

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

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Abstract: This paper examines how tourism value-chain performance influences visitor satisfaction and behavioral intentions in religious tourism destinations in Lebanon. Grounded in value chain theory and studies on religious tourism supply chains, the research uses a structured questionnaire developed from the literature and administered to 208 adult respondents in Lebanon, including current and prospective visitors. Perceptions were measured through 23 Likert-type items covering transport infrastructure, accommodation quality, and local business services, while outcomes included overall satisfaction, intention to revisit, recommendation likelihood, and willingness to participate in religious events. The scale showed excellent internal consistency, although the very high alpha value should be interpreted cautiously because it may also indicate item redundancy. Results show strong positive associations between value-chain dimensions and all outcome variables. The regression model explains 87.9% of the variance in overall satisfaction, while chi-square tests indicate significant associations between prior visitation and revisit intention, as well as between perceived infrastructure and recommendation intentions. The findings suggest that strengthening religious tourism in Lebanon requires coordinated improvements in accessibility, culturally appropriate accommodation, and community-based local services. The study offers practical guidance for destination managers and policymakers working in complex and fragile tourism contexts.

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

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Introduction

Religious tourism is an important part of Lebanon's tourism offer because the country combines dense sacred heritage, active pilgrimage traditions, and strong cultural diversity. Yet the presence of religious sites alone does not guarantee stable tourism performance. Visitor satisfaction and future behavioral intentions depend on how well the tourism value chain functions across transport, accommodation, local services, and stakeholder coordination. This makes the topic relevant not only for tourism management, but also for regional development and destination resilience (Issa & Altinay, 2006; Apaydin et al., 2016; Kabalan & Stanciulescu, 2018).

The research problem addressed in this study is straightforward: Lebanon has religious tourism potential, but the coherence of its tourism value chain remains uneven. Accessibility, accommodation quality, local business services, and coordination among public, private, and community actors may either strengthen or weaken the visitor experience. In fragile national contexts, these service links are especially important because disruptions in one part of the chain can affect the entire destination experience. This study

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therefore examines how value-chain performance shapes satisfaction and behavioral intentions among visitors to religious destinations in Lebanon (Jallat & Shultz, 2011; Olsen, 2018; Budovich, 2023; Muhardi et al., 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, the study is positioned within tourism value chain thinking, which treats tourism as a set of connected activities that create value through coordination rather than through isolated services. In religious tourism, this chain includes not only transport and accommodation, but also culturally meaningful local businesses, hospitality practices, and community involvement. The literature suggests that these dimensions are interdependent, yet many studies still examine them separately rather than as a unified system. This paper addresses that gap by operationalizing the tourism value chain as a multidimensional construct linked to visitor outcomes ((Kim et al., 2016; Kuo et al., 2019; Sutomo et al., 2023).

The study has three aims. First, it measures tourists' perceptions of value-chain components in Lebanon's religious destinations. Second, it tests how these components relate to overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions such as revisit, recommendation, and participation in future religious events. Third, it examines whether prior visitation and selected socio-demographic variables are associated with behavioral intentions. Based on this framework, the study formulates four hypotheses linking transport infrastructure, accommodation quality, local business services, and overall satisfaction to visitor outcomes ((Budovich, 2023; Muhardi et al., 2023; Zakhia & Pérez Pérez, 2024).

Literature Review

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries, and planning is a prerequisite for sustainable development. In tourism studies, the value chain perspective helps explain how value is created across interconnected activities rather than within isolated services. Religious tourism, traditionally linked to pilgrimage, is particularly suited to this perspective because the visitor experience extends from the journey to the site and through the destination ecosystem. 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 (Issa & Altinay, 2006; Robinson et al., 2020; Sinha & Mittal, 2021).

Religious tourism has both spiritual and practical dimensions. Visitors seek meaning, authenticity, and ritual connection, but they also depend on accessible transport, reliable accommodation, and local services that support the journey. The literature shows that when these elements work together, destination value increases. When they are fragmented, the overall experience weakens. This is why tourism value chain approaches are increasingly used to study religious destinations, especially those facing instability or service coordination problems (Lin & Fu, 2020; Nasiri, 2021; Mittal & Sinha, 2022). 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).

