Palestinian Tourism in Transition: Hope, Aspiration, or Reality?

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Abstract
Palestine's main attraction for a large proportion of visitors is the status of Palestine as the Holy Land. Pilgrims have visited the country from all over the world. The violence between the Palestinians and Israelis has caused a drastic reduction in pilgrimages. With virtually no access to religious sites, the blockade of border crossing points, the closure of Gaza Airport, the Separation Wall and the image of insecurity projected abroad, tourism into Palestine has effectively come to a halt. Relatively little attention has been paid in the academic literature on tourism development to the difficulties, impediments and growth in Palestine. In addressing this gap, this paper explores tourism development in Palestine since the Oslo Peace Accord – 1993 until 2000. In addition, it explores the history of tourism in Palestine, the history of the Palestinian economy and the Palestinian tourism changeover in 1993.

Keywords: Planning, Palestine, economy, tourism development, hope

Introduction

Tourism is now a complex global phenomenon with political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and educational dimensions. Robinson (1998, p. 31) considers tourism to be the 'largest of multi-national activities'. When Lanfant (1995, p. 26) explained about the omnipresence of tourism, she added that tourism on a world scale makes itself felt at geographical, ecological and technological levels - as well as in the less visible domain of symbolic processes. AlSayyed (2001, p.1) considers the twentieth century to have 'been the century of travel and tourism. Indeed, the inhabitants of the world in the last two decades have met more other people that at any time in known history. As travel around the world has risen to unprecedented levels, the number of tourists visiting certain countries and cities in a given year often exceeds the numbers of those place's native populations'.

Tourism already has a long tradition in the Middle East of attracting visitors for business, leisure and religious purposes. The region occupies a unique geographical location at the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa. As the cradle of cultures it has much to offer with respect to history and antiquities, such as the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia and the numerous Greek and Roman ruins along the Mediterranean coast. The region is also where the most important Jewish, Christian and Muslim sites are located. With respect to natural attractions, the Middle East includes spectacular desert landscapes, the Nile, the Red Sea beaches and coral reefs and the Dead Sea (Kester & Carvo, 2004).

Since 2000, the region has experienced an average annual growth rate of 10% in international tourist arrivals; outdoing the rate of increase in most other regions (UNWTO, 2007). However, with some notable exceptions, the Middle East as a whole remains relatively undeveloped as a tourism destination, achieving a share of just 4.8% of global tourist arrivals and 4.0% of global receipts in 2005 (Sharpley, 2008). This is due, in part, to the fact that much of the region has not been traditionally associated with leisure or holiday travel (Wahab, 2000). With the exception of Egypt, which in 2005, accounted for 21.1% of the region's arrivals (8.25 million) and 24.9% of receipts (UNWTO, 2007) and Israel, Palestine and

Turkey, tourism to and within the Middle East has long been dominated by business travel or, in the case of Saudia Arabia, mass religious travel (Henderson, 2006).

Palestine's main attraction for a large proportion of visitors is the status of Palestine as the Holy Land. Pilgrims have visited the country from all over the world. The violence between the Palestinians and Israelis has caused a drastic reduction in pilgrimages. The situation has worsened since the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA. With virtually no access to religious sites, the blockade of border crossing points, the closure of Gaza Airport, the Separation Wall and the image of insecurity projected abroad, tourism into Palestine has effectively come to a halt (UNWTO, 2003).

Relatively little attention has been paid in the academic literature on tourism development, to the difficulties, impediments and level of growth in Palestine. That is, tourism in the Middle East has been addressed in a general sense (Mansfeld, 1999; Wahab, 2000, Kliot & Collins-Kreiner, 2003; Daher, 2006) with some exceptions about Palestine such as Al-Rimmawi (2003), Isaac (2008; 2009; 2010).

Hannam (2008) commented on the book edited by Daher (2006) entitled *Tourism in the Middle East*, 'the collection on the whole is somewhat biased to a relatively small number of countries in the Middle East …….. . I would certainly look forward to a second volume of chapters that would give us a wider geographical coverage, including perhaps some critical insights and contrasts with the contemporary research that has been published on Israel too'. This indeed also includes Palestine.

The purpose of the present article, therefore, is to explore tourism development in Palestine in the 15 years since 1993. Additionally, the paper will address a gap in the literature. Drawing on primary (author's field-trip, 2007) and secondary sources, it explores the policies, processes and structures of tourism planning in Palestine, and in doing so contributing to knowledge and understanding of tourism development in Palestine in particular and of tourism planning more generally. It is recognized that this tourism discourse cannot be separated from the wider political and historical debate that has shaped the political economy of Palestine.

