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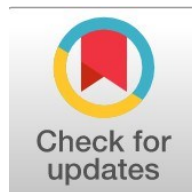
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Digital Marketing Practices and Sustainable Tourism Development Relationship Findings

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Abstract

General Background: Sustainable tourism has become a strategic priority for the hotel industry amid the global shift toward environmentally responsible practices. Specific Background: Digital transformation has strengthened the role of e-marketing as a key driver of tourism promotion, yet empirical evidence on its direct contribution to sustainable tourism development remains limited in developing contexts. Knowledge Gap: Few studies have analysed how e-marketing practices influence sustainability-oriented outcomes within hotel operations, particularly in Iraq. Aims: This study examines the relationship and effect of e-marketing on sustainable tourism development in the Baron Hotel, Karbala. Results: Using data from 20 respondents and SPSS-based analyses, the study found a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.530$) between e-marketing and sustainable tourism development, and a statistically significant effect ($p < 0.05$), confirming both hypotheses. Novelty: The research offers one of the earliest empirical assessments linking e-marketing characteristics—such as digital communication, online promotion, and service personalization—to sustainability dimensions in the Iraqi hotel sector. Implications: Findings underscore the need for hotels to strengthen digital marketing strategies to enhance environmental awareness, improve visitor engagement, and support long-term sustainable tourism goals through efficient and targeted digital communication.

Highlight :

- Highlights the linkage between e-marketing and the strengthening of sustainable tourism practices.
- Emphasizes the role of digital tools in enhancing tourist engagement and awareness.
- Underscores the contribution of e-marketing to efficient promotion and the achievement of sustainability goals.

Keywords : E-marketing, Sustainable Tourism Development, Baron Hotel, Digital Promotion, Customer Awareness

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Introduction

The hotel sector is undergoing a radical transformation in light of global trends toward sustainable tourism development. At the same time, e-marketing has emerged as an effective tool for communicating with customers and promoting hotel services. Therefore, it has become imperative to study the role of e-marketing in promoting sustainable tourism, especially in hotel establishments, which are a fundamental pillar of the tourism sector. E-marketing processes, which utilize marketing experience, historical data, and crisis data to analyse the market situation, aim to identify effective methods to be used at the present time and express them in a marketing plan to achieve the hotel establishment's objectives [1]. Furthermore, the results generated through marketing operations are stored in a database as a first step, while in the second stage, marketing methods are selected based on data determined by age group, educational level, and household income. This is the method used in E-marketing, which hotels deliberately practice to reduce advertising costs and clarify desired marketing objectives, thus enhancing the advantages of hotel establishments in marketing their services with the best possible quality [2]. Market response and consumer behaviour are then measured as a result of the use of E-marketing mechanisms.

E-marketing also includes the application of digital technologies, such as websites, email, wireless databases, and digital screens, to support marketing. It aims to achieve significant customer acquisition and retention across multiple channels and the customer lifecycle, creating free publicity and encouraging others to choose sustainable tourism [3]. Hotel establishments can launch digital campaigns to support local initiatives such as tree planting, clean energy support, and cleanliness campaigns. E-marketing is not just a tool for attracting tourists; it has become a strategic tool that supports sustainable tourism development goals [4].

Research Problem:

Despite the growing global interest in sustainable tourism, many hotels in developing countries still focus on traditional marketing methods, limiting their ability to attract environmentally conscious tourists [5]. Therefore, the research problem is defined as follows: What is the role of e-marketing in promoting sustainable tourism development in hotels?

Significance of the research:

The research contributes to enriching the scientific literature by linking the variable of e-marketing to sustainable tourism development and helping hotel managers design more effective e-marketing strategies to attract new segments of tourists [6]. It also contributes to supporting sustainable tourism development goals by promoting positive environmental practices and supporting clean energy in the hotel sector.

Research objectives:

The research aims to explain the concept of e-marketing and its impact on the hotel sector. It also aims to analyse the relationship between e-marketing and sustainable tourism development trends by highlighting the best digital practices that enhance hotels' image as environmentally friendly destinations, thereby enhancing the attraction of sustainability-minded tourists. It also aims to provide proposals for hotel establishments to develop digital marketing strategies that support sustainable tourism development [7], [8].

