

Requirements for the Development of the Tourism Sector and it's Role of Diversifying Sources of Income in Iraq

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Abstract

Tourism development encourages small and medium sized businesses to get developed which adds to the diversification of income sources. In the study, two main variables have been identified. The independent variable is development and the dependent variable is income sources. In order to further analyze the impacts through regression, five more independent variables have been identified. Hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, cleanliness and infrastructure are great sources of income in tourism sector. To conduct the research, 350 residents from Erbil, Baghdad and Ur have been selected as a sample of the primary research containing 10 questionnaires. The questionnaire have been analyzed in 5-point Likert scale and the results show a positive relationship between development and income sources. Range of data analysis methods have been applied to conduct the research like Regression, correlation, frequency, percentage, mean, mode, median. Finally, some recommendations regarding the development which would enhance the diversity of income sources have been provided.

Keywords: Tourism; Resources of income; Iraqi economy.



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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Research

Travel and tourism is presently one of the rapidly developing industries in the world. Even the tourism industry has a large share in increasing the GDP of the country to a considerable extent. It can be observed that the business of tourism industry sometimes surpasses the retail or automobile industry. This industry has become one of the major players within the global trade market as it contributes to the significant sources of income for several countries, mostly for the developing economies (Sharpley and Telfer, 2014). It can also be said that the modern day tourism industry is correlated with the social and financial development of the country. Putting adequate emphasis on the tourism industry, the countries with rich history, and both natural and cultural attractions can enhance their economic progress. Tourism industry also contributes to the social benefits by generating more earning, employment, foreign investments, job opportunities, enhances export and tax revenues (Alegre and Sard, 2015). Therefore, it can be observed that tourism is one of the most sustainable and feasible source of financial development in many developing countries. Even some of such countries have started contributing to the global trade using tourism as their primary source of income. Iraq has always been considered to have a great potential for utilizing the tourism industry for developing their economy. The capital of Iraq Baghdad is considered as the second largest city in Arab and the country has many Islamic pilgrimage locations. Iraq has high potential to utilise religious tourism and other heritage sites for improving their tourism industry (Bac et al., 2015). Therefore, this essay will discuss the requirements for developing the tourism sector in Iraq and the role of this industry in diversifying the income sources in the country.

1.2. Research Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate the requirements for the development of the tourism sector and its role of diversifying sources of income in Iraq.

1.3. Research Objectives

- To investigate the requirements for the development of the tourism sector in Iraq
- To research income sources associated with in tourism sector in Iraq
- To recommend some ways to develop diversifying income sources in tourism sector in Iraq

1.4. Research Questions

- What are the requirements for the development of the tourism sector in Iraq?
- What are income sources associated with in tourism sector in Iraq?
- What are some ways to develop diversifying income sources in tourism sector in Iraq?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourism Industry in Iraq

It is a well known fact that Iraq is an ancient country where many religious and historical sites are present that possess a vibrant culture along with a variation of natural attractions in the country which makes it highly potent to attract foreign visitors. Not only that but it can also be said that the Political situation of the country makes it highly attractive for visitors (Vellas, 2016). It has been seen that Kurdistan state of Iraq is in the continuous process of developing its tourism industry than any other states of this country and it can also be said that by the way Iraq is progressing in developing its tourism by the year of 2030 Iraq will appear as one of the finest tourism destinations in the world and it may surplus the tourism of Dubai in near future. It is a matter of fact that the Global politics is restraining the tourism of Iraq nowadays what things will definitely change and the present government of Iraq and the UN officials are trying to resolve the issues (Eid, 2015). In this regard it can be said that Iraq is continuously working on developing its tourism sector in order to bring in more revenue from the existing tourist destinations and is Keen to invest a lot in developing mode tourist destination other than only depending on the ancient and historical sites which are already present in the country (Mohammed, 2018). Therefore it can be surely said that Iraq has a huge potential to become one of the major tourist destinations in the world in near future and if the progress of the government remains unadulterated Iraq will soon appear as a powerful country with huge tourist attractions.

