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THE EFFECTS OF ECOTOURISM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN IRAQ

Submission Date: October 11, 2024, **Accepted Date:** October 16, 2024,

Published Date: October 21, 2024

Crossref doi: <https://doi.org/10.37547/ajsshr/Volume04Issue10-19>

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the most essential elements of the modern service sector and contributes significantly to countries' economies, including Iraq. It also plays a vital role in increasing national income and improving the balance of payments in foreign exchange. It aims to provide job opportunities for the workforce and implement development programs. The research problem is identifying Ecotourism's effects on sustainable development in Iraq.

The main objectives of the research are:

1. What is the meaning and concept of Ecotourism and sustainable development, and what are the requirements for its application?
2. What is the importance of Ecotourism as the most critical type of modern tourism?
3. How do ecotourism dimensions impact sustainable development in Iraq?

The most crucial search results:

- 1- The dimensions of sustainable development were represented in the environmental dimensions, social and political dimensions, economic dimensions



2- The research results showed that ecotourism principles take into account nature - ecological sustainability - environmental culture - and tourism satisfaction.

3- The environmental impact of Ecotourism on development was represented in (Ecotourism efforts lead to the continued reduction of energy and natural resource consumption) - The state should be able to reduce the problem of pollution as long as it has the financial and technical, and human resources to ensure the use of cleaner technologies and fewer resources - An ethical and ethical approach to Ecotourism.

KEYWORDS

Ecotourism, countries' economies, development programs.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most essential elements of the modern service sector and contributes significantly to countries' economies, including Iraq. It also plays a vital role in increasing national income and improving the balance of payments in foreign exchange. It aims to provide employment opportunities for the workforce and implement development programs.

On this basis, tourism is vital to decision-makers in most countries, especially Iraq. Tourism countries' economic and social development, requires good thinking about exploiting them to the fullest extent development, communication, and continuity strategies must be followed, which must work to achieve sustainable development, as this strategy is based on the one hand on culture of Ecotourism that occurs based on reactions to tourism and its adverse effects and the other hand concerns about biodiversity. It examines the relationship between tourism activities and

environmental sustainability. It also works to achieve higher levels of fun without compromising the ecological balance, which is primarily responsible for Evensan, by not exceeding the absorptive capacity of tourist destinations, preventing pollution resulting from tourists and waste resulting from tourist destinations, as well as protecting cultural, civilizational and historical heritage.

Problem of the Study

Tourism is mainly related to the environment, and since the eighties, sustainability has been focused. The new concept of sustainable tourism is limited to economic considerations but responds to the requirements of sustainable development regarding the impact of tourism activities on the natural and human environment. As a result, interest in Ecotourism is growing among various organizations. The decision of



the United Nations Economic and Social Council to recognize 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism is evidence of the growing global interest in Ecotourism, both at the international and governmental levels.

Importance of the Study

The importance of research is divided into scientific importance and applied significance and includes the following:

Aim of the Study

The importance of research at the scientific level is as follows:

- There is a lack of Arab and foreign research regarding the impact of Ecotourism on sustainable development, so the current research tries to contribute to filling the research gaps for topics not related to the impact of Ecotourism on sustainable development.
- Determine the impact of introducing Ecotourism on sustainable development from an economic and environmental perspective.

Importance of the Study

The importance of this research at the applied level is as follows:

1. Ecotourism represents a development alternative with a significant position in many countries, as it

contributes to the diversity of sources of income and the revitalization of economic sectors.

2. Research is essential in trying to benefit from Ecotourism as a tourist attraction that effectively contributes to revitalizing tourism in Iraq and achieving sustainable development.

3. Provide a set of suggestions that help in the behavioral rationalization of the use of resources, which contributes to maintaining public health and safety and replenishing resources to maintain the safety and vitality of society.

Questions of the Study

4. What is the meaning and concept of Ecotourism and sustainable development, and what are the requirements for its application?
5. What is the importance of Ecotourism as the most critical type of modern tourism?
6. How do ecotourism dimensions impact sustainable development in Iraq?
7. What is the economic and environmental level necessary for Ecotourism to achieve sustainable development?

Objectives of the Study

1. Highlight the meaning and concept of Ecotourism and sustainable development and the requirements for



its application to reach sustainable political development standards.