In recent studies, religious tourism is increasingly viewed as a value web rather than a simple linear chain. This means that multiple actors, including public authorities, religious organizations, businesses, and communities, jointly shape the visitor experience. Such an approach is especially relevant in fragile contexts, where the tourism system depends on coordination and shared responsibility. The value chain perspective therefore provides a useful analytical framework for understanding how religious destinations create or lose value (Sitkevich, 2023; Sutomo et al., 2023).

Lebanon offers a particularly relevant case. The country has a long history of pilgrimage and a dense concentration of religious sites, but it also faces political, economic, and organizational constraints. Previous research has highlighted the destination's heritage potential, stakeholder complexity, and community attitudes, but fewer studies have examined how transport, accommodation, and local services jointly influence visitor satisfaction and loyalty-type behaviors. This study responds to that gap by combining the tourism value chain perspective with an empirical analysis of visitor outcomes in Lebanon (Apaydin et al., 2016; Baker et al., 2020; Chaddad, 2021; Ertzogue, 2023; Farra Haddad, 2024; Zakhia & Pérez Pérez, 2024).

Three gaps motivate the study. First, many studies examine transport, accommodation, and local services as separate attributes rather than as interconnected parts of a value chain. Second, Lebanon-focused research often emphasizes qualitative potential and contextual fragility but not a unified quantitative model. Third, recent work on resilience after COVID-19 has not sufficiently addressed smaller or more fragile destinations such as Lebanon (Budovich, 2023; Sitkevich, 2023; Sutomo et al., 2023; Ayele & Singh, 2024). Based on these gaps, the study conceptualizes transport infrastructure, accommodation quality, and local business services as the core dimensions of the tourism value chain in religious destinations. Transport reduces friction and uncertainty, accommodation shapes comfort and cultural fit, and local businesses convey authenticity and socio-economic value. These dimensions are expected to influence overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Kim et al., 2016; Kuo et al., 2019; Chusmeru et al., 2023).

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).

Tourism value chain theory conceptualizes tourism as a series of connected actions that work together to generate value for travelers, businesses and local communities instead of thinking to different attractions or products separately. From this viewpoint, value is co-created along a chain that usually consists of planning before the trip, marketing, transport, accommodation, food and beverage, guiding and interpretation, retail and complementary services, as well as how the whole area is managed and organized. In “new” or structurally transforming tourism regions, problems with coordination and weak connections along this chain can hurt both competitiveness and inclusiveness of tourism growth (Sitkevich, 2023; Sutomo et al., 2023).

Sitkevich, (2023) and Sutomo et al., (2023) highlight in their studies that the tourism value chains are more like value webs, where vertically and horizontally connected actors share information, risks and rewards. This change is especially important in destinations exposed to political or economic instability. Here, flexible ways of working together and shared management are key to keeping the tourism experience strong. In such contexts, the tourism value chain is not only an analytical tool for mapping activities but also a helpful approach for creating destination systems that can adjust and withstand challenges better.

Religious tourism embeds the tourism value chain to certain spiritual, cultural and ethical expectations. Pilgrimage flows often display high temporal concentration (linked to

religious calendars) and involve strong connections with holy sites, spiritual leaders and local communities. Studies of contemporary pilgrimage emphasize that religious trips are evaluated not solely on logistical performance, but on how well the chain of services supports spiritual goals, perceived authenticity and moral principles like unity and helping others. This means that the religious tourism value chain includes both practical aspects like getting there safely and comfortably and deeper meanings like a sacred feeling, ritual facilitation, opportunities for prayer and thinking (Budovich et al., 2023; Carvache-Franco et al., 2024).

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).

Existing research indicates that religious tourism experiences unfold across multiple interconnected service points, accessibility and travel conditions, accommodation and hospitality, and the local destination ecosystem that provides information, products, and culturally meaningful encounters (Kim et al., 2016; Kuo et al., 2019). Studies also note that disruptions in service coordination can weaken the tourism supply chain and diminish destination performance, particularly in contexts exposed to uncertainty and external shocks (Sinha & Mittal, 2021; Mittal & Sinha, 2022). However, the literature remains fragmented in two ways. First, many studies discuss religious tourism value creation conceptually without empirically testing integrated value-chain dimensions against concrete outcomes such as satisfaction, revisit intention, recommendation, and event participation. Second, Lebanon-focused discussions often emphasize tourism potential or

contextual constraints without providing a unified quantitative assessment of how the service chain shapes visitor perceptions and future engagement (Issa & Altinay, 2006; Jallat & Shultz, 2011; Kabalan & Stănciulescu, 2018).