It is a well known fact that with the increase in tourism the economy of Iraq will automatically get an enormous boost with the continuous incoming of foreign currency. It has been seen that in the last 15 years with the increase in the tourism of the country the economy of Iraq become better and with the frequent visit from numerous countries of Europe Russia and America 15 years the tourism of Iraq has become a popular face in the world. Iraq is enriched with numerous historical and ancient tourism sites that generate huge revenue for the country that can be utilized for better causes. In this regard it can be said that tourism has a direct relation with the economy of the country and the more the tourism of Iraq will get increased the more free flow of money will be seen in Iraq economy (Muresan *et al.*, 2016). It has been seen that as long as Iraq was dominated by the Marine corps of United States of America the tourism sector of the land was almost demolished and right after the new government took up the rule of the country they invested a lot of time and money in the building and restructuring the tourism of the country which was once famous in the world for the wood sculptures tombs and many ancient historical sites. It can be said that 2017 was one of the strongest years that has been observed by the ministers of Iraq as that particular year has been most fruitful for the economy and as well as per the tourism of the country. In the year of 2017 the GDP growth of Iraq was at its best and it was also seen that the travel and tourism GDP had a magnificent figure of 10.4% which can be considered as pretty good in the recent times (Ahmed, 2015). The direct travel and tourism GDP growth of Iraq was 4.6% in the year of 2017 and it was also seen that by the year of 2017 one out of 10 employees of Iraq was working in tourism sector which is a very good figure in terms of the recent trends and the recent political stability of the country. As it can be said that one fifth of the total Global net jobs created in the last decade was within the domain of travel and tourism Iraq should invest a lot of time and money to restructure its tourism in order to make the most out of it in the present situation (Eid, 2015). It can be said that over the longer period of time the growth of travel and tourism sector will significantly robust as Millions of people are interested to see the wonders of the world and the strong growth of this sector requires stronger management which will co-ordinate the things in a much better and efficient way. It can also be said that the present government of Iraq is trying hard to re-establish the past grandeur of the tourism sector of the country and hopefully they will be successful in their venture within a time span of 10 years (Alegre and Sard, 2015). Therefore it can be said that the travel and tourism sector of Iraq is directly in relation with the economy of the country and a steady increasing the tourism sector will surely give a major boost to the economy of the country in no time.

Furthermore the national government requires to develop Iraq as a well-known and safe tourist destination, therefore some of the necessary means have to be taken. The country needs to put emphasis on developing the destinations for attracting more tourists. In order to be successful, the attractive features of the destinations should be a little diverse from the other competitors. By focusing on the unique and identical factors of the tourist destinations, the country can develop the tourism sector. The region has several natural resources, therefore their economic growth will be affected eventually by also leaving a positive impact on the travel and tourism industry. In this case the support from local authorities and governments is highly required. For developing the infrastructures, certain amount of budget is required along with marketing the destination by creating its brand name. The region is also likely to attract several international tourists; therefore the airport has a major role to play for increasing the numbers of international visitors as that is the first impression they will get of the country. Therefore the government has to improve the airport system to fulfil the requirements of visitors. It is not expected that the international visitors will know the local language; therefore there should be government officials present in the airport for proper communication with the tourists. It can also be said that the government should improve the transportation system which will make the country much easy accessible for the visitors. The support is also required from the local community as they need to understand that they would also be benefitted from the industry. Another major improvement that is required in Iraq tourism industry is the expertise of the employees in this sector. The employees are not skilled which make it quite difficult for both the global and domestic visitors. The government should also pay more attention on improving the infrastructure in the country, especially the roads and highways.

