
THE STATE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN ERBIL**Houshyar Darbandi**

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ABSTRACT

The overall purpose of this paper is to find out the state and knowledge of sustainable tourism in Erbil and how tourism industry with Erbil can protect environment, meets the local people's needs and improve their socio-culture. The principle of Sustainable development works for planning and management, in fact tourism industry involves the functions of organizing, coordinating, training, monitoring and evaluating at all levels generating of economic profit for local people, minimization of negative tourism impact, preservation of natural resources and culture in tourism destinations. The research of this study has been conducted in Erbil and data about sustainable development has been collected by interviewing two managers within tourism authority, one manager of the preserving and developing environment in Erbil and an assistant professor lecturer of law and environment. The findings of the research in line with the objectives provides the lack of planning and management of the local government to which that have negative impact on the sustainable development in Erbil. The validity and reliability of the research has been outlined and many vital solutions have been drawn up along with the problems with the sustainable development with Erbil. The findings of this research were demonstrate the poor management with government's policy with tourism management in terms of having clear employment policy with local people, tourism cultural activity and poor management of the improving environment in Erbil. The conclusion and recommendation of this research has been highlighted and challenges with improving environments, lack with government decisions in tourism planning including lack in qualified people with strategic tourism managements have been underlined.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism; marketing; Economic; tourism; Socio-cultures.*

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study is to analyse the Sustainable tourism with Erbil as a tourist destination

1.3 The objectives: -

- To critically review the literature about Sustainable tourism with Erbil as a destination
- To collect data about the state of Sustainable tourism with Erbil as a destination
- To analyse data on Sustainable tourism with Erbil as a destination
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations for the further future research in developing Erbil as a tourist destination.

1. CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Introduction:

This research investigates the state of sustainable tourism with Erbil as an international tourism destination. According to UNWTO (2007) the topic of sustainable tourism has emerged in the last decade and it has been defined by many researchers however the most acceptable definition of sustainable development was provided by the Brundtland Commission in *Our Common Future* as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987).

Travel & Tourism 2015 generated US \$7.2 trillion (9.8% of global GDP) and the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment (including wider effects from investment and the supply chain) was 283,578,000 jobs in 2015 (9.5% of total employment). This forecast to raise by 2.2% in 2016 to 289,756,000 jobs (9.6% of total employment) The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC)

In general, employments in tourism and hospitality are cover hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services. Likewise, it covers also scenery, nature based tourist activities and leisure industries directly supported by tourists.

In contemporary tourism world, the term of sustainable tourism frequently comes to surface and been given a huge weight in research of developing tourism industry because, sustainable tourism representing the benefit of Socio-cultural, economic and environmental within tourism industry.

Therefore, this research tries to show the challenges with the quality of environment, air pollution and socio-cultural activities with other nation living in Kurdistan to attract tourists visiting Erbil. Furthermore, despite Erbil has invested significantly in improving its

infrastructure, attractions and hospitality to stimulate domestic tourism and meet the international tourist demand however, there are concern with tourism industry if sustainable development in the city meet the local peoples' need where the economic leakages in recent year had both negative impact on employment and region's economic crises.

1.1.1 The significance and objectives of this research:

- In line to objectives of this research, this study is contributing to improve knowledge and benefits of the sustainable development with Erbil to improve economic, socio-culture and environment as a tourism destination. The objectives of this research have been formulated based on research goal. The dissertation research consists of four main research objectives, where critical review, collect data, analyses data of the sustainable tourism including conclusion and recommendation.

1.1.2 Background and problem formulation:

Tourism operations is like an instrument where heritage, economy and the culture can be energizing a destination economically to meet the societies standard and needs. Without sustainable development, and lack in sustainable tourism planning it can leads to negative impacts on tourism and local peoples' cultural activities, natural and the economic performance of the destination. The authors of this research hope to show the needs for social development and improve the context of heritage, culture and environment to be preserved together under the concept of sustainability

1.1.3 Aims and Research Questions:

To achieve a successful tourism system, the tourism destinations perform as a supply side of marketing, it should respond properly to tourism demand, also in order to be competitive and meet tourist expectations, the tourism destinations should be investing in quality products, quality services and tourism infrastructures. A successful tourism system comprises of attractions, amenities, tourist nature based activities and accessibility (Buhalies 2000). Therefore, a qualitative data analysis was gathered to discuss the state of the sustainable development with Erbil and the following questions have been formulated in this purpose.

- what measures have been taken to get Erbil clean regarding the followings:
 - Access to clean water. Tap water
 - Cleaning sewages
 - Collecting Waste-litter
- How are, Pollution from traffics and other sources in general are managed to get clean air in cities and rural areas?
- How is tourism development being done and managed in Erbil?
- Is tourism managed to create opportunity for local force to integrate to the market

- Do you think the culture of other nationalities in Kurdistan have been highlighted and recognized by tourism industry and other government bodies?

1.1.4 Assumption:

The assumption of this research is based on two factors firstly, that the term of sustainable tourism and its function is new for tourism management and local authority in Erbil and the tourism plan is not performing in line with the principles of sustainable development. Secondly, the participant could withdraw at any time from interview or not answering some sensitive questions.

1.1.5 Methodology:

The research method used in this research was qualitative and a deep interview were used as a research techniques with selected samples, an explanatory method was used to analyse the gathered information and discussed.

