58415	60482	88007
Tulkarm	321450	291704	166359	255495	145534
Qalqelyah	469870	382550	255400	245750	347940
Nablus	454622	531949	532165	663000	755252

Table 3.2: The overnight stays of domestic visitors in Palestinian districts 2014-2018 (Source: MOTA annual report 2018)

District	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Jericho	21378	16487	22669	28228	26979
Hebron	2370	2682	5113	5714	4629
Bethlehem	6741	5239	7328	5831	8424
Jenin	3993	3471	1767	1677	3423
Ramallah	97607	96018	116070	82311	76164
Nablus	12026	9266	57424	13732	21777
Tubas	981	1033	420	-	-
Tulkarm	169	142	2639	1028	61
Qalqelyah	-	22	73	64	2

Nablus stands in a semi-weak position regarding the rate of inbound visitors and overnight stays. By referencing to statistics carried out by MOTA in 2018 (See Table 3.3), the number of international tourists who visited Nablus had reached 387,051 which is very few in comparison to Bethlehem where it was the highest at 1.2 million and Jericho's international visitors were 947,468.

Table 3.3: The international visitors of Palestinian districts 2014-2018 (Source: MOTA annual report 2018)

District	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Jericho	675290	515933	623096	803772	947468
Hebron	268903	165957	91766	93335	108546
Bethlehem	1022282	767716	615094	911224	1042535
Jenin	253681	228998	393435	377766	367784
Ramallah	63149	25469	23339	59091	59262
Tubas	-	198	2800	17145	21208
Nablus	36550	97154	305013	383047	387051
Tulkarm	103368	61829	39991	42250	51374
Qalqelyah	103950	43815	72650	78400	53360
Selfit	-	-	-	-	11165

Table 3.4: The overnight stays of international visitors in Palestinian districts 2014-2018 (Source: MOTA annual report 2018)

District	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Jericho	61457	42328	48893	66339	96906
Hebron	2379	2128	4617	7156	13029
Bethlehem	848124	686971	711324	995010	1202172
Jenin	19349	17047	18187	14892	21711
Ramallah	122161	106961	84652	74846	105363
Nablus	12734	10999	39129	23070	25082
Tulkarm	77	211	1590	530	13
Tubas	-	9	127	-	18
Qalqelyah	-	21	89	115	1

Surprisingly, the overstay nights of inbound tourists were disappointing in Nablus throughout the mentioned period where it ranged only from 10,000 to almost 25,000 nights; although, the number of international tourists coming to Nablus exceeded 350,000 in 2018 (See Table 3.4). This calls on the authorities responsible for the tourism sector in the city to ask many questions, that why is the city has not succeeded in fulfilling a prosperous and prominent tourism sector, as it is in some other districts, and what are the obstacles that facing the city under the harsh political circumstances. Besides that, what are the tourism planning issues that hinder the further development

of tourism industry. This academic piece will report and discuss the reasons behind this feeble sector by carrying out qualitative research methodology for deep understanding of the case.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Research Methodology

This research has adopted a qualitative research method which helps in deep understanding of a given research problem from the perspective of the local population and how do people experience the given predicament. The non-numerical research methodology, was used as a mean to seek for social-cultural specific information, opinions, behaviors and actions of respondents to fully illustrate the picture from all angles and understand precisely the tourism planning dilemma and phenomena to find the adequate solutions (Qualitative Research Methods Overview, n.d.).

With the help of qualitative method, it is more easy to find out data about ‘human’ side of a particular problem which is usually linked with contradict behavior, beliefs, opinions and emotions. Understanding the complex reality of the given case or situation is definitely achieved by utilizing qualitative method.

According to McCracken in 1988, as cited in Brannen in 2017, qualitative methods help the researcher to accomplish ingenious cognizance of the respondents’ social world’s, and give the chance to the investigator to be more flexible to ask why and how, yet somehow manufacture distance. While utilizing the qualitative research methods, the most critical part is that, the researcher should listen carefully to the

respondents and engage with them based on their different mindsets and personalities to probe initial participant responses.

4.2 Sampling

What is special about qualitative research method, that it is not obligatory to collect the data from all people in a certain community to get righteous and valid data? The sampling method used in this research is based on the concept of purposive sampling that is one of the most common sampling techniques, where respondents are selected based on their relevance to the research topic and particular questions (Qualitative Research Methods Overview, n.d.). All of them were employees in tourism-related institutes and organizations (e.g. ministry of tourism, faculty of tourism, Nablus municipality, touristic police office, hotels, restaurants, travel agents, antique shops).

Another criterion while using qualitative method, is that the sample size may or may not be fixed prior to data collection depending on the study objectives, available resources and time. In short, once the researcher is theoretically saturated and new data are no longer adding new insights and answers to the research questions, it is an indication that the sample size is adequate. This study took a sample of 20 participants from the tourism sector in Nablus. However, research questions act as a justification to figure out what categories of participants need to be focused and therefore sampled (Bryman, 2012).

4.3 Data collection

Since qualitative methods are typically more flexible, this research has generally embraced semi-structured methods such as ‘open-ended’ questions for an in-depth interview, where participants can freely respond in their own way. The relationship between the researcher and participants during the in-depth interview is less formal

and amiable which in turn will help the researcher to gather valuable data with greater details. Furthermore, an open-ended questions contribute in bringing chances to the researcher to respond immediately to participants' answers and link it to other questions subsequently. In addition to in-depth interviews, 'participant observation' method was fully utilized during the data collection stage. The participant observation method-type is basically used to collect data on spontaneously and artlessly occurring behaviors in its normal context. Yet, participant observation is usually conducted over a long period of time which ranges from several months to many years in which the investigators is able to acquire accurate facts about individuals and community. The most crucial stages in participant observations in this research included the following: try to get to know the people in the field as much as possible, fit oneself in the selected area, recording data and observations and lastly, consolidate all gathered data (Crawford, F. 2007).