Following value chain reasoning, this study treats transport infrastructure, accommodation quality, and local business services as core value-chain components that jointly influence the visitor experience. Improved accessibility and supportive mobility conditions enable visitation and reduce friction across the travel process; accommodation quality and culturally reflective hospitality strengthen comfort and perceived fit; and community-linked local services (authentic products, responsiveness to tourist needs, and visible economic contribution) enhance the experiential and social value of religious travel (Kim et al., 2016; Kuo et al., 2019).

Building on prior means-end and value-chain studies in religious tourism, this paper treats transport infrastructure, accommodation quality and local businesses as important parts of the tourism value chain that influence how visitors think and feel. Transport infrastructure functions as an enabling condition that reduces uncertainty and travel friction, thereby making pilgrimage feasible and less stressful. The quality of places to stay, especially if they show the local religious culture and provide caring services, boosts pilgrims' feelings of being connected to their personal motivations and the destination. Local business services, like small shops, restaurants and handicraft providers, serve as links to the community. They can improve the perceived authenticity and socio-economic benefits of tourism or, conversely, harm it by becoming too commercial or not providing good quality. In Lebanon, these tourism value chain dimensions operate within a highly plural and politically fragile environment where religious tourism holds significant economic and cultural importance. The country has one of the highest concentrations of holy places in the Middle East and sees a lot of interest from both locals who live abroad and regional travelers. However, religious tourism is still disorganized and not well-managed as a connected system. Infrastructure disruptions, varying levels of service quality and a lack of cooperation between religious authorities, government agencies and private operators create delays in the tourism value chain process. This makes it hard to turn visits into steady growth for local communities (Armiah et al., 2023; Budovich et al., 2023; Chusmeru et al., 2023; Ayele & Singh, 2024).

Existing literature on religious tourism and pilgrimage has mapped motivations, experiences and destination development challenges in diverse contexts, including the Middle East. However, three interrelated gaps remain and need attention. First, most empirical studies look at transport, accommodation and local services as separate service attributes rather than seeing them as related parts of a tourism value chain where how well they work together affects visitor satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Second, research focused on Lebanon tends to emphasize qualitative assessments of heritage potential, political risk and community attitudes, with limited quantitative analysis of how specific tourism value chain dimensions influence visitor experiences. Third, recent global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have sparked more interest in resilience and supply-chain cohesion in religious tourism, but empirical work has concentrated on major hubs (like Iraq

and Saudi Arabia instead of smaller, weaker destinations such as Lebanon (Budovich et al., 2023; Sitkevich, 2023; Sutomo *et al.*, 2023; Ayele & Singh, 2024).

This study addresses these gaps by (i) operationalizing the tourism value chain in religious destinations as a multidimensional construct which include transport infrastructure, accommodation quality and local business services; (ii) testing an integrated model that connects these dimensions to overall satisfaction and a bundle of behavioral intentions (revisit, recommendation, participation in future events) for religious tourists in Lebanon; and (iii) placing the Lebanese case within current debates on tourism value-chain resilience in politically and economically unstable environments. Conceptually, the paper contributes to the tourism value chain literature by demonstrating that in religious destinations, community-embedded business services and culturally reflective accommodation are not peripheral elements but central drivers of satisfaction on par with infrastructure. Empirically, it provides one of the first large-sample quantitative analyses of the religious tourism value chain in Lebanon, giving helpful information and guidance for destination managers and policymakers who want to turn fragmented pilgrimage flows into a more coherent, welcoming and inclusive value chain. Given this situation, this study looks at the tourism value chain in religious sites as a complex system that connects how well services are performed to visitor satisfaction and their future actions in a risky environment.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the effect of tourism value-chain performance on visitor satisfaction and behavioral intentions in religious tourism destinations in Lebanon. The questionnaire was built from the literature on tourism value chains and religious tourism, and its content was reviewed for conceptual coherence before data collection. The instrument included 23 Likert-type items measuring transport infrastructure, accommodation quality, local business services, overall satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Detailed demographic variables consisting of age, gender, education level, monthly income, and experience at religious sites were gathered to support group-based comparisons (Issa & Altinay, 2006; Sinha & Mittal, 2021; Haddad, 2024).

