

# Towards the development of the tourism sector in Palestine: Challenges and recommendations

Ahd Hinnawi<sup>1</sup> 

Nurul Zarirah<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1,2</sup>Faculty of Technology Management and Technopreneurship, Technical University, Malaysia Melaka (UTeM), Malaysia.

Email: [Ahdhinawi96@gmail.com](mailto:Ahdhinawi96@gmail.com)


Email: [zarirah@utem.edu.my](mailto:zarirah@utem.edu.my)



## Abstract

This study explores the challenges facing the Palestinian tourism sector and provides recommendations for its development. A systematic review methodology was used to analyze relevant studies, categorizing challenges into three areas: (1) occupation-related barriers, (2) internal structural obstacles, and (3) marketing and technological limitations. Key recommendations were extracted and synthesized. Findings indicate that the Israeli occupation imposes severe movement restrictions, site destruction, and misinformation campaigns. Internal obstacles include weak infrastructure, economic constraints, and inadequate professional capacity. Marketing and technological limitations hinder global visibility. Addressing these challenges requires political advocacy, infrastructure development, economic investment, and digital marketing strategies. Palestinian tourism has strong potential but is hindered by political, economic, and marketing barriers. A comprehensive strategy integrating political resolutions, economic development, and modern marketing approaches is essential for sustainable growth. The study provides actionable insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders, emphasizing infrastructure improvement, digital marketing, and global advocacy to enhance the sector’s sustainability.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Digital marketing, Economic development, Obstacle, Palestine, Tourism sector.

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### Contribution of this paper to the literature

This study examines key challenges hindering the development of Palestine's tourism sector and proposes practical solutions. Its novelty lies in employing a systematic review methodology to synthesize challenges and recommendations from previous studies, offering an analytical framework for policymakers and stakeholders to develop effective strategies that enhance the sector's growth and impact.

## 1. Introduction

The importance of the tourism industry is increasing, and its developmental and strategic role is growing in countries distinguished by their civilization, religious and cultural heritage, historical sites, and attractive nature, as is the case in Palestine. Palestine is a region steeped in history, with human habitation dating back over half a million years. Its rich archaeological landscape has been shaped by numerous civilizations, including the Canaanites, Pharaonic Egyptians, Assyrians, Hebrews, Babylonians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Islamic cultures, each contributing to its unique cultural heritage. So, Palestine is rich in religious and archaeological tourism, it is pivotal to the development of monotheistic religions, housing vital sites, and numerous historical antiquities. Moreover, Palestine serves as a crossroads connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe, which has historically facilitated cultural exchange. The region also offers medical tourism opportunities, particularly due to the Dead Sea's therapeutic properties, in addition to the geographical and climatic diversity in Palestine that attracts visitors throughout the year. All of these characteristics make Palestine a unique tourist destination.

The tourism industry currently plays an important role in the global economy, sometimes surpassing other economic sectors. Many countries have realized that the tourism industry is the largest and most important industry in the world, due to the various benefits it generates (Belhadef & Qaytoun, 2022). Tourism sector is emerging as one of the largest and fastest-growing segments of the economy, often regarded as a powerful tool for regional development. The economic activity generated by tourism contributes to regional development, highlighting its pivotal role in fostering social, cultural, and economic interactions on a broader scale (Ha, 2025).

Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing religious, social, cultural, and economic dimensions, involving individuals traveling to countries or destinations beyond their habitual environment for various reasons, including personal, business, or professional purposes (Mkwizu, 2020).

Tourism types are classified according to geographical areas into three categories: domestic tourism, which means the movement of individuals within the same country, and this type of tourism requires encouraging prices for the country's citizens in addition to a variety of services. Regional tourism, which refers to travel and movement between neighboring countries and is characterized by lower overall costs. International tourism, which means receiving foreign tourists in a country, is sought after by all countries in the world, and they are keen to develop and encourage it to obtain foreign currency. This type of tourism requires the provision of diverse services and high-quality infrastructure, in addition to ensuring security, stability, and respect for tourists (Kafi, 2015).

Tourism is also classified according to its purpose into: Medical tourism, which is motivated by the need to treat diseases and recover or alleviate the symptoms and pains associated with them. Recreational tourism, which involves the need to rest and restore the individual's psychological and physical strength by escaping the routine of daily work and changing the place of residence for a specific period during which the individual enjoys and spends his time entertaining himself. Sports tourism: which may be for the purpose of actually participating in sports matches and competitions, or for watching sports matches and celebrations. Cultural tourism, which aims to familiarize the individual and increase his culture about regions and countries, and is linked to learning about the history of regions and countries, their archaeological sites, the heritage of their peoples, their customs and traditions. Official tourism, which is when members of delegations or specific individuals travel to participate in specific activities and various purposes such as business meetings or official talks or participating in conferences or international celebrations or watching trade and industrial exhibitions. Religious tourism, which is one of the oldest types of tourism, and is represented in visiting religious sites, performing religious rituals and worship, and visiting sites and landmarks of a religious or religious-historical nature (Assaf, 2016).

Countries around the world place great importance on activating and developing tourism due to the unique benefits and gains that this sector provides, which are difficult to achieve through other sectors in the country. These benefits and gains vary in economic, social, cultural heritage, historical identity, and political fields. In the economic field, the tourism sector is one of the largest industries in the world that contributes to supporting the economies of countries and achieving comprehensive development through increasing national output, providing job opportunities, helping to solve the unemployment problem, and impacting the balance of payments through the influx of foreign currencies, attracting capital, and drawing in foreign investments (Bin Ghadban, 2020). In the social field, tourism allows for cultural interaction between the communities of different countries, the exchange of ideas, social integration, interaction, and closeness among them. In the political field, tourism contributes to improving relations between countries and creating positive impressions and strong ties among their peoples. As for cultural heritage and historical identity, tourism helps affirm the historical identity of the state, cling to its cultural heritage, take pride in it, and care for archaeological sites to protect them from decay, theft, or obliteration. Therefore, tourism significantly contributes to preserving the cultural heritage of the state and the historical identity of its peoples (Al-Qurna, 2019).

