

# NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY IN BEIRUT: MODERNIZATION AND RE-BRANDING AS A RECOVERY MECHANISM FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LEBANON.

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## Abstract

*Throughout the past years, tourism in Lebanon has witnessed downfall periods followed by periods of growths and constancy. However, recent statistics confirm that Lebanon is benefiting from a tourism boom that has never been previously witnessed in the country. The country lacked academic literature and an observational visit was enforced as a result. Literature mainly focused on war as Lebanon witnessed years of war which destroyed tourism and the entire Lebanese economy. The observational visit focused on night-life in Beirut and six days were required to observe tourists and nationals that visited and experienced night-life in the city. The research aims to investigate the development of nightlife in Beirut and the effect that night time economy has on the tourism industry in Lebanon. The intention is to establish whether night time economy in Beirut helps in developing Lebanon. Experiencing night-life in Beirut resulted in recognizing three themes that attracted three different types of tourists. Observations illustrated that night-time economy in Beirut was of great importance to Westerners, Arabs and most vitally to locals. Discussions with locals revealed that the night-time economy in Beirut hides an enormous but secretive industry, which is of great benefit to the entire Lebanese economy, as thousands of tourists are attracted to that industry. An increased number of Western tourists were observed as a result of the Lebanese government westernizing Beirut as part of the tourism development strategy in Lebanon.*

Keywords: Lebanon; Nightlife; Re-branding; Tourism Development.

## Introduction

### Tourism in Lebanon

Situated on the Mediterranean Sea with a 225 km coastline, inland mountains, valleys and rivers Lebanon's natural beauty and moderate climate offers treasures for people searching for a taste of the Middle East. The scattered remains of Phoenicians and Romans throughout various cities of Lebanon prompted visitors to discover ancient civilization in the country. Lebanon's unique geography and distinctive climate means that visitors could swim on the shores of Lebanon in temperatures exceeding 45°C then travel a 2 hour journey to the high mountains of Lebanon and ski.

Prior the civil war that took place in the late 70s and 80s Lebanon's geographical location, climate and free liberal system made the country a popular holiday destination. For instance, in 1973 Lebanon attracted more than 1.5 million tourists of which two-fifths were Arab visitors and the rest from European, Western and various countries (Mahdi, 1981).

Lebanon's devastating civil war lasted for a prolonged 15 years, killing thousands of citizens and destroying the entire economy including tourism. The 15 years of violence affected all of Lebanon's cities and brought the country's economy to the edge of collapsing (Kanso, 2005: 139).

Israel's recurrent invasion of Lebanon also worsened matters until the year 2000 when the Israeli forces were forced out of the country. Lebanon persists in having an extremely impulsive relationship with Israel which has witnessed various conflicts, the most recent being the 33 day war in July/August 2006 and has had high impacts on all sectors of the tourism industry. The 33 day war caused an estimated loss of 1 billion dollars to the Lebanese tourism sector (Fattouh, 2006: 96-113).

Lebanon has regularly recovered rapidly from war crisis and planned continuous development. The Lebanese government has repeatedly shown a great commitment in producing a road map for a sustainable tourism (Jill, 321-356). This eases the recovery of tourism in Lebanon and encourages travel to the country.

It also creates more jobs opportunities and stabilizes the economy (Moody, 213-45). The Lebanese government has also contributed towards programs developed by the United Nations' World Tourism Organization such as reducing poverty by developing sustainable tourism (John, 2006: 45). The recovery of Lebanon's tourism industry was attained by implementing a tax relief measure enforced by the government besides additional measures (Miller, 2007: 152).

Part of the quick tourism recovery plan was the cooperation revealed by the Lebanese tourism minister in 2006. The Lebanese minister of tourism revealed that the ministry of tourism and ministry of environment will cooperate together in eliminating pollution caused by war and had a negative effect on tourism in the country (John, 2006: 52). 4.4 billion dollars was also spent on the tourism sector in order to rebuild, redevelop and rebrand tourism in Lebanon (Abas, 2008: 123).

Lebanon's liberal democratic system and freedom of belief helped in making the country an attractive place to visit especially amongst Arabs. Arabs flocked to Lebanon to experience the freedom deprived to them by their countries and authoritarian systems. The variety of religions and acceptance of nationals with diverse beliefs living amongst one another provided an authentic experience that was deprived in most Arabic and Muslim countries. Freedom of belief helped in the development of amusements such as gambling which is famed in Lebanon for its largest casino in the Middle East. Clubs, nightclubs, bars, pubs, cabarets, casinos, halal and non halal cuisines which were developed in Lebanon as part of the freedom of belief and the restriction of such places in Arab and Muslim countries alongside with the country's natural beauty and good climate renowned Lebanon as the "Switzerland of the Middle East". The Lebanese government and ministry of tourism helped in sustaining such a reputation by focusing plans on developing sustainable tourism. Quick recovery and vast development in the tourism sector after various war outbreaks made Lebanon an even more attractive destination to visit by Westerners. The country is witnessing a slow but increased amount of Western and European visitors each year. Such increase is down to the country's ability to quickly redevelop (Abboud, 2010). For Arabs, who are the majority of visitors to the country, Lebanon has and always will be the only destination closest to home where a person can act freely without having trouble with the authorities. Females can dress and act as freely as they like and all can drink, party, gamble and engage in sexual activities. Such freedom has attracted large amounts of tourists from different backgrounds which then lead to Lebanon being voted as top destination for 2009 and 2010. In January 2009, Lebanon was rated as the top destination to visit for 2009 by the New York Times, Guardian, abc news and CNN. The Guardian also rated Lebanon as a top destination to visit for 2010. The Lebanese government put enormous efforts to westernize some of the main cities such as Beirut in order to attract more Westerners to the country. Tourism officials suggest that by westernizing main cities such as Beirut, Lebanon will therefore attract more Westerners as they will feel welcomed or at home when visiting the Westernized cities such as Beirut (tayyar, 2009).