Primary data were collected from adult respondents in Lebanon using a non-probability purposive sampling strategy. The final sample included 208 valid responses from current visitors and prospective visitors to religious sites. Because no complete sampling frame was available, purposive recruitment was the most feasible strategy in this context. This approach supports exploratory analysis, but it also limits the generalizability of the results, especially for international pilgrims and less digitally connected groups. The study therefore treats the findings as indicative rather than fully representative of all religious tourists in Lebanon (Budovich et al., 2023; Carvache-Franco et al., 2024).

The questionnaire contained 23 items capturing perceptions of tourism value-chain performance and visitor outcomes. Value-chain items covered three domains: transport

infrastructure (accessibility via public transport; road condition/signage; parking/traffic; experience enhancement), accommodation quality (availability near site; clean/safe facilities; culturally reflective services; staff hospitality), and local business services (tourist needs met; authentic products; economic contribution; understanding tourist needs). Outcome items captured overall satisfaction and future engagement (recommendation, revisit intention, and participation in future religious events). All items were measured on a Likert-type agreement scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The study followed standard ethical guidelines for social research. Participants received an information sheet outlining the academic purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and data confidentiality assurances prior to providing informed consent. No personal identifiers were collected beyond basic sociodemographic variables, and data were stored in aggregated form for analysis.

The analysis proceeded in four steps. First, descriptive statistics summarized respondent characteristics and item-level agreement levels. Second, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Third, Pearson correlations examined associations between value-chain dimensions and outcome variables. Fourth, a regression model tested the reliability test using Cronbach's alpha yielded 0.994, which shows strong consistency among the survey items according to Nunnally & Bernstein (1994). Descriptive statistics were computed for all items and demographic variables. The reliability analyses was performed on the full set of 23 items, followed by Pearson correlations, multiple linear regression predicting overall satisfaction, and chi-square tests for associations between categorical variables and behavioral outcomes. The significance level was set at 0.05, with $p < 0.01$ highlighted for particularly strong relationships.

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.

Surveys were disseminated both on-site at selected religious destinations and through online channels affiliated with religious and community organizations, which facilitated access to geographically dispersed respondents under conditions of political and economic instability. Although this strategy helps reach many current and future local pilgrims, it does not provide a typical sample of every religious traveler in Lebanon. This is especially true for visitors from other countries and for marginalized groups with limited digital access.

The study also recognizes several methodological constraints. The cross-sectional design does not support causal inference. In addition, the large number of predictors relative to sample size means the regression results should be interpreted carefully, with attention to

possible multicollinearity and overfitting. Future studies should strengthen construct validity through pilot testing, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, and, where feasible, structural equation modeling. These steps would improve both measurement precision and explanatory power in future research on religious tourism value chains (Sinha & Mittal, 2021; Mittal & Sinha, 2022; Ayele & Singh, 2024)

Results and Discussion

As presented in Table 1, most respondents reported having visited a religious site in Lebanon, and the sample was broadly distributed across age, gender, education, and income categories. This indicates that the dataset captures a relatively engaged group of visitors and prospective visitors. The socio-demographic pattern suggests that religious tourism in Lebanon attracts economically active and well-educated respondents.

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
\$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

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 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%
I intend to Revisit Site	84.6%
Interest in Other Religious Sites	85.1%
Participation in Future Religious Events	86.5%

Source: own work

Respondents expressed strong agreement across all value-chain dimensions and outcome variables. This indicates a highly positive perception of religious tourism services in Lebanon. Notably, the strongest agreement was recorded for behavioral intentions such as willingness to participate in future religious events and interest in other religious sites. These patterns suggest a strong link between perceived destination quality and future engagement.

The majority of respondents expressed strong agreement across all value chain dimensions, indicating a positive perception of religious tourism services in Lebanon country. 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).

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.

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

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.994	23

Source: own work

This exceptionally high value indicates that the items are highly correlated and reliably measure the underlying construction, affirming the scale's robustness for statistical analysis.

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 extremely high overall Cronbach's alpha (0.994) shows that items are closely related to each other and that the instrument provides very consistent scores across respondents. However, measurement literature cautions that alpha values close to 1.00 may also signal redundancy, where multiple items tap almost identical content rather than distinct facets of a construct. In this study, the high alpha likely reflects both the conceptual coherence of the tourism value chain dimensions in respondents' perceptions and the inclusion of similarly worded items within subscales. Although this level of reliability is acceptable for exploratory research, future instrument development should aim to shorten the scale by removing redundant items and to complement alpha with additional reliability metrics such as composite reliability and average variance extracted.

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. The regression model (see Table 5) significantly predicts overall satisfaction with a high R^2 value of .879 ($p < .001$), indicating that approximately 88% of the variance in overall satisfaction is explained by the model.

The F-statistics of 117.697 confirms the model's statistical significance and overall strength. The adjusted R^2 (.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.

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

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.

Discussion

The consistently high agreement levels across tourism value chain items and outcomes suggest that surveyed visitors perceive Lebanon's religious tourism value chain as functioning very effectively, especially when it comes to the spiritual and personal experiences. At the same time, this positivity may partly reflect sample composition—well-educated, economically active residents with strong attachment to religious sites—and potential acquiescence or social desirability bias in self-reported evaluations. From a value-chain perspective, the pattern of high scores across transport, accommodation and local business services indicates that visitors do not differentiate sharply between functional and experiential elements; rather, they experience the chain as an integrated whole.

The fact that local business and accommodation variables display some of the strongest correlations with satisfaction and intentions supports arguments that in religious tourism, embeddedness in local culture and community is a critical source of perceived value. In other words, pilgrims reward destinations not only for providing safe access and comfortable facilities but also for visibly benefiting local residents and honoring religious and cultural norms in service provision. This finding directly affects how to improve tourism value chain interventions that prioritize community-based enterprises, faith-sensitive hospitality training and participatory governance arrangements in Lebanon's religious destinations.

The findings speak directly to current discussions on how tourism value chains can be leveraged to support inclusive and resilient development in emerging and politically sensitive destinations. Studies of “new” tourism regions show that value is more often created through mixed management styles that connect small, local businesses with bigger companies throughout the chain. The significant impact noticed here for local business variables such as “tourist needs met” and “economic contribution” indicates that in religious destinations, community-anchored nodes of the tourism value chain are particularly salient for visitors' satisfaction and loyalty. In studies about religious tourism, a key argument is whether secular and sacred values can coexist within commercially organized pilgrimage systems without losing their true meaning. The present study adds to this discussion by demonstrating that high levels of satisfaction and behavioral intention are associated not only with spiritual experiences and site maintenance but also with visible socio-economic benefits for local communities and culturally coherent service encounters. Instead of treating commercial services as inherently problematic, the findings indicate that when embedded within a well-functioning tourism value chain, they can actually enhance pilgrims' perceptions of authenticity and moral appropriateness (Budovich et al.,

2023; Chusmeru et al., 2023; Sitkevich, 2023; Sutomo et al., 2023; Ayele & Singh, 2024; Mileva & Krachanova, 2024).

The findings offer coherent support that the results of religious tourism in Lebanon have a strong correlation with the performance of the tourism value chain. In all the correlation findings, transport infrastructure, quality of accommodation, and local business services were positively correlated with variables of satisfaction and behavioral intention (recommendation, revisit intention, and participation in future events), which confirms the overall hypothesis of the study that the value-chain performance is relevant to visitor outcomes. This tendency is further supported by a regression model that demonstrates that overall satisfaction is explained by a significant portion of the value-chain indicators ($R^2 = 0.879$; $p < 0.001$). This is in line with the value-chain logic that tourism value is generated in the form of a series of sequential service experiences and not a single destination characteristic (Kim et al., 2016; Kuo et al., 2019). Another outstanding trend is the strength of relationships between local business dimensions and general satisfaction. The fact that most of the factors, such as the destination's ability to know the tourists' needs and perceived economic contribution, had high correlations implies that religious tourism experiences are influenced not only by the logistics and comfort of a destination but also by the perceived authenticity and sense of belonging to the community.

This study is in line with literature that highlights the fact that pilgrimage-type travel adds a spiritual connotation to both social and cultural meaning, with interaction with the locals and services rooted in culture enhancing the visitor experience (Kim et al., 2016; Kuo et al., 2019). The practical implication of this outcome in the context of Lebanon is also the following: destination policies that merely invest in infrastructure without bolstering the local service ecosystem might fail to deliver on visitor satisfaction and long-time engagement. There are also positive relations between satisfaction and behavioral intentions and accommodation variables, in particular, staff hospitality and culturally reflective services. This implies that in religious tourism, where identity-related and experience-oriented motives are often relevant, the quality of hospitality services is not merely functional but interpretive as well: the tourism visitor assesses whether hospitality services capture the cultural and religious context of the destination. According to previous studies, the weakness of standard operating procedures and coordination exposes service chains in religious destinations to declines in perceived quality despite the presence of attractive destination assets (Sinha and Mittal, 2021; Mittal and Sinha, 2022). The presented results support the idea that harmonized quality levels and culturally suitable service design between accommodation providers and destination managers are the strategy towards enhancing visitor outcomes.

The transport infrastructure has been firmly connected with outcomes, but in this case, it seems more facilitating than experiential. Accessibility and the state of roads and signs play a role in both satisfaction and future engagement due to the diminution of friction and uncertainty during the travelling process. This is in line with the perception that tourism planning and destination management are preconditions to sustained tourism performance,

especially in those environments that are susceptible to political or operational turmoil (Issa and Altinay, 2006; Kabalan and Stanciulescu, 2018). In the case of Lebanon, it means that investments in mobility, signage, and access management must be addressed as a background: without access that can be trusted, there may be no transformation of interest into visits and repetitive engagement despite the cultural and religious wealth.

The chi-square findings also support the behavioral explanation of the model by demonstrating that intention to revisit is strongly related to prior visitation. This implies that favorable experiences, which are generated by the systemic performance of value-chain elements, are converted into loyalty-type responses such as repeat visitation and recommendation behavior. Practically, this may serve to support a destination approach toward experience consistency: making certain that the transport, hospitality, local services, etc., work together to amplify the satisfaction so first-time visitors become repeat visitors and informal marketers of the destination. This is more especially the case in religious tourism, where word-of-mouth and community recommendation would affect the planning of the trip and the spread of the destination's reputation.

In general, the discussed evidence indicates that a holistic policy approach to religious tourism in Lebanon should include (i) value-chain enhancement based on accessibility and site-arrival management, (ii) the quality of hospitality offered in accordance with the religious/cultural identity of the sites and (iii) the creation of local business ecosystems that provide authentic products and can be seen by the local communities. This kind of coordination needs the alignment of the stakeholders (public sector, religious organizations, private operators, and communities) and implementation of destination management practices to track the quality of services along the chain (Kabalan and Stanciulescu, 2018). Methodologically, the paper also contributes to measurement debates in tourism value-chain and religious tourism research by developing and validating a concise scale that jointly captures chain performance and visitor outcomes in a small-country, multi-faith context. While further refinement is needed, especially regarding item redundancy, the scale provides a starting point for comparative studies across different religious destinations in the Middle East and other places (Budovich et al., 2023; Chusmeru et al., 2023; Sutomo et al., 2023).

Conclusions

This study examined how transport, accommodation, and local business services shape satisfaction and behavioral intentions in Lebanon's religious tourism destinations. The evidence suggests that visitors evaluate the destination as a connected value chain rather than as separate services. Satisfaction increases when the chain works coherently and when local services reflect both practical needs and cultural expectations. 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. 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. 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. The study contributes to the literature by operationalizing religious tourism value-chain performance in a fragile destination context and by linking it to satisfaction and future behavioral intentions. Its main theoretical value lies in showing that community-embedded services and culturally appropriate hospitality are not secondary features, but central components of destination value creation. This contribution is exploratory, however, and should be confirmed through future studies with stronger measurement designs. (Budovich, 2023; Sutomo et al., 2023; Ayele & Singh, 2024)

There are limitations of this research that need to be considered during the interpretation of findings. The survey is a self-reported cross-sectional survey, thus restricting causal conclusions. The sample was also gathered in one national situation, and not all the segments of visitors were represented, particularly the international religious tourists. Also, the agreement rates are high in most of the items, implying the potential of positive response bias that the future research should deal with using mixed measurement methods. The use of purposive, primarily domestic sampling limits the external validity of the findings, especially with regard to international pilgrims and low-income groups whose value-chain experiences may differ. In addition, the combination of on-site and online

recruitment may have favored respondents with stronger engagement in religious tourism and higher digital literacy, thereby inflating levels of satisfaction and behavioral intention.

The model should be repeated in the future with larger and more diverse samples, such as international visitors and site-specific comparisons between Lebanese regions. The qualitative methods (interviews with visitors, religious establishments, local enterprises, and policymakers) may enhance insights into why certain links in the value chains contribute to the formation of spiritual and cultural experience. The future research can also test mediating processes (e.g., perceived authenticity or perceived safety) and test policy interventions, which can enhance the value-chain coordination over time.

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