Palestine is considered one of the most important tourist areas in the world, despite its small size, due to its many unique features. It is distinguished by its numerous and diverse tourist attractions, as well as its ancient monuments and sites. Palestine has distinguished itself as a cradle for many ancient civilizations that have inhabited, colonized, or conquered it throughout history, such as the Canaanites, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, Christians, Hebrews, and Muslims, which has left priceless traces (Palestinian News and Information Agency, 2024a).

Palestine constitutes a focal point for the three heavenly religions, embracing many of the sacred religious sites, making it a temple that the hearts of believers yearn for. It is a center that houses the holiest of churches for followers of Christianity and the second greatest mosque for Muslims (Suliman & Al-Qadi, 2022).

The tourism sector has become more linked to the climate, as the climate characterizes the tourist destination, and it is indeed a strong driver of tourist satisfaction. The climate also determines the length and quality of the tourism season and plays an important role in choosing tourist destinations. Palestine has natural and climatic components that qualify it to be one of the prominent regions as a tourist destination. It is characterized by the diversity of its topography and climatic environments in terms of elevation and depression from sea level, temperature, and rainfall amounts, as well as climatic variation from one area to another during a single season. All these factors are confined to a small geographical area, giving the region a unique characteristic that contributes to tourism development. Thus, Palestine becomes a tourist attraction throughout the year, where tourists can resort to recreational and entertainment sites in the mountainous areas during the summer, where the climate is mild. In winter, recreational and entertainment areas are concentrated along the shores of the Dead Sea and the city of Jericho, located in the Jordan Valley, the lowest point on earth, which is characterized by its warm winter climate (Al-Daajna & Alqam, 2018). The moderate summer and warm winter climate in Palestine has made it a destination for various interests and tastes from different regions and backgrounds. It is worth mentioning that Palestine includes moderate hot areas in the valleys, and moderate cold areas in the highlands that extend from north to south. Palestine also contains several contradictions, as it includes the lowest region on earth, high mountains, vast plains, valleys, deserts, and some rivers. It also includes the Dead Sea, known for its extreme salinity unmatched anywhere else in the world. The geographical contradictions in this small area have resulted in a remarkable diversity of natural resorts that invite visitors to enjoy its magnificent landscapes (Palestinian News and Information Agency, 2024a).

2. Problem statement

Tourism sector in Palestine is considered to be in a phase of growth, despite having significant resources that enable it to contribute to the Palestinian economy with factors of success, prosperity, and attracting foreign and local investments. However, the tourism sector in Palestine has suffered and continues to suffer from challenges and obstacles that hinder its development. By comparing the main indicators of hotel activity in the West Bank between the years (2014-2020) showed in the Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Comparison of the main indicators of hotel activity in the West Bank between the years (2014 - 2020).

Years	No. of hotels	Average no. of available rooms	Average no. of available beds	No. of guests	No. of overnight stays
2014	109	6,666	14,769	610,347	1,537,311
2015	112	6,791	15,059	484,394	1,420,264
2016	125	6,878	15,145	448,247	1,310,824
2017	130	7,343	16,117	545,814	1,579,143
2018	130	7,404	16,252	653,744	1,833,687
2019	125	7,245	15,770	746,911	2,009,934
2020	89	3,927	8,328	180,632	338,596

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2021).

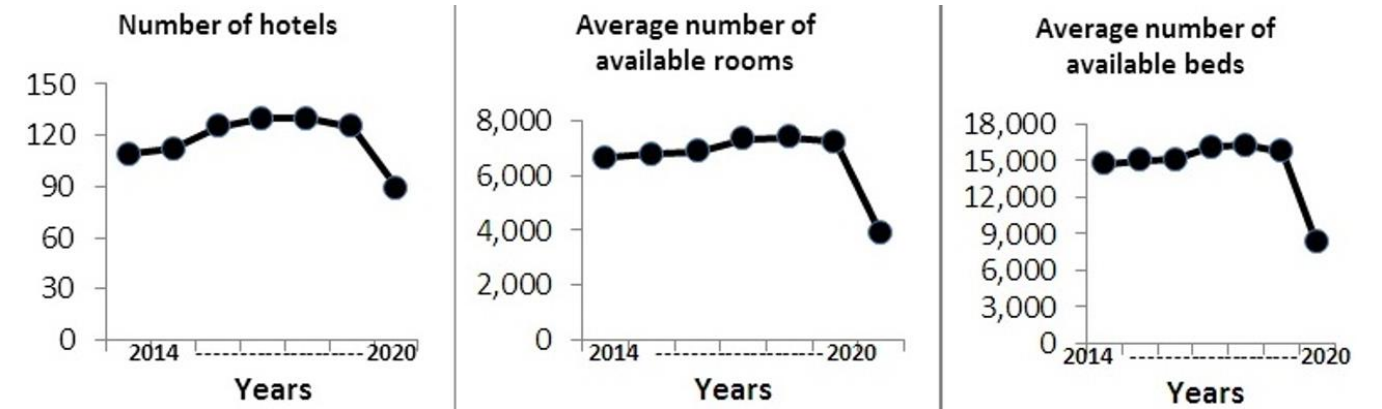


Figure 1. Comparison of the main indicators of hotel activity in the West Bank between the years (2014 - 2020).

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2021).

It is noticeable from the statistical data in Table 1 and Figure 1 that there was a relative stability in hotel activity and a lack of significant development and prosperity during the period 2014-2019, and there was a significant decline in 2020 due to the circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic.

