

# The Status of Tourism Sector in Tafila Governorate: Challenges and Expectations

Dr. Talal Bataineh<sup>1\*</sup> Dr. Khaled Abu Aligah<sup>1</sup> Dr. Amjad Qwader<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bassam Abu Karaki<sup>3</sup>

1.Tafila Technical University, Tafila , Jordan

2.Dept. of Economics, Tafila Technical University, Tafila , Jordan

3.Dept. of Economics Al Hussein bin Talal University, PO box 20, Ma'an 71111 Jordan

\* E-mail of the corresponding author: [bataineh.talal@yahoo.com](mailto:bataineh.talal@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

This study aimed at shedding light at the reality of tourism sector in Tafila governorate and presenting some of the challenges that face this sector. A questionnaire was designed for this purpose, and was distributed to the target sample of study. SPSS and one-way ANOVA methods were used for the study analysis. The study recommended the following: much care should be given to tourist sites through intensive programs of propaganda and publicity; introducing these sites for local and foreign tourists; providing the necessary constituents (e.g. infrastructure) services as well as the necessary hotels, restaurants, shopping centers, and, most importantly, having tourist guides available to introduce such tourist sites and review their history and benefits.

**Keywords:** Tourist Sector, Tafila Governorate, Dana reserve, Efra baths.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism sector in Jordan plays a significant role in the Jordanian economic development, especially in bringing high-quality investment projects to the country, and creating lots of job opportunities that help much hard currency get into the country. Tourism activities also help allowing much income into the treasury of the country through the fees imposed on entering the tourist sites, visas, Arrival taxes, income taxes, and the tourist sites. Jordan currently witnesses an increasing tourist activity ,which helps to fulfill the increasing demands of the tourism section in Jordan that is characterized by the different tourist criteria viz, geographical , historical, natural criteria. In fact, there are different kinds of tourism in Jordan such as:

- Cultural Tourism
- Medical tourism
- Religious tourism
- Sports tourism
- Recreational tourism
- Scientific tourism

This study therefore aims to study the tourist sector in Jordan in Tafila Governorate as well as the hindrances that face this sector in an attempt to identify the suitable solutions and make it an effective participant in increasing the national income and creating job opportunities for the population.

## 2. The Problem of the study

This study sheds light on the tourist criteria in Tafila Governorate and showing the impact of these criteria in an attempt to serve this sector, present the challenges and obstacles that hinder the progress of tourism, and present some suggestions and solutions that would facilitate these difficulties and increase the role of this sector in increasing the national income.

Despite the abundance infrastructure needed for the industry of tourism an its refreshment in Tafila Governorate, there stands a number of obstacles and hindrances that face the industry of tourism, therefore hindering its advancement and progress; the carelessness and the decrease of the services quality along with the shortage in the tourist information have been acting as a stumbling-block in the path of the development of tourism industry in Tafila Governorate.

## 3. Significance of the study

The significance of the present study arises from the fact that it focuses on a significant part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan which is Tafila governorate. That Tafila Governorate is located in the southern parts of the kingdom has somehow marginalized it due to being very distant from the capital Amman. Tafila has witnessed a very limited number of tourists recently despite the fact that Tafila governorate includes a number of tourist sites that are characterized with a historical and old-fashioned sense equipped with medication sites.

The number of these tourist sites climbs up to 1500 sites but the vast majority of these sites didn't receive much attention as needed. So, this study came in response to shed light on what such a Hashemite Governorate enjoys of having a very distinct tourist sites which have not been exploited well yet, and which, in

case of being well-exploited, will definitely contribute positively to increasing the tourist sites in the country and placing them on the tourist map, the thing that will play a great role in attracting other tourist investment and tourist industry for the region. This, in effect, will help the whole region gets refreshed both economically and socially.

#### **4. Data Sources**

In an attempt to achieve the objectives of the current study, the current researchers have consulted and therefore adopted the following resources, which can be classified as follows,

- Primary resources that used the fieldwork method depending on the field visits for gathering data.
- Secondary resources; represented by the scientific contributions in the related fields including the relevant books, researches, and tourism related reports.

#### **5. Population Sample of the Study**

The sample of the present study was randomly selected. It included 150 respondents chosen from the population of the study so as to represent the whole tourist sites in the governorate.

