

RESEARCH ABOUT TOURISM VALUE CHAIN IMPACT IN RELIGIOUS TOURIST DESTINATIONS FROM LEBANON

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Abstract: This paper aims to study the impact of tourism value chain in religious tourist destinations and formulate a value chain model for developing religious tourist destinations from Lebanon. In this sense, a systematic literature review was conducted to identify the lapses in the religious tourism supply chain which provides adequate revenue to the tourism sector. The identified lapses shaped the objectives and research methodology of this study and guided the authors to develop a theoretical framework (survey) for the smooth flow of people and other services along this supply chain. Collaborative efforts of all stakeholders at different levels can make the proposed framework work effectively. For data collection, this study adopts a quantitative analysis, the descriptive survey, with a set of step-by-step processes that has been proposed to understand the religious tourism supply chain. The main results of this research show the strong impact of tourism value chain in religious tourist destinations which deserves the attention of cultural and tourism policymakers from Lebanon. In addition, the results of this research can be taken into account by other countries with different religions for developing their own tourism value chain. The importance of the study is far-reaching. The findings can contribute to the expansion of supply chain in religious tourist destinations and aware of the importance of reconstruction solution to the tourism value chain. Finally, this study proposes a list of conclusions that would benefit future researchers to close the lapse in the tourism value chain on religious tourist destinations.

Keywords: tourism value chain, religious tourist destinations, supply chain, religious tourism, Lebanon

JEL Classification: Z32, L83, L89

1 Introduction

Our study focuses on religious tourism from Lebanon and will present the tourism value chain in tourist destinations with historical, cultural and especially religious importance for tourism sector. This paper investigates the impact of the tourism value chain in religious tourism destinations from Lebanon and discusses how countries in such a situation can increase their potential for developing the religious tourism value chain. A possible solution is suggested through the use and practice of tourism destination management, as this approach can help better prepare nations for unexpected instability and uncertainty in the tourism value chain (Kabalan & Stanciulescu, 2018). Some stakeholders believe that the problems of the deteriorating value chain in Lebanon's tourist destinations could be solved through tourism. The presence of many stakeholders only adds to the complexity of this research area (Apaydin *et al.*, 2016).

This study demonstrates the strong role of the tourism value chain on the economy and religious tourism industry from Lebanon, which deserves the attention of cultural and tourism policy makers. In addition, the results of this research can also be taken into account by other countries with different religions (Budovich, 2023). From the value chain model, it is known that

many aspects determine the success of religious tourism management, including the role of the government, investors or business people, as well as the individuals or communities who contributed to building religious tourism destinations (Muhardi *et al.*, 2023).

The paper is an attempt to identify and model the factors that contribute to the religious tourism supply chain from Lebanon. The identified factors and their modeling will further contribute to the revitalization of the religious tourism sector by highlighting the factors that stakeholders believe will affect the travel decisions of religious tourists. The research has been organized in the following sequence. Following the introduction is the literature review section. The research methodology segment describes the impact of tourism value chain in religious tourist destinations from Liban through a quantitative analysis, the descriptive survey. The subsequent section discusses the results and conclusions. The last section describes the limitations and scope for further studies.

2 Literature Review

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world, and tourism planning is considered a prerequisite for success (Issa & Altinay, 2006; Robinson *et al.*, 2020). Tourism development and planning should consider the value-added activities that form a tourism value chain. Religious tourism (traditionally known as pilgrimage) is an essential element of society. The religious tourism trade adds significant contribution to the tourism sector in terms of revenue, employment, cultural and destination visibility, etc. Infrastructure development and government initiatives have made religious tourism a lucrative business for various tourist destinations.

In contrast to the same, lack of attention and standard operating procedures have made the religious tourism supply chain vulnerable to various threats. People-oriented religious destinations will face many more challenges to maintain people's faith and emotions (Mittal & Sinha, 2022). The rapid development of modern service industries has a significant impact on religious tourism in many ways. Among them, the progress of information technology and e-commerce has brought opportunities and challenges to religious tourism. With the value chain theory, this paper firstly made an analysis of the distinctive features, forms and limitations of the value chain of religious tourism and proposed the solution of reconstructing the tourism value chain in religious tourism destinations (Lao & Hu, 2007; Sutomo *et al.*, 2023).