As the years that followed the stage of the Corona pandemic faced obstacles and challenges leading to instability in tourist activities and fluctuations between increase and decrease. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2023) indicated a decrease in the number of workers in the tourism sector during the second quarter of 2023, with a decrease of 8% compared to the same period in 2022. The number of workers in the tourism sector reached 50.3 thousand workers during the second quarter of 2023, accounting for 4.3% of the total workers in Palestine.

Despite the challenges and obstacles, there are many hopes and aspirations for this sector in the future, as it is expected that the tourism sector in Palestine will account for a significant share of the Palestinian national income if good planning and proper development are followed, along with addressing the obstacles and challenges it faces. Therefore, the study problem is represented in answering the main question: What are the challenges and obstacles facing the tourism sector in Palestine, and what are the recommendations for addressing them?

3. Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the systematic reviews methodology was adopted. Systematic reviews are powerful tools in scientific research, providing a comprehensive overview of a specific topic and helping

to understand the existing evidence. They are used across various fields, for development and evidence-based decision-making. It is a research methodology aimed at systematically collecting and evaluating all available evidence related to a specific topic in a transparent and structured manner. A comprehensive search for relevant literature is conducted, with every step documented to ensure transparency. Descriptive or statistical analyses may be performed on the extracted data. Results are interpreted in the context of the research question, considering the reliability of the evidence. Findings should be presented clearly, to enhance transparency and accuracy in reporting (Higgins et al., 2024). This was done in accordance with the PRISMA framework. The PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) is a set of guidelines designed to improve the quality of reporting in systematic reviews and meta-analyses. The PRISMA statement aims to enhance transparency and reliability by providing a checklist for researchers to ensure that essential items are included in their reports, facilitating peer review and increasing the credibility of research findings (Page et al., 2021).

Therefore, the researcher used systematic reviews methodology to gather, review and summarize the results and recommendations of a set of literature and previous studies related to the challenges and obstacles facing tourism in Palestine, relying on the most recent and available evidence references (2018-2024) collected using the Google Scholar academic database. The researcher then extracted from those previous studies the challenges and obstacles and classified them into three axes, as well as extracted recommendations that could address or mitigate those challenges and obstacles and classified them into its three axes as well. In the end, the researcher reached conclusions.

## 4. Review of Literature and Previous Studies

Tourism in its contemporary concept is an integrated industry that significantly contributes to achieving economic and social development for many countries around the world that have focused on their development. In contrast, Palestine, despite having the components for successful tourism that make it an effective tourist destination, has not received the same level of attention compared to other sectors. This is due to a number of obstacles and challenges, including internal obstacles and challenges on one hand, and obstacles imposed by the occupation on the other hand (Abbadi, 2018).

Tourism in any country is exposed to external hindering factors; these factors can disrupt the tourism industry, lead to a decrease in the number of tourists, and affect their choice of destination. In Palestine, the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories is the main factor that negatively affects the Palestinian tourism sector. Therefore, it is necessary for the Palestinian government, represented by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, to increase its interest in tourist areas and Palestinian heritage sites. Likewise, the local community and its institutions must be aware of the necessary means to protect Palestinian archaeological and cultural heritage sites. Undoubtedly, it will be very difficult for the tourism industry in Palestine to grow and develop without ending the occupation (Abahre & Raddad, 2016).

The reality of the occupation that has existed for decades prevents the Palestinian tourism sector from benefiting from many available tourism opportunities, depriving this sector of achieving sustainable tourism development, achieving the desired market share, and attaining market growth rates that align with the capabilities of this sector. It is not an exaggeration to say that Palestine, once it achieves complete independence and full sovereignty over its lands, will be one of the most attractive countries for tourists globally due to its vast tourism wealth (Suleibi & Abu Fara, 2018).

The tourism sector in Palestine has suffered numerous setbacks due to the conflict imposed by the occupation and its practices at various stages, which have made tourism a fluctuating activity and limited its development and benefits (Palestinian News and Information Agency, 2024b).

The Oslo Accords, particularly Oslo II of 1995, divided the West Bank into separate “areas,” subject to varying Israeli and Palestinian administrative and security control, though each area was subject to Israeli raids, Israeli control, and Israeli violence. These classifications, and the subsequent confiscation of land by the Israeli state, introduced and established a system of curfews, closures, roadblocks, and checkpoints that further suffocated Palestinians in the occupied territories. With the proliferation of Israeli settlements—whose populations doubled during the Oslo years—came bypass roads connecting the settlements, turning the West Bank into an archipelago of expanding Israeli settlements connected only by Israeli roads and islands of Palestinian towns and villages separated from each other or connected by roads that could be completely closed off by a single soldier (Lynn Kelly, 2023).

The availability of security, political stability, and economic prosperity are among the most important considerations and essential requirements for the development of tourism in any country. If these considerations deteriorate, the tourism sector becomes paralyzed and unable to develop or sustain itself. This is clearly seen in Palestine, where, in addition to the poor and unstable economic conditions, which are primarily attributed to the occupation, the absence of security and political instability, along with the measures taken by the occupation such as the construction of the separation wall, settlements, and the establishment of military checkpoints between cities, further limits the flexibility of movement between Palestinian cities and the tourist sites within them. In addition to the misleading narratives promoted by the occupation regarding Palestinian cultural and historical heritage, which serve its colonial project and represent one of the greatest challenges that must be faced to preserve Palestinian historical identity and its cultural heritage, all of this is likely to limit the development of the tourism sector in Palestine and its flourishing (Kalab, 2022).

Yang (2020) mentioned that tourism is often viewed as separate from political violence, but it reflects and reinforces the geopolitical dynamics in Israel/Palestine, where tourism in Israel/Palestine serves to reinforce the narrative of the Israeli state while obscuring the realities of political violence and military occupation. Yang (2020) study explores the relationship between tourism and political violence in the context of Israel/Palestine, highlighting how the occupation constructs narratives of tourism to align with the Israeli state project. In Tel Aviv-Jaffa, the occupation works through tourism to reinforce the image of Israel as a Western entity, erasing the history of Palestinian displacement and the Palestinian history of Jaffa and promoting an exceptional narrative. In contrast, the occupation presents the tourism landscape in the West Bank with a fragmented vision of its history



and culture, obscuring the realities of Israeli control and military occupation. Narratives of occupation constructed through tourism obscure the settler colonial nature of the Israeli state and its implications for the Palestinian population.