#### **6. Theoretical Framework and Related Literature**

Tafila Governorate is located in the southern part of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan and it is almost 180 kms far from the capital, Amman. The total area of Tafila Governorate is about 2259, 5 square Kilometers, thus forming 2.5 of the total area of the Kingdom. The total number of the inhabitants of Tafila, whose number is 85, 6 inhabitants represented 1, 04 % of the total inhabitants of the Kingdom.

There are a number of sites that have unique tourist qualities which can be highly exploited to become very attractive in light of its tourism qualities due to the historical and medical features they are endowed with. Further, the existence of a number of natural area that constitute a geological museum for the earth layers along with the unique landscapes represented by Dana Reserve which is considered one of the most phenomenal reserves in the Middle East. Generally, the industry of tourism can be classified as thus,

- Medical Tourism because of the existence of the hot mineral waters spa in Efra and Borbeita.
- Religious Tourism due to the existence of the shrines of the Prophet's companions.
- Historical and traditional tourism due to the existence of old-fashioned sites that represent the national and architectural heritage along with the natural tourism due to the availability of the natural sceneries which are considered amongst the unique ones in the world. This is in addition to the closeness of Tafila Governorate from the tourism city of Petra, a fact that definitely qualifies it to be among the most important tourism attractions in Jordan.

##### *6.1 Related Literature*

In her study titled "planning and developing the traditional tourism in Nablus," Lubna Ajaj (2007) discussed the subject of traditional tourism in Nablus Governorate and the different means of developing and enlarging it. The study hypothesized a developmental plan for the sake of developing and expanding the tourist reality in the governorate where most studies have pointed out that tourism in Nablus governorate used to be very flourishing during the period that preceded the year 2000, but it recently experienced some delay due to the political circumstances and due to the lack of healthy environment on which traditional tourism can rely.

The study concluded that traditional tourism could flourish again when a number of human, financial, and traditional potentials are available, especially with the help of some suggested developmental plans for developing this important kind of tourism. It also is expected to flourish when there is a strong coordination between all public and private institutions and when almost all people become aware of the significance of traditional tourism for the welfare of the country.

Hayat Al-Areeshy (2007) tackled the subject of tourism in Jazan area: its constituents and means of development. This study aimed at showing the tourist identity for Jazan area by presenting its constituents of tourist attractions in addition to presenting further tourist data that would help with a developmental vision for those interested with the tourist reality in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This study also focused on presenting the different types of tourism in Jazan area and how to promote them in an attempt to help with establishing attractive environment in the area therefore pushing the process of tourist development ahead.

Mohammed Hadad (2009) conducted a study titled "evaluating the competitiveness of the industry of tourism in Libya" as a source of income in light of liberating service- trade. The study recommended that the government needs to intensively work on an obvious investment plan in the field of tourism and provide the well-qualified cadre in the field of tourism through establishing a number of tourism colleges in Libya and preparing an electronic map for tourism to be disseminated on the web pages of tourism by taking care of the cognitive services especially the electronic ones, supporting and enhancing the process of investment in the infrastructure and providing the tourist services with reasonable prices.

In a case study that took place in Algeria, Hamida Buamsha (2012) explored the tourist sector role in financing the national income to alleviate the levels of sustainable development. The study concluded that there is a general weakness performance role by the tourism sector in Algeria which is attributed to the lack of investment in this sector and the delay in performing the projects during the performance of the national plans that contributed to much more weakness in the performance of the tourism industry in addition to the political unrest that accompanied this sector along with the carelessness policies adopted by the successive governments, the thing that negatively affected the performance of this sector.

In his study titled, "the tourist development and its effect on the integrated economic development in the Arab world," Fallaq Ali (2012) studied the developmental effect of tourism on the economic development. He argued that the tourist sector might play a powerful and a significant role in the economic development in Arab countries.

The study concluded that the tourism contribution to the welfare of economic development in Arab countries is still very humble and beyond the expectations. It also came to the conclusion that the Arab countries gain from the international tourism is very little despite the abundance of the suitable infrastructure necessary for the industry of tourist attraction; especially that the tourist sector in these countries didn't get the enough attention necessary for the development of this industry.