Overall, 18 semi-structured, in-depth interview questions were administrated to respondents who were representative of different groups such as Governor of Nablus Governorate (1), hotel managers (3), front-office hotel employees (1), Chefs (2), self-employed tourist guide (1), academicians (4), Nablus Municipality employees (2), Nablus Municipality related institutes (2), touristic police (1), directorate of tourism and antiquities of Nablus (1), old city antique shop (1), tourism agencies (1).

The process of collecting data was conducted during the months of July and August in 2018 in Nablus city. An appointment was settled with each participant before starting the interview. Questions were translated into Arabic, thus, interviews were carried out in Arabic language and each interview lasted for at least 40 minutes to one hour. All interviews were recorded to be transliterated, besides, taking notes were an essential

part during all interviews. Table 4.1 illustrates the classification of all respondents according to their area.

Table 4.1: The classification of respondents

Respondents	Area
1	Governor of Nablus Governorate
2	Manager of Al-Yasmin Hotel
3	Owner & manager of Saleem Afandi and Khan Al-Wakaleh Hotels
4	Manager of Royal Suites Hotel
5	Front-office employee at Al-Qasr Hotel
6	Chef at Gardens Resort
7	Owner and Chef of Lavash Restaurant
8	Self-employed tour guide
9	Academician at An-Najah Univerity- Faculty of Tourism & Hospitality
10	Academician at An-Najah University- Faculty of Media & Mass Communication
11	Photographer at An-Najah University
12	Manager of a tourism and travel agency
13	Colonel at Tourism and Antiquities Police
14	Nablus Municipality employee-Public relations
15	Nablus Municipality employee-Public relations
16	Manager of the community resource development center
17	Manager of Hamdi Mango Cultural Center in Nablus
18	Director of the Directorate of Tourism and Antiquities in Nablus
19	Architectural engineer and founder of the Heritage Revival Center
20	Owner of Antique shop in old city of Nablus

4.4 Data Analysis and Findings

The main purpose of this study is to identify and present the touristic-planning challenges that Nablus city have been always and still going through due to harsh political conditions; together with, to figure out the outlooks of tourism situation in Nablus from the perspective of participants who works in a tourism-related area in a way or another. To reach the aim of the research, the following objectives are clearly framed as a guide to fulfill the process of data collection and analysis:

- 1- To get the general idea of Nablus' tourism situation, its potential and its impact on Nablus economic status
- 2- To identify the main challenges of tourism planning in Nablus city
- 3- To figure out what is the current political position of Nablus city and likelihood of its stability
- 4- To explore deeply the perception of respondents in terms of their satisfaction with the tourism planning development in Nablus city at local, regional and national levels
- 5- To determine the future prospects of tourism in Nablus city

Qualitative data analysis proceeded according to the usual frameworks which is based on conceptualization, coding and categorizing. During this stage, it is a key part to diagnose, understand and refine the important concepts in the process of qualitative research (Crawford, F. 2007). Gathered data were defined, coded and categorized into specific sections and classified by themes of each question; which will easily lead to the final results. Tables from 4.2 to 4.7 illustrate the percentages of responding each question whether it is good, average or poor. The recorded materials were repeated several times and interpreted to avoid bias, bringing it all together towards explaining the findings.

In general, Palestine was known for its religious tourism since centuries. It is considered as one of the top attractive countries due to its complex history that is full of events and its distinct religious status in comparison with other countries. It is the birthplace of the Prophet Isa and the place from which the Prophet Muhammad made his night journey. Before the occupation and political obstacles take a place, after completing the Hajj, Muslims used to sanctify their pilgrimage by visiting Al-Quds

Al-Sharif and performing the prayer there as it is deemed as the first of the two Qibla and the third of the two Holy Mosques.

Table 4.2: The responses of Participants concerning the overall tourism in Nablus

Interview questions/ Themes	Responses	Good	Average	Poor
Overall state of tourism in Nablus		-	30%	70%
Changes in the flow of tourism in the past decade		100%	-	-
Religious tourism in Nablus		-	20%	80%
Availability of National Tourism Organization (NTO); an institution in charge of tourism		-	-	100%
Tourism potentials in Nablus		85%	15%	-

The pilgrimage to Jerusalem continued for many years, until Palestine has become to suffer from the main barrier to the revitalization of tourism, which cannot be denied is the Zionist occupation. Mainly, as the director of Directorate of Tourism and Antiquities in Nablus said that:

As the state of Palestine seeks liberation, sovereignty and a strong international tourism, must have borders, yet unfortunately, until this moment we own no land, maritime and air boundaries, most crucially, we have no freedom.

Besides, he added:

In the previous time, before the Ministry of Tourism took measures to develop the tourism sector in Palestine, the tourist groups would come through Israeli companies with a flight ticket by Israeli airlines, the airport to which tourists land in is an Israeli airport, although on Palestinian lands, tourist programs are planned by Israeli tourism agencies and sometimes carried out by an Israeli tourist guide; that will deliver incomplete, distorted and falsified information about Palestine and even assign the historical and cultural sites to the State of Israel.

A clear-close example of this scenario is Sabastya village within Nablus city, which has an international recognition. Until this day, only by standing in that area for few hours, great number of touristic convoys pass by, but unfortunately, most of them if not all are for Israeli tourist companies. Notwithstanding, the touristic groups that has been to Sabastya village before the Second Intifada, used to reach almost 50 touristic convoys every day. Nowadays, as Palestinians, they have not benefited greatly from this marginal situation, the tourists were only passing by Palestinian cities; and that was the main purpose of the Israeli companies to prevent the tourists as much as possible from exploring the real historical Palestine especially the northern cities, most notably Nablus despite its touristic attractions, vital and environmental tourism. Indeed, respondent 5 said:

The tourism in Palestine is divided into two parts; first one is the Religious-Christianity tourism which is mainly centered in the south area (Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Hebron), so that its total dependence is on the foreign Christian tourists since Muslim foreigners are not allowed, thus, there is intangible or no Religious-Islamic tourism. The second part is the internal tourism which centered in the north where cities of Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilyah are located.