E-Marketing

A. The concept of electronic marketing

According to Kotler and Armstrong, e-marketing is a form of direct marketing that connects consumers with sellers electronically using interactive technologies such as email, websites, online forums, newsgroups, interactive television, cellular communications, etc.

It is a tool for managing the interaction between the organization and the consumer in the virtual environment space in order to achieve mutual benefits. The virtual environment for e-marketing relies primarily on information technology, as the e-marketing process is not limited only to the process of selling products and services to the consumer, but also focuses on managing the relationships between the organization on one hand and the customer and the elements of the internal and external environment on the other hand [9], [10]. The function of e-marketing works to achieve coordination and integration with the rest of the various departments of the organization.

B. Characteristics of electronic marketing

2.1. Extensive service through dealing with marketing sites at any time:

E-marketing offers a wide range of services (mass and diversity) for customers and users of the marketing site to interact with at any time, without the company owning the site knowing who has read its email until the customer contacts it. Furthermore, the company cannot monitor its website visitors.

2.2. Global e-marketing:

The methods used in e-marketing know no geographical boundaries, as customers shop wherever they are, through their personal account on the company's website. However, there are caveats regarding the lack of crystallization of laws regulating e-marketing, particularly matters related to the security of commercial transactions [11].

2.3. The speed of changing concepts for individuals and societies:

Using the element of attraction and user attention in emails, as in TV ads, is due to the multiplicity of companies that distribute their emails.

2.4. Bridging the gap between companies:

Digital marketing helps bridge the gap between large and small companies in terms of production, distribution, and human resources. It enables small businesses to access the global online market without the infrastructure of large multinational corporations, enabling them to compete with these companies [12].

2.5. Accept online promotions:

Given the international nature of e-marketing, cultural differences and sensitivities play a significant role, particularly in the methods used for

promotion. Some organizations accept and adapt to their cultural mentality, while others reject it and adopt a hostile stance toward it.

Sustainable tourism development

A. The concept of sustainable tourism development

Sustainable tourism development is defined as the programs and strategies developed by tourism decision-makers to advance the tourism sector at various cultural, economic, social, and environmental levels, with the aim of preserving the rights of future generations to environmental and natural resources [13], [14].

The World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism development as tourism that takes into account current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts while meeting the needs of visitors, industrial and environmental stakeholders, and host communities. It seeks to protect natural and cultural resources, enhance local community participation, and achieve social justice, ensuring long-term sustainability of benefits.

Tourism also plays an important role in sustainable development. For this reason, most governments, particularly those in emerging countries, have focused significant attention on tourism, demonstrating their support for the growth of their national economies [15].

Society's shift toward sustainable development and a knowledge-based economy is increasing demand for a systematic approach to environmental issues. Environmental care, along with planned and targeted protection, has been a key component of many strategies, including e-marketing strategies. It has also been a prerequisite for developing a sustainable tourism economy. Within the context of sustainable development strategies, the protection of the environment, individual ecosystems, and biodiversity has been among the priorities and key objectives of national strategic documents.

B. Dimensions of sustainable tourism development

3.1. Economic dimension

Sustainable tourism development targets wealthy countries, first and foremost, by continuously reducing their consumption of energy and natural resources and changing their economic policies by radically transforming prevailing lifestyles. These countries bear a special responsibility for development, given their significant role in pollution and resource consumption. Rich or industrialized countries bear a significant responsibility for leading sustainable development. The economic dimension, in general, is a state of balance, aiming to increase society's income and reduce and eliminate poverty by creating a sustainable economic system capable of producing goods and services.

3.2. Social dimension

The concept of sustainable development is based on freedom, equality, and justice among all segments of society, both now and in the future. The social dimension is considered one of the fundamental pillars for achieving a balance between economic growth, preserving cultural identity, and the social well-being of local communities. This concept extends to include the human and social aspects of societies. Therefore, sustainable development is development with a human dimension, and its primary goal is to preserve human dignity and status, provide basic necessities for life, achieve effective and fair participation among members of society, and reduce economic and social gaps.

3.3. Environmental dimension

The environmental dimension is of great importance in achieving sustainable tourism development, as it highlights the most important strategies that can be followed in manufacturing processes, with the aim of optimally and most efficiently utilizing the natural resources that enter this or that tourism industry, instead of depleting and wasting them in irrational ways that do not take into account the future. This dimension works to control access to cleaner, more environmentally friendly industries that support green oases and renewable energy.

