

ELECTRONIC TOURISM AND ITS ROLE IN DEVELOPING THE TOURISM SECTOR IN THE HOLY KARBALA

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ABSTRACT

The research problem is represented by finding mechanisms to efficiently apply electronic tourism in the tourism sector in Karbala Governorate instead of the usual means. The research is based on the inductive, descriptive, analytical method, and direct personal interviews. Government interest is not commensurate with the importance and vitality of the tourism sector, as it contributes greatly to revitalizing the economy, as the funds allocated to this sector are not sufficient to put the necessary plans for its development. The lack of communication centers with modern technologies which facilitate the work of the tourism sector in the field of electronic tourism application. Hotels and tourist companies do not apply electronic tourism in their daily procedures. There is low level of staff working in the tourism sector in Karbala Governorate in terms of the inability to use modern technological means in the field of electronic tourism. The low level of infrastructure in Karbala governorate in general, which reflects negatively on the development of tourism in the governorate. We call on the federal and local governments to increase interest and develop the necessary plans to develop the tourism sector and increase the financial allocations that help. It is essential to work to improve the status of the communication and information infrastructure for its direct link in the field of electronic tourism. Also it is a must to provide incentives to the owners of hotels and tourist companies to encourage them to use modern technology in the field of tourism. Working to raise the level of workers in the tourism sector and increase their efficiency through training them to use modern electronic means in the tourism sector. The necessity of setting the necessary plans for the development of the tourism sector, and this includes increasing interest in infrastructure and allocating the necessary funds for its development.

Key wards: *electronic, tourism, Karbala, internet.*

INTRODUCTION

Electronic tourism has become an approach and method that many Arab and international tourism institutions are based on, and it has become the focus of attention of many international organizations with direct contact with the tourism sector. It is essential to study the impact of electronic tourism in the tourism sector which contributes to increasing economic growth and energizing the economic cycle. (Dredge, 2018) It contributes to reducing the tourism services

costs and developing the tourism product, which leads to reducing prices and thus increasing competitiveness in institutions that have a positive impact on the tourism sector and increasing its contribution to developing the economy. (Al-Ansari, 2006)

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research problem is to find mechanisms to efficiently apply electronic tourism in the tourism

sector in Karbala Governorate instead of the usual means.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The research aims to clarify the concept of electronic tourism, its importance and its scope of applications, highlight the tourist reality in Karbala governorate, and to show the means by which E-tourism can be applied in Karbala governorate.

METHODOLOGY

The research is based on the inductive, descriptive, analytical method, and direct personal interviews.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The concept of electronic tourism

The concept of electronic tourism is a modern approach and method in tourism science in general and there are several definitions of the electronic tourism concept, would refers to "using electronic means in the tourism sector field to make tourism services more streamlined and easy", and it is also a path through which the relationship which coordinated among the produce institutions that tourism services and the beneficiaries of them, tourists, through the sustainability of information available through the internet (*Al-Wardani, 2008*). These concepts show the importance of technological progress in the international information network, and its impact on different tourism patterns. This includes all known tourist operations, including tourist program offers, booking and organizing trips through the Internet. (Activities to produce, distribute, market, or deliver goods and services to the buyer through electronic media). (*Al-Alaq, 2005*) Thus, it can be said that electronic tourism means that companies, tourist and hotel establishments, such as hotels, restaurants, and air, sea and land transport companies, offer and market their various tourism services (transportation, accommodation, food and drink) to current and prospective tourists, and using advanced information and communication technology (without intermediaries) And by adopting new distribution

channels, such as the internet, interactive TV, and phone sales centers, instead of the previous mediators (travel agencies, tour operators, tourist offices). (*Benjamin, 2010*)

2. Elements of electronic tourism

- Producers and sellers: they are companies and tourist facilities, who represent the supply side
- Modern tools and means of information and communication technology.
- Tourists and represent the demand side. (*Al-Ruby, 2009*)

3. Pillars of electronic tourism

- Provides a strong technological infrastructure in the field of modern informatics.
- The necessary insurance laws which protect the workers in the tourism field that rely on modern applications. (*Pan, 2015*)
- There are effective electronic payment methods and the availability of electronic banking services to complete these transactions.
- An integrated legislative structure that contributes to organizing and completing electronic transactions in the tourism field
- Having a tight regulatory and institutional framework (*Hind, 2003*).

4. Electronic tourism means

- **Internet:** Reservation Electronic Booking via internet of great importance in the subject of electronic tourism, as it facilitated the communication process between companies and their actual and lurking customers in the market by facilitating and creating new ways of selling and marketing without entering intermediaries (*Al-Tai, 2004*). Its effects reflected on the seller (the supplier) and the buyer (the tourist) are both positive. It includes: reservation and purchase of airline tickets, hotel reservations, reservation and rental of cars, reservation and purchase of tourist trips, places of trains, meals, drinks, and these reservations are characterized by the substitution of the Internet by the global automated reservation systems GDSs to make reservations in the tourism sector, and the rapid spread of this type of reservations at the expense of

known traditional types, and the possibility of reservation and purchase via internet has become very widely available in light of the growing number of Internet users in the world (*Benjamin, 2010*).

Interactive TV: The first appeared of television in 1939 in the United States of America, and this great device contributed greatly to the development of societies in general. This device was used to advertise goods and services in the fifties of the last century, and this device was credible as it transmits the events informed and they transmit the directed image and have great potential to influence viewers (*Alfuzi, 2007*).

- **Self-service kiosks:** The term self-service kiosks refer to those devices that are installed in airports such as ATMs to facilitate travel procedures for the airlines benefit. These are kiosks that have proven its effectiveness and eligibility in completion of such transactions while ensuring a high level of accuracy, (*Jonathan, 2016*) and this is what a recent study conducted by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) on the performance and efficiency of these kiosks which it was found that contribute in reducing the time needed to conduct travel transactions percent 30%. One of the Arab airports (The Royal Air Marco) where provide the Self-Service Kiosks (*Salman, 2009*).

5. Conditions of applying electronic tourism

- **Institutional and organizational framework:** This contributes to achieving cooperation between government institutions and the private sector and clarifies the benefits and importance of implementing electronic tourism systems in the tourism activity field through providing material support to tourist companies and mediators, as well as providing detailed databases about tourism resources and the tourism product. (*Al-Wardani, 2008*)
- **The presence of a legal framework:** the most important legal requirements for the regulation of electronic tourism can be identified in the following: the existence of an integrated legal system for electronic transactions at the international and local levels in harmony with the

efforts of states in providing material and technical requirements of tourism companies, (*Jonathan, 2016*) and the development of legal legislation regulating the work of tourist guides and includes working conditions and technical competence and cognitive requirements that should be available to workers in this profession include their ability to use modern technological means and deal with computers and network as the real tool of electronic tourism, and increase the incentives of tourist investment to encourage national and foreign capital to enter the tourism field and increase for workers in the electronic tourism field. (*Chulwon, 2004*)

- **The availability of a supportive cultural environment:** It is necessary for the application of electronic tourism and related transactions to have a professional cultural environment. Through developing training programs aimed at raising awareness of the knowledge importance about electronic commerce and the linkage of electronic tourism. (*Sion, 2013*)

6. Electronic tourism applications in the hotel sector

Statistics issued by (W.T.O) indicate that (28%) of hotel reservations are made by travel agencies, while in the United States, hotel reservations have reached (80%) and this percentage is done by travel agencies. Some companies have started to implement this system such as (Travel Web) and (Thisco) instead of the classic system (GDS), as well as some hotels have started using the (HDS) system in cooperation with hotels chain hotels (*Al-Taie, 2004*) on the other hand, applications and first uses of tourism are related Electronic in the hotel sector, major hotels, particularly hotel chains (chains hotels) that one organization or one company participates in managing, by adopting Computer Reservation System (CRS) in addition to automated reservation systems (Pegasus) that are associated with first-class hotels, and among the benefits for hotels: (*Chulwon, 2004*) increasing the number of customers they reach the most T and expand S geographical space, raising the capacity of hotels competitiveness through a briefing on the rest of the hotels and modalities prices offering their services, increase the level of sales through the

immediate booking, expand the target market internally and externally, decision support price by the availability of received data and information required, expanding the use of modern technical techniques in the pricing process and improving the hotels' ability to do. (Pan, 2015) Through studies conducted by the website of the Kuwaiti (.dot com) hotel in 2009, which specializes in providing hotel reservation services in the Arabic language around the world, it was found that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia occupies the first place in the Arab world in online hotel reservations via Internet, followed by the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. And (76%) of hotel bookings for Gulf nationals are made online, while the rest of the reservations belonging them are done by traditional known methods. (Benjamin, 2010)