#### Beirut Nightlife and Lebanon's Night-time Economy

Beirut, the capital of Lebanon and "Paris of the Middle East" offers everything that any modern city worldwide offers. This modern metropolis is steadily fashioning itself to look similar and better than most European capitals. Visitors to Beirut would surprisingly find world class accommodation, ample restaurants and a nightlife that beats some of the best nightlife destinations around the world. Beirut received the most destruction in past years through conflicts and wars. But with the aid of supportive countries, Lebanon's government was able to rebuild Beirut in the Westernized fashion it originally aimed for. The ministry of tourism's plans to redevelop and rebrand tourism in Lebanon mainly included Beirut. According to Sinno (1999) the ministry of tourism implemented a tourism plan for Beirut in 1992 labelled "Horizon 2002". The ten year plan was aimed at redeveloping and rebuilding Beirut as a capital destination for tourism in the Middle East. But recurrent events such as the 2006 conflict between Lebanon and Israel damaged Beirut's architecture and infrastructure which provided the city with a negative image. The Lebanese government realized that the long term sustainable tourism plan implemented on Beirut and the redevelopment and rebuilding of the city was not enough as rebranding was also needed in to re-tract tourists to the city. The partnership and solidarity between Lebanon and neighbouring countries helped in the redevelopment and rebranding of Beirut as statistics prove that tourism to Beirut has been on a constant rise since after the 2006 war till present day. Beirut's Westernized life style adoption had a direct impact on the increase of tourism to the city as more Arabs desired experiencing a Westernized lifestyle in an Arabic country and Westerners especially Europeans desired feeling more at home. In an effort by the Lebanese government to encourage more tourists especially more Western tourists, visitors to Lebanon receive free visas when entering the country. More signs in English language have been created and easier transport from the airport to Beirut city, with stricter tourist policing, have been implemented.

For a country with more than 15 million refugees and limited industries, Lebanon's economy heavily depends on tourism in the development of other sectors in the country; therefore, tourism is a drive of economy in building Lebanon. But nightlife in Beirut plays a significant role in attracting tourists to Lebanon.

With hundreds of bars, clubs, restaurants, casinos, cafes, super nightclubs, gentlemen's clubs and luxurious hotels lining up the streets and districts of Beirut, the capital is now renowned as the nightlife capital of the Middle East. Neighbouring Arabs that have visited the country for years return regularly. More Europeans and Westerners are visiting in order to discover what this city has on offer and the place is constantly buzzing with tourists visiting from all over the world.

The aim of this research is to investigate the development of nightlife in Beirut and the effect that night time economy has on the tourism industry in Lebanon. The intention is to establish whether night time economy in Beirut helps in developing Lebanon. For the following purpose a six night visit was planned and participant observations were used as a means of observing and experiencing nightlife in Beirut. Three districts renowned for great night life were visited and three themes were identified from the observations. Locals, workers and visitors were questioned about nightlife in an effort to gain more information and compare experiences to observations. Other districts were also visited in Beirut in order to compare findings.

### **Observing Beirut's Nightlife**

#### **An Observational Journey into Beirut's Night-life**

Arriving at the Casa D'or hotel in the Hamra district of Lebanon's capital city Beirut, the home of a journey that would last six nights, as a necessary experience for this study, various impressions were taken at the first glimpse. Lebanese citizens were seldom seen as Arabs from neighbouring Gulf countries swarmed the place. Europeans such as Brits, French and Germans, and Westerners such as Americans could also be seen and heard everywhere. The first impression a person would get is the increase in the amount of westerners in the city, and the second being the lack of presence of Lebanese citizens due to the soaring rise in prices as later on acknowledged which lead citizens to banish outside touristic area. Flashy cars driven around with foreign number plates also gave the impression that lots of wealthy tourists were visiting Beirut. People from various nationalities entering and exiting the hotel, seen with private nannies and drivers granted the intuition that most tourists visiting Beirut were wealthy. Being a Lebanese national, it was noticed that prices in Beirut city were extortionate compared to previous years. Products sold in Beirut city cost double or even triple the price sold in various other parts of Lebanon, and that includes hospitality and transport. But such issues stood as a clear indication to the flourishing of tourism in Lebanon.

#### **Night one:**

The first night was spent in Rue Makdissi in Hamra as the hotel was also located in the same district. De Prague, Dany's Bar, By The Way Pub, The Underground Jazz Barr, Wolf Lounge Bar and The Blue Café are just a few names of the many bars and clubs in the district. Each bar was similarly full of Lebanese, Western and Gulf visitors with modern and warm decorations and western music played in the background. Hospitality in these bars was differed to other countries, such as the UK and America. When ordering a beer or any other beverage, the drink was presented with a plate of carrots and nuts to accompany it. Bar tenders were affectionate and perfectionists in serving their unique cocktails. Some even boasted about it saying "you can never get this anywhere else", such as Danni, the bar tender in De Prague. The latter service falls within Hobbs (2003)'s definition of good entertainment, suggesting that quality liquors resulted in dramatic increases in night time entertainment.

#### **Night two:**

From what most people mentioned and was also observed, Hamra district was a place for classy and trendy visitors as Monot Street was more the average people's regular night out destination. Walking up and down Monot Street, a large amount of bars, clubs, cafes and restaurants was noticed. A Street filled with local residents enjoying a good night out, with the exception of the odd western European tourist. With many bars and clubs lining up the street, a visitor would be spoilt for choice. Whilst speaking to some visitors it was clear that all were more than satisfied with what was on offer. Some commented that Beirut provides pleasures for its tourists as the city caters for all desires.

#### **Night three:**

The third night was spent on Rue Gouraud in Gemmayzeh. The street, crowded with more than 150 bars and clubs, could be compared to Piccadilly in London. The street was teeming with a mixture of posh, classy and average people from various backgrounds. Visitors would ask others for opinions of which bars are best to visit based on past experience, as there is a wide variety of clubs and bars, which could not all be visited in one or two evenings. Crawling from one bar to another throughout the night, each bar had something to tell about it the minute someone entered the place.

As taxis were used for transportation around the city, each taxi driver was asked for their opinion on nightlife in Beirut as they would have a deep experience in such a domain. Taxi drivers explained where the best bars and clubs were located, gave opinions on which district would be better to visit, and also discussed the high arrival of visitors to the city.