Ghodieh, Abahre, Abahre, and Huang (2019) mentioned that Palestine is a region with prodigious historical and culture heritage that makes it one of the most remarkable destinations for tourism. However, due to the extremely complex political situation, tourism in Palestine had been negatively affected and cannot grow as well as it should be. According to their study which analyzed the challenges that Palestinian tourism face in consideration of Chinese market, results found out that, visitors from China may have a much less impression of Palestine than Israel. Result found out both objective and subjective reasons for this reality. For objective reasons such as entry limitations and restrictions imposed by Israeli occupation authorities, such as Israeli military checkpoints spread along main roads in the West Bank. These issues are very difficult to be solved by Palestine only, but for some subjective part, there are several possible methods for improvement. Since tourists are usually more interested in visiting Israel than Palestine, it must be some specific reasons, it could be the better service of travel agency, or the travel-related arrangement from Israeli or Jordanian side is better than Palestine. This is due to the fact that the Palestinians do not have any control on more than 60% of the West Bank area (C areas according to Oslo Accord). In other words, the Palestinians do not yet have an independent state like Israel. Also, Israeli tourism agencies play negative role by warning tourists not to visit the Palestinian territories. It is clear also that the Palestinian tourism agencies do not do their job well in encouraging tourists to visit Palestine. Therefore, on the long run, the strategic solution is political, which is ending Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip according to the UN resolutions, and building peace in the whole region between Israel and Palestine. The study recommended the need to increase interest and activation of media promotion for Palestinian history and culture as one of the most important strategies to improve the tourism sector in Palestine, raise global awareness about it, and confront rumors and misleading narratives of the occupation regarding the Palestinian historical and cultural heritage. The study emphasized the necessity of employing modern technology in the media promotion of Palestinian history and culture in its recommendations.

The study by Abu Rahma and Jafar (2018) aimed to identify the Israeli arbitrary policies that restrict tourism development in Palestine. It indicated that the Paris Protocol regarding tourism is an obstacle to activating Palestinian tourism due to the Israeli occupation's procrastination in handing over archaeological and natural sites to the Palestinian National Authority. The occupation authorities have also conducted an intensive hostile campaign against the Palestinian people by generating a perception among tourists that Palestinian territories are unsafe and unstable, exploiting the weak role of Palestinian tourism media in promoting the potential and resources of Palestine's tourism. The study recommended the necessity of reviewing the Oslo agreements related to the Palestinian tourism sector and forming international pressures on the occupation to implement what has been agreed upon, as well as handing over the Palestinian tourist areas to the Palestinian National Authority. Additionally, it emphasized the need for cooperation between the Palestinian public and private sectors to provide effective Palestinian tourism media that possesses professionalism and specialization in order to develop media and marketing strategies that raise global awareness of Palestinian tourism and provide accurate and correct guidance and information about the Palestinian tourism sector, aiming to activate it on one hand and preserve the Palestinian historical heritage and identity on the other hand.

A study by Faris, Al-Tohamy, and Sheikh Al-Arab (2019) indicated that Palestinian tourist guides face many difficulties and obstacles while practicing their profession. The most prominent of these difficulties and obstacles are a direct result of the policies of the occupation and its measures against the Palestinian tourist guide, which limit their authority and professional activity. In addition to internal difficulties and obstacles, their causes are an indirect result of the practices and policies of the occupation, which have resulted in a form of unequal competition in favor of the Israeli tourist guide.

Shaheen (2019) stated that although Palestine has a set of components that qualify it to be a first-class tourist destination, there are a number of obstacles that hinder attracting tourists to it, the most prominent of which are: the occupation and the political and security situation, as the occupation imposes control measures, restrictions, obstacles and closures that limit access to visited tourist sites and make the visit unsafe, in addition to neglecting and demolishing many Palestinian historical areas and landmarks. The lack of tourism services and the lack of many infrastructures that would enhance the level of tourism (roads, hotels, restaurants, rest houses, information, etc.). The lack of local expertise in dealing with tourists and tour guides. The lack of attractive packages that explain tourist attractions. The lack of qualified cadres to manage tourism in terms of media, planning, etc. The absence of organization, systems and laws to protect historical and archaeological areas and buildings in Palestine, as well as the lack of an accurate legislative system to control and oblige individuals and owners to implement restoration work and preserve urban heritage.

The results of the study by Abahra (2020) revealed that there are several obstacles limiting the development of heritage tourism in Palestine. In the field of social awareness, the results indicated that there is a lack of awareness among the local community regarding the importance of heritage sites. In the area of occupation policies, the findings showed that the occupation alters the history of Palestinian heritage sites by disseminating misleading information to tourists about these heritage areas, in addition to the restrictions imposed by the occupation on the heritage sites located within Area C and the expansion of settlement at the expense of these heritage sites. In the field of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and related institutions, the results indicated the absence of a strategy for cooperation between them and a weakness in funding projects for the protection, restoration, and rehabilitation of the infrastructure of these heritage sites, as well as a deficiency in the efficiency of skilled human resources and experts, and a significant weakness in the promotion and marketing processes for them. The study concluded with a number of recommendations, the most important of which is to work on revising the laws and regulations related to the protection of heritage sites. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities should collaborate with local community institutions to raise the level of funding for the tourism sector related to heritage, in order to restore, protect, develop, and improve the infrastructure that serves it. Additionally, specialized human resources

should be provided in the field of Palestinian heritage and tourism guidance, along with the establishment of marketing plans to promote Palestinian heritage areas and activate tourism for them.