2.2. Requirements for the Development of the Tourism Sector and Sources of Income

As infrastructure development ensure employment and the emergence of different types of businesses, it is a big income source for the tourism sector. As infrastructure from both physical and IT perspective flourishes so does the development of the country increases in case of tourism. The physical development ensures that tourists are easily traveling from one place to another and the IT development ensures that they are paying the bills and communicating with ease.

The main task of the travel agencies is to promote the tourist attractions of a country by providing different packages, tour offers, tour planning etc. Travel agencies are a good source of tourism income which enhances the development. As travel agencies develop, they start promoting a healthy competition for more market share and more market share brings more tourists which enhances development and income (Mowforth and Munt, 2015).

Tourist all over the globe likes a place that is neat and clean when they visit the place. Developments and improvements in cleanliness ensure more tourist gathering, more tourist gathering ensures more businesses around the area, more businesses ensure diversity of businesses and income. Cleanliness also makes it easier to visualize the beauty to other people so they are attracted to the place as well (Mohsin and Zhang, 2015).

Tourists usually stay in the hotels when they travel and a lot of hotels get built around the attractive travel area to keep the tourists at ease while they are travelling. Various small and medium sized hotels ensure that the economy is developing. More businesses ensure a diverse range of services and incomes that are generated from the hotels in the sector (Ahmed, 2015).

Tourism sector should emphasize the restaurants so that the tourists can enjoy the local cuisine along with different types of delicacies. Different types of family owned businesses can start around the tourist spots to encourage the tourists to visit the area and try the local food. This way, not only the local delicacies are promoted to the tourists but it becomes a great source of tourism income as tourists usually do not prepare food by themselves while they are travelling (Vellas, 2016).

2.3. Conceptual framework

According to the topic of the research, the independent variable that has been identified is income while the dependent variable is development. There are various means of development like infrastructure, travel agency, cleanliness, hotels, and restaurants that are considered to be the independent variable. The impact of independent variables on dependent variables is measured for understanding if an actual relationship is existent between the two which would increase the validity of the study.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Method

In this research, quantitative research method has been used. Quantitative research allows the researcher to include the numbers which are easily understood and aids graphical presentation. Moreover, the sample size is big here with 350 respondents, so, quantitative research is required in order to validate the data gathered and ensure consistency throughout the research. Quantitative research also provides a structure for the research that boosts the conduction of research as data generation becomes fast and analysis is done through the predetermined criteria (Kothari, 2014). As the research is focused towards tourism, development and income sources resulted from tourism, the scope is huge which requires a proper comparison. Quantitative data makes room for the comparison because it is hard to compare facts while numbers are easily compared. This will not only show the areas where the tourism sector in Iraq is lacking but also give a hint of the areas where development is most required. Moreover, the research problem is well specified, so conducting a quantitative research is more viable because qualitative research has its focus on finding the problem (Newman and Benz, 2016).

3.2. Data collection method

Only primary data has been gathered for the research to enhance the validity. The data regarding requirements for development and income sources in tourism sector of Iraq has been gathered through survey. Survey is a great tool for primary research which has been applied here. As primary data is gathered for the specific research topic, the redundant data has been ignored which would have decreased the accuracy and validity of the research if proper usage of secondary data was not considered (Driscoll, 2011).

Through survey method, a questionnaire containing 10 close-ended questions was developed. The responses were recorded in 5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This method is well implemented in quantitative research because of the simplicity of the questions, ease of implementation and analysis of data. Moreover, for a research having a sample size of 350 respondents, questionnaire technique is the most suitable data generation tool.

3.3. Sampling Techniques

The research implies the simple random sampling technique method from probability sampling. This is one of the widely used method in probability sampling which is easy to implement, cost efficient and biasness free technique because all the units in the population are provided with equal chance to be included in the sample (Cavana et al., 2011).

350 respondents have been selected from Erbil, Ur, Baghdad and Basra because most of the tourist's attractions are concentrated in these places. Out of the respondents, 175 are female and 175 are male in order to get a 1:1 ratio.