Nights four & five:

Two days were spent visiting various clubs, pubs, bars, cafes, and restaurants around different parts of Beirut such as Down Town and Baabda in order to get a glimpse of what is generally happening around the city and not only in three districts. Fusion restaurants around the city offered a wide range of food on menus to attract a wider variety of customers. Other restaurants such as Spanish, Chinese, Moroccan and Egyptian were also available for customers to choose from. American franchises such as Duncan Donuts, Starbucks, McDonalds, Dominos Pizza and Pizza Hut were also available everywhere around Beirut. The immediate observation a person could perceive was that Western or European restaurants and Cafes attracted mostly westerners visiting the city, whilst Lebanese and other Arabic restaurants and cafes highly attracted Arabs. Clubs and bars around the city were similar to what was experienced in the three districts of Hamra, Ashrafieh and Gemmayzeh. The high attraction of Arabs from the Gulf countries to prostitutes in Lebanon was widely talked about in nearly every place visited. Although not easily detected, brothels could be found after brief investigation. The hourly or nightly rates of pay to the girls and the sums which the Gulf visitors were willing to spend on them were common topics for discussion. Gulf visitors could regularly be seen with one or two Lebanese girls nearly everywhere around Beirut. The race and age difference and the way the girls are dressed clearly suggest to observers that those were working girls. Taxi drivers and locals discussed the matter and suggested locations where such girls could be found if needed to hire for an evening. This included how much they would charge and exactly which "Super Nightclub", as described by them, have such girls on offer. Such an industry is an unlawful and discreet industry, which generates millions of dollars to the country, similar in nature to the red light districts in various countries around the world.

The fashionable, relaxed and glamorous themes were observed whilst visiting the first three districts of Beirut. Bars and clubs on Rue Makdissi in Hamra lightened up the district at night, but during the day the same district was similar to Fifth Avenue in New York as the latest and best fashion designer outlets lined up the street. Whilst observing nightlife, many customers who visited bars and clubs on Rue Makdissi were also carrying bags or dressed up with designer clothing. Dress styles were unique and fashionable and visitors seemed trendy. It was clear that tourists to Rue Makdissi enjoyed fashion and were attracted to the top designer outlets available in that district. Bars and clubs also accommodated for such visitors in the way the latter were designed and decorated. Fashionable decorations and stylish bar tenders were seen in nearly every bar and club visited on Rue Makdissi making the place a fashionable district.

Glamour is the first aspect any visitor to Rue Gouraud would perceive. Expensive cars, luxurious clubs, bars, restaurants and affluent customers swarmed the Gemmayzeh district. Most clubs were VIP entrance as previous bookings were required to gain entry and therefore denied entries for non-existent bookings. Westerners, mostly accompanied by Arabs, wealthy Arab tourists and upper class Lebanese citizens visited the district. Cars parked on the district contained hired drivers and escorts. Beverage prices in bars and clubs were exorbitant as such places only accommodate the rich and wealthy. Glamour was everywhere in Rue Gouraud including services, the hospitality on offer and the customers that visit the place.

Rue Monot or Monot Street provided a warm and comfortable feeling by its cosy atmosphere, average decorations, local music and standard customers. It reflected the relaxed theme as its customers were friendly and bar tenders welcoming. Locals who had just finished work were going there for a few drinks after work, along with others who just went out to unwind and socialize. A few western tourists were seen, perhaps in an attempt to avoid glamour and fashion, but no Arab visitors were perceived in the district. Local visitors were asked why Arab tourists did not visit the district and the answer was simply because there were no brothels or what they call "Super Nightclubs" available in that district. Thoughts about such answers were immediately questioned. If such answers were true, why would Arab visitors be seen on a fashionable district like Rue Makdissi and Rue Gouraud when brothels or "Super Nightclubs" were not visible? Such a question required questioning more experienced locals and demanded another visit to Rue Makdissi. Whilst questioning local experience taxi drivers, the following was established:

The common view held by most locals is that Gulf Arab tourists are extremely rich and devious in their practices and beliefs. Such tourists solely visit Beirut for the sexual interaction with beautiful Lebanese girls. Annahar (2009) shares a similar view when suggesting that wealthy people of the Gulf visit Beirut for pleasure and seeking sex workers in brothels and nightclubs.

There are a few “Super Nightclubs” in and around Beirut that employ girls for sexual work. These clubs are familiar to most Arab tourists and are well known by most locals. Arab Gulf tourists visit the “Super Nightclubs” in order to meet and choose the girl of their desire. But since prostitution is illegal in Lebanon, sex is not permitted in nightclubs. Therefore, “Super Nightclubs” offer a service through which the girls are introduced to, and socialize with, the clients, to be followed by an arranged visit by the girls to the clients in their hotel or a location of their choice. Pimps and other employees of the sex industry also pursue Arab Gulf tourists as the latter are renowned for their wealth and keen interest in sex. Such observations correspond with the findings of Rue Makdissi and Rue Gouraud, who confirmed the great interest which Arab Gulf males have in dancing, interacting and flirting with attractive ladies. Some Arab visitors were also accompanied by more than one elegant lady. When first observed such companionships were unclear, but local’s explanations made matters apparent. A complete secretive but successful industry was beginning to unfold, therefore demonstrating what The Daily Star (2009) revealed. Lebanon’s Daily Star described Lebanon as “an upmarket tourist destination that offered Arab tourists entertainment, good food and good times on the surface, but beyond the tables, Lebanon’s greatest attraction was sex. It was clear that such an industry was of a great importance to the people who worked in it and to the tourism industry itself, as well as being the main source of attraction for some tourists as Masri also suggests. Masri (2009) explained that sexual consumption of female bodies is a significant factor of Lebanon’s tourism attraction. The rich Arab tourists attracted by the sex industry in Beirut were only accompanying ladies to the “Glamorous” and “Fashionable” districts as money was not a concern for such wealthy and hungry clients. It was then clear why Arab tourists did not visit Rue Monot, as such a district would not be suitable for them to show off their wealth and treat their glamour ladies. Therefore, the sex industry plays an important role in the advance of tourism in Lebanon.

Lebanon has shown an extensive and rapid recovery in its tourism sector after the war. However, considering that armed conflict occasionally breaks out in Lebanon, the above findings signify the importance of the sex industry to the Lebanese tourism. Hence, Arab tourists wait anxiously for the war to end in order to return back and visit Beirut. Furthermore, latest statistical figures prove that tourism in Lebanon has been constantly rising since the war ended in 2006. The observational visit also proved that more European and Western tourists were visiting Beirut which confirms that sex is not the only factor for Lebanon’s quick recovery in the tourism industry. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2010, the Lebanese ministry of tourism announced that by the first half of the year tourism was already up from 2009 and that 2.2 million visitors had visited the country. The ministry had previously announced that tourism had increased by 39% in 2009 compared to 2008. On December 04, 2008, the Lebanese minister of tourism announced that Lebanon had experienced the best tourism year since 2004 (E. Marouni, 2008). The steady increase in tourism to Beirut can be attributable to various other factors. Literature such as “Reinvigorating the “Switzerland of the Middle East”: How the Lebanese Government Can Use Public Relations to Reposition the Country as a Premier Tourism Destination” by (Kanso, 2005) suggests that the Lebanese government and the Lebanese ministry of tourism had planned a development strategy for sustainable tourism to Beirut. During the six day visit to Beirut, the Lebanese ministry of tourism was visited and failed to provide any details about tourism development strategies. But the prior Lebanese minister of tourism Elie Marouni spoke about tourism development and stability in Lebanon to the BBC News on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2009. The BBC discusses how Marouni launched in 2009 a ten year plan called "A Vision" for developing the tourism industry in Lebanon. The plan included renovating tourism resorts, building more hotels and removing army checkpoints close to tourist resorts. But in the interview given to BBC, Marouni admits that tourists to Lebanon do not rely on development strategies. The tourist boom is due to the political stability and calmness that the country has witnessed in the past few years.