1.1.6 Limitations:

The limitation of this research comprises of difficulties with time and numbers of interviewing participating managers including the quality image of Erbil as tourism destination

structure of the research

Chapter 1: introduction

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 4: results and discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendation

2. CHAPTER TWO

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1 Sustainable development in Erbil

Erbil is located at the heart of Kurdistan region in the Northern Iraq. In this part of the world freedom for people historically was an ultimate priority therefore, the notion of developing sustainable tourism is a new term and in a very early stage. In fact, the region has all potential products such as manmade and given nature that increasingly attract tourism nationally and internationally. According to many observer in tourism, the region is in need to be helped with a strategic plan to enhance tourism industry including academic material, staff performance, national and international investment to upgrade these tourism products in the region

World Tourism Organisation (WTO) highlights that Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is predicted as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.

A report from 1999 shown by World Tourism Organisation (WTO) state that domestic tourism accounts for approximately 80% of all tourist activity however, many countries tend to give priority to international tourism because, while the domestic tourism basically involves a regional redistribution of national income, the latter has now become the world’s largest source of foreign exchange receipts. In this regard, the latest figures compiled by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), foreign exchange earnings from international tourism reached a peak of US\$ 476 billion in 2000, which was larger than the export value of petroleum products, motor vehicles, telecommunications equipment or any other single category of product or service (WTO, 2001).

Demand for international tourism remained high in 2016 despite challenges. International tourist arrivals grew by 3.9% to reach a total of 1,235 million, due to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. Some 46 million more tourists (overnight visitors) travelled internationally last year compared to 2015.

With Kurdistan region in general and Erbil destination one can easily notice that tourists visited the region from central and southern Iraq much higher than the international visitors check the table below. To which, this means the expectation of tourism industry to receive high profits from the international currency is not that high.

Table(1) Tourist Arrival In Kurdistan region for (2015-2016)

Tourist arrival In Kurdistan	Domestic Tourists	International Tourists
Tourism Arrival 2015	698,407	83,844
Tourism Arrival 2016	1,227,289	37,611

Source : (Tourism commission board)

LANGE, L (2011) argue that Globally, tourism is a \$3 billion a day business that all countries at all levels of development can potentially benefit from. Tourism continues to grow, particularly in developing countries, needs to increase the economic benefits and to minimize the negative impacts for the host regions. These needs are reflected in the efforts of engaging in sustainable tourism development.

World travel and tourism council (WTTC) stress that safety and security are of maximum priority for tourism, they believe that the safety and security concerns have moved into the spotlight, in 2016 and if these issues will continue it cause difficulties for tourism industry in 2017.

Another factor also influencing the flow of travelers around the world notably the strength of the US dollar relative to other currencies is shifting the price competitiveness of destinations. Undoubtedly new developments will emerge alongside these existing factors. Saveriades (2000), underline the importance of carrying capacity by describing that when tourism perceive the capacity has been exceeded they lose interest and turn to find other destinations

According to Taleb Rifai General Secretary of UNWTO “Tourism has shown strength and resilience in recent years, despite many challenges, particularly those related to safety and

security. Yet, international travel continues to grow strongly and contribute to job creation and the wellbeing of communities around the world”

2017 has been designated by the United Nations the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, Mr. Rifai said “we need to work closer together to link the contribution of tourism to economic growth, social inclusion, cultural and environmental preservation and mutual understanding. In this sense, businesses and public organizations are increasingly interested in the economic impacts of tourism at national, state, and local levels. Also, tourism creates a certain number of jobs in a tourism destination, or festival and special event generates specific amount of sales or income in a community. Use of local source including local employments in tourism industry also has Multiplier effects to which often cited to capture the secondary effects of tourism spending. Stynes, D (1999)

Erbil is in the Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq and has 4.5 million of population. The landscape of the Kurdish region consists of mountains, valleys, ancient sites and historical buildings, which together contributed to the Kurdish region operating as a tourism destination. According to KRG (2012), the mountains of the Kurdistan Region have an average height of about 2,400 meters; rising up to 3,660 meters occasionally, that provides wonderful scenery for tourism activity. In recent years, Erbil has invested significantly in improving its infrastructure, attractions and hospitality to stimulate domestic tourism and meet the international tourist demand. The development of tourism products and services in Kurdistan considered is considered as a foundation for market pull factor, improve employment and increase of international tourism arrivals. However, these development in Kurdistan region are of high importance to cover protection of environment, enhance planning and managements and improve social and culture of local people.

2.1.2 Erbil 2014 been elected as Arab Tourism Capital

During the council’s conference in Cairo, four cities -- Beirut, Taif, Sharjah and Erbil -- competed to win the title of tourism capital for the year 2014.

According to Tahir Abdulla, Erbil deputy governor, many cultural activities that take place annually, such as celebrating the Kurdish New Year (Newroz), the anniversary of Erbil’s liberation, an international marathon and a beauty queen contest, all these including many other religious and national events were determinant in name Erbil as Arab tourism capital. Abdulla said that other touristic activities planned in Erbil region such as horse racing and skydiving, also renovate the old neighborhoods and markets around Erbil’s citadel to build a huge concert hall in the downtown. All these are to be worked for and planned to turn Erbil as an attractive tourism destination. Barzan Muhammad, Rudaw, 2014)

World Tourism Organization (WTO) state that environment and heritage are valued differently by different people, those working in tourism recognize them as assets of mainstream and niche tourism products and can do much to educate visitors about the values of our natural and cultural heritage places.

This election of Erbil as a Arab tourism capital if been exploited strategically and wisely it

could give many economic benefits to Kurdistan in general and people in particular in Erbil. According to a statistic from Erbil governorate, the city predicts 3 million tourists visiting Erbil by 2014. Meanwhile, Mawlawi Jabar, the director of the tourism commission board, told *Rudaw*, “The number of tourists coming to Erbil is increasing year by year. The number may reach 4 million by 2014 and this will help Kurdistan’s economy.” The Arab tourism capital was a huge project and opportunity to promote the cultural and other tourism attractions to the world in general and especially the Arab world as this market is recognized as having the largest number of potential visitors to Erbil, where representatives of tourism in Erbil could take advantage of the event and represent more of Erbil to a bigger market in terms of culture, environment and nature.

According to Hitchcock, M et al (2010) the concept of heritage refers to tangible and concrete elements of the past (buildings, monuments, artifacts, sites and constructed landscapes), as well as to those aspects of culture expressed in behavior, action and performance. The products from above mentioned by Hitchcock are the same with historical, natural products available in Kurdistan and therefore one can argue that the potential for a strong sustainable development and economic progress are immense if tourism commission board and other government bodies in Erbil planning for a strategic marketing and represent Erbil as safe and attractive tourist destination.

The provision of tourism services and quality products can create significant direct and indirect economic benefits, and for this reason the industry is attractive to governments in many developing economies to generate employment opportunities and foreign exchange. Governments and development agencies believed that by stimulating regional development and providing infrastructure such as airports, roads and water, tourism could be an economic engine that could transition traditional rural economies into a more modern path of growth and development. (Bandara, 2001)

A traditional tourism planning approaches is to meet the developmental goals and objectives for which they were promoted. However, if other measures like having quality products and services meet visitor’s need and answering for their complaints not been taken to action seriously it can give a very negative impact.

The pattern of negative economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts resulting largely from unplanned and rapid development (Weaver, 1998, pg. 50)

2.1.3 Economic IMPACTS OF TOURISM

Local authorities many times were confronted by a range of serious problems, including environmental degradation, unsustainable consumption patterns, an invasion of drugs and prostitution and unplanned settlements generated from rapid immigration to tourist areas Weaver, 1998 assert, hoped for economic revenues were limited by economic leakages associated with a high level of foreign investment and weak local economies dependent on imported goods and services. To big extend this is the case with Kurdistan region also. national products are scarcity in the region and not of high quality also lack of experienced

staff within hospitality resulted in economic leakage in the region by importing not only foreign product but staff also.

Many criticisms suggest that tourism only leaves minimal economic benefits in host countries due to high levels of profit leakage,

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT UNCTAD (2010) LIST THE FOLLOWING LEAKAGES IN THREE CATEGORIES:

- 1- Internal leakage: The weaker the economy is in terms of producing quality goods and services, the higher the imports.
 - 2- External leakages: Refers to tourism expenditures that accrue outside of the destination such as:
 - External leakages accrue to foreign investors through transfer profits to outside the destination
 - pre-leakage profits received to foreign intermediaries for providing booking services to destination
 - 3- Invisible leakage: It is mainly of financial nature i.e. tax avoidance through international transactions, and off-shore investments (overseas investment)
- Also (*Hemmati and Koehler*) argue that significant percentage of the revenues arising from tourism - common estimates suggest approximately 60 to 75% (e.g. Wheat 1998; Kersten 1997; Sinclair 1991) - leaks away from developing countries because of foreign ownership of the industry, imported resources, foreign tour operators and airlines and other reasons.

Supradist, N (2004) from university of LUND-SWEDEN underline the following solution for the leakages problems within tourism industry

- Increase sale and marketing points as well as Internet marketing. With this method, the destination will be able to minimize the impact of intermediate company who operates in destination e.g. tour operators.
- Partnerships with local transportation companies to reduce transport services provided by overseas company in the destination.
- Integrated and train quality local management in to replace both foreigner managers and employees
- Industrial linkage, increase awareness and appoint dedicated management through private and public bodies to increase of local food supplies and food retailers.

2.1.4 ENVIRONMENTAL and socio-cultural IMPACTS OF TOURISM

Sunlu, U (2003) believe, many of environmental impacts are linked with the construction of general infrastructure such as roads and airports, and of tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants and shops. The negative impacts of tourism development can gradually destroy environmental resources on which it depends.

According to author, the negative impacts from tourism occur when the level of visitor use is greater than the environment's ability to produce. For example, Water, and especially fresh water, is one of the most critical natural resources especially in hot regions like the Mediterranean. The tourism industry generally overuses water resources for hotels, swimming pools and personal use of water by tourists. This can result in water shortages and degradation of water supplies, as well as generating a greater volume of wastewater.

Additionally, Tourism can cause the same forms of pollution as any other industry: air emissions, noise, solid waste and littering, including releases of sewage Sunlu, U (2003).

Spanou, E (2006) in *Impact of Tourism on the Sociocultural Structure of Cyprus*, believes that the positive and negative impact of tourism on the host destination's socio-cultural structure has been an issue for a long time.

Baltic countries in 2006 started to develop their social and cultural products and services not only as an Identity for their country but for improving their economy also. In order to ensure stable sustainable economic, social and cultural development combined with preservation and enhancement environment, the Baltic countries took the following measures:

- Create financial instruments and tax policies that stimulate the development of cultural tourism;
- Continue to implement laws and adopt tough policies to protect cultural heritage and local employments within tourism industry
- Introduce policies and positive measures to promote access to public and private sites of cultural tourism interest;
- Provide information in more languages;
- Set up more signs and information on how to reach cultural tourism sites;
- Set up a Baltic cultural tourism internet portal;
- Ensure that public support for cultural events can be given 2 years before the event;
- Restore and protect monuments, museums, archaeological and historical places;
- Establish carrying capacity for the sites;
- More support handicraft traditions;
- Focus on music and dance to develop cultural tourism;
- Use minority cultural heritage and rich multicultural resources;
- Pay more attention to cultural tourism in education and research;
- Establish systematic, regular and long-term partnership with enterprises;
- Facilitate communication between professionals and the community;
- Strengthen international co-operation; strengthen international marketing of Baltic cultural tourism products; conduct market research;

- Expand cultural tourism product range;
- Monitor and improve product quality; cover the whole region and seasons with available cultural tourism services; develop an investment policy to support investments in cultural tourism;

From the Baltic countries and the above proposals, Kurdistan can build many strategic plans and studies to enhance its sustainable tourism and improve the region's economy as the region is in a very early stage in terms of sustainable development. In Erbil province, there are many cultural and heritage sites if there are a proper tourism planning and strategic management to design these sites in high-quality products and provide quality services then the potential for yield a strong economy benefits for the region and local people looks good. For Example, Kurdistan has at least 1,307 known archaeological sites. Among the most famous is the Erbil citadel, the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in the world, which has been settled since 6,000 BC. Another is the Shanadar cave, where nine Neanderthal skeletons were found dating between 60-80,000 years. The cave is in Bradost Mountain, in Erbil province. It was excavated between 1957-1961 by Ralph Solecki and his team from Columbia University and yielded the first adult Neanderthal skeletons in Iraq. One skeleton and casts of the others are at the Smithsonian Institution in the US. (KRG)

Also, many nationalities and religions side by side living in Kurdistan like Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Christians, Yazidies are turned Kurdistan to diversity of cultural and social activity where these activities including both given and manmade nature products are designated by tourism industry as a source of attracting tourists. However, the Kurdish tourism products and strategic planning are according to the researcher of this paper in need of sophisticated management who has sufficient knowledge in developing and organizing tourism products

The archaeological sites and cultural products including the natural attraction is very important for attracting visitors to Erbil. Therefore, increase in local managements and variation and production of cultural tourism activities that are strongly connected with other branches of economy will increase in employment in the destination and stimulates country economy to which reduce economic leakages

3. CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 The introduction

Chapter two in this research was discussed and explored the conceptual framework of sustainable tourism and the factors affect tourism development. The present study is attempts to explain the aim and objectives of this research into research issues through interviewing managers or academics and measure their experience level and views as they managing tourism plans or linked to tourism industry in Erbil.

The purpose of the methodology is to evaluate the strategy for responding the research questions through highlighting the design of the research, the research instrument and the sample selection.

According to Hyde (2000), there are two types of approaches to gaining of new knowledge and as a method of the data analysis, the inductive and deductive approaches. The inductive approach is a theory building process, which seeks to generalize a phenomenon under investigation. Whereas, the deductive approach is a theory testing process which seeks to see if the theory applies to specific case. The research method used in this study is an inductive qualitative approach by testing from specific attitude and observations to wider generalizations of the hypotheses.

3.1.2 Primary research

There are two major approaches to data collection, primary and secondary data collection (Kumar, 2011). According to the author, the choice of the methods depends on the purpose of the study. Primary data is that the researcher gathers directly from primary sources such as: students, tourists or other members of the public through utilising the primary data techniques as questionnaires, interviews and observations. To develop this study data have been collected from Two experienced managers working at tourism commission in Erbil and two academics one is lecturer at Salahadin University who has PHD Geographical Tourism and the other academic is also lecturer but in Lebanese French University who has PHD in Global environment.

3.1.3 Secondary researches

Secondary research is that the researcher collects from sources such as articles, journals, magazines and books to obtain historical and other types of information. According to Saunders (2007), primary literature includes published sources such as reports and some central and local government publications. The major sources that likely used as secondary research along with those primary sources most frequently used for a literature review. For example, journals from academic scholar including scholar Google, websites, and academic institutes such as Mintel and Emeralds are some of the secondary sources that have been used to find out the literature about the conceptual framework of sustainable tourism and to improve the notion of the literature review of this research.

3.1.4 Qualitative and quantitative methods

The research methods in its nature can be qualitative or quantitative, according to Ryan (1995), many researchers find both as valid, and both completing each other and both have different problems and objectives. Traditionally, qualitative research viewed as a set of different research methods that have certain features in common. In this sense, in order to understand the state of sustainable tourism in Erbil, the qualitative research employed to collect data about economic development, socio-culture and environment in Erbil. Phillimore and Goodson (2004) stress that qualitative research is perceived as distinct from quantitative research as it does not produce quantified findings or have hypotheses testing

integral part of research process. Therefore, according to authors in last few decades using qualitative approach in studying social life has been more acceptable and valued as thinking research development. One of the key issues in designing qualitative research is the extent to which methods should be structured Maxwell (1998; cited in Phillimore and Goodson (2004). Maxwell believe, while structured approach can help to ensure comparability, unstructured approach focus more on drawing out generalisation and comparability for internal validity and contextual understanding.

3.1.5 Choice of the research technique

3.1.5.1 Interview

Data were collected from two tourism managers and two academics who deal with the Geographical tourism and environmental respectively. interview with open ended questions were the tool for collecting data for all interviewees

The interview method used in this research was involved questioning or discussing issues were very useful technique for collecting data which would probably not be accessible using techniques such as observations or questionnaires (Blaxter et al., 2001). According to Phillimore and Goodson (2004), interviews were chosen as an appropriate method to accomplish the aim of gathering qualitative data, in that, in-depth interviewing has an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Using interviews enables the researcher to adopt an inductive approach by identifying patterns in the data that might lead to the development of the ground theory based on the actual travel experience.

3.1.5.2 Factor analysis of sustainable tourism

An exploratory factor analysis to validate this research related experience with sustainable development in Erbil has been conducted. The samples have been asked for their point of view and experience with the sustainable development to measure their perception linked to available tourism development within Erbil.

The analysis of the collected data in this research was based on sorting, comparing with the literature and classifying of personal judgement or much higher level of subjective of the provided information, (Weaver and Lawton, 2010).

3.1.5.3 The research instrument

A list of questions has been presented to interviewees before performing the interview. The objectives and purpose of the research also has been addressed. Table 1-A shows data about the time and the location of conducting the interviewing in Erbil :

Table (2) Participants’ profile

Participants	Date of interview	Time of interview	Location of interview
Participant 1	27/03/17	10.00 am	Tourism-Commission
Participant 2	28/03/17	1.00 Pm	Tourism-Commission
Participant 3	4/04/17	11.00 am	Lebanese French University
Participant 4	5/04/17	13.00 pm	Salahadin University

4. CHAPTER FOUR

4.1. Results and discussion

4.1.1 Results

This chapter present the research results and analysis from primary data collection from 4 Participants. The results will be presented into three sections, based on the foundation that comprise sustainable tourism and the different experiences and position of managers. The first section presents the Participant number one, who are a spokesman of tourism commission and familiar with the state of tourism industry in Erbil. The second section presents sample Participant 2 who is a planning department manager at tourism commission and the third Participant is a lecturer who has academic knowledge in preserving environment and lastly the Participant number 4 also been interviewed.

In this chapter research results, will be highlighted and analysis from primary data collection of interviewees will be presented in and discussed. The interviewees have different educational background with different professions. The data extracted from them are based on the literature review of this research.

The questions were based on the notion of sustainable development linked to literature of this research where it covered the cultural, economic and environment in Erbil.

4.1.2 4.2. Exploratory factor analysis and reliability

The justification of the analysis of the findings is based on the laddering and grand tour techniques. The laddering technique involves; the participant should identify the features that he/she believes useful in relation to the selected subject such as product or service. Whereas, grand tour technique engages the participant to discover the selected subject or tourist experiences with a certain product or services (Vranesevic and Vignali, 2003). Additionally, the exploratory factor analysis of participants’ satisfaction was performed in order to their experience with Erbil in comparing to other visited international destination relating to participant’s expectation.

First Participant:

The first part of the interview was about tourism impact on the local economy in Erbil In order to find out how the local economy affected by tourism development and the response about how is the state of local forces integrated to tourism industry? The Interviewee believed that tourism in Erbil created jobs directly and indirectly, and they are trying to reduce overseas labour in the tourism market and employ more of local people however, one can notice that most labour working in popular five stars hotel in Region are foreigner. Additionally, the interviewee provided the following data about visiting tourists based on national and international visitors

70% of tourists visiting Kurdistan are coming from central and south Iraq

%20 of tourists are coming from overseas

% 10 of tourist are from inside Kurdistan

Furthermore, regarding the economic leakages in region and Erbil especially the participant explained that tourism commission in Erbil started to open a training centre for local people and students who want to work in tourism industry in order to reduce the number of foreign labour and leakages in the region to improve the local economy. Regarding the tourism infrastructure in Erbil the interviewee stressed that it is governments responsibility to ease the traffic congestions and improve roads, tunnels and bridges to get better accessibility to attractions. Moreover, the interviewee find lack in trained labour was the reason on why they cannot force the overseas tourism companies to take in local people to work in their company.

Along to economic development in Erbil a question been asked to the participant about how tourism safety managed in Erbil he responded that It is up to tourism companies and tour operators to take care of their customers

Table (3) Interview Demographics

<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Educational level</u>
Interviewee 1: 48 years	Male	Advertising- department	<u>Bachelor Sociology</u>
Interviewee 2: 57 years	Male	planning department.	<u>Bachelor Agriculture</u>
Interviewee 3: 45 years	Male	Lecturer	<u>PHD environmental Law</u>
Interviewee 4: 39 years	Male	Lecturer PHD	<u>Geographic Tourism</u>

Lastly, about how carrying capacity is managed in tourism attractions, the participant state that In (2013) a loan has been given for tourism investors to carry out and expand carrying capacity in the region however, the project not been completed because of the economic crisis.

Second Participants:

Referring the state of the socio-culture with Erbil second manager has been interviewed and first question was directed to him about how Kurdish culture is integrated to international culture and if other culture's activity in Erbil have been highlighted to attract more tourists. The manager believed that It is difficult to integrate to other nation's culture as the society is conservative and the western culture do not fit. However, the respondent manager fond the advantage with the integrating to other culture was only is about to get insight from their way of running tourism operations. Even, the interviewed manager believed that the other international culture not been presented to get local people familiar and see differences with cultures.

Referring cooperation on regular basis with other government bodies who work with developing and promote culture inquiries? The interviewee argued that there are cooperation's with the other government bodies but not on regular basis.

When the participant been asked about how tourism commission can contribute to get Hotels and restaurants in Erbil meet the international requirement in term of providing service, cleanliness and staff performance. The manager, underlined that services provided in hotels including cleanliness and staff performance not meet the international standard and that was because of lack in qualified people in running tourism in Erbil, in turn the tourism industry in region rely mostly on forces from outside of the region.

Third Participants:

The third interview was about the state of environment in Erbil. The participant explained the way of getting clean tap water including the way of how to clean sewages and collect litter inside the Erbil city. The interviewee stress that the lack in knowledge on how to get clean water in our taps in Erbil including the way of how to use it efficiently in right way is one issue and lack in knowledge with decision-maker inside government who not able to take right measure are another issue. Therefore, government needs firstly, to dedicate a special budget to do more to get clean water, and secondly, we do need more professional people from overseas to help us get fresh water cleaned in our taps. Also, regarding the measures with cleaning sewages and collecting waste- litter, the participant believed that the methods used for these purposes are not meets the needs of local people and managers in Erbil municipality should do more efforts to get these issues under control. And staff needs more training with better uniforms.

In term of over usage of energy among society, the participants believed differences in deliver services to different class of local people were not been shared equally between local people as the higher classes of society supplied with more energy including the companies to which it has negative impact on local people

Regarding reducing pollution from traffics to get clean air in Erbil and rural areas, the interviewee explained that vehicles and power-generators are two major factor for pollution in Erbil, the academic believed that planning minister and interior minister are responsible

for these mess, many cars have been imported to Erbil and bad condition car needs to be discarded to get clean air in Erbil.

No measures have been taken yet toward these problem, even fuel used in cars in Kurdistan is in a very bad condition and no one do something about it. if we organise all these and rid of old cars maybe we can get better air. Luckily, some money from traffic police according to some source have been promised and dedicated to get clean environment hopefully this generate good fresh air in Erbil. The participant hoped they use this money correctly to clean air.

To get more green area and parks inside and outside Erbil the interviewee explained that many of rural area has been turned to habitat for private land or second house usages and government should from beginning had taken advantages from Erbil master plan to fulfil the green area policy through building a green belt of forest around Erbil to protect the city from dust and pollution. Unfortunately, despite a huge amount of money been injected for this project however, failure has been realised in carry out the masterplan accordingly and lack in knowledge and management were the major reason that the project did not succeeded to meet the objectives.

Also, the participant underlined that corruption was other reason for this failure in fact yet, not even concern been taken to know how much green spatial should be designated therefore, if Erbil compares with other country the green area designed in Erbil is not meet the people's need and the international standard.

Moreover, regarding the random allocation of private land to some people or building second house outside Erbil that has put strains on green area and biodiversity in which affected negatively tourism industry also. The interviewee explained that it is straight forward that biodiversity and wild birds and animal needs quiet area to survive however, building Second house in such random way in rural area has a major impact negatively on wild birds, open areas, green parks and tourism where these and all other biodiversity species are considered important for promoting quality of life in urban environments. Therefore, more green area is needed and better measures should be subject for government concern and protect and preserve biodiversity must be enforced in city planning as we have a good example in Barzan region. For these reason, the interviewee state that fund can be applied through Kurdistan Region Government (KRG) to improve environmental area and expand parks and green area.

Forth participants: Regarding local cultural activities to attract tourism into Erbil the interviewed academics told gave an example about theatre in Iraq in that has been exposed to marginalization and he believed that many cultural academics stresses that they are not supported by Iraqi government to get improve this important activity and theatre is remained undeveloped in Iraq. Similarly, local people here in Erbil believe theatre here in Kurdistan also not supported and it does not represents objectively attract Kurdish audience.

Also, Regarding Kurdish cuisine and Kurdish Music the participant explained that the Kurdish cultural products are well developed and organised but not represented in a way to attract international expectation to create a bigger market in international arena.

4.2. Discussion

The current study has attempted to evaluate the sustainable tourism with Erbil as tourist destination. The research methods have revealed significant findings addressed by the interviewed participants. The findings were strongly relying on how they perceive the sustainable development and needs of local people. The similarity in descriptive of issues and solution were found considerable among the interviewees regarding the city of the Erbil and outside of the city. The sustainable level with tourism in Erbil were measured based on three factors that participants have been asked for. These factors comprised the following: Economic factor of local people, socio-culture and environment,

The main finding indicated that two of the interviewees were government employees from tourism commission and despite they had qualification such as: sociology and Agriculture engineering but they were performing as representative for tourism development and tourism issues. Third and fourth interviewees were independent academics. Moreover, all four participants had one thing in common and that was they did hold government responsible for many issues through lack of long term planning.

In general, the first respondent who represent government within the tourism commission did mention that despite there are plans to develop tourism infrastructure in Erbil however, the current standard does not meet the international needs. Lack of fine dining restaurant and quality accommodation and quality shopping and lack of the tourist information centre are factors that contribute to tourism dissatisfaction. Weaver and Lawton (2010) believe adequate accommodation, including affiliated services are considered as an important element in satisfying tourism needs. Moreover, despite improved road quality and increased car parking among shopping malls with the city of the Erbil and with attractions out Erbil, still work needed to be performed with accessibility within Erbil and outside Erbil. Many of the roads are in a very bad condition, no sufficient sign post and in high season dissatisfaction with carrying capacity in rural area are substantial. Despite the participant' concern regarding safety is put on tourism companies' responsibility however, one can notice that there is huge lack of the safety with the traffic flow and death cases increasingly recorded every year in traffic accidents. likewise, death cases at attractions in Kurdistan and outside Erbil also records almost every day as one can hear from local news that repeatedly there are death cases incidents at Bekhal water fall or at the Dokan lake.

