

The Impact of the Sustainable Strategy on Strategic Performance: Field Study in the Iraqi Tourism Sector

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Received: 8th November 2022

Accepted: 10th December 2022

Published: 3rd February 2023

ABSTRACT

The tourism industry, with its two sides (recreational and religious), is one of the important investment fields in Iraq, it is represented Iraq as the second economic source after the oil sector. So a need for serious efforts to develop the tourism sector and maintain its sustainability. This paper will be one of the important contributions in this field; the paper aims to explore the extent of the impact of the sustainable strategy on the level of overall performance in the Iraqi tourism sector. The field of research was some Iraqi tourist institutions at Iraqi tourism, Which covers the field of study on the one side, and can be studied on the other side, for the developing study methodology and organizing its main parts, the research paper adopted a major hypothesis that (there is a statistically significant effect of the sustainable strategy on the level of the overall performance of the Iraqi tourism sector), and for data collection, a checklist was used. The checklist In its questions covers the content required from the study of some tourist institutions in the Iraqi tourism sector, and the list was distributed to a sample of people working in the Iraqi tourism sector, size of the sample (43 people), with experience and academic specialization. The study reached a set of results, the most important of which are: the ability of the sustainable strategy to ensure continuously improve the overall tourism sector performance.

Keywords: Strategic perspective, Sustainable strategy, Overall performance, tourism sector.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has gained great progress compared to other industries, its contribution to supporting the national economy and sustainable development, and it is considered one of the fastest-growing industries continuously in the world. In developing countries, tourism is an essential element for sustainable economic development. However, sustainability in the field of development depends on its integration with employment, its connection to the agricultural and service sectors, and its role in stimulating infrastructures such as the construction of roads, airports, and ports, and investment support for the economy (Khan et al., 2020 & Abbas et al., 2022). Tourism may be defined in terms of particular activities, selected by choice, and undertaken outside the home environment. Tourism may or may not involve overnight stay away from home (Camilleri, 2018; Ashraf et al., 2019; Ashraf et al., 2021).

The five main elements that should be present for a destination to have a better tourism product which is: attractions, accessibility, destination facilities/amenities, image, and price (Abdullah et al., 2021; Zimbabwe et al., 2018 & Abdullah et al., 2019). The Iraqi tourism sector is one of the important for Iraqi economic sector, on the local and national levels. The tourism sector constitutes the second largest sector in the Iraqi economy after the oil sector. The main tourist attractions of Iraq are cultural and religious (Faris et al., 2015; Noor, Hossain & Shirazi, 2022). The construction and diversity of Iraqi tourism are affected by three forces: (tourist destinations, tourist sites, and tourism services). Which should be organized and integrated through the strategic perspective strategy, the strategic perspective means in this field, the comprehensive and long-term framework that covers the tourism field and directed its activities towards achieving the specified tourist destination, it exchanges meaning in this study with the concept of strategy, strategy means the “long-term” that requires maintaining the strength and effectiveness of the tourism sector throughout its specified life or through the sustainability. This shows the importance of a sustainable in the tourism sector so that the strategic framework for sustainable should include (the social dimension, the economic dimension, and the environmental dimension), which together form the foundations on which sustainability is based. This was justified the reason of choosing the impact of the sustainable strategy on the level of overall Performance: An exploratory study in some Iraqi tourism sector institutions) title for research paper, the reason of select some Iraqi tourism sector institutions as a field

study (Because the Iraqi tourist institutions are far apart and spread in all regions of Iraq. They also differ in terms of interest and level of performance).

The purpose of the research is to explore the extent of the impact of the sustainable strategy on of overall Performance, at Iraqi tourism sector, and the research adopted a major hypothesis that (there is a statistically significant effect of the sustainable strategy on the level of overall performance at the Iraqi tourism sector). For the field study, some tourism institutions of Iraqi tourism sector were selected , Because the integration and support between these institutions forms the basis of the sustainable strategy at tourism sector, and improves the overall performance,, a checklist was developed for the purposes of data collection and organizing, and it was distributed to a sample of (43 person), comprising people in leadership positions in tourism sector institutions, with advanced academic ranks, and good experience in the tourism field. The research was structured (introduction and five parts), the first included the Literature review, the second the methodology of the study, the third the design and method of the field study, the fourth the result, and the fifth conclusions and recommendations. The study reached a set of results, the most important of which are (the ability of the sustainable strategy to continuously improve the overall performance).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Strategic Perspective of a Sustainable Strategy