As a result of the political stability in Lebanon hundreds of thousands of tourists have visited the country, filling its resorts and providing the cash needed for the tourism economy. Marouni also stated that “in Lebanon anything might happen any minute any time which would throw the country ten years backwards” (Marouni, BBC News, 2009). The latter proves that Lebanon is an unpredictable country for stability. The tourism minister’s statement breaches the criteria laid by Inskip (1991) for long-term successful tourism, which stipulates that development must consider the change in situations, circumstances and lifestyles. The latter suggests that tourism development cannot be planned in Beirut if the city is unstable. Tourists, especially Westerners, would not arrange long term travel to Lebanon as instability might occur in the country at any time. Political stability provided the country with a temporary tourism boom that might collapse at any time. Lebanese entrepreneurs have taken advantage of such stability to construct and develop private sectors (BBC, 2009). The government encouraged private investments in Lebanon as privatization would help in developing the country. Therefore, the government applied Brunt & Courtney’s (1999) suggestion that governments can encourage residents to make decisions and gain benefits from an industry. Downtown Beirut, a district visited and observed during the visit, is an entire district privatized by the government to encourage tourism to Beirut. Downtown Beirut accommodates the largest and most powerful private companies such as “Solidere”, a company owned by the wealthiest Lebanese family “Hariri”.

Varying private businesses, including financial and hospitable businesses, compose Down Town Beirut as the centre of tourism for Beirut and Lebanon. The government's plan to privatize some districts in Beirut would also help in the Westernization the country aims for in order to attract more Westerners. Westernizing Beirut also attracts Arabs as it represents a "window to the West for Arabs" as described by Ladki (2002). The Lebanese government encourages tourism development in Beirut but cannot guarantee political stability. The government would need to invest more money in order to develop Beirut as a modern Western city and not only certain parts and districts of the city. The government's main aim is to encourage more tourism to the country in order to generate the funding needed. The government has also recognized that attracting Arab tourists to Lebanon is unnecessary as Beirut is and has always been all Arab's favourite choice of holiday destination. The Lebanese government's main concern is increasing the numbers of Westerners visiting Beirut.

Observing nightlife in Beirut demonstrates three realities that some might notice but most would not be aware of. The Lebanese capital's night scene attracts Arabs for their pleasures, Westerners for their comforts and nationals for their beliefs.

#### Westernizing Beirut: An Attraction to Westerners

The Lebanese government's long-term sustainable tourism plan to develop Beirut as a Western city by privatizing some districts has already achieved results. Political stability, development and re-branding have encouraged Western and European tourists to visit Lebanon, which suggests that Ashworth and Tunbridge (1990)'s suggestion was correct. Ashworth and Tunbridge argued that countries and cities used re-branding strategies as a method to change the negative image of the place. Cooperation between the Lebanese government and other countries in addition to political stability in Lebanon have lead to more development, as the latter inspired global firms to establish outlets in Beirut. Taking the Hamra district of Beirut as an example, the district demonstrated a modern Westernized image of Beirut. Dominated by Western companies and developed by Lebanese investors to match the similar image, the district provides a taste to what a person could see when visiting London or any other European city. Hospitality franchises such as McDonalds, Starbucks, Holiday Inn, Hilton, Dunkon Donuts and Pizza Hut can be seen all over the Hamra district including couriers such as DHL and other firms like Securitas. Parking attendants, pay and display parking and traffic lights provide an unseen image in other cities of Lebanon of a Westernized city. Staff in restaurants, cafes, clubs, bars and nightclubs speak perfect English, which demonstrates that employers seek workforces than can host Western visitors. Signs in English language can be seen in all bars, cafes and restaurants advertising special deals and offers. Menus and background music are also in English, creating a Western foreign scene for Lebanese citizens and neighbouring Arab visitors, as well as a home to all Westerners. Providing visitors with a homely feeling is a necessity for all touristic countries as Page et al (2001) suggest that tourists do not visit places alone but they travel with their own behavioural modes and beliefs.

Lebanon as suggested by Dah (1997) provides western visitors with an Arab country with a comfortable Western identity. Every bar and club offers beverages found in nearly every European city such as Whiskey, Vodka, spirits and beer as well as the Lebanese products such as Arak and house wines. Cafés also serve various English and Arabic teas and coffees including muffins, donuts and short bread biscuits and croissants. Taking the above into consideration, an observer would not comprehend the uniqueness of the matter until realizing that firstly Lebanon is an Arabic country, bearing in mind that no other Arab countries have revealed similar efforts. Secondly, looking into Lebanon's history it is clear that the country was occupied by the Turkish Empire followed by the French but never by the English. Astonishingly, the English language is predominantly taught in schools at present as the second language, as compared to the previously dominant French. In addition, the US dollar is used as the second currency in the country after the Lebanese Lira. Such facts although may appear peculiar at first, are understandable when realizing that the country has selected the path of Westernization as a matter of policy. Dah (1997) argued that Lebanon's freedom of practice lead Lebanese citizens to choose a Western way of living.

As it currently stands, Beirut amazes most tourists as the city contains various districts, some Westernized, some developing and some still the old fashioned Lebanese style. Nevertheless, the latter could be what fascinates most visitors as Beirut currently offers every tourist a taste of different cultures. Tourists can find whatever they are looking for in Beirut, including a modern nightlife. An overview of Beirut can be simplified by Warner's description. Warner (2005) described a city with modern nightlife as a place with constructed civil society. Warner then explained that civil society was shaped by freedom given to individuals.