In term of economic leakages, the respondent believes that tourism industry in Erbil directly or indirectly contributed to create work for local people however, he did stress that most of the five star hotels are managed by foreigners. This means that the economic leakages are factum and not much have been done from local authority to reduce this negative impact toward local economy especially the participant mentioned a training centre to prepare local



people to get them to the market. Firstly, that Centre almost is three years has been finished and nothing has been done about it secondly, there are no proper trainer to train local people to meet the international standard. Therefore, as it is the case it will be very difficult to have local people working or managing the five star hotels in Erbil unless they are not trained and upgraded by the actual hotel managements itself.

The second foundation of sustainable tourism is about socio-culture and the second manager who has been interviewed about this part also works as a representative of tourism commission. This participant believes that there are many barriers to integrate Kurdish culture with other culture as the society is conservative and other international culture don't fit however, the second academics had different view and believe that integrating to other culture does open door to population to become acquainted with and acquire many social and cultural customs and traditions at different levels, to which it will generate a change in the social and cultural environment. Likewise, the fourth participant stated that past experiences have shown that the inhabitants of religious cities' view with those who came to visit their holy places has raised positively the cultural level of the population. It has also reflected the tolerant structure of religious cities in such It has also been the basis of many intellectual and political movements, translation and study of languages, cultures and customs.

Also, a question regarding local cultural activities to attract tourism to Erbil the second interviewed academics believed that the theatre in Iraq in general has been exposed to marginalization and many cultural academics stresses that they are not supported by Iraqi government to get improve this important activity and theatre is remained undeveloped in Iraq. Similarly, for Iraq even some local people here in Erbil believe theatre here in Kurdistan or not performs objectives and it is not representing the actual reality to get Kurdish audience satisfied and pay attention. Lack in comedian, family and children theatre is a sign of weakness of this type of activity and lack of the theatre performer in this regard is a clear sign that local government needs to invest more in these people to get more cultural and local products. Moreover, the second manager from tourism commission believe that one of the reason of why the local cultural activities is so weak that there is no international performance here in Erbil to see the differences to enhance and promote the local performance in this respect.

Furthermore, regarding the existing culture activities with other nations living here in Erbil, the second interviewed manager stated that second cultural activities have not been highlighted and not even been given attention as it is needed to create more cultural products in order to increase in local employments. Hinsberg, A et al (2003) from UNICCO stress that Increase in local variation and production of cultural tourism activities that are strongly connected with other branches of economy will increase in employment in the destination and stimulates country economy to which reduce

The third basis of sustainable tourism is about environment where interview took place with an academics who also agreed similarly like other participants and found the region government more responsible to get Erbil more green inside the city and in rural area and have to improve and provide better clean water and clean air. Therefore, the outcome of four interviewees were contained issues that needs urgent solution from governments and local bodies to remove impediments that creates disorder with sustainable development. Factors that disable tourism developments had common ground with four of participants were as the following:

- lack with qualified people who need to develop elements that comprises the concept of sustainable tourism such as economic, socio-culture and environment.
- lack in trained staff and cleanliness of tourism attraction
- lack in knowledge in solving tourism issues
- lack in government long term planning.
- lack in cooperation between public sectors in one hands and with public and private sectors in other hand.
- Lack in professional measures to improve local economy by government
- Lack in International standard

The above factors are crucial for the degree of the tourist satisfaction that accurately have to be evaluated and considered by the tourism board and other government bodies in Erbil to meet the international standard and promote Erbil as tourist destination to provide an exceptional tourism experience.

5. CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Conclusion and recommendation

5.1.1. Introduction

The overall conclusion of this study namely is that Erbil in recent years invested significantly to improve its infrastructure, attractions and environmentally to stimulate the national tourism and meet the international tourist demand. The literature review presented comprehensive theme about the characteristics of the sustainable development. The conceptual model of the sustainable tourism was based on economic, socio-culture and environment has been highlighted involving the benefits of tourism for local people and providing a healthy environment including the factors that enhancing cultural activities that affecting the level of tourism developments.

5.1.2. Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this research revealed that there are lacks with many elements that needs urgent measures to improve the tourism infrastructure including the economic leakages that is broadly affected negatively the national and local economy.

Based on the findings, the recommendation that can be made in this study is that government and tourist board in Erbil in compatible to region's investment in tourism sector must invest

in development of tourist products, quality service, hygiene, tourism safety and a green environment where Erbil can be found healthy with improved images for both local people and tourists.

In order to deliver excellent quality of life, improved local economy and travel enthusiasm with tourism in Erbil, staffs need better tools, more information and better training so that they can understand the tourist needs. Also, more trained local employment should replace the foreigner who increasingly split in many attractions especially five star hotels. For example, Abu Dhabi supporting the delivery of world-class service standards by a human resource of well-trained, committed and dedicated local professionals, ensuring that Abu Dhabi offers a superior visitor experience

Furthermore, it would be of great benefit for Erbil if tourism board had an effective instrument to measure and benchmark the product and service quality which can be developed by obtaining customers' perspective and feedback (Narayan et. al., 2008).

In order to increase the intention to revisit and recommend Erbil as a tourism destination, the implication of this study is that Erbil must show that the beauty of the nature, green rural area, variety of the culture & social products and accessibility have a significant link with the level of the satisfaction of tourists. This result can be valuable factors for tourism board in Erbil to improve and maintain these factors to contribute improving the level of local economy and provide a quality images of the city.