This enhances the validity of the research as both the genders are included in the similar ratio. The respondents were all 18 or more of age which ensures that the respondents are considered to be of legal age and conscious enough to understand the tourism conditions of the area. The respondents selected are the residents of the adjacent area who have better understanding of the economic conditions and tourist spots of the area.

3.4. Data analysis Method

In this research, 7 methods have been used to analyze the data gathered. correlation, frequency, percentage, mean, mode, median. Correlation will be analyzed to analyze the strength of association between one dependent variable and one independent variable identified in the research like attractiveness of hotel as an income source (Kumar and Phrommathed, 2015). Frequency will be used to determine how much the respondents agreed to an attribute. Percentage will be found out to identify the percentage of respondents selecting each of the responses in the questionnaire. Finally, the mean, median and mode will be used to analyze the central tendency or average of the data gathered.

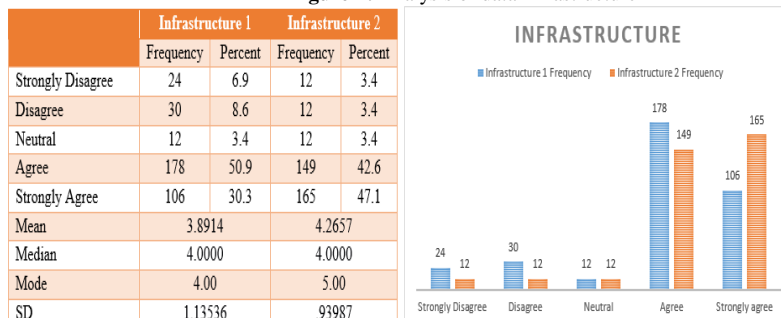
3.5. Ethical Issues

The research has been conducted by maintaining the ethical boundary and ensuring no ethical breach is happening. The respondents were more than 18 of age and were able to consciously and voluntarily included in the research. The respondents were provided with enough information they required to fill up the questionnaire. The respondents were selected in simple random sampling method which has the least biasness associated with it because the respondents get sampled independent of any circumstances. Before conducting the survey the respondents were asked for permission so that they could voluntarily be added to the research. No coercion or bribes were involved in this research to ensure authenticity of data. To keep the data intact, no false information, manipulated information or misleading information has been added. So the results gained from the research will be a perfect representation of the responses of the respondents. The identity of the respondents have been kept confidential so that they could easily provide their preferred responses. The information gathered is purely for educational purposes, so distribution of data to any third party has been restricted.