According to respondent 5 and 4, they mentioned:

Northern cities are completely depending by almost 80 per cent on the internal or domestic tourism, where Israeli-Arabs visit those cities on a daily basis and 20 per cent on business conferences and foreign university students.

By referencing to the final results, clearly, Nablus city is suffering since very long time from prosaic and feeble tourism planning. It generally enjoys a moderate tourism status especially in the summer season when most of expatriates come for a visit; whereas, it is in a state of slumber throughout other times of the year; despite its high prospects in several aspects which lead to touristic flourish, most importantly its distinctive location. It has a high potential of religious, recreational, historical, archeological,

cultural and solidarity tourism, but unfortunately they have not been well exploited, besides, Nablus lacks the adequate sufficient attention from the responsible authorities.

Although, Palestine and particularly Nablus witnessed a notable change in the flow of tourism since 10 years by indicating a considerable increase in the number of restaurants by 10 times, hotels by 5 times, guest houses and tourism agencies. As respondent 18 stated a fact that Nablus has more than 22 licensed tourism agency, 16 licensed hotels and tourist apartments and not less than 20 tourist facility including swimming pools, parks and theme parks across the city and the number can be increased. In addition, the city of Nablus is one of the most popular Palestinian cities in traditional cuisine with more than 80 restaurants. Furthermore, MOTA started a new program which is based on classifying the tourist-oriented restaurants according to the standards of quality of food, diversity, cleanliness, hygiene and hospitality. Another indicator, is the feeling of safety and confidence of tourist during his/her visit to Palestinian territories and the West Bank, especially after the second Intifada, there has been a significant and tangible change in the tourism sector.

Tourism in Nablus city depends mostly on the archeological that goes back to the Roman era and ancient sites such as the old city. Yet, the religious tourism in Nablus is not strong enough. Respondent 18 particularly said:

Biblical sites in Nablus for religious Christian tourism is confined only in one place which is Jacob's Well. Conversely, Islamic tourism in Nablus is out of the question with a negligible rate. However, overall, religious tourism has no notable and tangible growth because there is a conflict between cities around who will attract the most number of tourists. It is well known that Jerusalem and Bethlehem have the biggest chunk of religious tourism in Palestine with no need of any single advertisement. Besides, tourism related institutes did not do the right and smart effort to attract tourists to this only holy place in Nablus.

Most of respondents said that, Joseph's Tomb is a world-minor religious site but mostly sacred to Jews, but Palestinians will never recognize Jews tourists. Nablus enjoys a unique Samaritan community which is considered a small part of the religious tourism and tourism plan in general. The Samaritan community is located on Mount Gerizim, where tourists can learn more about their rites and religious customs. Tour plans in Nablus, rarely includes the exploration of Samaritan community because it is a very small, closed and not internationally recognized community, thus most believe it is not important as Jacob's Well where Christian tourists all around the world come through touristic convoys with not less than 10 echelon every day to visit this holy site.

Respondent 14 said:

We can benefit from the small community of Samaritan by making huge advertisements about it through social networking sites, create booklets and distribute it to the tourists and tourism agencies. As it is the only Samaritan community in the West Bank, this could be an advantage for us and should be exploited smartly.

Some respondents believed that Nablus has rich religious sites, but due to political conflicts and programmed media, it has been touristically oppressed. For instance, there should be one touristic speech directed to the audience to show up Nablus city to the world and imbue a sense of reason that Nablus is one of the safest cities in Palestine compared to others such as Jerusalem and Hebron where settlements are mostly concentrated, in contrast of publishing separate advertisements by each company.

Respondent 6 mentioned:

The touristic speech towards Nablus city is weak. There has been no presence of any material to be presented, discussed and distributed for media publication due to the lack of coordination between tourism institutions where each operates on its own for its own benefits only. Moreover, in comparison with Jerusalem and Bethlehem, there is no mentioned media focus on the religious sites in Nablus, whereas, it is deemed as a holy city for Jews, Muslims and Christians.

In general, there is no National Tourism Organization (NTO) in Palestine that is in charge of tourism situation. Respondent 5 stated:

Regrettably, in Palestine each city works on developing its own tourism sector alone. There is no availability of NTO which enhances the tourism throughout the West Bank. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities is the only public representative of tourism in Palestine. Nonetheless, the private sector plays an important role in pushing the MOTA and decision makers for further boosting of tourism sector in Nablus city.

However, in a small talk with the Minister of MOTA, respondent 5 asked Maayaa:

Why the north is neglected? She responded by:

MOTA's first priorities are Jerusalem and Bethlehem only, the northern cities are not part of the ministry's plan.

Another point respondent 18 and 16 mentioned:

Nablus as an example, the number of attempts by the Ministry of tourism to develop the tourism sector in the city is inappreciable. In other words, it has done nothing, instead it has created constraints and limitations. For instance, the information center has been closed for more than 2 years and turned into landfill. By contrast, Nablus Municipality and the surrounding institutions have done very well under these harsh circumstances.

Different touristic potentials in Nablus are very high especially of what is known as Hiking Tourism or Recreational Tourism as it is located between two mountains. These two types of tourism have become the most common and accepted. Some respondents mentioned that there are some local youth contributions in Nablus, where their main purpose is to identify the city for expatriates and guests in more comprehensive manner. In addition to that, exploration of the other cities and small towns or villages of the West Bank. Those small-scale tours include hiking activities, cook traditional food in the nature, harvest if it is during the season, biking or cycling throughout specific trails between villages, exploring different species and lastly visit

the Palestinian villages, meeting people and participate in their daily tasks. Whereas, unluckily, those local contributions are not recognized yet by MOTA or any other tourism-related authorities. Some interviewees declared, most of tourists in Nablus these days are solidary tourists, delegations, politicians and trainers. Orientalists often choose Nablus as their destination because it literally represents the Palestinian community compared to other cities. By the same token, respondent 2 and 14 said:

Most of the inbound tourists we receive, do not come for tourism in the literal sense. However, their main purpose is to imitate the Palestinian people, to integrate with them, to identify them and the details of their lives in a close proximity under the conditions of the occupation. In short, their visits are limited to the humanitarian and historical aspect rather than leisure and entertainment.