In contrast, lack of green area, socio-cultural products and lack in trained and well performed local people are factor that affect negatively the level of tourism industry and local economy. For the marketer's division in Erbil may need more effort to improving in quality of the tourist leisure & entertainment, the tourism board should improve the professional employees and following service standards among the hotel. Furthermore, in order to increase the tourist satisfaction more cooperation between government bodies are needed including private sector to ensure quality experience with Erbil.

Additionally, the tourism board in Erbil should regularly ask tourists for their enjoyments and experience with the destination and enhance handicraft villages as a cultural product, promote more of music and cultural festivals including use minority cultural heritage and pay more attention to cultural tourism in education and research and lastly, employee more professional people in developing and preserving the green area inside and outside Erbil. Therefore, tourism board in Erbil must be more sustainable in developing the destination and investigate in tourist's perception and measure the degree of their satisfaction to meet their expectation.



5.1.3. Limitations of the research

The purpose of limitations of this study is discussed in order to improve in future research. According to Locke, (2007) many approach of the data collection of the qualitative research take forms at the field, where the behaviour of the interest occurs. The researchers of this paper are lecturers at Lebanese French University therefore, the limits of time were a major reason to collect data from more decision-maker in tourism industry and within local government in Erbil. Furthermore, the sample size comprising of 4 respondents are not statistically representative to the tourism industry or government in Erbil. To overcome these obstacles and in order to interact with a larger tourist managers, the researchers of this study advice to collect data in Erbil to extend the research scope.

Additionally, this research lacked from investigating the image of Erbil to determine measuring the intention of the participants for revisit. Chon (1990) believe that the role of a destination image in tourism has a greater significance in marketing when viewed through the framework of the traveller's buying behaviour.

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Appendix

The interview questions

Cultural Question:

- 1- Do you think the culture of other nationalities in Kurdistan have been highlighted and recognized by tourism industry and other government bodies?
- 2- How do you see the possibilities of the Kurdish culture to integrate with other nations? If yes, what is it's implications?
- 3- Do you have any cooperation on regular basis with other government department who work with tourism like Tourism culture, municipality and Governorates
- 4- Accessibility is recognized as one of the foundation for tourism system, what can you do about it where we see all roads is in very bad condition and sign posts is not meet the standard and needs.
- 5- Many of the restaurants and hotels here in Erbil not meet the international requirement in term of providing service, cleanliness, staff performance. How tourism commission can help these issues to increase tourism satisfaction?
- 6- How are crime, vandalism and theft are managed in tourism attraction and if there are any community complaints about tourism behaviours?
- 7- In Erbil we don't see many green areas for tourism entertainment, sport, relaxation. Do you think government have any plans for that?
- 8- Comparing to other tourism destinations, Erbil has not so many tourism activities such as mountain climbing, tours through cities or rural areas or big events like international festival. Why tourism activities not been improved
- 9- Building Second house in such random way in rural area is also impact negatively on wild birds, open areas, green parks where these and all other biodiversity species are considered important for promoting quality of life in urban environments. How do you think government and other environmental bodies treat this problem?
- 10- Many hotels run by foreign investors and foreign labour, these cause economic leakages, what tourism commission can do about this?
- 11- According to our knowledge, there are not so many qualified people managing tourism industry in Kurdistan also tourism qualifications also lacks among staff too. What tourism commission can do to improve these phenomena

Environmental questions

- 1- what measures have been taken to get Erbil clean regarding the followings:
 - Access to clean water. Tap water

- Cleaning sewages
- Collecting Waste-litter

Be advised, as we monitored in Erbil City, the methods of collecting waste and litter are old fashioned and the staff is not trained at all, also they are not even equipped with proper uniforms.

- 2- Usually, the tourism attractions and shopping areas are supplies and overuses of local energy. According to your knowledge, what measures available in place to reduce the impact of these overuse on local people?
- 3- How are, Pollution from traffics and other sources in general are managed to get clean air in cities and rural areas?
- 4- Are there any plans to make Kurdish cities and rural area more green especially many of rural area has been turned to habitat for private land or second house usages to which it puts strains on natural and tourism activities? How can this kind of habitat expansions can be regulated and organised to not impact on tourism Industry?
- 5- Building Second house in such random way in rural area is also impact negatively on wild birds, open areas, green parks where these and all other biodiversity species are considered important for promoting quality of life in urban environments. How do you think government and other environmental bodies treat this problem?
- 6- Is there any possibility to apply for government fund by other environmental bodies to improve green spaces, quiet streets and recreational for relaxation?

Economic Questions

- 1- What is the market's perception of tourism in Erbil?
- 2- How is tourism development being done and managed in Erbil?
- 3- Is tourism managed to create opportunity for local force to integrate to the market and what is the ratio of the foreign labour working in hospitality and tourism in Erbil?
- 4- Which group are the clear majority visiting Erbil, the international or national tourism including those from Iraq.
- 5- Many hotels run by foreign labours and managers, this cause economic leakages for the Kurdish region. Do you have any concrete plan to stop these leakages?
 - 7- In general, do you think tourism managed to help region government economically with foreign currency?
 - 8- Do you think the tourism infrastructure (ease of transport, road quality) meets the international standard? If not what is government's plan for future?
 - 9 - In rural area how carrying capacity manged. For example, hotel rooms and car parking