Due to the lengthy nature of this discussion, and in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the analysis, the report was split into two parts. The first part, which is the concern of this article, deals with tourism development in Palestine from 1993 until 2000. The second, scheduled in the second issue of this journal, will investigate tourism development from the year 2000 until 2008. In addition, it will explore the policies, processes and structures of tourism planning in Palestine, the institutional frameworks and governing bodies, and the main challenges facing the Palestinian tourism industry.

The daily diet of war and conflict stories that have emanated from the second uprising (in Arabic *Al-Aqs*a *Intifada*) give the impression that tourism is the least likely economic sector to flourish. The political instability in Palestine has done much to damage tourism, bringing it sometimes to the edge of collapse. Recent history shows that if political instability increases, tourism development becomes very difficult. However, despite political violence and counter-violence, tourism can be developed, and therefore offer opportunities that provide hope for people in these circumstances. This hope is expressed in the book C*hallenging the Wall: Toward A Pedagogy of Hope* (Van Teeffelen, 2007). The Palestinian people were directly faced with the consequences of the Separation Wall in Bethlehem. The family of Claire Anastas, a member of the Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem was especially poignant. Her house was destined to be surrounded by the Wall on three sides. Therefore, it was decided to establish a peace house to help revitalise the area and to conduct advocacy on the issue of the legality of the Wall. Building a peace house in a dead area indeed requires a source of inspiration. Van Teeffelen's book was set up to provide such inspiration (as a complement to the inspiration that springs from activities that are undertaken at the house). A range of

scholars and activists were asked to contribute their reflections. Therefore the book was on one hand looking for inspirational ways to challenge the Wall, and on the other hand, the contributors were trying to see how much such ways could serve a pedagogy of hope.

Describing and analysing tourism development in the last 15 years in Palestine is crucial and can provide a realistic illustration of 'hope' in difficult situations, a counter to the academic community whose general tendency is to withdraw from such reflections. Discussions are concerned with the Separation Wall, normative and existential issues (Platenkamp, 2007) to do with the daily life of suffering, the checkpoints and humiliations of Palestinian people, and more generally the outsider view of the political context where tourism is one of the dimensions. As Qumsiyeh (2008, p.1) notes, 'silence in situations of injustice and racism is not being neutral but being complicit'. Understanding the tourism context in Palestine requires an understanding of political context and history. That is the insider view, for it is this that sets the constraints and barriers within which Palestinian tourism has to operate. This is the reason why there is so little information on this issue. There is a need for academics to address these types of what could be called "knowledge gaps" but more accurately "situations of despair".

The author would like also to refer to the character of biases, which may be dealt with in a contradictory manner during the process of 'peer reviewing'. Some reviewers refuse biases as part of any discussion about political developments in the Middle East. Others accept the fruitfulness of biases as sources of information. This paradox refers to a discussion about reflexivity in social sciences that already has some tradition. Reflexivity according to Giddens, Beck and Lash (1994) has been institutionalized in modern society. In a plural, international and transnational culture communities divide into different groups, styles and identities. More than ever before this cultural restructuring goes along with a rising awareness of the changeability of customs and social relations in the light of continuous new information. New forms of identity are emerging at an accelerating speed. Self-reflexivity is a logical consequence of this ongoing process.

As an example to illustrate these biases, a paper submitted to a tourism academic journal, which was rejected, one of the peer reviewers commented on the paper stating that

"the author writes that "Palestine itself was wiped off the map, historic Palestine coming to be known as Israel". If the author wish to deal with the history of the land maybe he should give the readers a full review of that history (or at least reference to a decent history book). I emphasize this because this land was called officially "Palestine-Eretz Israel" by the British (was not a territorial unit under the Ottomans), was called the "Kindgom of Jerusalem" by the crusaders, Palestine by the Arabs, Syria Palaestina and Judea by the Romans, Yehuda and Israel by the Hebrews, Canaan by the Egyptians, etc. It was always called Zion and Eretz Israel by the Jews and Terra Sancta by the Christians. Maybe I'm getting too detailed for a tourism journal, but if the author of this article wishes to get into historical names and details, I think that he should be very careful and balanced".