The relationship between e-marketing and sustainable tourism development

The expected relationship between e-marketing and sustainable tourism development is a complementary one, as e-marketing can contribute to strengthening and developing the tourism sector in line with the principles and goals of sustainable tourism development by:

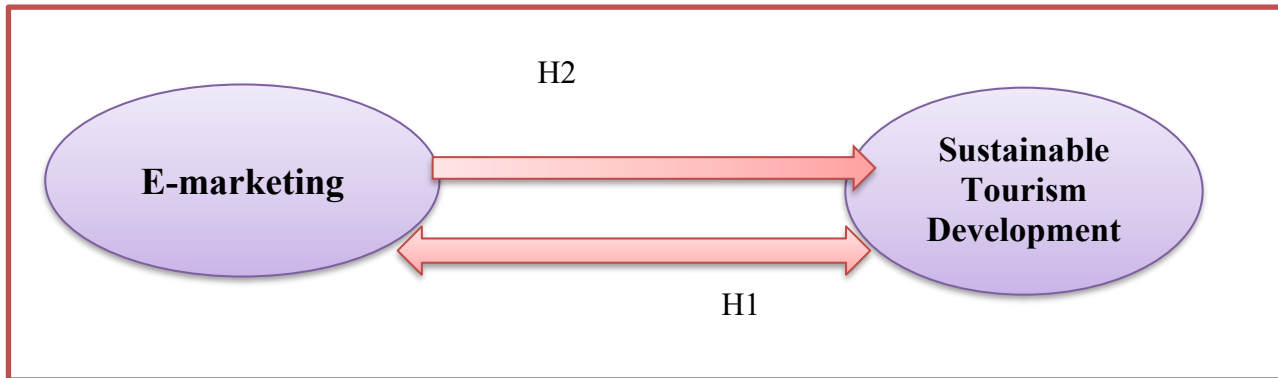
1. Increase tourist awareness of destinations and tourism services that meet the diverse needs and expectations of tourists and respect the environment, culture, and community.
2. Increase tourism and environmental engagement with selected tourism destinations and services that provide an enjoyable and quality tourism experience, achieve customer satisfaction, and exceed customer expectations.
3. Increasing the tourism impact on destinations and tourism services that contribute to achieving the economic and environmental goals of the tourism sector within a competitive environment that supports sustainable tourism development.

Methods

A. Hypothesis Diagram of the Research

Figure (1) Hypothesis Diagram of the Research Which explains the relationship and influence between the research variables (e-marketing and sustainable tourism development).

Figure (1) Hypothesis Diagram of the Research



A. Research sample

The research targeted a sample of (20) people from the clients of the Baron Hotel in the city of Karbala. The questionnaire tool was distributed to the sample members with the aim of knowing the level of their expectations and ideas about the independent and dependent research variables, and then collecting the answers and analysing them statistically through the statistical analysis program SPSS.V26.

B. Survey instrument reliability

The research tool includes (40 paragraphs) based on two axes: the first: electronic marketing, which includes five characteristics, namely (broad service through dealing with marketing sites at any time, the universality of electronic marketing, the speed of changing concepts for individuals and societies, narrowing the gap between companies and accepting promotional methods via the network), and the second axis: sustainable tourism development, which includes three dimensions, namely (the social dimension, the economic dimension and the environmental dimension).

C. Research instrument reliability scale (Cronbach's alpha)

The researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient to verify the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire items, as the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire reached ($\alpha \geq 0.70$), which is considered appropriate in administrative sciences.

Table (1) Cronbach's alpha scale

Variables	Cronbach's alpha
E-marketing	0.896
Sustainable Tourism Development	0.902

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS (SPSS.v.26)

Table (1) shows that the Cronbach's alpha values for the research variables are higher than (0.70), which is higher than the permissible limit according to. This indicates that the research tool has a high reliability coefficient.

D. Hypothesis testing

H1- There is a significant correlation at (α) level (0.05) between e-marketing and sustainable tourism development.