2. Revealing the importance of Ecotourism as the most critical type of modern tourism?

3. Measuring the impact of ecotourism dimensions on sustainable development in Iraq.

4. Identify the economic and environmental level necessary for Ecotourism to achieve sustainable development

Previous studies:

Study by Rasha Abdullah Sultan (2023)[1] on Designing a virtual reality for the Saudi environment to develop sustainable tourism.

The study sought to identify virtual tourism, reveal its role in tourism activation and sustainability, and review the tourism potential of the Kingdom and the city of Jeddah to design virtual tours that reflect its tourist destinations. To achieve the objective of the study, the descriptive approach was adopted to identify the most critical elements of tourist attractions in the Saudi environment and the city of Jeddah, and the descriptive analytical approach to identify virtual tourism and its role in tourism activation and sustainability, and the work of a questionnaire directed to the Saudi society, where the study sample reached 600 individuals, to find out the extent of interest of members of the Saudi society in virtual tourism. Their

most essential desires in this field and the applied approach were used to design virtual tourist environments that reflect the archaeological tourist destinations in the city of Jeddah.

The Results of the Study:

Virtual reality is a promising technological means in marketing and tourism activation and documentation of archaeological sites. Unique and diverse components and a globally civilized tourist site characterize the city of Jeddah. The study recommends taking advantage of virtual reality technologies to document and protect archaeological sites affected by the accumulation of tourists and the optimal investment of this technology to enhance the economic return of tourism, especially in light of the crises hindering traditional tourism.

Safou Narges (2022)[2]study on The role of Ecotourism in achieving sustainable tourism development

The research paper aims to identify Ecotourism as one of the most important patterns of modernity and identify the relationship between tourism development and recognition of the role of development plans as a mechanism to achieve sustainable development and the evaluation of environmental values for tourism projects as a mechanism to achieve sustainable development.



The search record is a set of results, the most important of which are:

- Algeria has many diverse ecotourism areas, but this type of tourism has not received enough attention due to the lack of environmental awareness and tourism information in this area.
- The Law on Environmental Protection 10/03 did not mention tourism clearly but paid attention to sensitive tourist areas, as it allocated the protection of nature reserves and biodiversity and the protection of water, water, and desert environments.
- The Algerian legislator has created an arsenal of environmental laws that intervene with, care for, and protect tourism, such as the Law on the Protection and Valuation of the Coast No. 02/02, the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage Rathm 98/04 and Law No. 02/11 on protected areas within the framework of sustainable development.

A study by Wahiba Al-Jawzi Khalifati (2022)[3] on Ecotourism and its role in achieving sustainable development in the state of Tizi Ouzou - Algeria

This study aims to highlight the meaning and concept of Ecotourism and sustainable tourism development and the requirements for its application to reach sustainable tourism development criteria through which tourism development experiences can be

evaluated; it also aims to describe the current state of Ecotourism in Algeria.

The study found several results:

The concept of tourism development is not a fixed state of balance between achieving economic benefits and protecting the environment. Thus, the concept of best environmental practice may differ from one region to another in terms of the different problems and conditions of development in each region, resulting in a different concept of sustainable tourism development.

Hanan Saidi's study, Si'aq (2022)[4], on Mechanisms for establishing the foundations of sustainable Ecotourism in Algeria in light of the Emirati experience

This study aims to identify the most critical mechanisms supporting the activation of the tourism/environment combination to reach sustainable Ecotourism in Algeria by applying the Emirati experience in the field of its transformation to Ecotourism, relying on green hotels, and drawing lessons learned from them for Algeria.

The study's results indicated that Algeria has the ingredients to qualify it as a tourist attraction par excellence and that sustainable Ecotourism is achieved when activating the elements of the balanced combination, which links tourism to environmental



protection and must be within the state's comprehensive sustainable development plan.