The narrative of Palestine in the cultural arena carved by Zionism is, first and foremost, a story of erasure, denial and active silencing by historians and intellectuals. The first casualty was the word Palestine itself. After 1967, when the whole of Palestine was occupied by Israel, it became *de rigueur* to replace the historical term Palestine with the nationalist and expansionist Hebrew phrase *Eretz Israel*. The use of the Hebrew phrase acted as a hidden marker of ideology. It denoted the absence of Palestine – the country, the people, the language, and its history. The phrase provided a virtual (and false) connection between the biblical existence of the land and its current occupation by the Israeli state. This erasure is

applied not only in the case of texts that deal with the area and its recent history, but also as a blanket term, even when nonsensical. The use of the term *Eretz Israel* to replace and erase Palestine has become a test of conformity and political correctness. Similar codes embedded in some academics are the terms used to describe the wars in the Middle East: the 1948 war is referred to only as the *War of Independence*; the 1967 war *The Six Day War*; and 1973 is called the *Yom Kippur War*. Any departure from such terminology is understood as a dangerous deviation, opening the door to arguments about the moral justification for any of those military campaigns and ultimately to justifications for Zionism itself (Bresheeth, 2007). Some academics have accepted and adopted such terminology without question.

The 1948 War resulted in the destruction of some 420 Palestinian towns and villages and the expulsion of at least 780,000 Palestinians. Yet, the story of 'Nakba' has hardly been told and certainly not been well heard. Why has it not found the space where it could take form as a story of injustice (and disregard) for human dignity? In other words, the establishment of a space of legitimacy and understanding within which a pluralistic discourse that would include multiple voices of Palestinians could find a hearing and possibly contribute to a solution in the future. This failure stems not only from the victims' silence, but also from a general lack of desire by those responsible to deal with the burden of the Palestinian catastrophe. The bottom line of this responsibility is to deploy and advance an agenda of critical research on the political-economic difficulties in developing tourism, related to the Israeli occupation and political violence in Israel and Palestine.

The Palestinian Economy

Palestine is located on the crossroads between three continents, Asia, Africa and Europe. It is considered the cradle of civilizations and a place of the world's three major religions (Alavi & Yasin, 2000; Wizermass & AlHiyari, 1987).

Since 1948, Israeli planners, politicians and military leaders have undertaken efforts to de-develop the Palestinian economy through confiscating land and resources and undermining potential growth by rendering the Palestinian economy dependent upon Israel.

For the first two and half decades of the Occupation, from 1967 through the first Intifada and until the economic closure following the Gulf War, Israel's economic policy towards the Occupied Territories was one of controlled development - 'asymmetric containment' (UNCTAD, 2006): Israel wanted to incorporate the territories' economy into Israel. The Palestinian population thus became one of Israel's major agricultural export markets. The Old City of Jerusalem became its most important tourist venue and Palestinians themselves provided cheap produce and labour. However, the economy of the territories had to be kept under strict control for fear that their cheap products and labour could undermine or compete with Israel's own market - and with economic strength and independence lead to demands for political independence (Halper, 2008). Through the years, economic development in the Occupied Territories fell under ever greater limitations. Palestinians were not allowed to open a bank of their own; tariffs and subsidies for Israeli produce, and import controls (such as wine, olive oil, and handicrafts) prevented the Palestinian economy from seriously competing with the Israeli one; and economic ties between the Palestinians and Arab countries were severely curtailed (Hever, 2007). Simultaneously, Israel actively de-developed the Palestinian economy. It invested almost nothing in infrastructure, housing, tourism facilities or services. In the agricultural sector, a pillar of the Palestinian economy, farm land continued to be expropriated at a rapid pace. The closure policy prevented Palestinian produce from reaching Israeli markets and the steadily tightening internal closure closed access even to Palestinian markets within the Occupied Territories.

Israel also maintains control over utilities such as water, electricity and phone services in the Occupied Territories, and Israel charges very high prices for these utilities in spite of the

low income of the Palestinians. In fact, they actually pay more for electricity than Israelis and in 2004, Israel confiscated US$15.8 million from humanitarian aid sent to the Palestinians for utility bills owed by Palestinian municipalities (Hever, 2007, p.7).

Key sectors of the Palestinian economy are under Israeli control. 98% of Palestinian National Authority (PNA) electricity comes from the Israel Eclectic (Should this be 'electric'?) Corporation; the Palestinian natural gas and oil market is monopolised by Dor Alon and other Israeli companies. Israeli companies' share of the Palestinian mobile line market is as much as 45%. Nowadays, the West Bank and Gaza function as captive markets. Overall, Israeli exports to the West Bank and Gaza have risen from US$0.8 billion in 1988 to US$2.6 billion in 2007, solidifying the Palestinian economy's dependence on Israel.