Sustainability is referred to as (the wise and balanced use of resources), and it depends on four elements: (comprehensive planning and strategic decision-making, preservation of environmental processes, protection of human heritage and biological diversity, development based on the idea of continuity of productivity in the long term for future generations (Kazem, Abbas, Sabti, Ali., Nasser, 2022; Yang, 2009). Therefore, economic growth based on business organizations has become an important pillar in sustainable development. Business organization development studies focused on the perspective based on economic, cultural, social, and environmental sustainability. Because it ensures the continuous development of the organization sustainability places "its attention on a set of values and ethical principles, which guide action responsibly and consistently, with measures integrating environmental and societal outcomes, with economic objectives (Font et al., 2017; Rashid, Ahmad & Tariq, 2022).

The Tourism sector has a clear impact on both economic and social development, because it positively affects employment, total revenue, and production. It also has negative effects on the environment (Aman-Ullah, Mehmood, Amin., & Abbas. 2022 & Fossati, et al, 2017). Therefore, it has become important to focus on a sustainable perspective as an important issue for the country (Kisi, 2019 & Mehmood, Mohd-Rashid, Abdullah, Patwary., & Aman-Ulla, 2022). This requires comprehensive planning and management of organizations activities, based on the strategic perspective of sustainable management., Because this perspective must cover and define all the forces and factors driving organization activities on the one hand, and maintain the continuity of maintaining its progress towards the future on the other hand, In the opportunities may result in sustainable social/cultural, environmental, and economic benefits for towns and local communities. The strategic perspective for managing sustainable projects or organizations is based on (developing an implementable sustainability management system, controls for compliance with specific laws and policies, follow-up mechanisms adopted by stakeholders, participation of forces from within the project in the sustainability process, maintenance of buildings and infrastructure to meet sustainability standards, and continuous accreditation on sustainable practices and materials (Abbas et al., 2022; Suleman et al., 2021).

Conclusion, the sustainability means the wise and balanced use of resources, intending to preserve the organization or (tourism project's) ability to perform efficiently and effectively for the longest Possible time.

- Focusing on the availability of the elements of economic, cultural, social, and environmental Sustainability.
- To support the national economy and sustainable development.
- Through the development of comprehensive planning and management of activities based on the strategic perspective of sustainable management.
- According to the Perspective based on building an implementable system that harmonizes the (economic, social, environmental, and infrastructure requirements of the project).

Sustainable Strategy in The Tourism Sector

The crystallization of the concept of a sustainable strategy requires taking into account the following things: environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspect (Thakur, 2020). The continuous development of tourism make Sustainability a central issue in tourism industry

development policies, called for encouraging tourism sector to move towards friendship with the environment, cultural sensitivity in tourism policies, sustainability challenges, and implementation methodology. Sustainable tourism development meets to be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (Cernat & Gourdon, 2007).

Hence, sustainable tourism strategy was defined as (a continuous process that takes into account the current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, including the needs of the visitor, the tourism industry, the environment, the host region, to provide the means of sustainability that takes into account the needs and effects of these forces when planning and implementing the strategy) (Cairngorms, 2011), also need to pay attention to other elements that affect the strategy such as (complexity and ambiguity, long-term strategic perspective, sustainable tourism knowledge and experiences, tourism environment), in light of the foregoing, the mean element of sustainable strategy in Iraqi tourism sector is: (Strategic direction).

Conclusion: sustainable strategy in the tourism sector depends on vision, mission, goals, and tourist destination: Target tourist markets, Human resources: knowledge and skills, Supporting activities (transportation, hotels, restaurants, tourist site services, Sustainability: economic, social, and environmental factors).