Fawzia Laxie's (2021)[5]study on Ecotourism as a strategy to achieve sustainable development presents the experiences of some Arab countries

The research aims to highlight the importance of Ecotourism, which is one of the essential strategies in achieving sustainable development, concerning some of the experiences of Arab countries, and to focus on the Algerian experience and the various mechanisms taken by Algeria to protect the environment and support Ecotourism due to its availability of natural elements of multiple landscapes and ecosystems, by presenting the most important possibilities of Ecotourism from reserves and national natural parks with rare characteristics and classified globally. It has been reached through research that there is a compelling and distinctive role for Ecotourism in promoting and promoting sustainable development, especially in the aspect of the environmental dimension, but there are some reasons and factors that hinder the embodiment of this; Algeria still has fragile results in this area compared to some Arab countries that have achieved very satisfactory results, such as Jordan and Tunisia, and several suggestions and recommendations have been made that may enable the promotion of this type of tourism.

Procedural Definitions

The concept of Ecotourism

Visiting relatively safe natural areas (nature reserves - the absorptive capacity of each location), benefits to local communities (equitable distribution of benefits - partnerships), environmental awareness, alternative energies (solar energy - wind energy - biofuels), and green buildings (environmentally friendly materials). – Control/reduction of energy and water consumption), sustainable transport (some electric vehicles), water management (water reuse – rainwater harvesting), waste management (recycling – toxic waste treatment), land management (organic investment in the environment in short-term improvements) and long-term in social welfare, employment, and social services (environmental conservation).

The concept of sustainable development

Many definitions have been said about sustainable development, among which:

Classic definition: Sustainable development is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This definition is based on balancing development's economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

United Nations definition: Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and focuses on the



balance between the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. [6]

Definition of inclusive sustainability: Sustainable development is a holistic process that aims to achieve sustainability in all aspects of life, including the environment, economy, and society. It focuses on balancing current needs with the ability to meet future needs [7].

The concept of sustainable tourism development:

Sustainable tourism is defined as "the optimal use of tourist sites in terms of the entry of tourists in balanced numbers, provided that they are aware in advance of the importance of these sites and deal with them in order to prevent damage." [8]

It is a comprehensive plan for the economic, social and environmental development of an entire country or region, combining elements of tourism development, including natural and cultural attractions. ". It is also "tourism that meets the needs of tourists and host sites, as well as the protection and provision of opportunities for the future, and it represents a set of guiding rules in the field of resource management, in a way that meets the requirements of economic, social and cultural issues, and with it cultural integration, environmental factors, biodiversity and support for life systems"[9].

Theoretical Aspect:

Dimensions of sustainable development:

Four dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, economic, social).

1) Environmental dimensions:

It is represented in the use of pesticides and avoiding soil damage, eliminating vegetation cover and fisheries, preserving natural resources, protecting water, preserving the climate from global warming, and reducing the shelter of different biological species (preserving the earth's richness in biodiversity for future generations) [10].

2) Social and political dimensions:

The social dimension of sustainable development focuses on social justice by combating poverty, providing social services to all those in need, and ensuring democracy through people's participation in decision-making. It focuses on the fact that the human being is the essence of development and its ultimate goal. The most critical social and political aspects of development are the stability of population growth, final population size, population distribution, the importance of maximizing the use of human resources, health, education, the importance of the role of women, and democratic governance.

3) Economic dimensions:



According to this aspect, national sustainability means the continuation and maximization of economic well-being for as long as possible by providing elements of human well-being at the highest levels of quality, private consumption of natural resources, stopping the waste of resources, the responsibility of developed countries for pollution and cleaning, reducing the dependence of developing countries, achieving sustainable development for poor countries, equality in the distribution of resources and reducing income inequality[11].

It establishes the concept of sustainable development and proves the existence of many elements that form the basis of sustainable development. The most important are:[12]

It meets people's humanitarian needs and improves their standard of living. It eradicates poverty. This requires ensuring sustainable population levels and rational environmental management that effectively uses all that is possible and human development. Because there is no sustainable development without sustainable human development, it improves health. It expands societal opportunities (knowledge acquisition, political freedom, securing human rights) through community investment in knowledge, education, health, and acquired capacities.

Environmental economics views economics as the nervous system of interactions between the

environment and development. Sustainable development, therefore, depends on a balance between economic and ecological systems, the use of environmentally friendly technologies, and, finally, success in self-sufficiency—international support and cooperation to solve global environmental problems.

Sustainable Tourism Development:

After addressing sustainable development and its aspects, we will look at ecotourism as a type of tourism that contributes to sustainable development. Therefore, in addition to preserving the environment, it also contributes to achieving the desired goals of income generation and increasing the working class. I want to do it. Supporting Ecotourism contributes to achieving a higher level of enjoyment, but this does not disturb the ecological balance, and its maintenance is man's responsibility.