Even as the Oslo peace process began, the Israeli government took an almost unexplainable decision to impose an economic closure on the West Bank. "Closure", writes Amira Hass (2002, p. 6, cited in Halper, 2008) - one of the Israel's most respected journalists, a close observer of the peace process, and a resident of the occupied Territories for many years - 'had a very immediate advantage in the [Oslo] negotiating process underway. Particularly under Rabin and Peres, the use of closure as an instrument of economic leverage over the PNA was blatant: "You arrest this one or that one, and we'll give you 500 more work permits" and "if you behave yourselves and agree to our (slow) implementation timetables, we'll allow you to export more vegetables and release from Israeli customs the heavy machinery you imported" were the unexpressed but widely understood premises underlying negotiations'.

Following the Oslo Accords, it was expected that the Palestinian economy would enter a period of sustained rapid growth. By 1999 real GDP had grown to US$4,512 million. However, since 2000, when Israel instituted a strict closure regime in response to the second Intifada, the Palestinian economy has been on downward trend. GDP fell to US$3,557 million at the height of fighting in 2002 and then recovered slightly in 2004 and 2005. But, with the continuing growth in settlements, closures and the cut off in direct aid, GDP fell again in 2006 (World Bank, 2007).

Because of the hostile economic policies, the almost complete denial to Palestinians workers of access to the Israeli labour market, and the effects of the Separation Wall, the economic situation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories entered an emergency situation. Unemployment runs at 67% in Gaza and 48% in the West Bank, and 75% of Palestinians including two-third of the children, live in poverty, on less that US$2 a day, defined by the UN as 'deep poverty'. More than 100,000 Palestinians out of the 125,000 who used to work in Israel, have lost their jobs (UNCTAD, 2006).

In recent years, these efforts at de-development have been seemingly facilitated by agencies such as the Word Bank, the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). All these actors work together with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to implement 'development' schemes that treat the Occupation as a partner rather than an occupier, thus normalising the existing patterns of domination, rather than enhancing Palestinian capacity to develop independently.

History of Tourism in Palestine

Most of the literature about tourism and the history of tourism established the 20th century as the real beginning of growth in mass tourism. However, mass tourism has been around Palestine for more that 2000 years with three monotheistic faiths requiring or exhorting their faithful to make pilgrimage to this Holy Land. Since the beginning of the 20th century Palestine has seen complicated changes in its political circumstances. These have included the creation of Israel in 1948 and the 1967 war, where Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These events have created catastrophic political, economic and social impacts on the population, many of whom became refugees, living in camps in Jordan, Lebanon and

Syria and within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In many ways Palestine itself was wiped off the map (PATG, 2008), historic Palestine coming to be known as Israel. In this context, tourism became a political tool in the supremacy and domination of the Israeli establishment over *land* and *people* and an instrument for preventing the Palestinians from enjoying the benefits and the fruits of cultural and human interaction on which tourism thrives (see Isaac, 2010, forthcoming).

Until 1948, tourism in Palestine was a marginal and undeveloped sector, notwithstanding visits by pilgrims and others to holy places, especially in the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron and Nazareth. While in many countries of the region tourism has developed since the 1950s into an important sector, the prolonged Middle East conflict has prevented this in Palestine.

The division of Palestine in 1948 into three entities (Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem) completely transformed the structure and market orientation of tourism. Some important tourist attractions, of natural beauty, and historical and religious significance, remained within the borders of Israel, and as a consequence, were inaccessible to tourists from Arab and Islamic countries (Bethlehem University, 1995).

After 1967, the Palestinian tourism sector in general and the hotel industry in particular suffered a significant decline in the volume and quality of business. There was increasing competition from the Israeli tourism industry and physical, institutional and financial restrictions were imposed on Palestinian tourism. All in all, the tourism industry has suffered greatly since the occupation and has remained underdeveloped. Strong pressures and profound changes have resulted in the effective separation of the Israeli and Palestinian tourism sectors and the marginalisation of Palestinian facilities.