In a discussion with an English lady met on Rue Monot, the lady, a fan of Beirut and its nightlife scene, described how Beirut would have been the best tourist destination had it not been for the political instability in country. She discussed how political instability prevents her from visiting the city but anticipates another visit when she is guaranteed that Beirut is safe to visit. Political instability is clearly proving to be a major problem for Westerners to visit Beirut.

But observations illustrated an increase in the number of Westerners visiting Beirut in comparison to previous years where Westerners were rarely seen in the city. Henderson's (2003) argument about Western tourists arriving in Muslim or conventional communities can cause disruption clearly does not have an effect on a city like Beirut. On the contrary, Aziz's (1995) argument about European tourists being attacked by radical Islamists in Middle Eastern countries to defeat local pro Western governments and disturb any western investment in the country, does not take place at all in Lebanon. The country might witness war and political disturbances but has never witnessed radicals troubling tourists. Tourism development has had a direct impact on the increase of Western tourists visiting Beirut, but full development also requires the re-branding of the city. Re-branding Beirut from an Arab hostile city to a modern Western city has produced positive results but not much has been done by the Lebanese government to advertise the re-branding of this city. The current Lebanese minister of tourism Fadi Abboud described that the inability of advertising Beirut as a tourist destination was due to the minimal funding provided by the government. Abboud also admits that the entire economy relies on the tourism sector (Realmagazine, 2010). Abboud must take Avraham's (2003) advice when suggesting that advertisement is the best way to re-brand a place as it delivers messages that target populations. Re-branding Beirut is a great step in encouraging Western tourists to visit Beirut. Much more needs done in the aspects of advertising in order to get the message across that Beirut is now a safe city to visit, as Elizur proposes. People think of a country in a stereotypical way, making it harder for them to change the image they already contain (Elizur, 1986).

#### Beirut Nightlife and Lebanese Citizens

Lebanon is the only Arabic country in the world that is recognized for its free liberal democratic system and freedom in religious beliefs. The country comprises multiple religions and provides all citizens with the freedom of choice in practicing their religious beliefs. Thus, Lebanon and its citizens have shown the world uniqueness in the mixture of religions in the country as all Christians, Muslims, Druze and some Jews live in mixed religious neighbourhoods and freely practice their religious beliefs. Mosques and churches built nearby each other can be seen throughout Lebanon. Muslims share their fellow Christians their celebrations on occasions such as Christmas and Easter and vice versa, thus confirming Ladki (2002)'s statement. The latter stated that Lebanon has always been and remains a distinctive illustration of the close connection between religions. The country's freedom has permitted citizens to practice what most Arab countries see as sins. Consuming Alcohol and gambling were recognized by Arabs as sinful gestures, although Long (1995) suggested that gambling was an important attraction for tourists and was necessary for developing a country. Furthermore, Long (1995) argued that Gambling generated a good source of income for tourism organizations and encouraged tourism to a country. Gambling in Lebanon attracts many Arab visitors as Abboud suggested. Abboud (2009) explained that Lebanon is the only Muslim Arab country that permits legal gambling and is the nearest destination to countries such as Syria, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, therefore accommodating such country's desires in gambling.

Lebanese citizens were allowed to practice and perform whatever they believed was right and also made them relaxed and blissful. The country proved to all other Arab countries that freedom is a necessity in people's lives. Lebanon is the only reason academics such as Cooper (2009) are required to declare that freedom is restricted in "most Arab countries" and not in "all Arab countries". Jones (2004) is absolutely erroneous by describing freedom and democracy as "unknown quantities" in Arab countries. In his question "Why is freedom not enjoyed by Arabs?" Jones suggests that it lies on the religious, political and social structures being converged together, causing the elimination of organized social movements. Jones's suggestion is totally rejected as the author has evidently not visited, observed or even researched Lebanon.

Alcohol production and consumption became an industry in Lebanon as the country was rich with vine yards and farmers took full advantage of turning good grapes into quality wine. Arak was also produced in Lebanon, making the beverage a favourite drink for all Lebanese and most Middle Eastern Arabs. Lebanese nightlife began developing slowly for citizens to unwind and get away from their daily routines and worries. It all began in Beirut as a few breweries were established there and a few bars were opened for citizens to taste the handmade beverages whilst unwinding. Citizens from various parts of Northern, Southern and Eastern Lebanon travelled to Beirut to experience bars there as nightlife was developing rapidly throughout the years. Nightlife in Beirut has turned into the biggest attraction of Lebanese tourism, upon which the Lebanese economy heavily relies. Neighbouring Arab countries that admired the sins Lebanese citizens performed and offered travelled to Beirut to experience nightlife and practice prohibited sins.

During the past few decades, nightlife in Beirut grew as tourism developments and re-branding encouraged more tourists to visit the city. The tourism industry in Lebanon, as established earlier, grows day by day and year after year as long as there is political stability in the country. Tourism in Lebanon as admitted by the government is the largest means of income for the Lebanese economy. Nightlife plays the most important role in the Lebanese tourism industry as the night-time economy attracts thousands of party seekers yearly especially in Beirut.

The city holds an international reputation for a trendy nightlife as it offers innumerable restaurants, bars, pubs and night clubs as suggested by Kanso (2009), who argued that nightlife in Beirut was world class. The industry is not only important to the Lebanese government, but is also of great significance to its citizens.

From the observations made in Beirut's busy nightlife districts, it was clear that Lebanese citizens enjoyed the benefits of such a significant economy. Taxi drivers described how transporting tourists was their only or main source of income. Bar tenders had rigidly trained to develop the skill of amazing visitors by serving impressive beverages. Bar tenders regularly sought their visitors' opinions with regards to their satisfaction by the service provided. The importance and care of bar tenders clearly demonstrates the importance of the job to such employees. Staff working in various shops, cafes and restaurants trained to communicate with tourists in English Language also demonstrates the difficulties that nationals face when finding and training for a job which they desperately try to perform impressively in order to maintain. The secret sex industry that any local can tell details about but is unseen to the eye must also be of great importance to the girls and pimps that work in it. Girls and pimps offering sexual services to clients seek wealthy tourists as the latter pay well for Lebanese girls who offer their bodies as a commodity for them to enjoy. Other workers employed in the night-time economy can be seen all over Beirut's nightlife districts. Dancers, singers, bands, DJs, body guards, parking attendants and many other workers employed in the enormous Night-time economy of Beirut, all show affection and care towards their jobs as they could be seen performing their duties well and in a very professional manner, evidently displaying the importance of their jobs to them. This imitates Zhang et al (2006)'s suggestion of resident's attitudes towards tourism playing an important role in the planning for successful tourism development.