Based on the above, sustainable tourism development is based mainly on the following basic principles[13]:

- At the level of productivity of tourism resources, ensuring the continuity of tourist attractions through pleasure and satisfaction with the services and opportunities provided.
- Preserving biodiversity and avoiding environmental variables that have serious consequences.
- Establishing equality between generations and reaping the benefits of tourism while applying the



principles of sustainable development. This principle is mainly based on removing any factors from the tourism environment that will lead to low productivity in the future.

- Finding a compromise between the host community's culture and the visiting tourist through developing and promoting the local culture, preserving it, seeking its continuity and delivery, and introducing the tourist to it.

- Involve local communities in the process of sustainable tourism development by providing host areas with tourism characteristics that attract tourists and investors at the same time.

Despite the diversity of approaches and aspects of sustainable tourism development, it can be limited to two main elements: material and moral. This ensures that the amount consumed today is at most required to be consumed tomorrow without depriving posterity. The ethical element of sustainable tourism means that tourism in social and cultural terms is not neutral but instead leads to encounters and friction between two types of cultures (the culture of the host country and the culture of the country of the tourist). It generates social communication and creates connections and relationships that increase the number of tourists. The social perspective of sustainable tourism seeks to maximize tourism with a human face and avoid problems that may arise as a

result of social differences and the different structures of the state and its cultural heritage, so it is necessary to respond to the needs and desires of both tourists and tourism workers [14].

What is Ecotourism:

Ecotourism arose when the eco-movement realized the possibility of combining people's interest in the environment with their interest in it. In particular, this idea has developed in recent years based on the interest in biodiversity on the one hand and tourism and its adverse reactions on the other hand because the environment depends mainly on nature with its beautiful landscapes, and there are activities associated with Ecotourism manifested in the following aspects: Interest in Ecotourism. Biodiversity. And explore everything inside. This includes visiting archaeological sites, visiting forests, watching birds and animals, and exploring valleys and mountains. [15]

Principles of ecotourism

The assessment of Ecotourism is based on several principles, including:

1) Observance of nature

Based on the natural environment, the essential biological, physical, cultural, and ecological features of the natural heritage and the cultural elements present in it, the protection of natural resources here is



considered as planning, developing, and managing Ecotourism. [16]

2) Ecological sustainability:

Ecologically sustainable tourism involves various resistances, such as respect for the environment and local culture. This includes administrative and organizational considerations, such as determining the capacity of the site and the maximum number of tourists so that the area can be visited without causing unwanted changes in the natural environment. It is consistent with the experience gained by eco-tourists and the necessary procedures.

Ecotourism means relying on natural resources without depleting them so that future generations cannot benefit from them, while sustainability means that all the money and profits generated by tourism belong to local people and not to big corporations. [17]

3) Ecological culture:

Environmental education is important for creating enjoyable Ecotourism. It affects tourists' behavior, helps them learn about the natural and cultural values of tourist destinations, and helps them understand the environment deeply. Comment.

4) Tourism satisfaction:

To ensure the long-term success of Ecotourism, visitor satisfaction with the ecotourism experience is

essential. Since it differs from traditional tourism goals, there must be a specialized department in securing the expected risks during tourists' trips because the goals of the conventional tourist are entirely different from the goals of the eco-tourist, as they want to enjoy nature and enjoy an ecological lifestyle, which encourages them to participate in sports such as hiking and trips[18].

Ecotourism and its effects on development:

The commitment of countries and communities to promote and continuously improve clean Ecotourism based on ethics and principles ensures the protection and preservation of the environment. Undoubtedly, this has excellent intentions to promote tourism and development that positively benefits various aspects of sustainable development. The most important of these benefits are:

Environmental impact:

- Ecotourism efforts continue to reduce energy and natural resource consumption and contribute to changing consumption patterns that threaten biodiversity and the extinction of animal products.
- Due to the predominance of ecotourism culture and the enactment of its laws, the state should be able to reduce the pollution problem as long as it has the financial, technical, and human resources to ensure



that cleaner technologies and fewer environmentally friendly resources are used to solve the problem.

- By taking an ethical approach to Ecotourism, in addition to protecting vegetation and fisheries, by slowing the extinction process, significantly slowing the destruction of shelters and ecosystems, and reducing the use of wasted water without damaging the soil, the richness of the earth's biodiversity is preserved for future generations. [19]

Social and political impact

- Reducing population migration to urban areas: To promote tourism development, it is necessary to promote rural development, reduce migration to urban areas, take special policy measures, increase spending on tourism projects, and increase the need to provide additional tourism-related services. These factors help stabilize populations, reduce migration to large cities, and balance these areas with cities.

- Rational use of human resources and human resource development: Tourism is developed, basic human needs are met, social welfare is improved, and cultural diversity is protected. Relying on environmental policy, it is necessary to invest in human capital through the training of tourism workers to sustain tourism and achieve tourism development.

- People transmit to future generations a sense of pride in themselves, their values, and their dignity to

contribute to the development of society and the preservation of cultural and tourism heritage.

- Tourism expands opportunities for peace and mutual understanding between peoples and nations, thus enhancing the country's image and enabling communication between peoples. Tourism is also one of the most important means of achieving intimacy between people and plays a vital role. In addition, countries that receive tourists can demonstrate their actual appearance in the eyes of others and achieve rapprochement between their people and host countries, allowing people and strengthening ties between the nation and this country. [20]

Economic impact

- Increasing spending in tourist destinations without harming the environment: Tourism spending is expressed in the economic evaluation of the overall services provided to tourists and represents the transfer of money from tourists to hotel owners, and due to the predominance of ecotourism culture, the transfer of funds and spending is increasing without any harm to the environment.

- Stimulating economic activity: Other types of spending by tourist countries rather than tourists exist. For example, expenditures on tourism projects such as the construction of cities and tourist vehicles, the construction of roads, and the construction of monuments and monuments. This type of spending on



public utilities expands museums, galleries, and transport networks. Undoubtedly, this will stimulate economic activity. [21]

- Positive impact on the balance of payments: Promoting Ecotourism creates a leading position in payment mandates, where income received in hard currency from tourism services is treated as an intangible export and included in the invisible trade credit component. Tourism expenditures of citizens living abroad are also considered imports and are considered in the debit part of the trade balance.

Through these operations, it was found that the balance of tourism is the difference between the expenses of foreign tourists inside the country and the expenses of citizens abroad, so tourism was used to determine the net impact on the balance of payments and know the truth the balance of payments income and expenses will be prepared. Since the overall trade balance is maintained, this balance is a deficit or surplus.

- Job creation: Total investment by tourism-dependent countries attracts a large workforce, and tourism is a multisectoral sector that includes many activities and industries and is closely related to other economic, social, and cultural sectors, considering that the tourism industry contributes to job creation. It contributes directly and indirectly to creating many job opportunities in the tourism sector[22].

The most crucial search results:

4- The dimensions of sustainable development were represented in the environmental dimensions, social and political dimensions, economic dimensions

5- The results of the research showed that sustainable tourism development is mainly based on the basic principles, namely

(Ensure the continuity of tourist attractions through pleasure and satisfaction with the services and opportunities provided - Preserving biodiversity and avoiding environmental variables that have serious consequences - Establishing equality between generations and reaping the benefits of tourism - Finding a compromise between the culture of the host community and the visiting tourist through the development and promotion of local culture - Involving local communities in the process of sustainable tourism development by providing host areas with tourism characteristics that attract tourists and investors at the same—time research results research showed that the principles of Ecotourism are represented in (taking into account the—natural - ecological sustainability - environmental—culture - tourism sat) satisfaction.

7- The environmental impact of Ecotourism on development was represented in ((Ecotourism efforts lead to continued reduction in energy consumption and natural resources - The state should be able to



reduce the problem of pollution as long as it has the financial, technical, and human resources to ensure the use of cleaner technologies and fewer resources - Following an ethical and moral approach in Ecotourism (

8- The social and political impact of Ecotourism on development was represented in (Reducing population migration to urban areas - Rational use of human resources and development of human resources - Tourism contributes to expanding opportunities for peace and mutual understanding between peoples and nations

The economic impact of Ecotourism on development was represented in (Increasing spending in tourist destinations without harming the environment - Stimulating economic activity - Positive impact on the balance of payments)

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