The ancient tradition of pilgrimage is transforming into the modern theme of religious tourism. Although religious travel represents tourist characteristics, the intention, purpose and spirit of the tourists remain the same. This transition has resulted in the commercialization of religious travel with comfortable travel packages. Tourism is a sensitive service industry. Well-coordinated and best efforts come to naught when the service supply chain is disrupted by external factors/natural disasters. Any mundane fuss in one link affects all the links, creating a swing along the entire supply chain. The main components of a tourism supply chain ensure a smooth flow of people from source to destinations. Later, it became necessary to manage the supply chain of this tourism sector for a smooth flow of people from source to destination (Sinha & Mittal, 2021).

2.1 The Religious Tourism Value Chain

Religion and spirituality are still among the most common motivations for travel (Zamani-Farahani *et al.*, 2018). Religious tourism is a subset of tourism that emerged from the ancient tradition of pilgrimage. The intention, purpose and spirit remain pious with religious tourism, but the journey has become touristy characteristics (Lin & Fu, 2020). Modern religious travel is a pilgrimage with long-term tourist characteristics. The various causes of this transformation are destination visibility, last-mile connectivity, affordability and annual family vacations. This transformation has also led to the commercialization of religious travel with star-studded customized tour packages (Sinha & Mittal, 2021). Religious tourism can prevail against climate conditions and the numbers of tourists do not fluctuate dramatically through seasonal changes or

adverse weather. For this type of tourists, the destination is not the only thing that matters. Their experience begins at the very beginning of the starting point and encompasses all the paths and events they encounter along the way. Religious tourism plays a prominent role in people's social lives (Nasiri, 2021).

The value chain of religious tourism explores the values and implications of pilgrimage as experienced by religious travelers. It identifies and explores both spiritual and social values as well as political and economic values throughout the value chain of the tourist destination. The value chain of religious tourism also investigates the hierarchical relationship between the attributes of pilgrimage, the consequences that senior pilgrims have achieved and the satisfaction of personal values as the final goal. The clear links are found between the attributes, consequences and values with social interactions that are achieved by maintaining contact with friends, followed by spiritual succor and support that connects with supporting cathedrals, praying and soul redemption. These findings offer new insights into the pilgrimage literature (Kuo *et al.*, 2019).

The value chain for religious tourism connects pilgrimage features to pilgrim advantages, which ultimately meet their personal values objectives. Social interactions among pilgrims produce the most connected value chain sequence and establish a strong relationship between pilgrimage attractions and intended outcomes and personal value fulfillment. The results from this research introduce essential understandings regarding the integration of secular and holy values, which operate throughout religious visitor destinations (Kim *et al.*, 2016).

2.2 The Tourism Value Chain Impact in Religious Destinations from Lebanon

Lebanon has the potential to attract many religious tourists because of its unique and intricate nature (Jallat & Shultz, 2011). In Lebanon, religious tourism has seen an increase of share within the tourism industry. However, it still faces challenges when it comes to involving the local community in the management process of religious tourism destinations (Baker *et al.*, 2020; Ertzogue, 2023). The evolving sacred geographies of Lebanon testify to the importance of religious tourism in the landscape of tourist destinations. The late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen the development of gigantic christian projects, including statues and large crosses of saints. This trend is linked to the development of religious tourism from Liban (Farra Haddad, 2024).

Lebanon is known for having a long and rich history of pilgrimage and religious tourism, which has attracted pilgrims from both within and outside the region for centuries. The Lebanese tourism value chain is characterized by strong socio-cultural and political tensions that affect religious travel in the area (Olsen, 2018). Research conducted so far reveals the perceptions of Lebanese tourists oriented primarily towards cultural and religious tourism that thrives at the country level. Multi-level stakeholder discourses and surveys show that the degree of consensus between stakeholders, locals and visitors on cultural, tourist and territorial dimensions is more significant in Lebanon (Chaddad, 2021).