Overall Tourism Performance

The tourism strategy works to achieve the vision and mission of the tourism organization, and sustainability contributes to the long-term continuity of the effectiveness of the tourism strategy. The tourism industry strategy results in social and economic performances at the local and global levels, (Ammar., 2013 & Mehmood, Mohd-Rashid, Ong., & Abbas., 2021) summarized these benefits with each (economic benefits: a new source of national income, obtaining foreign exchange, improving the balance of payments, and social benefits: absorbing unemployment, providing direct and indirect job opportunities for members of the local and national community). In another overview, the benefits of the tourism industry strategy were mentioned in each of (Diversification of sources of income, acceleration of the cycle of sustainable development, improving the behavior of workers in the tourism sector) (www-squadron/OSCar2014) (Aman-Ullah, Aziz, Ibrahim, Mehmood., & Abbas., 2021). It is clear from the foregoing that the sustainable tourism strategy contributes to developing the social and

economic performance of the tourism organization, especially in countries that have attractive (religious, heritage and recreational) tourist sites. Like Iraq, the economic returns of tourism in Iraq, if well managed, constitute the second economic resource after the oil and gas sector. Tourism has social returns at the national and international levels, as it is one of the important means of rapprochement between the cultures and customs of the community of one country. It also creates better conditions for coexistence among nations and dialogue of civilizations, and this is more evident in the religious tourism sector in Iraq. The interrelationship between social and economic performance reflects the bright image of the country's values and cultural heritage. The importance of the sustainable tourism strategy appears in the extent of its ability to achieve positive outcomes for overall performances nationally and globally. Conclusion: The importance of the sustainable tourism strategy appears in the extent of its ability to achieve positive outcomes for overall performances nationally and globally.

METHODOLOGY

Problem Statement

The tourism sector in Iraq is one of the important sources of the Iraqi national economy. It is the second economic source after oil if it becomes necessary to pay attention to the structures, forces, and relations that contribute to the development and improvement of the performance of the tourism industry. Many Developed countries have been interested in developing a comprehensive strategic perspective for sustainable tourism, which covered pioneering tourism strategies, and have tried to ensure the sustainability of these strategies, to ensure the continuous improvement of the overall tourism performance. However, the management of the Iraqi tourism sector still depends on independence between the different tourist sites, and the varying level of interest between these sites, and the lack of cooperation and support between these sites, also it lacks an expert and specialized management of tourism, a balanced interest in all tourist areas, and an organized and programmed tourism strategic planning, which focuses efforts instead of scattering them, and contributes to gaining the opportunity instead of losing it. This weakened the expected results of the Iraqi tourism sector in general, so the tourism sector and the tourism intuitions in Iraq are still below the required level, however, overcoming this dilemma requires developing a sustainable strategy for Iraqi tourism, which will be positively

reflected on the overall tourism performance. The problem was described by the following questions:

1. To what extent can we explore the possibilities and obstacles of building an overall perspective of sustainable tourism strategy in the Iraqi tourism sector?
2. To what extent can be explored basic elements in building a sustainable tourism strategy in Iraqi tourism organizations?
3. To what extent can be explored the impact of the tourism strategy on the overall performance of Iraqi tourism organizations?

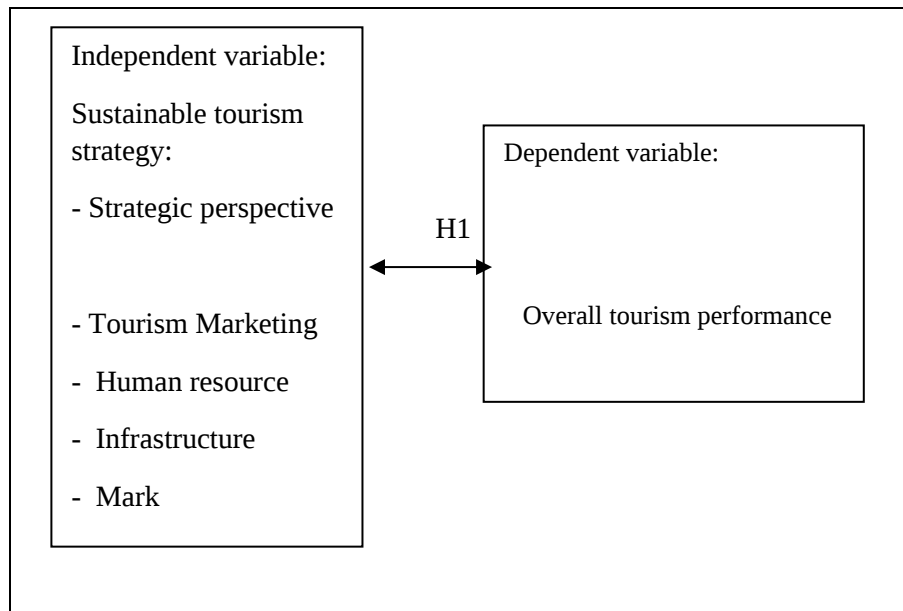
The Design of The Study

The research followed the descriptive approach, which includes the integration of (Inductive and deductive approaches), The theoretical side has been built on (the basis of presentation, discussion, and conclusion). For the field side, it followed the quantitative analysis method. The field of research was a group of Iraqi tourism organizations, regardless of their geographical locations. The study population included the available staff specialized in the field of tourism, the table (1) includes the characteristics of the sample and the field of study. For data collection, a checklist was used, which organized its paragraphs according to the characteristics of the study variables (main and sub-variables). The method of analysis was supported by some appropriate statistical techniques:

Table 2: *The Characteristics of the Sample and the Field of Study*

Academic certificate	Doctorate	Master's degree	Higher Diploma	Bachelor	diploma	Total	Total
	3	9	1	21	9	43	
work field	Provincial Council	Tourism Department	Tourist hotels	tourism agencies	Academics	Civil society organizations	
	4	7	13	5	10	4	43

The Study Model and Hypotheses



RESULT

Descriptive Statistical

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistical Analysis*

The variable and its symbol	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	Hypothetical mean	comment
The variable (30): Tourism marketing activity	3.6	1.43	3	The Iraqi tourist sector market is good, but it varies from one tourist site to another, and it is active in religious tourist s sites.
The variable (31): Distinctive characteristics of tourism human resources	3.50	1.32	3	The characteristics of human resources in the Iraqi tourism sector vary in terms of (knowledge and skill), but they are the best in religious tourism sites .
The variable (32) : the infrastructure of the tourism sites	3.44	1.56	3	The interest is weak in the infrastructure of most of the Iraqi tourist sites, but the greatest interest is in the religious sites, and the tourism sector of Kurdistan.

The variable (33) : the Mark that describes the Reputation of the tourist sites.	3.23	1.46	3	The reputation of the Iraqi tourism sector is good at the global level.
The variable (34) : tourism sustainability	4.28	1.81	3	Those working in the tourism sector are well aware of the importance of the sustainable tourism strategy in developing the Iraqi tourism sector..
The variable (35) : economic performance	3.54	1.08	3	The Iraqi tourism sector contributes well to supporting the Iraqi economic development and sustainable development.
The variable (36): social performance	4.45	1.06	3	The Iraqi tourism sector contributes well to social construction and improving the quality of life for the Iraqi community.
Variable (37) : overall tourism performance	4.00	1.01	3	The Iraqi tourism sector directed by the sustainable strategic perspective of Iraqi tourism contributes to improving the overall performance of the Iraqi tourism sector.
Result: The Iraqi tourism sector directed by the sustainable strategic perspective can be contributed to improving the overall performance of the Iraqi tourism sector.				

Correlations

Table 4: Relationships between (independent and dependent) dimensions and its variables

Main variable	Economic performance	Social performance	overall tourism performance	Comment
(v29) Strategic Perspective	0.956**	0.824**	0.964**	A very strong and positive Correlation relationship with the main dependent variable and its sub-variables.
(v30) Marketing activity	0.941**	0.827**	0.948**	A very strong and positive Correlation relationship with the main dependent variable and its sub-variables.
(v31) HR	0.944**	0.821**	0.951**	A very strong and positive Correlation relationship with the main dependent variable and its sub-variables.
(v32) Infrastructure	0.911**	0.805**	0.918**	A very strong and positive Correlation relationship with the main dependent variable and its sub-variables.

(v33) Mark	o.918**	o.830**	o.924**	A very strong and positive Correlation relationship with the main dependent variable and its sub-variables.
(v34) independent dimension	o.960**	o.812**	o.967**	A very strong and positive Correlation relationship with the main dependent variable and its sub-variables.
Result: The activities of the Iraqi tourism sector sites are significance and positively related to the expected overall performance .				

Hypothesis Test

Table 5: *The multivariate regression of main dependent (comprehensive performance) on the Independent dimension and its main variables)*

model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std Error of the estimate	sig	Comment
1	0.949	0.901	0.888	0.33864	0.00	The test model). is Significance
Result: acceptance of the main hypothesis (There is a statistically significant effect of the independent dimension (sustainable strategy) on the dependent dimension of the overall performance of Iraqi tourism sites).						