## 7. Methodology

Studying the reality of the tourism sector in Tafila governorate has depended primarily on two sources of data. **First:** the secondary resources that included the data from the relevant books, references, and specialized reports about the subject matter of the study which are available in the Tafila Directorate of Tourism which provided the number of tourists who visited Tafila during the years 2010 through 2012, as is shown below in Table (1). These touristic sites include:

- Dhana Reserve
- Efra and Borbeita Baths

Table 1. Tourism Sites in Tafila Governorate during 2010-2012

Year	2010	2011	2012
<b>Tourism Sites</b>			
Efra and Borbeita Baths	45670	40180	41975
Dhana Reserve	18046	10156	19780
<b>Total</b>	<b>63716</b>	<b>50336</b>	<b>61755</b>

*Source: Tafila Directorate of Tourism*

From the table above, it is noticeable that there is a fluctuation in the numbers of tourists visiting these sites in Tafila governorate as it is notable that the number reached 63716 in 2010 and then this number increased to 50336 in 2011 then it rose up to become 61755 in 2012, including all tourists from different nationalities whether Arabs or foreigners.

**Second:** primary resources, in spite of having some good secondary resources for the study, these data were not sufficient enough to achieve the goals prepared for the current study. Therefore, the researchers have resorted to using a fieldwork procedure to obtain some other primary resources for tourists who are currently visiting these sites. Therefore, accidental sample was used to capture such primary data which eventually saves much more time and effort by simply visiting these sites, Dhana reserve and Borbeita baths, and gathering as much data as possible due to not having the sample of the study in a constant manner.

## 8. Questions of the Study:

The researchers have prepared a set of questions for the present study. These questions include:

1. Are tourism sites in Tafila Governorate considered tourists' attractions?
2. Is there much care about the tourism sites in Tafila Governorate?
3. Is the lack of services considered a disadvantage for attracting tourists?
4. Do tourism sites in Tafila Governorate not receive the enough promotion and propaganda for tourists' attraction?

## 9. Analytical Framework

A questionnaire was designed to fulfil the requirements of this research and also two kinds of resources were used: secondary and primary. As for the primary resources, they were received through a questionnaire prepared for this special task. The questionnaire included two criteria; the first criteria included the tourism constituents in Tafila Governorate whereas the second criteria included the difficulties and problems that face tourism sector

in Tafila Governorate.

The population of the study included all the individuals who visited the touristic sites of Tafila, namely Dhana Reserve as well as Efra and Borbeitia baths. The questionnaires were distributed directly by face to face interviews due to the fact that tourists don't remain in the same place for long time. Data were analyzed through the statistical program SPSS where all statistical data were carried out through One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Percentages related to the demographic variables (age, gender, and educational level) were calculated in an attempt to identify the personal variables of the study subjects as shown in table (2) below.

Table 2. Demographic Features for the Study Sample

Variables of the study	Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	95	63%
	Female	54	37%
Age	Below than 20 years	23	15%
	From 20-40 years	41	28%
	above 40 years	85	57%
Marital status	Single	70	47%
	Married	79	53%
Profession	Public Sector Employee	39	27%
	Private Sector Employee	66	44%
	Business man	13	8%
	Retired	31	21%
Monthly income	Less than 200 JDs	17	11%
	From 200-500 JDs	24	16%
	More than 500 JDs	108	73%

From the table above, it is noticed that the members of the study sample were 95 male participants compared to 54 females. As for the age, the highest percent was from those whose ages are above 40 years old. As far as the marital status is concerned, the number of the unmarried reached 70 participants compared to 79 married participants. Profession wise, the private sectors employees scored the highest percentages with 66 participants followed by public sector employees with 39, retired participants with 31 and finally business men with 13 participants. Finally, with regard to the monthly income, the highest number of tourists were found to be those whose monthly income is more than 500 JDs, whose number was 108 participants thus forming 73% of the total tourists. Analysis of results will be presented depending on the order of the questions of the study.

**Q. 1. Are tourism sites in Tafila Governorate considered tourists' attractions?**

For the sake of checking the validity of this question, the means, the standard deviation, and the compatibility percentages of each item that measures the constituents of tourism in Tafila Governorate were carried out, as is shown in Table (3).

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviation for Tourist Constituents in Tafila Governorate

No	Item	Mean	S. D.	Rank
1	There are many tourist sites in Tafila Governorate.	4.72	0.624	1
2	The tourist sites in Tafila Governorate are considered a significant factor for tourist attraction	4.32	0.639	4
3	There are lots of hotels and furnished apartments in Tafila	2.34	0.76	8
4	The location of Tafila among Al Sharah mountains makes it a tourist attraction	4.22	0.75	5
5	There are lots of commercial markets that helps tourists in shopping	2.46	0.99	7
6	The moderate climate for Tafila makes it a tourist attraction	4.32	0.639	3
7	The beauty of Tafila makes you return again to visit	4.39	0.49	2
8	Availability of Car rent offices makes it a tourist attraction place	2.02	0.44	9
9	Availability of restaurants makes it a tourist attraction place	1.95	0.44	10
10	Availability of health services makes it a tourist attraction place	1.63	0.522	11
11	Availability of tourist guides makes it a tourist attraction place	3.26	1.97	7

From the table above, it can be noticed that the first item which states that there are lots of touristic sites in Tafila Governorate has scored the highest percentage with a mean of 4,72 and a standard deviation of

0.624. Item (2), which states that the beauty of the region invites you to return back once again, that scored the second highest with a mean of 4,39 and a standard deviation of 0.49 followed by item (3) that states the moderate climate of the region makes it a tourist attraction with a mean of 4,32 and a standard deviation of 0, 639. In the fourth place, item (4) about the change in the tourism sites in Tafila Governorate as a significant factor scored a mean of 4.32 and a standard deviation of 0.639. In the final place came the item related to the services and other facilities including healthy and service centres with a mean of 1.63 and a standard deviation of 0.522.

**Q. 2. What are the difficulties and obstacles that face the tourism sector in Tafila Governorate?**

For the sake of checking the validity of the question, all means and standard deviations for the items that measure the problems and difficulties that face the tourist guide in Tafila Governorate were calculated as is shown in Table (4).

Table 4. Means and standard deviations for the problems and difficulties in Tafila Governorate

Item	Mean	S. D.	Rank
Being very distant from the capital contributed to decreasing the number of tourists	4.02	0.80	3
No services that needs the tourists' needs	4.13	0.75	2
Shortage of propaganda and publicity contributed to decreasing the number of tourists	4.43	3.44	1
The lack of promotion services in the governorate that fits all age levels.	2.48	0.99	5
The scarcity of family designated areas especially for seating.	3.87	0.92	4
Low level of cleanliness	3.32	0.79	6
High expenses of tourist services	1.71	0.45	7

From the table above, it is noted that the most important difficulties that face the tourist section in Tafila Governorate is the lack of propaganda and publicity with a mean of 3.44 then came the item that tackled the lack of services that meet the tourists' needs with a mean of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 0.73, followed by the item (1) which is related to the distance of Tafila from the capital, Amman, with a mean of 4.02 and a standard deviation of 0.80, then item 5 came next with a mean of 3.87 and a standard deviation of 0.92, and finally came item 7, about the high expenses of tourist services, with a mean of 1.71 and a standard deviation of 0.45.

**10. Results and Recommendations**

1. The study has shown that there are no statistically significant differences at 0.05 in the level of tourist constituents which are attributed to the variables of gender. T-test was used to ensure validity, and it was the same regarding the problems and difficulties.
2. As for the age, the study has proved that there are no statistically significant differences regarding the difficulties which are attributed to the age. Shatay-Test was used to check the validity of age levels. Differences have shown an advantage towards the interval 20-40, who clearly stated they experienced a number of difficulties.
3. As for the marital status, there were statistically significant differences attributed for the benefit of the unmarried, but without mentioning any differences about the difficulties.
4. As for the profession, there were differences neither in the constituents nor in the difficulties. This was checked through conducting one way ANOVA test.
5. As for income, there were differences neither in the constituents nor in the difficulties.

*10.1 Recommendations*

Throughout the results reached, the current study has come up with the following recommendations:

1. Giving much more attention to the tourist sites in Tafila governorate though an increase in the means of propaganda and publicity to introduce these sites for local as well as foreign tourists.
2. The necessity to provide the attractive infrastructure for tourists such as hotels, furnished apartments, health services and commercial centres.
3. Providing family designated places where families can be seated provided that these places are well equipped with all services and that they to be extremely clean.
4. Providing offices for the tourist guides to help introduce the entire tourist sites for the tourists and also to help identify the unknown places for them.
5. The ministry of tourism needs to prepare a promotion plan to introduce all the tourist sites in the governorate.

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