7. Electronic tourism applications in the aviation sector

Air companies witnessed applications of electronic tourism methods before hotels; using the well-known CRS automated reservation system. Each airline had its own automated system, and the command continued on this type until the actual and real use of the network www (in 1992). (Chulwon, 2004) Airlines

entered this network with the aim of reducing costs, increasing sales and improving the level of service that customers received, and from the leading airlines in selling tickets through internet (American Airlines), which succeeded in selling nearly (1.6) million airline tickets in (1995). (Benjamin, 2010)

8. Electronic tourism application in the cars field, food and drink facilities

Cars of all kinds from approved transportation by tourists, and a giant group of specialized rental companies have emerged, for example, Hertz Company owns (500) thousand cars distributed all over the world, and also major companies such as (AVIV), (Enterprise), (National) and (Alamo) All of them are leaders in electronic commerce applications in its field, (Al-Taie, 2004) and it's started using automated reservation systems at the beginning of their work, then transferred to using the WWW network as did in the past hotels and airlines. As for food and drink facilities, it may be linked to hotels, whether they are located inside or outside the hotel. It may be independent operating alone or within the restaurants chain run by a company (Al- Kharbutli, 2002).

RESULTS

1. Analyzing the economic indicators of the tourism reality in Karbala for the period from (2003-2014)

- **Tourist Arrivals** relying on the latest statistics of the Directorate of Hotels Statistics in the Ministry of Planning and at the level of Karbala Governorate, where the number of tourists (1014844 for the year 2003)

Table (1) forecasts of the number of tourists in Karbala for a period of (2004-2014)

Year	Growth rate %	The tourist's number
2004	7	1085883
2006	7	1243226
2008	7	1423368
2010	7	1629613
2012	7	1865742
2014	7	2136087

Source: - Nassar, Muhammad Hassan Ali, , 2005, The Reality and Prospects of Tourism in Karbala Governorate, Unpublished Master Thesis, University of Karbala, College of Administration and Economics.

- **Tourism Receipts:** Through inquiries from hotel owners and the reality of hotel records in Karbala governorate, it became clear that the average nightly wages per night with three meals for the year (2003) is (22.5) dollars, depending on the spending rates prepared by the World Tourism Organization taking into consideration the distribution pattern of tourism spending. The expected tourism expenditures for the period (2004-2013) can be calculated on the assumption of a growth rate (7%) according to what the World Tourism Organization expected.

Table (2) Projected growth of expenditures in Karbala for the period from (2004-2014)

Year	Growth rate %	Annual spending in dollars
2004	7	234550728
2006	7	26837128
2008	7	307448158
2010	7	351997396
2012	7	403001818
2014	7	443396781

We note from the data of the above table that the volume of expected expenditures for tourists will increase by (89%) in (2014) over what is available in (2003).

- **Accommodation Capacity in (2004-2014):** It is expected that future tourism demand in Karbala Governorate will increase for hotels in a proportion commensurate with the numbers of visitors that increase year after year and by taking the growth rate of expected tourism demand of (7%) will be the number of families required expected and commensurate with average for years (2004-2014)

Table (3) Number of required and expected family years (2004-2014)

Year	Growth rate %	Expected numbers of tourists (tourist)	Number of expected beds required (bed)
2004	7	1085883	42500
2006	7	1243226	48658
2008	7	1423368	55708
2010	7	1629613	63779
2012	7	1865742	73020
2014	7	2136087	83600

Source: Muhammad Hassan Nassar, previous source, page. 185.