The results of [Hammad \(2023\)](#) indicated that: The degree of obstacles to tourism in Palestine related to marketing the tourism product was at a percentage of (67.97%). The degree of obstacles caused by the occupation was at a percentage of (89.0%), with the statement "The Israeli occupation is considered a major obstacle to the tourism industry in Palestine" receiving the highest percentage of (96.5%), the reason for this is attributed to the practices of the occupation that hinder the activation of tourism in the Palestinian governorates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, additionally, the control of the occupation authorities over the crossings is considered a major obstacle to incoming tourism. The degree of social obstacles was at a percentage of (69.7%), with the statement "The low awareness of the importance of tourism in Palestine is one of the obstacles facing tourism" receiving the highest percentage of (79.0%). The degree of economic obstacles was at a percentage of (75.3%) and the paragraph stated, "The phenomenon of economic weakness in the Palestinian society is one of the main challenges facing tourism" at the highest degree with a percentage of (86.5%). The degree of organizational obstacles was at a percentage of (75.25%) and the paragraph stated, "The lack of attention to tourism development within government development plans is among the obstacles to tourism in Palestine" at the highest degree with a percentage of (94.0%). The degree of obstacles related to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and relevant institutions was at a percentage of (74.5%) and the paragraph stated, "The tourism sector lacks maps and special tourism brochures about tourist facilities" at the highest degree with a percentage of (83.0%).

The results of the [Shaqour \(2023\)](#) indicated that the role of Palestinian local authorities in the development and protection of archaeological sites is weak and ineffective as required, due to a lack of allocations, financial budgets, and external support. Furthermore, the development plans of local authorities do not include a clear and specific mechanism for the development and protection of archaeological and historical sites, in addition to the practices of occupation. The study results showed indicators of weakness in the level of plans and activities used by local authorities in the development and protection of archaeological sites, with the reason being the lack of cooperation, integration of roles, and coordination between official government bodies and local institutions for the development and protection of Palestinian archaeological sites, especially in Area (C). Thus, the results confirmed that the main challenges and obstacles facing local authorities in the development and protection of archaeological sites are financial challenges and the practices of occupation and its control over most archaeological sites, in addition to the lack of awareness regarding the importance of preserving and protecting Palestinian archaeological sites among citizens and some local authorities in Area (C) in Palestine. The study recommended the necessity of providing financial budgets and external financial support for local authorities to support investment in archaeological sites, working on community awareness about the importance of preserving them, and including the development of archaeological and historical sites in the developmental plans of local authorities. It also emphasized the need to develop the infrastructure of archaeological and historical sites and the necessary services for them, to activate the role of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in supporting and developing local authorities and archaeological and historical areas, and to provide government budgets that support projects for the protection and restoration of archaeological sites and their preservation. Additionally, it highlighted the need to enhance media engagement regarding archaeological and historical areas in Palestine.

[Suliman and Al-Qadi \(2022\)](#) pointed to the weaknesses that represent the obstacles and challenges limiting the development of the tourism sector in Palestine: the poor economic conditions and the lack of financial resources, the weakness of the infrastructure for the tourism services sector, the absence of sufficient programs and activities that contribute to the development of tourism, the low investment in the tourism sector, in addition to the weakness of external marketing for Palestinian tourism. The results of the study also indicated that the level of the quality standard of Palestinian tourism marketing and the level of the standard of technology use in the Palestinian tourism sector were not sufficient or satisfactory, this weakness negatively affects and largely limits the growth and activation of the tourism sector, and gives the impression to the world of the weakness of tourism in this geographical area due to the lack of information and awareness about the importance of Palestine as a tourist destination and its uniqueness due to the lack of effective promotion and marketing for it. The study's recommendations emphasized the need to develop an effective integrated marketing strategy aimed at revitalizing and developing Palestinian tourism through the optimal investment in digital technology and employing digital marketing in promoting outbound tourism to Palestine, highlighting the unique features of tourism in Palestine to attract tourists.

[Arkawy, Abd al-Louh, and Al-Haila \(2019\)](#) pointed out that the tourism sector in Palestine suffers from obstacles and challenges represented by inadequate infrastructure, a lack of public spending and investment in the tourism sector and its services, which negatively affects the quality of the tourism product, weak promotion and marketing of tourism in Palestine, and the lack of awareness and cultural knowledge about tourism among Palestinian citizens, which has led to the neglect of tourist and archaeological areas, as well as a shortage of qualified tourism capacities and expertise among the workforce in the tourism sector. The study recommended the need to increase attention to creative ideas that contribute to leveraging information technology and technological advancements in promoting tourism products through the internet, smartphones, and interactive devices.

[Al-Jaradeen \(2018\)](#) pointed to the importance of the role of tourism marketing for religious and historical sites in empowering Palestinian identity and facing the challenges imposed by the occupation through its practices and its efforts to erase the Palestinian national, historical, and cultural identity, alongside the role of tourism marketing in revitalizing the Palestinian tourism sector and the benefits it can bring to the Palestinian economy. The study results showed the scarcity of tourism promotion methods and the need to activate effective strategies for Palestinian tourism marketing in order to place Palestinian religious and historical sites on the global tourism map.

In a study by [Badawi and Rabaiya \(2018\)](#) aimed at identifying the reality of internet use in promoting tourism services among hotels operating in Palestine from the perspective of their employees, the study recommended the need to enhance the current electronic services and applications offered by hotels online, to keep up with new services emerging in the global tourism sector, and the necessity for hotels to commit to providing distinguished

and advanced tourism services through the internet and their own websites, as well as to adopt and implement some services that are currently not applied on the hotel's website.