It is apparent that Beirut's night-life developed a night-time economy which thousands of Lebanese citizens benefit from. Night life is also essential to most Lebanese as it provides them with a place to escape daily routines, unwind after work, socialize with others and generally have fun. Observing nightlife in Beirut districts revealed that Lebanese citizens also visit the fashionable, relaxed and glamorous districts of Hamra, Ashrafieh and Gemmayzeh depending on their financial circumstances and family backgrounds. Wealthy citizens were seen on the Hamra and Gemmayzeh districts as they displayed their fashionable clothing, expensive jewellery, classy taste in beverages and private assistants. Average Lebanese citizens visited the Ashrafieh district and enjoyed their evening there in standard bars and clubs as beverage and service prices were common, creating a scene which middle and low class people can enjoy and feel comfortable when visiting. This is probably why citizens regularly state that Beirut has something for everyone, meaning that the wealthy, middle class and poor people can afford visiting and enjoying the city.

Whilst mixing and partying with Lebanese national night-time goers, it was clearly observed that not only the government but also locals have been scarred by the decades of war and political instability in the country. Bama (2009)'s statement was accurate when stating that war creates tough and difficult circumstances for the troubled area and its residents. Such tragedies often result in a tourism crisis, which therefore affects businesses and damages the destination's reputation for safety, providing it with a negative image for tourism. The war destroyed most of Beirut's architecture which can still be seen on some buildings on the outskirts of Beirut by all tourist arriving to the city, as the government has not completed refurbishing and re-constructing some of the damaged buildings yet. Although the nightlife industry has almost been completely re-developed, images of previous political instabilities which lead to an extensive civil war in the country are still clearly perceived as pictures of varying political leaders are displayed in some bars. The latter is due to the complete freedom of religious and ideological belief given to citizens which at times could be unbeneficial. It was also clear that citizens do not enjoy discussing politics in fun times as it could ruin good moods and cause tensions. However, despite the gloomy image that war gives to economy in general and tourism specifically, the Lebanese have managed to utilize their warfare memories for tourism purposes. Thus, tour operators created "the death tour" which aims at touring visitors around locations where previous political and famous Lebanese figures resided or were assassinated (Mounzer, 2009).

Politics plays a big role in most Lebanese citizen's lives and clearly suggests that when Lebanon is politically stable, citizens enjoy fun times which helps develop night-time economy and encourages tourists to visit the country.

#### Beirut Nightlife: A Treasure for Arab Tourists

Beirut the "Sin City" or "Paris of the Middle East" as most Arab tourists describe it, has long been the Arab's favourite holiday destination. Its geography and climate do not differ much than other neighbouring Arabic Middle Eastern countries, but the city has proven to be a popular destination for most Arabs. Ladki (2002) suggested that Lebanon is considered an attractive destination that meets all Arabs' needs and wants. When comparing Beirut to Dubai for instance, most Europeans and Westerners clearly prefer visiting Dubai as the country holds the best hotels, resorts and shopping facilities in the world. Dubai has never witnessed any previous wars or political instabilities, but amazingly the country is not a popular destination amongst Arabs as Beirut is.



Kerbs (2008) suggested that Middle Eastern countries such as Dubai re-branded themselves in a more progressive and constructive manner, but that did not affect Arab citizen's views. War in Beirut has never affected the city's reputation as a favourite tourist destination for Arabs as they have continuously rushed to visit the city the moment war in Lebanon has ended, therefore, contradicting Nelson's (1997) argument. Nelson suggested that the Lebanese civil war deprived the "Switzerland of the Middle East's" reputation as the Middle East's most popular tourist destination. It could be suggested that Nelson's argument affected Westerner's perception of Beirut but did not at all influence Arab's view of the city. Arabs are famously known for being the richest worldwide. Abu Dhabi, an Arabic city, holds the current highest record for one city that contains the most millionaires.

With so much wealth and money to spend and so many modern destinations to visit around the world, it is astonishing how Beirut has always been their preferred holiday destination.

Observations in Beirut city revealed the large volumes of Arab tourists visiting the city, starting the moment one arrives at the airport. Money was clearly not a problem for most Arab tourists as arrivals to the airport were accompanied by private assistants and child minders to look after their kids whilst they enjoyed themselves. Hired cars with private chuffers awaited the arrival of Arab tourist to escort them to their resorts. In restaurants, while Lebanese nationals and Western tourists paid bills and awaited change, Arab tourists were observed leaving \$100 bills as a tip. Citizens describe Arab tourists as incredibly rich with intentions to have fun at any cost. In the districts observed, single Arab men were accompanied by attractive Lebanese ladies in the fashionable and glamorous districts of Hamra and Gemmayzeh. The Arab tourists treated their ladies well as ample sums of money were spent on pampering them. From discussions with citizens, it was established that the girls offered sexual services for immense rates. Citizens describe how such tourists are unclean but are desired as they spend large sums of money on their girls. Arab tourist visited "Super Nightclubs" where Lebanese ladies offer sexual services for certain prices. The Arab visitors get to choose which lady they would like to sexually interact with and the chosen woman then escorts the client for nearly the entire duration of the visitor's stay, depending on his requests. Arabs generally describe Lebanese girls as the most fashionable, attractive and striking girls amongst Arab women. Therefore, wealthy Arab visitors choose to spend great sums of money to sexually interact with such beautiful girls. The latter and Wigand's (1986) description of interaction between unattached males and females being an unacceptable feature in Islamic cultures are undoubtedly contradictory.

Observations carried out in the Casa Dor hotel, revealed that female Arab tourists visited Beirut for fashion and were constantly seen returning back to the hotel carrying shopping bags packed with designer clothing. Whilst arriving to and departing from Beirut international airport, the majority of Arab tourists who jam-packed the airport were in family groups, whereas Arab tourist female shoppers and male night-seekers were seen separately. It was unclear whether all Arab families separated whilst visiting Beirut to fulfil their sins or not. But the idea that child minders were seen accompanying most Arab families and Arab female tourists were unaccompanied by Arab males and vice versa, provided an assumption that Arab families visiting Beirut separated in order for each to enjoy their sins whilst the kids are looked after by their child minders.