From tour guides perspective in this study, they mentioned that Nablus used to have an information center, located in the downtown to guide the guests, but it was closed for unclear reasons, consequently, this led to resentment of many tour guides because it served as an important tourist guide serving all domestic or foreign tourists by information and maps. The available maps nowadays are designed since 2010 and never updated. As a matter of fact, accomplished maps are mostly commercial by focusing on certain areas such as hotels and neglect many of other archeological sites that represent the city of Nablus such as Roman amphitheater and the Greek Cemetery.

Respondent 8 expressed his displeasure by saying:

Other tour guides and I tried to contact the Ministry of Tourism regarding the development of the sector in the city of Nablus and presented some appropriate suggestions, but to no avail.

Thus, this subject became more commercial than history and culture. Most compelling evidence, nearly all respondents were exasperated due to some ignorant people who run after the money, they dig for antiques for sale and profit. However, they are unaware of the importance of these monuments to the city because during the Great

Invasion in 2002, Al-Qasaba Museum which contained more than 800 antiques were demolished. Almost 200 to 250 pieces were found and grabbed by to the Israeli government. Once these precious pieces are sold by Palestinians, they are presented in the Israeli museums in a way or another. The governor emphasized:

For reasons of greed, some carry out digging operations to detect the archeological antiques in undiscovered sites for sale and profit. In addition to that, when some other Palestinians find relics while building their houses, they hide it to avoid the hindrances that might put by the tourist police or Nablus municipality, so that responsible authorities won't prevent them from completing the construction of the house above the archeological site. All of this lead to the blurring of historical and archeological identity of the city.

Table 4.3: The responses of participants regarding the main challenges

Interview questions/ Themes	Responses	Good	Average	Poor
What are the main challenges that Nablus must overcome?				
Infrastructure		-	25%	75%
Ease of movement		35%	55%	10%
Transportation		100%	-	-
Investment		25%	15%	60%
Management		-	30%	70%
Stakeholders		20%	30%	50%
Finance and budget		-	-	75%
Political		-	-	100%
Conflict		-	-	100%
Perception of residence		75%	25%	-
Hospitality		85%	15%	-
Community		30%	70%	-
Tourism strategy		-	20%	80%

As illustrated in the table above, the city of Nablus suffers from a very inadequate and poor infrastructure. It is divided into two parts. The first one is the service infrastructure (restaurants, hotels, cafes, etc.) where Nablus is doing very well about it. Such services were noticeably increased in number since 2000. While the

infrastructure of sites that attract tourists, the city is still saving the undeveloped touristic sites. In addition to the massive urbanization and population growth, the infrastructure is subjected to a considerable pressure. Besides that, many respondents have mentioned the relationship of corruption to infrastructure. For example, once the responsible bodies start some repairs in the city and finish it, other excavations take a place in the same place after a week or two! Which can be seen as a sufficient evidence of poor planning. Because of that, sometimes the tour guides are forced to park in a remote location due to unavailability of bus and car parking.

Although, the transportations are available all the time with a very reasonable price, the ease of movement, is moderately difficult but still a bit easier than some other worldwide touristic destinations such as Amman, New York and London, caused by the significant increase in vehicles and residents, but without changing and enhancing the streets. Regarding this point, respondent 5 stated:

In general, it is very difficult for the tourist to withstand the noise of the city, congestion and chaos unlike the citizen. When the foreigner comes for tourism, he comes for comfort, entertainment and to enjoy the advantages of the city. Thus, it is very expected that there are amenities for tourist most importantly the ease of movement within the city.

Nablus is the most affected city by political mayhem. It has been and still deemed as 'The Capital of Terrorism' by the Israeli government. If any political upheaval takes place in Nablus or around the city, all roadblocks will be closed immediately, as it was in 2015 and 2017 during the 'Knife War', Nablus was deeply distressed where most restaurants on the verge of bankruptcy. After the invasion of 2002, the old city was put into a state of decline. The revolt of the Palestinians at that time did not bring them any advantage, however, it brought them back for years due to the tremendous ruination and the huge number of negatives that inflicted the Palestinians specifically

is the severance of tourism from the city, besides that, being besieged from several sides by the Israeli roadblocks and subjected to security turmoil.

In general, the Israeli Entity does not want the Palestinian tourism to evolve, because tourism first and foremost is conveying a general image of the state/city to the whole world, thus, once a tourist enters the city, this poses a danger to authorities of occupation. Respondent 5 stated a story:

An American trainer came from US Consulate to train the special needs in Northern cities of the West Bank. The consulate told him not stay in Nablus because it is not safe over there. I was there at that time and I told the director of the security that I will take the responsibility of him. I took him to the old city, we ate the 'Kunafeh', we did shopping in the small antique shops, later on I took him to the cinema and Sama Nablus Park. After that, the American coach was surprised by the life in Nablus and told me that he would report to the consulate on what they have told him.

As a result of the unstable political situations, the touristic investment is quite poor. Unfortunately, there is no diversity not even an existence of investment by international companies in Nablus. Most businesses if not all are initiated, implemented and managed by Palestinians. The failure is confined to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Nablus Municipality and An-Najah National University. Nablus city does not have sufficient qualified manpower with a tourism degree to work in tourism areas. For instance, it is difficult to find a qualified receptionist to do the right job in the city's hotels, or a qualified cook. Thus, there is a shortcoming from the Ministry of Education, which must provide a vocational education to carry equal attention to other studies such as science, medicine, engineering, etc. Until now, Nablus does not have tourism agencies that bring tourist groups, yet, they are ticket offices only.

Most of respondents agreed that tourism management is quite weak and nonexistent to some extent. There is only an increase of the somehow unqualified restaurants and hotels. There is no tangible tourism, in spite of the many meetings regarding this sector in the province. The situation in the city need be addressed in several aspects to attract more foreign tourists, not only the '48 Arabs' who used to come to Nablus for more than 15 years.

Stakeholders and owners of tourist places in Nablus including restaurants, hotels and resorts, 70 per cent of them are not eligible to manage such projects and businesses. In Nablus most of the owners depend on the succession system. For example, when a millionaire wants to run a hotel business, the person will hire the family members in the administrative departments whether they are qualified or not. Regrettably, most tourism entrepreneurs do not hire the touristically qualified ones, they always prefer to hire unqualified workforce with cheap quality and low salaries. Consequently, this will lead to the failure of the project altogether. Besides that, respondent 5 added:

A new hotel has opened and I went for some judgments due to my long experience in this field. Surprisingly, there were no qualified staff to work in the hospitality industry. Even the investor himself had to pay almost \$ 1 million due to some errors and inaccuracy in the design of the hotel. Thus, if there were bodies or institutions that guide and teach well the right education in the tourism sector, all these repeated mistakes would not have occurred and we would almost have a thriving tourism sector.

On the other hand, the residents lack the adequate and full awareness of the market and customer demand. All businessmen have the same idea, either establishing a new hotel or a restaurant with no different features. They lack the knowledge about how to expand out of this conventional circle. There is no diversity in the Nabulsi market to attract tourists and no distinction in competitiveness. For example, all restaurants in Nablus have the same menus, food and meals but with different names only.

It is very well known that tourism is the largest foreign currency earner. But Nablus Municipality is facing an awful financial crisis, with its budget, 65 per cent is going for salaries and 35 per cent is too scarce to support and improve the tourism sector. Thus, the city encounters a deficit situation. The Nabulsi society benefited and harmed from tourism at the same time. The main advantage that is a vital source of hard/foreign currency in Nablus, besides, it leads to a noticeable increase in the local market activity. On the other hand, tourism was the cause of high prices, excessive increase in restaurants, and since Palestine is being more importer rather than exporter, the demand for food has increased and consequently the prices increased too. Note that the volume of agriculture production before the Palestinian Authority was 35 per cent, but now it is only 5 per cent. Other unfavorable impacts such as drugs, prostitutions and foreign culture in general that does not suit the conservative people of Nablus. However, people of Nablus community accept everything as long as it does not surpass their traditional and religious beliefs.

All respondents agreed that tourism in Nablus is very crucial and seen as the 'Petrol' of its economy because we own no raw materials, natural resources and heavy industries. It is the main and first tool to bring in the difficult currency, increase the direct and indirect employment, boost the marketing and business situation. Besides, it is a prime mean that is carried out to change the general patterned image of Palestine that is delivered through the directed media. While it was mentioned that it is deemed as the lifeline business particularly on Saturday and Sunday due to the high rate of internal tourism and the basis of the national income of the city. Tourism in Nablus also supports the industry mainly by bringing new goods, materials and machines that do not exist in the city.

Consequently, tourism is definitely treated as an important economic and social force in Palestine’s future. Respondent 18 indicated:

We were supposed to work on the tourism sector since 1994 until now, so that we can definitely make it the oil of Nablus’ economy. Whereas, unfortunately, there is no guidance, no responsible authorities or parties benefiting from these foreigners efficiently.

Table 4.4: The responses of participants regarding the tourism-economy correlation

Interview questions/ Themes	Responses	Good	Average	Poor
What is the role of tourism; especially its economic impact?		100%	-	-
Do you think with respect to all the problems in this area, discussion about tourism is not an important item on the agenda of decision-makers?		10%	10%	80%
Do you consider tourism as an important economic and social force in the future of Palestine?		100%	-	-
Has there been any meeting/cooperation/agreement with your neighbor regarding this industry?		10%	-	90%

However, in the present moment, most respondents agreed that discussing about this sector in the agendas of the decision makers is very marginalized. For instance, through the media, tourism might occupy a huge space but in reality, tourism is very weak and intangible. Until now, there aren’t any advertisements for marketing of tourism in Nablus because the media is ultimately biased. And if marketing was put into actions, it only covers the known ‘*Kunafah*’. Sadly, when elections take place, people tend to vote according to their political interests rather than considering what these decision-makers will offer to benefit the country/city. Economically, there has not been any prominent change in Nablus city. As an illustration, the agriculture’s budget is 1 per cent, however, the military’s budget is 24 per cent although Palestine has no an independent military base due to the colonization. With this mentioned, this

percentage has to be equally divided among economic sectors like agriculture and most importantly tourism.

Most participants have no knowledge about any meeting/cooperation/agreement with neighboring countries regarding this industry. Whereas, the fact that is tourism-related institutions suffer the existence of many plans and projects, but with no single application on real life. Some respondents believed in a fact that Western countries treat Palestinians government as a child who asks for his candy. Once the government tries to speak out about the occupation hazards and how it hinders the huge projects, the Westerns hush it up with mock meetings and agreements. Respondent 5 emphasized:

Many Palestinians studied abroad, thus, in this case economically we should be better than Singapore! But what is happening is exactly the opposite. In Palestine we don't invest these people at all and do not benefit from their experiences, but we continue to change the curricula of the education and work on testing new plans on students. Therefore, all of this has a negative impact on the society. There is no significant development not only in the tourism sector, but in various fields.

Table 4.5: The responses of participants regarding the tourism-policy correlation

Interview questions/ Themes	Responses	Good	Average	Poor
What are the hazards of occupation?		100%	-	-
Would you please specify the challenges that you are experiencing under the occupation and its implications for tourism?		35%	40%	25%
What is the prospect for peace and resolution?		10%	5%	85%
Assuming there is a solution to the conflict; for instance, two state solution; how will you plan and manage tourism during the post-solution?		75%	25%	-

The Israeli occupation is the main, biggest and real stumbling block for many developments of most sectors in Palestine, the first of which is tourism. On the local

level in the city of Nablus, despite the years of the invasion that has surpassed, it is still deemed as the terrorist city in the eyes of the Israeli government. Therefore, the city of Nablus is surrounded by several sieges as mentioned previously in chapter 3. The Israeli occupation also controls most of the historical and archeological sites in the city of Nablus despite being classified under zone A. Moreover, hazards of occupation are constituted in impeding the work of the Palestinian Authority and tourism police in any area that could be intended to explore and dig the necessary excavations to show the buried historic and civilized side in the city. As an evidence respondent 8 mentioned some examples:

It is strictly forbidden to have any archaeological excavations without obtaining a permit from the Israeli government. For example, there was an ancient Tahini factory, malfunctioned since many years. A business man once bought it to turn it into a commercial complex. During the demolition and excavation, a Roman cemetery was found. At this moment, the Israeli army and the preventive security surrounded the area. This site was closed and the businessman was fined a very high sum. The Israeli government is controlling the monuments through underground detectors and sensors.

Furthermore, Nablus municipality employees, tour guides and hotel managers insisted that the occupation was a sufficient reason to impede the tourism movement. For example, during the political confusions resulting from assassinations, many meetings and visits of foreign delegations were postponed because of the unexpected political tension. Similarly, many tours have been canceled until the volatile political situation calms down. According to respondent 14 and 15:

From the political perspective, yes there is a big struggle. Since the beginning of the second Intifada, many of the world's embassies and representatives continue to classify Nablus as a city whose visit is not recommended unless for an urgent mission, not even to stay there overnight. This classification is announced by the United Nations by giving each city a certain color (red, yellow and green) which indicates its level of safety, while Nablus is classified as yellow.

Other than that, hotel managers and front-office employee mentioned that occupancy rates in Nablus hotels do not exceed 10 per cent of each during the critical political situations.

The first thing that catches tourists' attention whenever they enter any city in the West Bank are the security checkpoints and the heavily Israeli soldiers, which tourists have to encounter in a daily routine and during their tour plans. This occurrence highly impacts the general image of the safety and security of the cities since tourists have never experienced such rigorism and extreme chaos in their homelands.

Post-solution phase is the biggest dream of all Palestinian in the country and in the diaspora. Once this phase takes a place, there will be great development and prosperity. Palestine will become connected with the outside world, which will facilitate many imports and exports. In addition to that, the establishment of factories and airports. Most notably, Palestine will have its own main borders and crossings that are free of restrictions. In short, there will be a tremendous renaissance in the state. Religiously, Palestine will restore its unique world-wide position where Muslim pilgrims will be able to sanctify their Hajj and visit the religious sites freely. The government and capitals will be able to institute giant projects instead of making only service projects such as recreational water parks, theme parks, telpherage between the mountains, and factories of all kinds most notably waste sorting plants that until now cannot be established due to the occupation control over everything. Overall, the State of Palestine will be marketed as any other independent and progressive state. Thus, the general image of Palestine will directly change from an occupied and dark state into self-governing and free state.

Under this moment, the governor stated:

I wish there will be a political development related to our Palestinian de facto that allows us to control all historical sites in general and in Nablus in particular.

Expectedly, most participants were pessimistic concerning the prospect of peace and resolution. Some of them stated the traditional phrase of ‘Who doesn’t through the sieve is blind’. For example, the ‘Deal of the Century’ actually started since 2000 when the Segregation Wall was fully established and after the occupation took a stronger grip on areas C along with the considerable increase of Zionist’s settlements. So, once Palestinian look to the reality and study it, there is no even a chance for peace. There is only one state. Eventually, the people are living solely in cities under stronger rule and greater control. Once peace treaty is accomplished, most important is to prepare first of which an appropriate infrastructure due to the huge numbers of Muslim tourists who will visit the holy land. Respondent 16 said regarding the two states solutions:

Assuming the two-states solutions based on what? Based on the borders of June 4, or based on the 1994 resolution which is almost impossible. At one point we tried to apply the idea of ‘Agro-tourism’, but it failed because all of natural areas, green landscape and mountains fall under Area C or either settlements. However, if the two-states solution is released minimum based on the borders of June 4, then yes due to this potential we might expand and apply the term of ‘Agro-tourism’.

Table 4.6: The responses of participants concerning the Hospitality in Nablus

Interview questions/ Themes	Responses		
	Good	Average	Poor
Are the people in Palestine ready to accept tourism and tourists with open arm?	85%	15%	-
Will there be a conflict between tourists and residents in case of solution to the conflict?	-	-	100%

From the hospitality perspective in the meantime and post-solution stage, respondents were absolutely certain that people in Palestine are always willing to accept the tourists

with all love and respect. However, some respondents said that Nablus citizens are very hospitable people and they are fully prepared to welcome the foreigners at their houses or restaurants at any time under any circumstance. In the light of this matter, respondent 2 disclosed:

People in Palestine are hospitable, they often invite others for a cup of tea, coffee or lunch and this is what surprises foreigners the most. In the midst of the hard times and political turmoil, when I was talking to tourist groups, I used to tell them that Nablus city is safer than New York, Los Angeles and London, because in every single minute or two there is a case of rape, murder and theft. But in Nablus, every five or ten years, one case happens. Because the society is coherent and prevents this kind of anomalies, so there are no criminals in the absolute sense.

Other responses that summarize these questions, participant 18 particularly based on his experience, said:

Tourists who visit Sabastya village and stay there over nights in the guest houses told me that we can sleep with doors open. We reached this level of high safety because we were able to distribute the culture of tourism successfully in that village. Tourists would participate in village activities, eat traditional Palestinian food, go for a walk at night with no fear of assaults, harassments, crimes or theft. This in itself is a great achievement.