Table (2) corellation between E-marketing & Sustainable Tourism Development

		E-marketing	Sustainable Tourism Development
E-marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	0.527*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.018
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	5.128	2.125
	Covariance	0.272	0.115
	N	20	20
Sustainable Tourism Development	Pearson Correlation	0.529*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.019	

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	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	2.133	3.163
	Covariance	0.115	0.167
	N	20	20
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS (SPSS.v.26)

The results of Table (1) show that there is a positive correlation with statistical significance between e-marketing and sustainable tourism development, which is an indication of the acceptance of the first hypothesis (**H1**).

H2- There is a statistically significant effect at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) of e-marketing on sustainable tourism development.

Table (3) ANOVA Test

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	0.877	1	0.877	6.70	0.019
	Residual	2.280	17	0.124		
	Total	3.157	18			

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS (SPSS.v.26)

Results of Table (3) There is a statistically significant impact of e-marketing on sustainable tourism development, as the value reached (0.019) sig, which is less than the significance level (0.05), and this indicates the acceptance of the second hypothesis (H2).

Table (4) Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.530	.280	.239	.35523	.279	6.969	1	18	.017

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS (SPSS.v.26)

The results shown in Table (4) indicate the overall correlation value of the model, considering that e-marketing as an independent variable has a correlation with the dependent variable of sustainable tourism development, as the correlation value reached (0.530) and at a statistical significance level of (0.019) which is less than (0.05), which supports the correlation between the independent and dependent variables. In addition, the value of R-square indicates the amount of variation that occurs in the value of the independent variable, which will affect the interpretation of the variation in the dependent variable with a value of (0.280).

Discussion

The outputs of the statistical analysis program (SPSS) indicate the acceptance of the hypotheses of correlation and influence between the research variables. This indicates the existence of a statistically significant relationship between e-marketing and sustainable tourism development. The Marketing and Sales Department at Baron Hotel must focus on developing e-marketing applications represented by social networking sites and e-mail, and training employees on them to achieve the highest level of sales, attract customers, and increase tourist awareness of tourist destinations and services that meet the needs and expectations of different tourists and respect the environment, culture, and society in a way that supports sustainable tourism development.

Conclusions

1. There is an acceptable positive correlation between the independent variable, e-marketing, and the dependent variable, sustainable tourism development, with a value of (0.530).
2. Digital marketing contributes to raising hotel customers' awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism development through the use of green spaces and clean energy.
3. E-marketing provides a beneficial experience for tourists by providing accurate and up-to-date information about tourist destinations and hotels, helping them plan their travel itinerary in advance.
4. Digital marketing helps hotels display sustainability certifications, guest reviews, and environmental impact reports transparently, enhancing customer confidence and encouraging them to choose quality hotel destinations.
5. Digital marketing for hotels provides a cost-effective way to reach potential tourists, allowing resources to be directed towards

sustainable improvement of hotel services.

Suggestions & recommendations

1. The researcher recommends enhancing the use of e-marketing tools such as social media as an effective means of communicating with current and potential customers at the hotel by disseminating meaningful and useful content about tourist destinations, available services, and their quality.
2. The researcher suggests that hotel management should highlight the importance of preserving the environment, supporting the local economy, and reducing the carbon footprint as factors that attract tourists interested in sustainable tourism development.
3. Adopting clear business performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of e-marketing campaigns in supporting the hotel's sustainable tourism development goals.
4. The hotel must invest in modern technologies, such as augmented reality and artificial intelligence applications, to improve the quality and diversify hotel services provided and promote sustainability and social responsibility in the hotel and tourism sector.
5. The researcher proposes conducting comparative studies with Arab and foreign countries that have successful experiences in enhancing the role of e-marketing in supporting sustainable tourism development in the tourism sector and other sectors.
6. Attracting and allocating the largest possible number of qualified employees capable of communicating with the company's clients through its website efficiently and effectively.
7. Publish more specialized pages on the internet and social media to inform customers of the hotel's new services and offers, as well as its program for creating a green environment that supports sustainable tourism development, and answer their questions and inquiries about this, beyond just emails via mobile phones.
8. The necessity of involving the human resources working in the hotel in training courses to increase the effectiveness of their use of the Internet and digital channels (social media, email, mobile, search engine optimization, and websites) and using them to communicate with customers and learn about their preferences regarding hotel services and tourism programs directly.

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