4. Data analysis and Discussion

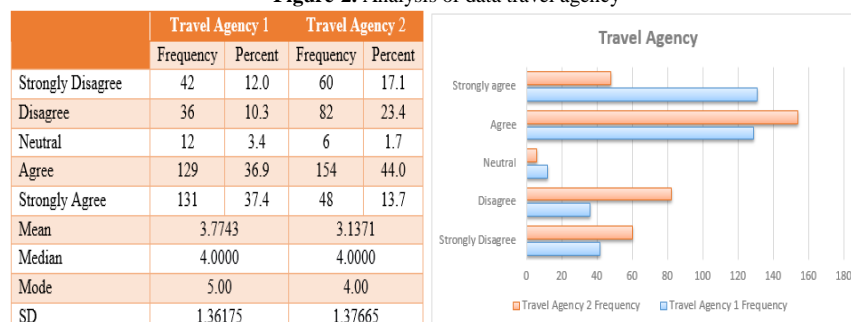
4.1. Analysis of questionnaires

Figure-1. Analysis of data infrastructure

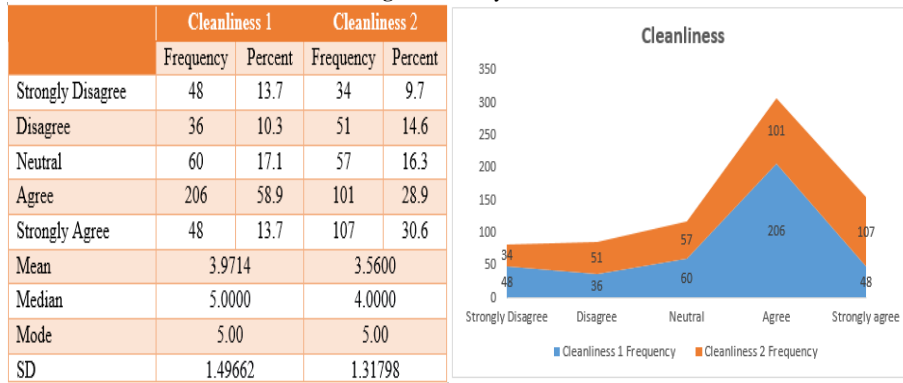


In the question of infrastructure-1, 6.9% strongly disagreed, 8.6% disagreed, 3.4% remained neutral, 50.9% agreed, 30.3% strongly agreed. On the other hand, In the question of infrastructure-2, 3.4% strongly disagreed, 3.4% disagreed, 3.4% remained neutral, 42.6% agreed, 47.1% strongly agreed.

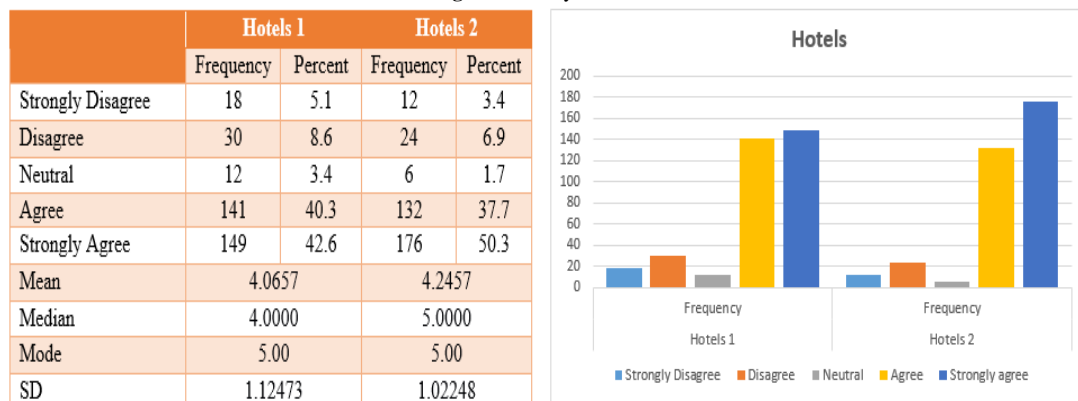
Figure-2. Analysis of data travel agency



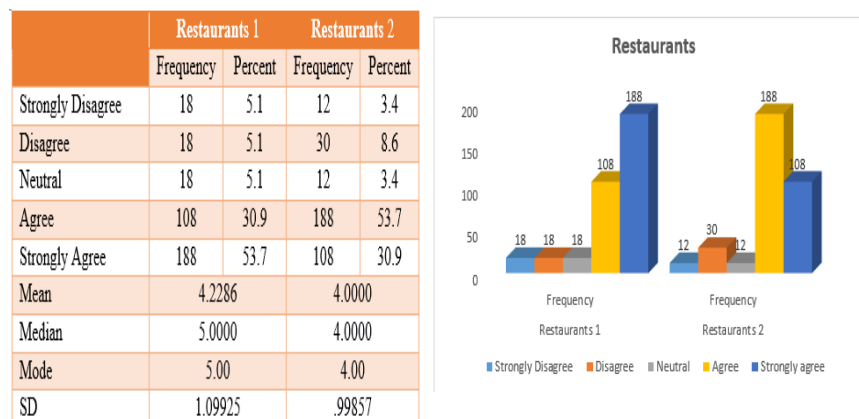
In the question of travel agency-1, 12% strongly disagreed, 10.3% disagreed, 3.4% remained neutral, 36.9% agreed, 37.4% strongly agreed. On the other hand, In the question of travel agency-2, 17.1% strongly disagreed, 23.4% disagreed, 1.7% remained neutral, 44% agreed, 13.7% strongly agreed.