There is currently a great interest from all the agents involved in the religious tourism value chain in Lebanon to promote religious tourist destinations, which could contribute to stimulating the diversification of the local tourist offer and the development of the tourism value chain in religious destinations (Zakhia & Pérez, 2024).

3 Methodology

The research design uses quantitative methods to study the impact of transport infrastructure combined with accommodation quality and local business service quality on visitor satisfaction as well as their future travel intentions in religious touring regions in Lebanon. The research instrument used validated concepts from both the tourism value chain and religious tourism frameworks found in the literature of Issa & Altinay (2006), Sinha & Mittal (2021), and Haddad (2024). Twenty-four items relating to transport infrastructure and accommodation quality and local business services and tourist perceptions and behaviors made up the questionnaire design. The items appeared with a Likert scale running from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

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Detailed demographic variables consisting of age, gender, education level, monthly income, and experience at religious sites were gathered to support group-based comparisons.

Adult individuals in Lebanon participating in this study belonged to two groups: existing visitors to religious sites and prospective visitors planning future religious site visits. The survey was distributed online for four weeks until the research team acquired 208 respondents who submitted valid responses. An analysis of research data occurred through the application of SPSS version 26.

A reliability test using Cronbach’s alpha yielded 0.994, which shows strong consistency among the survey items according to Nunnally & Bernstein (1994). Descriptive statistical methods were applied to create summaries about the participant characteristics and survey question answers. A comparison of visitation behaviors between religious site visitors and non-visitors used independent samples t-tests as the analytical method. The evaluation of how income and education levels affect perception scores employed one-way ANOVA statistical tests. Pearson correlation coefficients helped to assess both visitor satisfaction levels with the value chain components and their inclination towards returning. We performed cross-tabulations and chi-square tests on categorical demographic variables to check their relationship with who visits religious sites. Linear regression models evaluated the strength at which various transportation methods, lodging options, and business facilities explained visitor satisfaction and behavior results. The researchers defined statistical significance at the 0.05 threshold.

4 Results

As presented in Table 1, the majority of respondents (82.7%) reported having visited a religious site in Lebanon, indicating strong interest or participation in religious tourism. Most participants fell within the age range of 25–54, with the largest proportion (28.8%) in the 35–44 category. The gender distribution was nearly equal, with 51.4% male and 48.6% female respondents. Educational attainment was relatively high, with 36.1% holding a master’s degree and 29.8% holding a bachelor’s degree. Monthly income varied, though a significant portion (28.8%) earned between \$1,000–\$1,499, followed by 23.6% earning \$1,500–\$1,999. These findings suggest a well-educated, economically active population with broad engagement in religious tourism activities.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 208)

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age Group		
18–24	23	11.1
25–34	44	21.2
35–44	60	28.8
45–54	49	23.6
55 and above	32	15.4
Gender		
Female	101	48.6
Male	107	51.4
Level of Education		
High school	38	18.3
Bachelor’s degree	62	29.8
Master’s degree	75	36.1
Doctorate	32	15.4
Nothing	1	0.5
Monthly Income		
Below \$500	30	14.4
\$500–\$999	43	20.7

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\$1,000–\$1,499	60	28.8
\$1,500–\$1,999	49	23.6
\$2,000 and above	26	12.5
Visited Religious Site		
Yes	172	82.7
No	36	17.3