Beirut, a city providing a positive example of freedom in the Arab world has become a major attraction for all Arabs, as the city pleases everyone's desires. Most importantly, Beirut, the capital city of an Arabic country where individual freedom is a must, attracts Arabs that could not act liberally in their home countries. The latter adopt rules and laws which prevent females from dressing in any way or style they desire, and males from obtaining everything they admire. The desire to drink alcohol, gamble, party all night, dress stylishly, meet and interact freely with other people encourages all Arabs to visit Beirut as the city provides everything forbidden in their countries but also provides the homely feeling of being in an Arabic country. Simply speaking, liberty in Lebanon is the only reason Arabs are attracted to the country. Observations carried out in Beirut certainly corresponded with Bayoumy (2010)'s conclusion about Beirut. Bayoumy concluded that all Gulf visitors desired various forms of freedom to perform certain admired activities that are prohibited in their country. Bayoumy's results revealed that some visited for alcohol, partying and nightlife, others for gambling, dating and sex, and some for simply revealing their bodies as there are dress restrictions in most Arab countries.

#### Beirut Nightlife and the Lebanese Economy

Observers in Beirut can gain a quick and clear picture about Lebanon's difficult economy. The country does not manufacture many products, and therefore relies on imported goods. Lebanon does not contain oil wells such as other Arab countries, nor does it generate electricity or produce gas, and therefore has to rely on other countries in obtaining such commodities. Lebanon's economy therefore primarily relies on the tourism industry as a major component of the Lebanese economy. The government constantly aims for continuous improvement in the tourism industry by developing the tourism sector and planning long-term sustainable tourism plans. Henderson (2006) suggested that Governments play an important role in sustaining development.

The government recognizes that freedom is the main reason for which most tourists visit Lebanon and also recognizes that political instability is the only factor that prevents tourists from visiting the country. The Lebanese government seeks to keep peace in the country and has realized that long-term political stability is the only solution for long-term tourism development. This corresponds with what Weaver and Lawton (2002) originally proposed about tourism development being influenced by a peaceful and encouraging government. As the country has witnessed a few years of political stability, the government has comprehended that tourism to Lebanon is gradually increasing but re-branding Beirut's image is a necessity in attracting more tourists. Buhalis (2000) suggested that marketing and an optimistic image influence tourism development. The government has mentioned that there were not enough funds to advertise and encourage Western tourists to visit Beirut, although the economy heavily relies on the tourism industry.

From the observations carried out in Beirut, it was apparent that the city was developing into a modern Western city. The number of European visitors was already slowly increasing but more needed done to re-brand a city that had witnessed years of war and political instability and was gradually being transformed into a modern Western city. Nightlife in Beirut attracted tourists with various desires as everything they admired could be found in Beirut. The city reflects Sharma (2007)'s suggestion that in order for countries to attract more foreign visitors they must meet their needs.

Nightlife attracted the wealthy, glamorous, famous and adventurous. Three different districts of Beirut offered nightlife in a unique way, but when those were viewed in conjunction with other districts of Beirut they offered tourists almost everything they desired. Every district in Beirut was unique in its own special way and offered visitors something to entertain and attract them, including nightlife, as clubs, bars, "Super Nightclubs", cafes and restaurants could be seen and found all over Beirut city. The sex industry which is linked directly to nightlife is perhaps the biggest attraction for wealthy Arab males. Nightlife economy in Beirut generates millions for the Lebanese economy that the government greatly relies on. More is needed in re-branding Beirut as most Westerners and Europeans still embrace a negative image about the city. Sadik (2004)'s statement proved accurate when suggesting that Lebanon's positive image of beautiful women, great nightlife and legal casinos has regularly been obliterated by a negative image of war, terror and political instability. Re-branding Beirut is a necessity in accordance with Lewis's (2000) view, suggesting that re-branding is used by countries, witnessing failures in the past, to tell tourists that there are new products on offer. But with future development and long term political stability the city is guaranteed to witness an even greater increase in tourist arrivals than what it has already witnessed in the past few years. Hence, Hall (2000) argues that governments encourage the development of night-time economy in order to attract more tourists, provide employment opportunities and benefit the entire economy. The increase in tourist arrivals to Beirut can provide the government with more funds, which can be later spent on advertising and transforming the whole of Beirut and not only some of its districts to a modern Westernized place. Assiyaha magazine suggested that in 1971 the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism compared nightlife in Beirut to nightlife in cities such as Paris, Madrid, New York and London.

With permanent governmental stability, more development, additional re-branding strategies and long term sustainable tourism plans, the Lebanese government might be able, in the near future, to transform nightlife in Beirut into one which competes with the nightlife in all the major cities in the world. After all, Beirut does contain a good nightlife, to the extent that Ladki (2002) described Lebanon with its good nightlife and hospitality as the best country in the Middle East. Lebanon is already receiving accolades for the progress of its tourism industry. Hence, Middle East Tourism Marketing director Nicki Page (2009) hailed Lebanon as the "region's greatest Success". The country was also voted by the New York Times (2009) as the world's number one tourist destination in the world for 2010. If Lebanon has already witnessed a great success, this means that Lahoud's (2009) suggestion should be accurate. The latter suggested that re-branding initiatives and plans will help transform Lebanon into one of the world's leading tourist destinations.

### **Comparing Findings to Literature**

When comparing findings to literature it can be strongly suggested that as Lebanon constantly surprises critics with its rapid tourism recovery and hasty development, most of the former literature analyzing tourism in Beirut and Lebanon is no longer valid. For instance, "From Regional Node to Backwater and Back to Uncertainty: Beirut, 1943–2006" by (Shwayri, 2008) describes how tourism in Beirut boomed in the 50s and 60s up until the civil war in the 70s which damaged tourism and the economy. The article then suggests that the tourism industry in Beirut re-developed after the civil war and was later destroyed in the 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel. It is correct that the country came to a halt during the 2006 war but the author who published the article in 2008 did not suggest that the tourism industry regained its strengths shortly after the war ended as thousands of tourists visited the country in 2007. Furthermore, Madi (1981) suggested that in 1974 1.5 million tourists visited Lebanon and Kramer (1997) described how 17 years of civil war had caused the Lebanese economy to collapse and affected every sector of its

tourism industry. It is submitted that Kramer's suggestion is accurate since such a prolonged period of warfare did cause a lot of damage to the tourism industry. However, the increase of tourism in Lebanon today is much more advanced than that of 1974. Hence, the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism confirmed that 2.2 million tourists had visited the country between January and August 2010, a figure which is much higher than the country had ever previously witnessed. In addition, certain aspects of tourism were not affected by the war and continued to prosper even during such bad times. Hence, a thesis written by Nadia Barclay (2007) titled "Café Culture in Beirut: A Centre for Civil Society", describes how the café culture in Beirut from before, during and after the Lebanese civil war was not affected as cafés are an essential part of the Lebanese society. The café culture in Beirut acted as a tourist attraction. Barclay's findings were precise as observations also demonstrated the importance of the café culture to Lebanese citizens.