Figure-3. Analysis of data cleanliness


In the question of cleanliness-1, 13.7% strongly disagreed, 10.3% disagreed, 17.1% remained neutral, 58.9% agreed, 13.7% strongly agreed. On the other hand, In the question of cleanliness-2, 9.7% strongly disagreed, 14.6% disagreed, 16.3% remained neutral, 28.9% agreed, 30.6% strongly agreed.

Figure-4. Analysis of data hotels


In the question of hotels-1, 5.1% strongly disagreed, 8.6% disagreed, 3.4% remained neutral, 40.3% agreed, 42.6% strongly agreed. On the other hand, In the question of hotels-2, 3.4% strongly disagreed, 6.9% disagreed, 1.7% remained neutral, 37.7% agreed, 50.3% strongly agreed.

Figure-5. Analysis of data restaurants


In the question of restaurants-1, 5.1% strongly disagreed, 5.1% disagreed, 5.1% remained neutral, 30.9% agreed, 53.7% strongly agreed. On the other hand, In the question of travel agency-2, 3.4% strongly disagreed, 8.6% disagreed, 3.4% remained neutral, 53.7% agreed, 30.9% strongly agreed.

4.2. Correlation Analysis

In this section the researcher will discuss the correlation analysis to find out and measure strength and direction of linear relationships among the variables. According to the correlation matrix table given below here it is clear that the variables are highly correlated and most of the variables are correlated approximately to value .60 that indicates strong relationship the variables. It shows that infrastructure is highly correlated with restaurants with a correlation value of .713 and travel agency is negatively correlated with cleanliness with value of -.135.

		Correlations Matrix				
		Infrastr ucture	Travel Agency	Cleanliness	Hotels	Restaurants
Infrastructure	Pearson Correlation	1	.616**	-.588**	.636**	.713**
Travel Agency	Pearson Correlation	.616**	1	-.135*	.728**	.303**
Cleanliness	Pearson Correlation	-.588**	-.135*	1	-.322**	-.650**
Hotels	Pearson Correlation	.636**	.728**	-.322**	1	.658**
Restaurants	Pearson Correlation	.713**	.303**	-.650**	.658**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

5. Results

The researcher found that physical and IT infrastructure are two of the most important things to consider in tourism sector so that tourists can move easily to the spot of attraction and physical and IT infrastructure development could be a great source of income for the unemployed workers, seasonal workers and foreign constructors in Iraq.

The researcher found that that travel agencies in a country have to promote more offers, packages and provide better services to attract the tourists to enhance the growth and development of tourism sector and travel agencies can be a great source of income and employment in tourism sector from different areas like airlines, restaurants, hotels etc. which boosts the overall economy.

The researcher found that cleanliness of a tourist spot is important to attract the tourists more to not only enhance the beauty of that spot but to increase tourist gathering in that area and cleanliness of an attraction would increase tourists attention to that place and small businesses like grocery shops would open in the area to boost the economy and add to income source.

The researcher found that hotels in a tourist area indicates development as more hotels are developed if more tourists come to visit the area and small and medium hotels are most preferable by tourists than five star hotels because of low cost compared to the high cost in the five star.