Indeed, this explains that once the citizens understand the importance of tourism and tourism culture and what values it might add to their lives and economy, they will take care of it and develop it intelligently. All respondents never expect any conflicts to be existed even if the Palestinian-Israeli battle is resolved. On the contrary, in complete agreement of respondents, they concurred that people are very honest and worry about the interest of the visitor as it is their interest. Whereas, some respondents were disappointed due to their beliefs that touristic culture especially in Nablus is still weak and must be spread and bloomed until the city reaches a high level openness and this kind of culture.

Respondent 14 stressed on this point by saying:

It is a must to continue to promote the local tourism culture. We urgently need to aware the citizens of the importance of tourism and its positive returns. In addition to that, to raise awareness about the importance of the archeological artifacts and preservation of the historical and archeological sites, not to sabotage and encircling them. In general, the people have an acceptance on this subject, but they need to be more educated.

While respondent 3 stated that:

Still, tourism sector must gain an understanding of hospitality and the efficient integration of ethical attitudes such as respect and generosity towards tourists among stakeholders, tradesmen, and students across universities. With such a mindset, tourists are left with a gratifying and appealing impression of Palestinian hospitality.

However, some interviewees stated a fact that Nablus lacks the diversity in restaurants.

To put it differently, there are no restaurants that serve and specialized in Turkish, Asian, Mexican, American and Indian cuisines. In Ramallah for example, a new restaurant specialized in Turkish food with disciplined Turkish chefs has opened recently. Besides that, the restaurant brought in the culture of Turkey to Palestine through this smart business, where most Palestinians and guests came to try it which in turn will revive the tourism movement in the city. Now, this restaurant receives a plenty number of customers every day because of its uniqueness and the first of its kind in the West Bank. However, only 2-3 restaurants in Nablus are serving the good and right services, yet, this indicate that Nablus need to work more on the restaurants' standards including workforce, hygiene and food quality by starting inspection campaigns. Violations should be applied to any restaurant and café that doesn't follow the rules and regulations. Businessmen in Nablus are still traditional. Residents have never heard of a restaurant that is completely different in its food and theme from the existing ones. Another key point, culture in Palestine is different from city to another.

Nablus is a little bit more conservative compared to others such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah where alcoholic drinks are served in most restaurants and hotels. In addition, Nablus community prefers decent clothing everywhere, and tourists must respect the city's customs and traditions.

Table 4.7: The responses of participants regarding the future prospects of tourism in Nablus

Interview questions/ Themes	Responses	Good	Average	Poor
How do you see the future of tourism in Palestine and in Nablus?		-	25%	75%
Do you have a VISION for tourism in Nablus?		20%	65%	15%

Overall, most interviewees were not clear enough about how do they see the future of tourism in Palestine and Nablus specifically due to the fear of any political chaos and intrusions in the city at any time, thus, they expect almost nothing. However, yes they do have a vision and they dream of a better tourism like any other independent country. Some respondents were excited expressing their vision of tourism. They believed that if tourism is properly operated, Nablus with a high chance might occupy the third level after Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Equally important, the future vision is basically to make Nablus a major tourist destination in the northern West Bank due to its very high potentials, besides, the religious leniency that characterizes the State of Palestine as a whole and the city of Nablus in particular from other countries. On the other hand, respondent 7 put forward:

From my personal perspective, if the Palestinian government can control the crossings, tourist agencies can issue visit visas to the State of Palestine and people will flock to the Palestinian airports officially and safely, here, true tourism can be successfully achieved in its true image and conventional sense as it is in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt and other countries.

He also suggested:

It is highly needed to cooperate in peace agreements and be more equitable to the Palestinian people through the peace negotiations conducted by the PLO, there should be more pressure on the Israeli side to achieve a high returns or yields of tourism than it is currently.

Nevertheless, some other respondents pointed the significance of the vocational education in the fields of tourism and hotels to fulfill a splendid tourism future and an excellent vision. It is not possible to develop any tourist sector in the case of a workforce that does not have an adequate degree in the field and has no knowledge of tourism as it is the case today in most of restaurants in the city and some hotels. Besides, most businesses owned by families are managed by them too, which can lead to management problems and insufficient quality services, thus, loss in returns. In future and upcoming vision, this traditional norm should die out.

It is worth to mention also, that to have a thriving tourism in Nablus, the city should be ecologically clean. Yet, the level of cleanliness is very low. Unfortunately, the citizens believe it is only important to have a clean house no matter how the city looks from the outside. The municipality issued some rules and regulations regarding this issue, but to carry the violation there should be a witness and evidence that this person has threw the garbage.

In fact, according to participant's beliefs, Nablus city can reach a very high level of tourism in the future both locally and internationally where it can be at the same level of many other worldwide tourist destinations, but this situation can become a reality only if an auspicious and satisfactory solution is established by both ends. Even though the Palestinian businessmen in the diaspora will come to accomplish the most

luxurious projects and share their experiences until the world cannot distinguish between Nablus and Tel Aviv.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The tourism is a complex international phenomenon of a multi-dimensions. It contains political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and educational dimensions. It is the top export category in many of developing countries; yet, it is ranked the third after chemicals and fuels and ahead of automotive products (UNWTO 2018). Tourism is more than what we imagine and perceive. It contributes towards environmental protection, cultural preservation, economic growth, large-scale development, job opportunities and doubtless contribution to peace and security. Unfortunately, some destinations have been extremely suffered from a stagnant tourism sector due to longitudinal harsh political chaos in the last several decades. Undisputedly, some destinations, including Palestine, have been subjected to lack of planning and negligence notwithstanding their rich heritage and tourism resources. By far, Palestine is an example of such neglect that was exhibited and researched in the case of Nablus city.