Predictors: (constant) ,var34,var31,var32.var30,var33

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research attempted to shed light on the theoretical concepts of the strategic perspective of a sustainable strategy. To know the extent of sustainable strategy impact on the overall performance of the Iraqi tourism sector, because Iraq is one of the countries that attract tourists at the national and international levels. Its tourist sites are distinguished by a religious, heritage, and recreational nature, However, the limited capabilities and experience of the management of Iraqi tourism organizations, and their lack of a strategic sustainable perspective, make the expected outcomes of the overall performance below the required level, Therefore, the research tried, through its preliminary results, and discussed them, to explore the strengths point to invest them positively. And weaknesses to scale them down, and limit their negative effects, the results in the table below showed the following:-

The independence of the Iraqi tourist sites, and the weakness of the management of integration and cooperation among them, made Iraqi tourism organizations need a strategic sustainable perspective, that determines the future features on the one hand, and it constitutes a working guide to the managers in their various fields of work for the future long term in another hand. The management of the tourism sector ensures integration and cooperation between the various tourist sites, and also contributes to the development of human resource capabilities and skills in the various tourism fields. Conclusion: maintains the continuity of the effectiveness of the Iraqi tourism sector for the future long term.

The results showed that the opinions of the sample members are consistent with the concept of a strategic perspective for sustainability, and it is the best in improving the overall tourism performance. This means that there is a desire from most of the staff in the Iraqi tourism sites, (despite their different levels of education), in developing a sustainable strategy for Iraqi tourism organizations, because they believe that contributes to improving the overall strategic performance. It shows the positive and significant impact of the sustainable strategy on the overall performance of the Iraqi tourism sector.

Conclusion the importance of the Iraqi tourism sector work according to the perspective of the sustainable strategy, and this result supported by the study of (Anh, 2013), in the field of the positive impact of the tourism sustainable strategy on the overall tourism performance (social, economic and environmental). There is a positive and significant relationship between (the independent dimension and its sub- variables), with (the dependent dimension and its main variables), also There is a positive and strong reflection of the sustainability strategy on the overall performance of the tourism sector. Conclusion the sustainable strategy achieves a balance between the different tourist sites, and in turn enhances the strength of these sites and their positive impact on the overall strategic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation: Raise awareness of the administrative and functional staff in the Iraqi tourism sector with the concept of sustainable tourism strategy, and its importance locally and internationally.

Implementation mechanisms: Developing a comprehensive and long-term strategic perspective for the Iraqi tourism sector. Benefiting from the concepts and models of global tourism strategies to enrich the contents of the Iraqi tourism strategic perspective. - The strategic perspective should include sustainability factors that help maintain the effectiveness of the strategy in the Iraqi tourism sector. Developing a library of tourism literature at the national and international levels. The second recommendation: developing and enhancing the requirements of tourist attractions.

Implementation Mechanism One

Determining the areas at the national and international levels whose audience desires tourism in the Iraqi tourist sites of all kinds. Practicing media and promotional activities in the areas referred to in the above areas to attract Iraqi tourist sites. Providing tourist agencies and tourists with brochures that define the distinctive aspects of the Iraqi tourist areas. The third recommendation: Improving the quality of the tourist service in all Iraqi tourist sites.

Implementation Mechanism Two

Providing all the tourist's comfort requirements in the tourist site (housing, food, transportation, and other services that the tourist needs). Issuing an introductory guide to the tourist site to guide the tourist when visiting the tourist site, as well as assigning supervisors to accompany the tourists to the intended tourist site. Establishing strict controls for the practice of ethical behavior in the intended tourist site. Fourth recommendation: Develop the capabilities, knowledge, and skills of people working in the Iraqi tourism sector.

Implementation Mechanism Three

Create and implement advanced training and development programs for all levels of people working in the Iraqi tourism sector. Conducting a periodic evaluation of the Iraqi tourism institutions, and the people working in them, and benefiting from the results of the evaluation to improve the overall performance of the tourism sector. Field visits to the higher authorities responsible for the Iraqi tourism sites, and assigning specialized teams to visit and evaluate each tourism site.

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