Source: own work

The majority of respondents expressed strong agreement across all value chain dimensions, indicating a highly positive perception of religious tourism services in Lebanon. Notably, over 85% of respondents strongly agreed with statements related to interest in other religious sites (85.1%) and willingness to participate in future religious events (86.5%). Furthermore, over 80% strongly agreed that the sites were well-maintained, that tourism benefits the local community and infrastructure, and that they would recommend the destination to others. These findings suggest that the tourism value chain in Lebanon’s religious destinations is performing exceptionally well from the visitor’s perspective, particularly in terms of spiritual satisfaction, site quality, and long-term engagement intentions (See Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of respondents who strongly agreed with each survey item (N = 208)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree (%)
Transport: Accessibility via Public Transport	79.8%
Transport: Road Condition & Signage	76.4%
Transport: Parking & Traffic	76.4%
Transport: Experience Enhancement	77.4%
Accommodation: Availability Near Site	78.8%
Accommodation: Clean & Safe Facilities	78.8%
Accommodation: Culturally Reflective Services	78.4%
Accommodation: Staff Hospitality	78.8%
Local Business: Tourist Needs Met	80.3%
Local Business: Authentic Products	78.4%
Local Business: Economic Contribution	78.8%
Local Business: Understanding Tourist Needs	79.3%
Overall Satisfaction	82.7%
Expectation Fulfillment	82.2%
Enhanced Spiritual/Cultural Experience	83.2%
Recommend Destination	83.7%
Site Maintenance	84.1%
Tourism Improves Infrastructure	84.1%
Community Benefits from Tourism	83.2%
Site Management Efficiency	84.1%
Intend to Revisit Site	84.6%
Interest in Other Religious Sites	85.1%
Participation in Future Religious Events	86.5%

Source: own work

The scale used to measure perceptions of the tourism value chain in religious destinations demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.994 across 23 items as presented in Table 3. This exceptionally high value indicates that the items are highly correlated and reliably measure the underlying construct, affirming the scale’s robustness for statistical analysis.

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Table 3. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha)

Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of Items
0.994	23

Source: own work

As shown in Table 4, all value chain components exhibit strong and statistically significant positive correlations with key outcome variables, particularly overall satisfaction, intention to revisit, recommendation likelihood, and willingness to participate in future events. The strongest relationships are observed between local business dimensions, such as understanding tourist needs ($r = .909$) and economic contribution ($r = .924$), and overall satisfaction, suggesting that community-based engagement and authenticity play a vital role in shaping visitor experiences. Similarly, accommodation-related factors like staff hospitality ($r = .913$) and culturally reflective services ($r = .895$) demonstrate high correlations, indicating the importance of personalized, context-sensitive hospitality. Transport infrastructure, while still strongly associated, shows slightly lower but consistent correlations across all outcomes, highlighting its enabling role rather than a central emotional driver. Collectively, these results emphasize that high satisfaction and behavioral intentions in religious tourism are best supported through a holistic approach that combines functional accessibility with meaningful, culturally grounded service experiences.

Table 4. Pearson correlations among key variables (N = 208)

Variables	Overall Satisfaction	Recommend Destination	Intend to Revisit	Participation in Events
Transport: Accessibility via Public Transport	.868**	.865**	.797**	.804**
Transport: Road Condition & Signage	.844**	.828**	.765**	.766**
Transport: Parking & Traffic	.850**	.833**	.765**	.774**
Transport: Experience Enhancement	.835**	.818**	.769**	.771**
Accommodation: Availability Near Site	.851**	.841**	.790**	.805**
Accommodation: Clean & Safe Facilities	.886**	.875**	.791**	.799**
Accommodation: Culturally Reflective Services	.895**	.884**	.827**	.834**
Accommodation: Staff Hospitality	.913**	.902**	.824**	.839**
Local Business: Tourist Needs Met	.924**	.913**	.826**	.839**
Local Business: Authentic Products	.907**	.896**	.823**	.830**
Local Business: Economic Contribution	.924**	.913**	.834**	.833**
Local Business: Understanding Tourist Needs	.909**	.898**	.849**	.840**

Source: own work. **Note:** All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The regression model (see Table 5) significantly predicts overall satisfaction with a high R² value of .879 ($p < .001$), indicating that approximately 88% of the variance in overall satisfaction

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is explained by the model. The F-statistic of 117.697 confirms the model’s statistical significance and overall strength. The adjusted R² (.871) suggests the model remains strong even after accounting for the number of predictors. The predictors included in the model—Transport: Accessibility via Public Transport, Road Condition & Signage, Parking & Traffic, and Experience Enhancement; Accommodation: Availability Near Site, Clean & Safe Facilities, Culturally Reflective Services, and Staff Hospitality; and Local Business: Tourist Needs Met, Authentic Products, Economic Contribution, and Understanding Tourist Needs—collectively contribute meaningfully to tourists’ satisfaction levels. These results highlight that satisfaction in religious tourism is a multidimensional outcome influenced by both functional elements (infrastructure and services) and experiential qualities (cultural fit and hospitality).

Table 5. Regression model summary predicting overall satisfaction

Statistic	Value
R	.937
R Square	.879
Adjusted R Square	.871
Standard Error of Estimate	0.276
F-value	117.697
Significance (p-value)	.000
Number of Predictors	12
Degrees of Freedom (df)	12, 195

Source: own work

Table 6 summarizes the results of chi-square tests assessing associations between tourism-related variables and visitor behaviors. A statistically significant association was found between prior visitation and intention to revisit ($\chi^2 = 34.633$, $p < .001$), indicating that positive past experiences strongly influence future engagement. Moreover, strong associations emerged between perceptions of infrastructure, community benefits, and service quality with recommendation likelihood and interest in visiting other religious sites, all with p-values below .001. In contrast, the relationship between education level and prior visitation was not statistically significant ($p = .094$), suggesting that educational background is not a major determinant of religious tourism participation in this context.

Table 6. Summary of chi-square association tests between key variables

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	χ^2 Value	df	Sig. (p-value)	Association Strength
Level of Education	Visited Religious Site in Lebanon	7.938	4	.094	Not significant
Visited Religious Site in Lebanon	Intend to Revisit Site	34.633	4	.000	Significant
Tourism Improves Infrastructure	Recommend Destination	586.870	16	.000	Highly significant
Community Benefits from Tourism	Recommend Destination	483.123	16	.000	Highly significant
Local Business: Tourist Needs Met	Interest in Other Religious Sites	412.000	16	.000	Highly significant
Transport: Experience Enhancement	Interest in Other Religious Sites	450.837	16	.000	Highly significant
Accommodation: Clean & Safe Facilities	Interest in Other Religious Sites	473.772	16	.000	Highly significant

Source: own work

5 Conclusion

This research examined how visitors to religious tourist destinations in Lebanon combine experiences from transportation services with accommodation offerings and local business services to form their overall satisfaction levels as well as destination preferences for a future visit. The study indicates that religious tourism satisfaction results from multiple linked features that constitute a complete, memorable experience.

Travelers demonstrated strong positive attitudes toward religious tourism by appreciating transportation access and road quality as well as direction signs, as these aspects gain greater weight in spiritual tourism. Beyond basic functionality, the visitor experience included various other aspects. The accommodation received praise from visitors because visitors valued both its clean environment and comfortable amenities as well as its cultural harmony with sacred site practices. Local businesses that specialized in authentic community-based products related to religious needs strengthened the experience of tourists throughout their entire trip.

Religious tourism in Lebanon combines physical travel with cultural exploration, according to the findings of this research. Visitors build stronger connections when hospitality services follow both religious rites and local customs, and systems allow easy access to sites. The vibrant, authentic local commerce system facilitates cultural immersion of visitors so they gain both enhanced perceptive value and meaningful experience.

The research findings demonstrate that visitors develop emotional responses consisting of fulfillment along with satisfaction and willingness to visit again based on their positive assessments of different value chain elements. People who had prior experience visiting religious places in Lebanon showed increased intent to return because the quality of their experience served as the main factor influencing their future actions.

Religious tourism development heavily depends on community integration, according to essential learnings from the study. Tourists who experience their sites as beneficial for host communities and true to authentic traditions develop purposes beyond monetary exchange because their involvement becomes mutually beneficial. Tourism strategies require special design to benefit visitors while enhancing the power and capacity of host communities.

The research shows that to build a successful religious tourism sector in Lebanon, one must maintain equal attention to both accessibility improvements and cultural connection and active community involvement. Stakeholders should prioritize policies and investment decisions to develop high-quality infrastructure, cultural lodging arrangements, and locally run sustainable businesses. The establishment of Lebanon as a competitive destination in faith-based and heritage tourism will be achieved by improved visitor satisfaction.

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