We note from the table that the increase percentage in the expected number of beds will increase almost about 99% in the year (2014) than the year (2004), and this requires the responsible authorities to provide the necessary opportunities to invest in the hotel sector, especially if we know that the increase in the tourists numbers in the previous table has increased by 110% for the same period, also we notice that these days there is a campaign to expand and develop the area between the two Holy Shrines and its surroundings by the two General Secretariats, the holy shrines of Husayniyya and Abbasiyya and what follow of many hotels to destroyed in these area ,that's will increase the demand for hotels, as we call for hotel , apartments and houses demolitions which used for housing the visitors to coincide with the process of building new hotels and homes to avoid the shortfall in this area. (*Jonathan, 2016*)

- **Employment in the tourism sector:** Working in the tourism sector requires special specifications required this sector nature, such as professionalism and good behavior, with fluent of one or more foreign languages. Also, the tourism industry requires from individual to like the work he performs and is convinced of him and has abundance in public information and culture with self-confidence also should be from the worker In the tourism field, he should be a collaborator working in harmony with his colleagues, as the tourism work is the work of an integrated team and is an essential step in the success of the tourism development plan (*Al-Romani, 2008*).

Table (4) expected numbers of employees to cover the tourist offer until 2013 (worker)

Year	Growth rate %	Permanent workers (52%)	Temporary workers (seasonal workers) (48%)	Total
2005	7	8082	7460	15542
2006	7	8648	7982	16630
2008	7	9900	9139	19040
2010	7	11334	10463	21798
2012	7	12976	11978	24955
2014	7	13884	12816	26701

Source: Muhammad Hassan Nassar, previous source, page 186.

** The schedule was drawn up on the number of beds (24263) in Karbala Governorate, according to a statistic (2004) from the Tourism Authority, with a growth rate of (7%) according to the World Tourism Organization.

2. Analysis of the reality of the electronic tourism application

In our meeting with the Director of the Tourism Authority in Karbala, he stated that the role of the Authority and in light of the available capabilities and its dependence on self-financing, its role is limited and cannot do this large operation alone, it needs the concerted efforts of other parties, but we are generally satisfied with the reality of tourism in the province. The Chairman of the Commission also answered: Not to use electronic tourism or modern means of communication at the present time, but we have asked the hotels owners and tourist companies to prepare special requirements to facilitate the application of electronic tourism in the future, knowing that it is difficult because it needs great material and human capabilities, we note from this the lack of interest in the tourism planning and development process, as tourism planning is a scientific method aimed at achieving the largest possible rate of tourism growth at the lowest possible cost at the earliest time and from here tourism planning is a necessity of tourism development to improve the tourism reality and develop it to keep pace with competition in the international tourist market. (*Al-Saeedi, 2009*) we also note that the responsibility of the private sector represented by the owners of hotels and tourist companies has been applied to the application of electronic tourism while the process of investing in infrastructure and superstructure in this sector is primarily the duty of the state or to allow foreign investments to advance this task. This type of investment has a major impact on the development of the tourism sector, as there are many services related to public infrastructure (such as electricity, water, sanitation, airports, parks, and public parks). As for investment in the superstructure, such as investment in all kinds of hotel establishments and tourist villages, it also needs to large capital that the private sector is unable to provide alone (*Anand, 2013*)

CONCLUSIONS

1- Government interest is not commensurate with the importance and vitality of the tourism sector, as it contributes greatly to revitalizing the economy, as the funds allocated to this sector are not sufficient to put the necessary plans for its development.

2- The absence of an ordinary or developed legislative and legal structure in the field of electronic government.

3- The lack of communication centers with modern technologies which facilitate the work of the tourism sector in the field of electronic tourism application

4- Hotels and tourist companies do not apply electronic tourism in their daily procedures.

5- The low level of staff working in the tourism sector in Karbala Governorate in terms of the inability to use modern technological means in the field of electronic tourism.

6- The low level of infrastructure in Karbala governorate in general, which reflects negatively on the development of tourism in the governorate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1- We call on the federal and local governments to increase interest and develop the necessary plans to develop the tourism sector and increase the financial allocations that help.
- 2- Working to improve the status of the communication and information infrastructure for its direct link in the field of electronic tourism
- 3- Providing incentives to the owners of hotels and tourist companies to encourage them to use modern technology in the field of tourism
- 4- Working to raise the level of workers in the tourism sector and increase their efficiency through training them to use modern electronic means in the tourism sector.
- 5- The necessity of setting the necessary plans for the development of the tourism sector, and this includes increasing interest in infrastructure and allocating the necessary funds for its development.

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