The private organisation structure was under strict Israeli control and has diminished since 1976 (Isaac, 2001). Throughout the years of occupation, the Arab private sector has managed to undertake limited tourism related activities despite the problems due to occupation. Between 1976 and 1994, the number of Palestinian hotels remained unchanged. Very few permits to build or convert to hotels were granted by the Israeli authorities to any investors in the Palestinian sector.

At least 15 military orders and regulations related to tourism have been issued since 1967 by the Israeli military authorities, who have assumed responsibility for tourism in the Occupied Territories. These orders raised the level of requirements for licensing and functioning of tourist institutions, without availing those institutions of the means necessary for the required improvements. As a result of having quality requirements raised, but access to funding sources denied, many tourism firms were confronted with serious problems such as the often insurmountable challenge of unequal competition with Israeli firms, or demotion to lower tourist grades. Israeli tourism enterprises were offered long-term loans at concession interest rates, sometimes with part of the loan being turned into a grant. New Israeli tourism enterprises are eligible for tax reductions, especially when they face unexpected troubles. Vigorous government support for Israeli enterprises active in Israel has proved to be a major impediment to full and equitable competition with Palestinian enterprises, which are totally deprived of such subsidies and assistance (Hazboun, 1994).

Palestinian Tourism: A Destination On the Move: 1993-2000

After the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1993, several necessary steps were carried out to promote and encourage tourism. First, an economic agreement was signed between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel on 4 May 1994. Secondly, the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities was established and took responsibility for recognising and supporting the tourism industry in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For

example, it accomplished reorganisation of internal transportation, restaurants, tourism agencies and other segments; and rehabilitation of religious and cultural centres (Al-Khawaja, 1997).

The establishment of the Palestinian National Authority meant that various projects and programmes were developed and implemented within the tourism sector. According to the Palestinian Authority (UNWTO, 2003), the Palestinian tourist related enterprises in 1999 included 101 hotels with 4464 rooms. Another 34 hotels with 3,018 rooms were added to the lodging capacity in Palestine. However, due to the political situation, tourism services including accommodation have deteriorated. Some hotels have been damaged as a consequence of the ongoing violence (see Tourism Concern 2001/2). Palestine's tourism numbers are small, rising from 200,000 in 1998 to 330,000 in 2000 with promotional efforts such as Bethlehem 2000 events, and participation in international travel fairs in Spain, England, and The Netherlands.

Tourism is one of the most significant economic assets to Palestine and constitutes 7-10% of the Palestinian gross national product (Tourism Concern, 2001/2). Since 1995, exceptional efforts have been made to rebuild and upgrade tourism related sectors that were deliberately left to deteriorate and dwindle for more than three decades of Israeli occupation. Some US$700 million was invested in new tourism projects and upgrading of existing facilities and services.

The Jericho InterContinental Hotel & Casino (which attracted many Israelis and can be described as border tourism), operated between 1998 and 2000 but it closed after Israeli attacks as a result of the Al-Aqsa *Intifada* uprising in the year 2000.

The Tourism Revival Committee in Jericho and the Dead Sea Valley and the Palestinian Wildlife Society made an agreement to develop and activate the garden at the social activities compound of the committee in Jericho. These agreements were aimed primarily at efforts to protect and study wildlife on the site in the Dead Sea Valley in cooperation with national, regional and international institutions.

Between 1994 and 2000, a number of Palestinian investors chose to back businesses and projects there, and saw a return for their capital outlay. Large companies and banks were established by wealthy Palestinians, but such ventures are untenable under present circumstances. People need to operate in a tranparent investment environment. They want a clear political scenario to predict where events are heading in order for them to minimize risk.

The following tables show the number of visitors to Palestine and visitors by country of residence until year 2000. According to statistics released by the Israel Ministry of Tourism, 2,672,000 people visited Israel and Palestine in the year 2000, the highest number of visitors in a single year that Israel and Palestine have ever welcomed, and 15% more than 1998 (Isaac, 2001). A total of 1,954,300 tourists entered Israel and Palestine by air, about 5% more that those who flew into Israel and Palestine the previous year.

Table 1: Number of visitors (000').

Year	**No. of visitors**
1990	269,483
1991	744,881
1992	851,632
1993	902,644
1994	965,424
1995	1,010,452
1996	795,223
1997	685,494
1998	766,666
1999	906,568
2000	1,054,648

Source: Statistics Unit, MOTA (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities) Isaac, 2001.

Table 2: Visitors by country of residence (000') .