The study by [Damairah and Ghanem \(2018\)](#) aimed to reveal the role of social media in marketing Palestinian tourism activities. The results showed that employees in tourism companies in Palestine believe that social media plays a significant role in marketing tourism activities. The study recommended the need to encourage and raise awareness about the importance of using social media to enhance Palestinian tourism marketing in light of the challenges faced by the Palestinian tourism sector. It emphasized the necessity of using all types of social media for Palestinian tourism marketing concerning tourist sites, products, hotels, and other data and information that benefit tourists, in addition to the need to institutionalize marketing processes for the Palestinian tourism sector through social media.

[Thabet \(2018\)](#) focused her study on highlighting the role of tourism marketing in supporting the Palestinian cause and protecting Palestinian identity, heritage, and history from erasure and theft resulting from occupation practices. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of the Palestinian tourism sector as a significant resource if developed and activated, as it can increase national income, improve the balance of payments, create new job opportunities, and serve as a primary source of foreign currency. The study's results revealed that the contribution of tourism to the Palestinian national income is still below the desired level despite the availability of distinctive tourism components in Palestine. The study also indicated a lack of a clear marketing strategy in the Palestinian tourism industry, especially in the Gaza Strip. It recommended the necessity of establishing a genuine partnership between the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the relevant parties in the tourism sector, whether governmental institutions, the private sector, or the local community, to raise tourism awareness among citizens, protect the Palestinian cultural and heritage legacy from destruction or theft, encourage investment in the components of the Palestinian tourism sector, and develop effective strategies for marketing and promoting tourism in Palestine.

The study by [Abu Fara and Al-Darawish \(2018\)](#) aimed to explore the current reality and the hoped-for reality of the internal environment characteristics of Palestinian tourism sector institutions and the challenges they face, as well as to evaluate the nature of the marketing strategies adopted in these institutions to achieve marketing performance rates and overall performance. The results of the study indicated that the quality of services in the Palestinian tourism sector needs improvement to meet the needs of tourists and enhance effective tourist attraction elements. The findings revealed the need to improve the capabilities of restaurants in the Palestinian tourism sector, develop the current situation of Palestinian exhibitions and museums, diversify tourism programs, increase attention and care for archaeological sites, improve the quality of infrastructure and tourist transportation systems serving tourism in Palestine, and achieve further professional training for the workforce in the Palestinian tourism sector. The study's results also confirmed that marketing activities aimed at attracting tourists are insufficient and need improvement, requiring more attention and support to keep pace with technological advancements in developing effective marketing strategies.

A study by [Jadallah \(2018\)](#) indicated that one of the problems facing tourism in Palestine is the lack of a tourism culture among Palestinian citizens, which is evident through their negative practices towards tourist attractions and historical, cultural, and environmental heritage. The study recommended the need to raise awareness among Palestinian citizens about the importance of preserving Palestinian cultural and heritage, increasing academic and professional tourism education, and focusing on tourism media, which is considered one of the most important pillars of the tourism industry.

The level of income is considered one of the most important human factors affecting the tourism industry due to its direct impact on determining the level of tourism demand. An increase in income level means a rise in interest in travel and tourism, especially during vacations and holidays, in pursuit of relaxation and enjoyment. Conversely, in the case of a decrease in income level, this trend may reverse, even if vacation time is available ([Hammad & Al-Fleet, 2021](#)). In Palestine, the indicators showed an increase in the poverty gap index and its severity according to monthly income in the West Bank between 2017 and 2023, indicating a worsening of income conditions for the poor. The poverty rate, based on monthly income in the West Bank, rose to a rate of 15.3% in 2023. Meanwhile, the percentage of impoverished individuals in the Gaza Strip before the October war reached 63.6% during the first three quarters of 2023 according to severe poverty indicators ([Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024](#)). Thus, the low level of per capita income in Palestine is considered one of the obstacles to stimulating domestic tourism there.

The tourism sector in Gaza Strip suffers from the same obstacles and limitations as the West Bank, but to a greater degree, especially the wars witnessed by the Gaza Strip. Throughout history, wars on the Gaza Strip have caused a lot of destruction to archaeological and historical sites. The Gaza Strip remains in the headlines with tragic regularity, while amazing archaeological treasures are buried underground ([Aldohdar, 2020](#)). All of this is nothing compared to the last war (October 2023) on the Gaza Strip, in which the occupation destroyed buildings, including antiquities, cultural and historical heritage, and infrastructure, which poses a great risk of the disappearance of many of these historical and cultural tourist attractions. On October 7, 2023, a new chapter of Palestinian resistance began, which has been ongoing since 1948. The Israeli occupier responded by committing "genocide" against the people of the Gaza Strip, bombing mosques, churches, neighborhoods, and the homes of unarmed civilians. The Israeli aggression extended to historical culturally significant sites, destroying as many archaeological and cultural heritage sites as possible, in an attempt to erase the ancient Palestinian civilization and its continuity on this land, while denying the steadfast Palestinian existence, disregarding the UNESCO agreement on the protection of cultural and natural world heritage from 1972, which stipulates in one of its articles (Article 11, point 4) "the protection of cultural and natural heritage properties threatened by serious dangers due to changes in land use or ownership, armed conflict or threats thereof, or disasters and calamities" ([Shaer & Ashti, 2023](#)).



## 5. Extracting Results

In light of the researchers' review of literature and previous studies related to the obstacles and challenges facing tourism in Palestine, and the analysis of the results and recommendations obtained, the researcher found that these obstacles and challenges can be classified into three main axes: Challenges and Obstacles Caused by the Occupation, Internal Challenges and Self-Imposed Obstacles, and Marketing Challenges and Utilization of Technology.

The researchers then extracted from those previous studies the challenges and obstacles and classified them into its three axes, as well as extracted recommendations that could address or mitigate those challenges and obstacles and classified them into its three axes as well. They were as follows.

### 5.1 Challenges and Obstacles Caused by the Occupation

**a. Movement Restrictions and Access Control:** The Israeli occupation imposes severe restrictions on movement within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli checkpoints, roadblocks, and the separation wall limit access to tourist sites, creating a fragmented travel experience. Israeli military raids and security measures contribute to an atmosphere of insecurity, deterring potential tourists.

**b. Destruction and Fragmentation of Sites:** The expansion of Israeli settlements and bypass roads has led to the destruction and fragmentation of archaeological and historical sites. This undermines the integrity of Palestine's cultural heritage and reduces its attractiveness as a tourist destination.

**c. Negative Narratives and Misinformation:** The Israeli state uses tourism to promote a narrative that obscures the realities of occupation and military control, affecting global perceptions of Palestinian tourism. Misleading Israeli narratives seek to alter historical facts to its advantage and threaten Palestinian identity and historical heritage.

**d. Israel's failure to abide by the peace process agreements:** The implementation of the first phase of the Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into areas with varying levels of control, with limited Palestinian Authority control over small parts of the Palestinian territories in the West Bank. This division, along with Israel's failure to abide by the subsequent stages of the peace process agreements in the region, hinders the development and effective management of Palestinian tourism.

### 5.2 Internal Challenges and Self-Imposed Obstacles

**a. Economic Constraints:** Palestine faces significant economic challenges, including high poverty rates and low per capita income. This economic instability limits the spending power of local residents and affects the ability to invest in and develop the tourism sector.

**b. Infrastructure Deficiencies:** There is a notable lack of investment in infrastructure critical to tourism, such as roads, hotels, restaurants, and transportation systems. This hampers the quality of tourism services and visitor experiences.

**c. Lack of Professional Expertise:** The tourism sector suffers from a shortage of qualified professionals and tour guides. Additionally, there is a lack of effective training and development programs for those working in the tourism sector.

**d. Ineffective Management and Coordination:** Weak coordination among government bodies, local authorities, and tourism stakeholders leads to inefficient management and development of tourism resources. There is also a lack of clear strategies and policies to support the sector.

**e. Low Awareness and Education:** There is insufficient local awareness about the importance of preserving and promoting Palestinian heritage. This is reflected in the neglect of historical sites and a lack of emphasis on tourism education.

### 5.3 Marketing Challenges and Utilization of Technology

**a. Ineffective Marketing Strategies:** Current marketing efforts are inadequate and fail to effectively showcase Palestinian tourism. There is a lack of comprehensive strategies and campaigns that highlight the unique attractions of Palestine.

**b. Weak Digital Presence and Use of Technology:** Palestinian tourism lacks a strong digital presence. There is limited use of modern technology to promote tourism, and weak and disorganized use of effective digital marketing strategies, which impacts global visibility and engagement.

**c. Insufficient Promotional Activities:** Tourism promotion is limited and lacks creativity. This results in inadequate global awareness and interest in Palestinian tourism, impacting visitor numbers and investment potential.

**d. Inadequate Data and Information:** The absence of accurate and comprehensive data related to tourism limits the ability to develop targeted marketing strategies and assess tourism performance effectively.

## 6. Extracting Recommendations

In light of the researcher's review of the literature and previous studies related to the obstacles and challenges to tourism in Palestine, and the analysis of the recommendations that resulted from them, the researcher extracted the most important recommendations that could contribute to addressing these obstacles and challenges as follows.

### 6.1 Recommendations for Addressing the Challenges and Obstacles Caused by the Occupation

**a. Advocate for Political Solutions:** Support efforts to end the Israeli occupation and advocate for international pressure to facilitate access to Palestinian tourist sites and protect cultural heritage.

**b. Enhance Site Protection:** Work on safeguarding and restoring archaeological and historical sites threatened by occupation-related activities. This includes seeking international assistance and implementing conservation measures.



c. Raising global awareness about Palestinian heritage and confronting misleading Israeli narratives and rumors by increasing the focus on media promotion of Palestinian history, cultural heritage, and identity, using modern technology and digital marketing strategies.

### 6.2 Recommendations for Addressing the Internal Challenges and Self-Imposed Obstacles

- a. Invest in Infrastructure: Develop and upgrade essential tourism infrastructure, including transportation, accommodations, and visitor facilities. Invest in projects that enhance the quality of tourism services.
- b. Improve Economic Conditions: Implement economic policies that stimulate growth and increase investment in the tourism sector. Partner with international organizations to attract funding and support.
- c. Develop Professional Expertise: Establish training programs and professional development initiatives for those in the tourism sector. Enhance the quality of tour guides and other tourism-related professionals.
- d. Strengthen Coordination and Planning: Improve coordination among government agencies, local authorities, and tourism stakeholders. Develop clear strategies and policies to guide the growth and management of the tourism sector.
- e. Raise Awareness and Education: Increase public awareness about the value of Palestinian heritage and the importance of tourism. Focus on education and training programs that promote tourism and heritage preservation.

### 6.3 Recommendations for Addressing the Marketing Challenges and Utilization of Technology

- a. Develop Comprehensive Marketing Strategies: Create and implement effective marketing campaigns that highlight Palestine's unique tourism offerings. Utilize digital marketing to reach a global audience and attract tourists.
- b. Utilize Modern Technology: Invest in digital technologies and social media platforms to promote Palestinian tourism. Develop engaging online content, mobile applications, and interactive tools to enhance the visitor experience.
- c. Improve Promotional Activities: Enhance promotional activities through creative and innovative approaches. Use data-driven strategies to target potential tourists and increase global awareness.
- d. Collect and Utilize Data: Gather and analyze accurate data related to tourism. Use this information to inform marketing strategies and assess the performance of tourism initiatives.

## 7. Conclusion and Suggestion

In countries characterized by civilization, religious and cultural heritage, historical sites and stunning natural beauty, tourism is gaining importance, its development and strategic role is increasing, as is the case with Palestine. Palestine is an attractive destination for all types of tourism; it is a destination for religious holy sites, a destination for cultural tourism of historical and archaeological sites, also a destination for medical tourism, leisure tourism, conference tourism, etc. In addition, the diversity of Palestine's climate is also a source of attraction for tourists. Palestinian tourism is referred to as the "sleeping giant" as the future of this industry is full of hope and expectations. If Palestinian tourism is carefully planned and properly developed while removing obstacles and addressing challenges associated with it, then this sector is expected to account for a significant portion of the Palestinian national income.