Nablus demonstrates good potentials to find a foothold on the Palestinian and global tourism map. Nevertheless, achieving this endeavor is subject to overcoming a number of challenges and obstacles facing tourism sector in general. The political instability, particularly in Nablus, and the overall turbulences in Palestine because of the Israeli occupation associated with the brutal measures of the Israeli army; represents the major obstacle against any attempts or plans for development of tourism sector.

The so-called security siege imposed on Nablus for about eight years (i.e., in the periods between 2000-2008), impeded accessibility to the city either by international or local visitors. Not only tourism has been affected by the blockade policy, the entire sectors and clusters have been collapsed including human beings and the entire society. The processes of tourism planning and development not only has been weakened by political turmoil, it also was affected by the lack of properly designed initiatives and policies by the Palestinian National Authority's relevant ministries and agencies.

Therefore, this sector suffers from the haphazard planning and management and lack of investment opportunities. This has resulted in tourism to remain insignificant sector, which can be seen by lack of supporting infrastructure in highly attractive places such as Sabastya village and old city of Nablus. Furthermore, the limited number of tour operators, guides, and tourism experts are additional factors that hamper tourism potentials to be realized.

To conclude, tourism in Nablus is not consolidated and in spite of its potentials is still an immature industry. It needs a comprehensive analysis and exploration of weaknesses in order to formulate a credible policy towards its development. Last but not the least, there should be a unified agreement among the concerned parties and public at large to overcome at least some of the challenges that are associated with national and domestic environment.

5.1 Implications and Suggestions

Results of the research highlighted some important issues that Nablus city has been suffering since a very long time in tourism planning. The implemented findings could be utilized for further developments by Nablus municipality, the Ministry of Tourism

and Antiquities, managers, touristic police, stakeholders, governors and other related tourism institutions. Moreover, in order to achieve a remarkable positive change in tourism, it is a must to separate politics from tourism, because anyone who publicly speaks out and declares politics has a negative impact on tourism and creates political chaos in the place, as well as conveying a dangerous and distorted image of the city.

A professional marketing strategy should be accomplished with the help of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and tourism related private sectors. Furthermore, there should be a special tour guide for each city in the West Bank. Unfortunately, in the cities of north, there is only one licensed tour guide. Nablus, should establish tour guide programs for those who are interested instead of requiring to study 2 years in Bethlehem to obtain the license which can be deemed as expensive and time consuming.

It would be an important step to start cooperating with neighboring countries first of them is Jordan since it is the custodian on Palestine's holy sites. There should be agreements and prior planning with Jordan regarding tourism, given its long and deep experience in this field. For example, to cooperate with the Jordanian tourist agencies to design a fully integrated tourist program to Palestine specifically in the northern cities of the West Bank, such as Nablus.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities which is the only governmental body within the country responsible for tourism should design new maps for the city of Nablus with the help of Nablus municipality. Besides that, more touristic signs must be implemented to guide the tourists along with restoring the information center which is considered an important part of the strategic tourism management.

The municipality of Nablus should start a plan for developing events of religious sites through improving the calendar of local events (e.g. Christmas Eve and Easter Holiday). Create concerts with the help of An-Najah University Theatre, scout's street fairs, and by creating a slogan for the city along with destination branding and promotion campaign in Nablus, a hub for multi-cultural tourists.

The Ministry of Education with the help of MOTA should establish a high-class culinary arts and hospitality school in Nablus to offer vocational training or programs, consequently, this will help in rising the awareness of high-quality services, hygiene standards and touristic culture. International partners could be brought in to provide and share knowledge, besides, design a correct curriculum to ensure high educational standards.

5.2 Limitations and Future Studies

Since the target sample was located in Nablus, travelling to the city was a burden. If the researcher could have a permanent station in the city, that would facilitate the frequency of the contacts. Searching for participants, collect their names, contact them, setting the interview appointments and looking for their work place venue was immensely exhausting. In addition, some participants apologized for not being able to do the interview, which made it worse and required more time to look for other participants. Another limitation was the unexpected Israeli roadblocks that caused delays and postponement of some interviews. Further research can utilize a quantitative method to capture a large population for a deeper investigation. Perhaps, conducting a research involving citizens can reveal public's perception about challenges and difficulties in making tourism sector a formidable economic and social

force for development, which later might help in figuring out a permanent solution for tourism development from citizens' perspective.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is the overall state of ‘tourism’ in Palestine in general and in Nablus in Particular?
2. Has there been any changes in the flow of tourism in the past decade?
3. What is the role of tourism; especially its economic impact?
4. Overall there is strong flow of tourism to this region, especially religious tourism. What is the extent of this sector in Palestine and Nablus?
5. Do you have national tourism organization (NTO); an institution in charge of tourism?
6. What are the main challenges that Nablus must overcome?
 - a. Infrastructure
 - b. Ease of movement
 - c. Political
 - d. Investment
 - e. Hospitality
 - f. Perception of residents
 - g. Conflict
 - h. Transportation
 - i. Management
 - j. Stakeholders
 - k. Community
 - l. Finance and budget
 - m. Tourism strategy
7. What are the tourism potentials in Nablus?
8. How do you see the future of tourism in Palestine and in Nablus?
9. What is the prospect for peace and resolution?
10. What are the hazards of occupation?
11. Would you please specify the challenges that you are experiencing under the occupation and its implications for tourism?

12. Do you have a VISION for tourism?
13. Assuming there is a solution to the conflict; for instance, two state solution; how will you plan and manage tourism during the post-solution?
14. Do you think with respect to all the problems in this area, discussion about tourism is not an important item on the agenda of decision-makers?
15. Do you consider tourism as an important economic and social force in the future of Palestine?
16. Has there been any meeting/cooperation/agreement with your neighbor regarding this industry?
17. Are the people in Palestine ready to accept tourism and tourists with open arm?
18. Will there be a conflict between tourists and residents in case of solution to the conflict?