Country of residence	1999 Jan-Dec.	2000 Jan- Dec.	% change 1999/2000
Total	**659,322**	**843,718**	**28%**
USA	102,356	122,961	20%
Canada	4,595	4,561	-1%
Brazil	5,361	8,216	53%
U.K.	68,045	69,221	2%
France	29,767	40,315	35%
Spain	22,217	38,193	27%
The Benelux	20,243	20,665	2%
Germany	59,667	81,301	36%
Italy	75,149	132,002	76%
Austria	4,882	2,119	-57%
Poland	14,476	28,424	96%
Scandinavian countries	20,828	18,441	11%
Russia	59,549	57,554	-3%
Greece	24,261	36,905	52%
Cyprus	9,412	2,711	-71%
India	3,609	4,401	22%
Japan	5,764	10,280	79%
South Africa	2,813	2,871	2%
Other Countries	119,000	157,644	32%
Israel 'organised'	7,327	4,933	-33%

Source: Statistic Unit, MOTA (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities) Isaac, 2001.
These figures reflect the organised groups only.

Since the Palestinian Authority took control of the major cities investment in tourism has experienced a boom. Between 1994 & 2000, private sector investment in tourism alone

exceeded US$ 700 million (Khoury, 2007). Figure 1 below shows the growth in the number of hotels and rooms between the periods of 1967 and 2008.

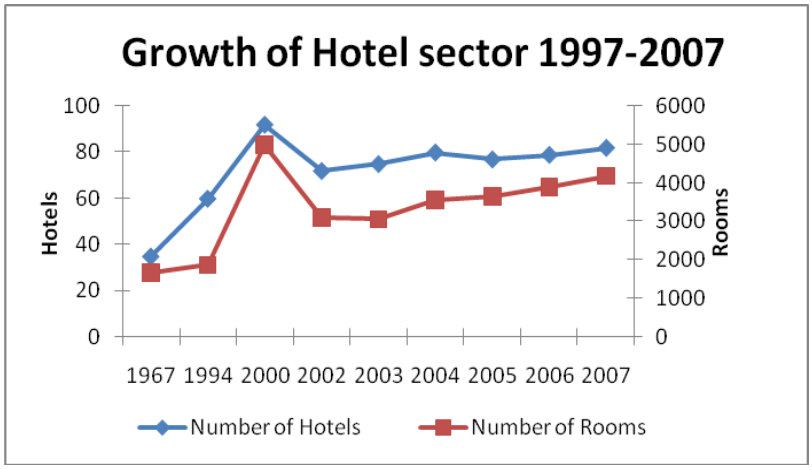

Figure 1. PCBS (2008).

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA), monthly visitors numbers grew steadily, yearly hotel occupancy rose from 30% to 60% and the number of hotel rooms increased from 2500 to 6000 rooms. The number of licensed tour operators rose from 31 to 101 and that of tour guides from 105 to 231. Such figures are indeed impressive given that Israel had consistently blocked the development of Palestinian tourism, withdrawing the licensing of tour operators or new hotels and hampering training for Arab guides. During the first nine months of 2000, Israel and Palestine and Jordan were experiencing the most successful year for inbound tourism in their respective histories. In March 2000, Pope John Paul II visited Israel, Palestine and Jordan and in his wake over 60,000 Catholics from around the world followed all or part of his itinerary through the Holy Land (Beirman, 2001).

Following the Pope's visit, Christian pilgrimage travel was the principal growth sector during this period, and Israel and Palestine were confident that year 2000 would be the region's most successful year for tourism.

Conclusion

Following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian tourism sector suffered a significant decline in volume and quality of businesses and has remained underdeveloped.

As observed in this article, the development of tourism in Palestine since 1993, after signing the Oslo Accord agreement, and until 2000 has been extraordinary, despite the difficulties and the impediments imposed by the Israeli military. Tourism planning in Palestine undoubtedly reflects and is directly influenced by the political economy and the political instability in the region.

Nonetheless, the Palestinian Authority in general and the Ministry of Tourism in particular have managed to support and encourage the tourism industry and re-organise tourism facilities in the Palestinian cities and towns.

The main aim of this article was to investigate tourism developments since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority to fill in the gap in the academic literature. The second part of this article, which will be published in the second issue, will deal with the developments of tourism since 2000 until 2008, tourism planning in Palestine, institutional framework and governing bodies, and will expose the main challenges facing the tourism

industry and how the tourism industry could go from here - the way forward - for Palestine as a tourism destination.

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