Tourism is not only considered a material contributor that creates job opportunities and improves income levels in Palestine, but it is also a media platform that conveys the civilizational, cultural, and distinctive identity of the Palestinian people to the world. Thus, it is one of the most important Palestinian tools that contribute to resisting the obliteration of the Palestinian identity and its history sought by the occupation. Therefore, the challenges and obstacles facing tourism in Palestine do not only have a negative impact on the economic aspect, but they also extend to become negative factors that hinder the preservation of the Palestinian identity and the global dissemination of its culture and history.

The tourism sector in Palestine faces a complex array of challenges and obstacles rooted in political, economic, and marketing domains. This study has classified these obstacles and challenges into three main axes: Challenges and Obstacles Caused by the Occupation, Internal Challenges and Self-Imposed Obstacles, and Marketing Challenges and Utilization of Technology.

The first axis (Challenges and Obstacles Caused by the Occupation) is the essence and the core axis that causes various obstacles and challenges facing tourism sector in Palestine, from which results to the second axis (Internal Challenges and Self-Imposed Obstacles), while the third axis (Marketing Challenges and Utilization of Technology) is the most prominent and important elements of the second axis that must be highlighted for its important role in developing the tourism sector. [Figure 2](#) illustrates these three axes and their relationship to each other.

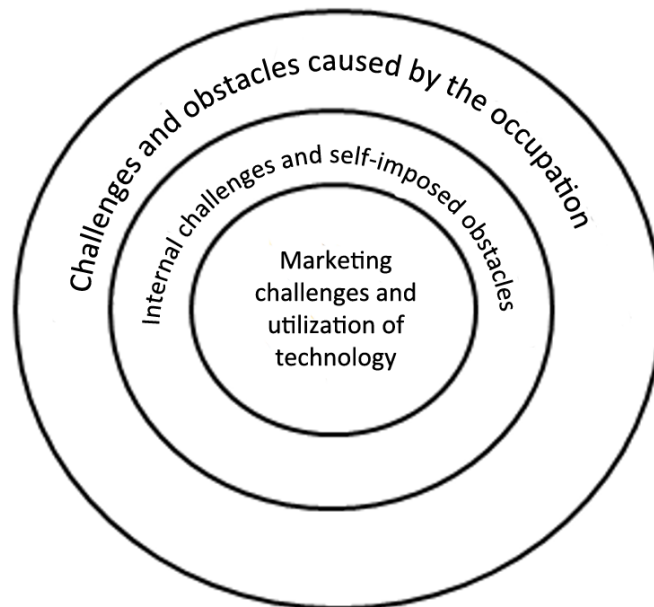


Figure 2. The axes of obstacles and challenges facing Palestinian tourism sector and the relationship between them.

The Israeli occupation significantly impedes tourism in Palestine by imposing restrictions on movement and access to tourist sites, as well as by causing the destruction and fragmentation of archaeological and historical areas. These occupation-related obstacles create an unstable environment that deters potential visitors and undermines the potential growth of the tourism sector.

Palestine faces significant challenges in developing its tourism sector due to economic constraints, including high poverty rates and low income, which limit local spending power. There are also infrastructure deficiencies, such as inadequate roads and hospitality facilities, affecting the quality of tourist services. Additionally, a shortage of qualified professionals and lack of effective training hinder sector growth. Weak coordination among government and tourism stakeholders leads to inefficient management, and there is a general lack of awareness about the importance of preserving Palestinian heritage, resulting in neglected historical sites. Additionally, there is a notable deficiency in the availability of resources and investment needed to advance the sector.

On the marketing front, the Palestinian tourism sector is hindered by ineffective promotional strategies and a lack of digital marketing presence. The current marketing efforts are insufficiently robust, with limited use of modern digital technologies. This lack of effective promotion and accurate data dissemination affects global awareness and interest in Palestinian tourism.

To address these challenges, several key actions are recommended:

- **Political Resolution:** Achieving a political resolution to end the Israeli occupation is crucial for the stabilization and development of the tourism sector. This includes advocating for international support and pressure to facilitate access and protect Palestinian heritage sites.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Significant investment is needed to improve the infrastructure, including transportation, accommodation, and visitor facilities. Enhancing these elements will create a more favorable environment for tourists and improve the overall tourism experience.
- **Economic Support:** Increasing financial resources and investments in the tourism sector is essential. This includes fostering partnerships with international organizations and private investors to support the development and marketing of Palestinian tourism.
- **Cultural and Heritage Awareness:** Raising awareness among Palestinian citizens about the importance of tourism and the preservation of cultural and historical sites is vital. Educational initiatives and community engagement can improve local attitudes towards tourism and encourage greater involvement in preserving and promoting heritage sites.
- **Marketing and Technology Utilization:** Developing comprehensive and effective marketing strategies is necessary. This involves leveraging modern digital technologies to enhance the global visibility of Palestinian tourism. Implementing advanced digital marketing techniques will help in presenting Palestine's unique tourism assets more effectively.

Addressing the multifaceted challenges facing Palestinian tourism requires a coordinated effort that integrates political, economic, and marketing strategies. By focusing on infrastructure improvement, increasing investment, enhancing marketing efforts, and fostering local and international cooperation, Palestine can develop a robust and sustainable tourism sector that showcases its rich cultural and historical heritage while overcoming the obstacles imposed by the occupation.

Finally, it is no exaggeration to say that Palestine, once it achieves full independence and sovereignty over its lands, develops its economic situation, improves its own capabilities and infrastructure, and develops effective digital marketing strategies for its tourism sector, will be one of the most attractive countries for tourists in the world due to its enormous tourism wealth.

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