

# A REVIEW OF ‘TOURISTS OR PILGRIMS: CLASSIFICATION OF THE VISITORS AT THE BAPTISM SITE OF JESUS CHRIST IN JORDAN’

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this mini-review is to evaluate the research of Mohammad Ibrahim Al zoubi and Yahaya Ibrahim of ‘Tourists or Pilgrims: Classification of the Visitors at the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ in Jordan’. In the study, the authors analyze the reasons and motivations driving Jordanians Christian visitors to visit the baptism site and examined the potential outcomes of the classification of the visitors at the holy site. The researchers used the quantitative method in the study by handed out 120 questionnaires among Jordanians Christians visitors. Accordingly, the researchers have classified the visitors into five groups: Religious journeys (pilgrims), cultural pilgrimage tourists, historical pilgrimage tourists, secular tourists and educational tourism.*

**Keywords:** Jordan, Religious tourism, Baptism, Religious pilgrimage.

## INTRODUCTION

This mini-review intends to evaluate the research entitled ‘Tourists or Pilgrims: Classification of the Visitors at the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ in Jordan’ written by Mohammad Ibrahim Al zoubi and Yahaya Ibrahim and published in International Review of Management and Marketing journal. The study began with discussing some studies which argue that pilgrims on their experience for the religious journey will cross the path into secular-tourists, in addition, indicating the importance of religious tourism world-wide and Jordan as holy land in particular, by discussing the most important sites for Christians in Jordan by focusing on the baptism site in terms of the history of the site, the geographic location, the site value to Christians, the development of the site by government and the number of international and local visitors to the site in the period from 2009-2018 including relative change every year and market share.

The research includes a recent and previous literature review related to the research topic. Several types of research related to religious tourism, religious visitor’s motivations and the pilgrimage and its multifaceted phenomenon discussed. For instance, the study of (Ebadi, 2015) that in his research classified the Muslims visitors in Klalid nabi shrine in Iran. The multifaceted phenomenon of

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religious tourism by (Collins-Kreiner, 2018; Durán-Sánchez, Álvarez-García, del Río-Rama & Oliveira, 2018; Olsen, 2013; Olson, 2006). Some of the researchers discussed the connection between recreation tourism and pilgrimage such as (Kartal, Tepeci & Atlı, 2015; Kliot & Collins-Kreiner 2000; Kumar & Singh 2015; Terzidou, Scarles & Saunders, 2017), and others, argued some of religious tourism approaches (Eade, 1992; Fleischer, 2000; Kozak, 2002; Rinschede, 1992) and those who discussing the distinguish between pilgrim and tourist such as (Hovi, 2010; Irimias & Mitev, 2016; Jirásek, 2014), the development of the baptism site (Mustafa, 2014), the strength belief of British and Swedish tourist towards Jordan's holy sites (Harahsheh, Morgan & Edwards, 2007; Harahsheh, 2009). The researchers also discussed the current situation of religious tourism in Jordan by indicating the study of (Bader, 2012).

All the research included in the literature review does not provide any pieces of evidence of how and what motivates Christian tourists to visit the holy site. Or how related those visitors to the holy site in Jordan. Thus, the study is the first study providing empirical evidence about the motivations of Christians local Jordanians to visit the baptism site in Jordan. In other words, the research is a good example of explaining the nature of religious tourism in Jordan and the motivations and perceptions of Christians visitor, which is a quite new approach in this type of research.

## DISCUSSION

According to the findings of the research, the visitors perceived the baptism site differently, some visitors' travel with assortments of motivations to the Baptism site. The purpose for 24.2% of the visitors to the site is a pilgrimage, while 15.8% have relaxation and entertainment (non-religious) motivations, on the other hand, 12.5% by religious reasons and 47.5% of visitors motivated by historical, cultural and research respectively. Data also showed that 23.3% of Christian Jordanian visitors believe in the sacred of the site, while 40.8% considered the site a touristic and cultural site, while 30.8% they preferred to combine and declared that it's a sacred, cultural and touristic site, only 5% were unable to classify the site.

It's clear that the motivations and reasons among the respondents do not have a comparable pattern among them and obvious that the visitors perceived the baptism site differently. The explanation behind this logical inconsistency that some groups of Christian devotees they perceived the baptism as pilgrimage site while different groups of Christians they perceived it as a historical and cultural site, where it's considered as an opportunity for researchers in the future to narrow the scope to special groups of Christianity. On the other hand, baptism offers different types of entrainments that are pull factors for visitors with non-religious motivations. It is basic to contemplate that these motivations are evolving and changing. Hence, the visitors may look for numerous experiences and then switch their motivations unknowingly. Therefore, visitors classified into five forms of tourism and pilgrimage: religious journeys (pilgrims), cultural pilgrimage tourists, historical pilgrimage tourists, secular tourists and educational tourism.

## CONCLUSION

The site of Baptism takes varied tourism assignments for its visitors. It has turned out to be evident that usually difficult to distinguish oneself from the visitors as indicated by discrete motivation. Visitors can show the overlapping to the minimum or most extreme degree. The research contributes to our understanding of Christian visitor's motivations and awareness among the visitors of the baptism. The research does this in two ways, firstly, based on the results of research, secondly, the literature review supported the idea those visitors able to switch motivation. The study is also making a contribution to tourism decision-makers in Jordan and academics of understanding the different motivations among the Christian visitors, which will help to promote the site. The research also can be extended for future researches by narrowing the scope to special groups of Christianity such as Catholic or Orthodox.

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