"The New Agenda: The Arab World in the 21st Century" by Hazbun (2005) discusses tourism development in the Arab world and suggests that the only way for tourism to develop in Arab countries is by ending the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such suggestions are erroneous as most of the Arab countries, except Lebanon and Palestine, did not witness any long-term conflicts with Israel. In fact, Syria and Egypt were the only other two Arab countries to witness a conflict with Israel in 1973, whereas the rest of the Arab countries have been at peace with the Israelis. Syria and Egypt did not experience any trouble with Israel after 1973 and therefore have been at peace for a long period of time. Palestine and Lebanon witness regular conflicts, the last one being in Lebanon in 2006. But Lebanon has proven to re-develop its tourism industry and increase the amount of tourists visiting the country by nearly 1 million tourists since the long-term war between Israel and Lebanon began. Thus, Hazbun's suggestion cannot be accepted.

Literature such as "Women and War in Lebanon" by Shehadi (1999), "Challenges facing Post-War Tourism Development" by Ladki (1997), "Effect of the Middle East peace process on Pan Arab tourism industries" by Ladki (2001) "Insecurity, migration and return: The case of Lebanon following the Summer 2006 War" by Hourani (2007) and many others, discuss tourism and its stages in Lebanon after and before the war, but none of them discussed the political instability that the country witnessed. Political tension between the politicians and different sectors of Lebanese society has witnessed tension and instability since the 70s when the civil war began until after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005. Political tension was clearly observed, as locals from various casts did not wish to discuss politics as they knew it would cause arguments and disagreements that would lead to clashes. As mentioned previously, some bar owners also displayed pictures of their favourite politicians which suggested how nationals strongly felt about politics.

Most literature discussing Lebanon or Beirut and the Lebanese tourist economy have revealed unfairness in describing the economic situation in the country. As most authors touched on the long-term war and its effects on the tourism industry in Lebanon, rapid recovery, developments and achievements have not been mentioned or discussed. Realities such as political instability and the increase of western tourists' arrival to Beirut were not discussed either, creating injustice to a great Middle Eastern Arab country.

## Conclusions

Lebanon's distinctiveness made the country a famous destination for tourists to visit. Tourism became Lebanon's best source of income which the entire Lebanese economy relied on. But for decades the country has witnessed war and political instability which took tourism in the country through various stages. Lebanon witnessed a tourism boom in the 60s and early 70s and was nicknamed "The Switzerland of the Middle East". Beirut was nicknamed the "Paris of the Middle East". The latter distorted when the civil war began in the mid 70s and lasted till the 80s. The country also witnessed a few wars with Israel, the most recent being in 2006. Tourism re-boomed and re-developed in Lebanon after the 2006 war and Beirut is now described by most Arab tourists as "Sin City". But the war and political instability provided Westerners with an appalling image about Lebanon. The capital city of Lebanon was re-developed after the war and greatly assisted the Lebanese economy by its significant night-time economy that attracts thousands of sinners and party seekers yearly.

Results demonstrated that night-time economy proved very popular amongst visitors. Beirut offered everyone a taste of their desire. The wealthy, fashionable, average and poor visitors were accommodated and found certain districts that entertained all. Clubs and cafés also proved popular amongst citizens who used such places to socialize and unwind. Observations also revealed that many Western tourists visited Beirut to enjoy nightlife and feel comfortable in a modern westernized city. The city was westernized as a development and re-branding plan set by the Lebanese government to change the troubled image of Beirut. The increased number of Western tourists visiting Beirut revealed that such plans have already caused a positive impact on Western tourists.

Arabs visited Beirut for decades and observations confirmed that the city is still their favourite choice of destination. Beirut, the “Paris of the Middle East” or “Sin City” to most Arabs, attracts Arab tourists for various reasons but most importantly nightlife. Lebanon offered Arab Female tourists the choice to dress and act freely and male Arab visitors enjoyed the pleasures offered in Lebanon. Their home countries restricted freedom and therefore Lebanon was the closest home to them that offered freedom. Arabs visited Beirut to sexually interact with Lebanese females as mentioned by most locals. When observed, each Arab visitor was accompanied by many Lebanese ladies, which later revealed an enormous secretive sex industry that not many visitors can easily witness. Such a vast industry was beneficial to the night-time industry as clubs and bars accommodated sex workers and sex seekers that meet there. Night-time economy proved very important as locals discussed how wealthy Arab tourists spent enormous amounts of money to get entertained by the girls. It then became clear that the night-time economy in Beirut was essential to the entire Lebanese economy.

Furthermore, Beirut attracted Lebanese nationals that desired experiencing good nights out and implausible entertainment that were not on offer in other parts or regions of Lebanon. Beirut citizens also enjoyed nightlife in Beirut as it offered them a chance to relax after work, unwind, socialize and get entertained. The strong affect of politics and years of political instability was observed by political pictures framed in bars and undesired political conversations between locals.

The research contained few limitations that prevented obtaining the accurate results desires. The limitations such as: spending more time in Beirut to observe the districts at different seasons, provided a general picture of nightlife in Beirut but prevented attaining the exact results required.

Nightlife in Beirut proved to be an essential part of Lebanese society and economy. It's a main reason of the increase in tourism the country has been witnessing. Tourism is Lebanon's major source of incoming and therefore the government plans to constantly develop it. Re-branding Beirut is the Lebanese government's biggest concern as they recognize that most Westerners still perceive Beirut as a war zone. The government is working hard on re-branding the city but suggests that they need more money and the only way to generate that money is by the increase of tourists to Beirut. The city, as observed, will certainly but slowly develop. The only fear that might prevent developments is the political instability which the government admitted can't be resolved. But the immense efforts achieved by citizens and the government to rapidly re-develop and encourage tourism to Beirut have not been recognized. Statistics revealed the high increase of tourism in 2007 after the war in 2006 but authors and literature failed to recognize such efforts and described tourism and the economy in Lebanon unfairly. In addition, despite most critics suggesting that Beirut was once the best tourist destination in the Middle East before the civil war, statics revealed that tourism by July 2010 had already increased by nearly 1 million tourists than what it was before the civil war.

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