The researcher found that hotels should be available more in the tourist spots to promote local delicacy and ensure overall tourism development through the development of local economy and hotels can differentiate themselves in the tourist attraction spots by offering different cuisine to enhance the local economy as a diversified income source.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that, being a country with such rich heritage, religious pilgrimages and natural landscape, Iraq has high potential in enhancing the travel and tourism sectors. There are some of the obstacles in this area including the continuous violence in the region. However the government has put much emphasis on the development of the tourism industry as it has always boosted the economic development of the country to a great extent. Considering the high amount of revenues earned from this industry, it can also be said that the industry also develops the socio-economic structure of the nation. This region has major potential to develop as important global tourist destinations; therefore substantial amount of emphasis should be put for further development.

6.2. Recommendation

After conducting the research, it has been apparent that the main areas where developments are required are infrastructure, hotels, travel agency, restaurants and ensuring cleanliness. So the recommendations regarding these areas are:

- More government resources should be spent on IT infrastructure as well as physical infrastructure so that the tourists can pay their bills online and get to the tourist attractions quickly and easily. This might increase the employment in the area while adding value for the tourists.
- More small and medium hotels have to be developed because most of the tourists use the hotels only for the stay at night. During the daytime they just visit the attractive places. As a result, to provide the value they require, it is suggested to invest on small and medium sized hotels with enough services.
- Even though there are dedicated cleaners in every area, as people gather the areas become somewhat dirty. In order to ensure that the area remains clean, proper number of buckets should be kept at minimal distances of the tourist attractions and cleaners should be appointed to ensure that the places are cleaned properly.
- Even though there is ample number of local food stalls and restaurants, tourists like to get the taste of local cuisine which can be provided by specialized restaurants. Different restaurants can be created in the adjacent area of the tourist spots so that the small and medium businesses gets a boost and newer income

sources emerge. This will also ensure development as more tourist can gather in the area if good foods are served within reach.

- Even though there are plenty of travel agencies working in Iraq, they can differentiate themselves by offering bundles, giving discounts and promoting the local tourist attractions. This would enhance the development if the country's true beauty is communicated properly.

6.3. Scope of Further Research

The research only focuses on the development requirements and various income sources in case of tourism. So further research can be conducted on developments needed in specific industries in tourism like airlines, restaurant, hotels etc. The research can be further conducted regarding the key area which has to be developed further in order to attract the tourists. Moreover, research can be conducted on the satisfaction level of the tourists from the current activities so that the areas where developments can be done is pointed out. Research can be extended to other tourist spots like Karbala, Hatra, Dur-Kurigalzu etc. to check if data varies.

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Appendix Questionnaires

Infrastructure 1: Do you agree that physical and IT infrastructure are two of the most important things to consider in tourism sector so that tourists can move easily to the spot of attraction?

- 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Infrastructure 2: Do you agree that physical and IT infrastructure development could be a great source of income for the unemployed workers, freelance workers, seasonal workers and foreign constructors in Iraq?

- 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Travel Agency 1: Do you agree that travel agencies in a country have to promote more offers, packages and provide better services to attract the tourists to enhance the growth and development of tourism sector?

- 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Travel Agency 2: Do you agree that travel agencies can be a great source of income and employment in tourism sector from different areas like airlines, restaurants, hotels etc. which boosts the overall economy?

- 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Cleanliness 1: Do you agree that cleanliness of a tourist spot is important to attract the tourists more to not only enhance the beauty of that spot but to increase tourist gathering in that area?

- 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Cleanliness 2: Do you agree that cleanliness of an attraction would increase tourists attention to that place and small businesses like grocery shops would open in the area to boost the economy and add to income source?

- 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Hotels 1: Do you agree that hotels in a tourist area indicates development as more hotels are developed if more tourists come to visit the area?

1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Hotels 2: Do you agree that small and medium hotels are most preferable by tourists than five star hotels because of low cost compared to the high cost in the five star hotels?

1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Restaurants 1; Do you agree hotels should be available more in the tourist spots to promote local delicacy and ensure overall tourism development through the development of local economy?

1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Restaurants 2: Do you agree that hotels can differentiate themselves in the tourist attraction spots by offering different cuisine to enhance the local economy as a diversified income source?

1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree