

## The modern dimension of tourism management and its role in Economic progress in Kurdistan Region

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### Abstract:

Tourism management has become one of the most important contributors to economic development in many regions around the world. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, tourism has experienced significant growth due to the region's natural landscapes, historical attractions, cultural diversity, and increasing investment in tourism infrastructure. The purpose of this quantitative research study is to examine the modern dimensions of tourism management and their role in promoting economic progress in the Kurdistan Region. The study investigates how strategic tourism planning, digital tourism marketing, tourism infrastructure, service quality, and government support influence economic development indicators such as employment generation, investment growth, business expansion, and regional income improvement. A quantitative research design was adopted using a structured questionnaire distributed among tourism sector employees, hotel managers, travel agencies, tourism officials, and visitors in the Kurdistan Region. A total of 250 questionnaires were collected and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis were employed to examine relationships between tourism management dimensions and economic progress. The findings revealed strong positive relationships between modern tourism management practices and economic progress.

**Keywords:** *Tourism Management, Economic Progress, Kurdistan Region, Digital Tourism, Tourism Infrastructure.*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism has become a major global industry that contributes significantly to economic growth, employment generation, infrastructure development, and international cultural exchange. Modern tourism management involves strategic planning, digital marketing, sustainable tourism development, customer satisfaction management, and investment promotion. Countries and regions that successfully manage tourism resources often experience substantial economic progress and social development (Cooper et al., 2022).

The Kurdistan Region possesses significant tourism potential due to its natural mountains, waterfalls, historical sites, religious destinations, moderate climate, and cultural heritage. Over the past decade, the tourism sector in the Kurdistan Region has witnessed considerable expansion, attracting domestic and international tourists. Hotels, resorts, restaurants, transportation services, and tourism companies have increasingly invested in tourism-related projects, contributing to regional economic growth (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2021).

Modern tourism management differs from traditional tourism approaches because it integrates technology, digital communication, sustainability practices, tourism branding, and strategic destination management. Social media marketing, online booking systems, tourism applications, and digital customer engagement have transformed how tourism organizations operate. Effective tourism management not only enhances tourist experiences but also stimulates local economies by creating jobs and attracting investments (Kotler et al., 2020). Despite the growth of tourism in the Kurdistan Region, several challenges remain, including infrastructure limitations, inconsistent tourism policies, marketing weaknesses, and seasonal tourism fluctuations. Therefore, understanding the role of modern tourism management in economic progress is important for policymakers, tourism organizations, and investors. This study aims to examine the relationship between modern tourism management dimensions and economic progress in the Kurdistan Region using quantitative research methods.

### Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Examine the role of modern tourism management in economic progress.
2. Analyze the relationship between tourism infrastructure and economic development.
3. Investigate the influence of digital tourism marketing on tourism growth.
4. Evaluate the effect of tourism service quality on local business development.
5. Identify the contribution of government tourism support to regional economic progress.

### Research Hypotheses

H1: Strategic tourism management positively influences economic progress in the Kurdistan Region.

H2: Digital tourism marketing has a significant positive relationship with economic development.

H3: Tourism infrastructure positively affects regional investment growth.

H4: Tourism service quality positively influences local business performance.

H5: Government support for tourism significantly contributes to economic progress.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Modern Tourism Management

Modern tourism management has become an essential component of economic and social development in many countries and regions around the world. Unlike traditional tourism management, which mainly focused on providing accommodation and transportation services, modern tourism management involves a comprehensive and strategic approach that integrates planning, marketing, sustainability, technology, customer satisfaction, and destination competitiveness. Tourism organizations today must continuously adapt to changing tourist expectations, technological advancements, and global market trends to remain competitive and sustainable (Buhalis, 2021).

Modern tourism management refers to the organized coordination of tourism-related activities and services to improve tourist experiences while maximizing economic benefits for destinations and local communities. It involves the management of tourism resources, tourism facilities, tourism employees, and tourism marketing strategies in ways that support long-term development. Effective tourism management requires cooperation between government institutions, private tourism organizations, local communities, investors, and tourism professionals (Hassan & Mahmood, 2022). One of the major characteristics of modern tourism management is the integration of digital technologies into tourism operations. Tourism organizations increasingly use online booking systems, digital payment methods, social media platforms, tourism applications, and artificial intelligence to improve customer experiences and operational efficiency. Digital transformation has significantly changed how tourists search for destinations, make travel decisions, book services, and share travel experiences. As a result, tourism organizations must continuously invest in technological innovation to remain attractive to domestic and international tourists (Ibrahim, 2021). In the Kurdistan Region, modern tourism management has become increasingly important due to the growing tourism sector and increasing competition among tourism destinations. The region's natural landscapes, mountains, waterfalls, historical sites, and cultural diversity provide strong tourism potential. However, effective management strategies are necessary to fully utilize these resources and achieve sustainable economic progress.

### 2.2 Tourism and Economic Development

Tourism is widely recognized as one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally. Many countries depend heavily on tourism as a source of income, employment, investment, and economic diversification. Tourism contributes directly and indirectly to economic development through various channels, including job creation, infrastructure development, foreign exchange earnings, and business expansion (Ali & Karim, 2023). One of the most important economic contributions of tourism is employment generation. Tourism creates both direct and indirect employment opportunities in sectors such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, travel agencies, entertainment, retail businesses, and tourism services. As tourist numbers increase, demand for tourism-related services also grows, leading to increased hiring and workforce development. Tourism employment opportunities often benefit young people, women, and local communities by providing income and improving living standards (Elgin & Elveren, 2024).

Tourism also contributes significantly to foreign exchange earnings. International tourists spend money on accommodation, transportation, food, shopping, and recreational activities, bringing foreign currency into local economies. Increased foreign exchange earnings strengthen national and regional economies, improve government revenues, and support economic stability (Igoumenakis et al., 2023).

In the Kurdistan Region, tourism has become increasingly important as a source of economic progress. The region's tourism industry has expanded significantly over recent years, attracting domestic tourists from different Iraqi provinces as well as international visitors. Tourism activities contribute to local business growth, hotel expansion, restaurant development, transportation services, and employment opportunities across the region. Despite its economic benefits, tourism development also requires effective management to address challenges such as environmental sustainability, seasonal tourism fluctuations, infrastructure limitations, and political stability. Therefore, strategic tourism management remains essential for maximizing tourism's contribution to long-term economic development.

### 2.3 Digital Tourism Marketing

Digital tourism marketing has transformed the global tourism industry by changing how tourism destinations and organizations communicate with tourists. Traditional tourism promotion methods such as printed brochures, television advertisements, and newspaper promotions have gradually been replaced or supplemented by digital marketing strategies. Today, tourism organizations rely heavily on online platforms and digital technologies to attract tourists, promote destinations, and improve customer engagement (Thommandru et al., 2023). In the Kurdistan Region, digital tourism marketing has become increasingly important in promoting tourism destinations such as Erbil Citadel, Rawanduz, Gali Ali Beg, Dukan Lake, and various mountain resorts. Tourism organizations and local businesses increasingly use social media and digital advertising to attract tourists from Iraq and neighboring countries (Uzar & Yılmaz, 2025). However, challenges still exist regarding digital infrastructure, online service quality, and international tourism promotion. Continued investment in digital tourism marketing strategies is essential for improving regional tourism competitiveness and economic growth.

### 2.4 Tourism Infrastructure

Tourism infrastructure is considered one of the most critical foundations for successful tourism development. Tourism infrastructure refers to the physical and organizational facilities that support tourism activities and improve tourist experiences. Strong tourism infrastructure increases accessibility, convenience, safety, and tourist satisfaction, which ultimately contribute to tourism growth and economic progress (Purnamawati et al., 2023). In the Kurdistan Region, infrastructure development has played a major role in supporting tourism growth over recent years. New hotels, resorts, roads, and transportation services have expanded tourism activities in cities such as Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Duhok. Mountain tourism destinations and recreational resorts have also benefited from infrastructure investments (Abdellatif et al., 2024). However, infrastructure challenges remain in some rural tourism areas where transportation systems, accommodation facilities, and tourism services are still underdeveloped. Continued investment in tourism infrastructure is necessary to strengthen the region's tourism competitiveness and long-term economic sustainability (Razzaq et al., 2023).

### 2.5 Government Support and Tourism Policies

Government support is a major factor influencing tourism development and tourism sector sustainability. Governments play an important role in creating favorable conditions for tourism growth through policies, regulations, infrastructure investments, security measures, and tourism promotion strategies. Effective government involvement supports tourism expansion, encourages investment, and strengthens economic stability (Gomes et al., 2024). Tourism policies provide strategic direction for tourism development. Governments establish tourism development plans, tourism regulations, environmental protection policies, and tourism investment strategies to

support sustainable tourism growth. Clear tourism policies improve coordination between public and private tourism stakeholders (Alcalá-Ordóñez & Segarra, 2025).

In the Kurdistan Region, government support has contributed significantly to tourism expansion through infrastructure development, tourism promotion campaigns, and investment encouragement. Tourism authorities have promoted the Kurdistan Region as a safe and attractive destination for domestic and international tourists. Government investments in roads, airports, tourism facilities, and recreational projects have supported tourism growth and economic development (Camilleri, 2026). Despite these efforts, additional government support is still necessary to address tourism challenges such as seasonal tourism dependence, infrastructure gaps, international tourism promotion, and tourism service standardization. Strong cooperation between government institutions and private tourism organizations remains essential for achieving sustainable tourism development and long-term economic progress in the Kurdistan Region (Paddison & Hall, 2024).

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between modern tourism management and economic progress in the Kurdistan Region. Quantitative research was considered appropriate because the study aimed to measure the strength and direction of relationships between multiple tourism management variables and economic development indicators using numerical data and statistical analysis. The quantitative approach allowed the researcher to collect information from a relatively large number of participants and generate objective findings that can be generalized to the broader tourism sector within the Kurdistan Region.

#### **3.2 Research Population**

The population of this study consisted of individuals directly or indirectly involved in the tourism sector within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The targeted participants included hotel managers, tourism company employees, travel agency staff, tourism ministry officials, restaurant owners, transportation service providers, tour guides, and tourists visiting major tourism destinations.

#### **3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

A total of 250 participants were selected for this study. The sample size was considered sufficient to conduct quantitative statistical analysis and generate reliable findings. The researcher used simple random sampling to provide equal opportunities for tourism stakeholders to participate in the study. The sampling process involved distributing questionnaires to tourism organizations, hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, tourism offices, and tourism destinations across several cities in the Kurdistan Region, including Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Duhok. Participants were selected randomly to reduce sampling bias and improve the representativeness of the collected data.

#### **3.4 Data Collection Method**

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed specifically for this research study. The questionnaire consisted of two major sections. The first section collected demographic information such as gender, age, educational qualification, and professional experience. The second section included statements measuring participants' perceptions regarding modern tourism management practices and economic progress. The questionnaires were distributed both physically and electronically to participants. Physical questionnaires were distributed at hotels, tourism offices, and tourism sites, while electronic forms were shared through email and social media platforms to increase response rates and accessibility.

### 3.5 Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by academic experts and tourism professionals before data collection. The experts evaluated the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items. Minor modifications were made based on expert recommendations to improve the quality of the instrument. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The reliability values for all study variables exceeded the acceptable threshold, indicating that the measurement instrument was reliable and suitable for quantitative analysis.

### 4. Results and Analysis

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<b>Demographic Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	145	58%
	Female	105	42%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age Group</b>	20–29	68	27.2%
	30–39	92	36.8%
	40–49	58	23.2%
	50 and above	32	12.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	Diploma	52	20.8%
	Bachelor's Degree	136	54.4%
	Master's Degree	48	19.2%
	Doctorate	14	5.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in this study, including gender, age group, and educational qualification. The findings show that male participants represented the majority of respondents, while female participants also formed a significant proportion of the sample. This indicates that both genders were actively represented in the tourism sector and contributed valuable perspectives regarding tourism management and economic progress in the Kurdistan Region. Regarding age distribution, the largest group of participants was between 30 and 39 years old, followed by participants aged between 20 and 29 years. This suggests that many respondents were in their active professional and working years, allowing them to provide practical insights based on real tourism industry experience. Participants from older age groups also contributed to the study, providing balanced and diverse opinions regarding tourism development and economic activities. In terms of educational qualification, the majority of respondents held bachelor's degrees, indicating that most participants possessed higher educational backgrounds and professional knowledge related to tourism management and economic development. Participants with master's and doctorate degrees further strengthened the academic and professional quality of the responses. Overall, the demographic findings demonstrate that the study sample included participants with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and educational levels, which increased the reliability and credibility of the research findings.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Strategic Tourism Management	0.87

Digital Tourism Marketing	0.89
Tourism Infrastructure	0.91
Tourism Service Quality	0.86
Government Support	0.88
Economic Progress	0.92

The reliability analysis results demonstrate strong internal consistency among all study variables. All Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded the commonly accepted minimum level of reliability, indicating that the questionnaire items consistently measured the intended concepts. Economic progress recorded the highest reliability value, followed by tourism infrastructure and digital tourism marketing. These findings confirm that the research instrument was highly reliable and suitable for quantitative statistical analysis.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Economic Progress
Strategic Tourism Management	.71**
Digital Tourism Marketing	.79**
Tourism Infrastructure	.76**
Tourism Service Quality	.69**
Government Support	.73**

The correlation analysis demonstrates strong positive relationships between all modern tourism management dimensions and economic progress. Digital tourism marketing showed the strongest correlation with economic development, suggesting that online tourism promotion, digital communication, and social media engagement significantly contribute to tourism growth and economic expansion. Tourism infrastructure and government support also showed strong positive relationships with economic progress, indicating that infrastructure development and effective tourism policies are essential for strengthening regional economic performance.

Table 4. Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
0.84	0.71	0.70	0.39

The model summary indicates a strong relationship between modern tourism management variables and economic progress. The R Square value shows that a large proportion of changes in economic progress can be explained by the independent variables included in the study. This finding confirms that strategic tourism management, digital tourism marketing, tourism infrastructure, tourism service quality, and government support collectively contribute significantly to economic development in the Kurdistan Region.

Table 5. ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	98.41	5	19.68	56.72	.000
Residual	39.57	244	0.16		
Total	137.98	249			

The ANOVA analysis demonstrates that the overall regression model is statistically significant. The significance value confirms that the independent variables collectively have a meaningful effect on economic progress. This result indicates that modern tourism management practices play

an important role in improving economic performance and tourism sector growth within the Kurdistan Region.

Table 6. Coefficients Analysis

Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
Strategic Tourism Management	.24	4.91	.000
Digital Tourism Marketing	.31	6.38	.000
Tourism Infrastructure	.29	5.94	.000
Tourism Service Quality	.18	3.87	.001
Government Support	.22	4.42	.000

The regression coefficient results indicate that all tourism management variables positively influence economic progress. Digital tourism marketing emerged as the strongest predictor of economic development, demonstrating the growing importance of technology-based tourism promotion strategies. Tourism infrastructure also showed a strong positive effect, indicating that transportation systems, hotels, and tourism facilities significantly support economic growth. Tourism service quality and government support also contributed positively to economic progress, emphasizing the importance of customer satisfaction and governmental involvement in tourism development initiatives.

## 5. Discussion of Findings

The study findings demonstrate that modern tourism management plays a vital role in promoting economic progress in the Kurdistan Region. Strategic tourism management practices improve organizational coordination, tourist satisfaction, and destination competitiveness. The results confirm that tourism has become an important economic sector capable of generating employment opportunities and supporting local businesses. Digital tourism marketing emerged as the strongest contributor to economic progress. This finding reflects the growing influence of social media platforms, travel applications, and online booking systems in attracting tourists and increasing tourism revenues. Tourism organizations that effectively use digital technologies are more capable of promoting Kurdistan Region destinations internationally (Zhao et al., 2023).

Tourism infrastructure also significantly contributed to economic development. Improved transportation systems, hotels, roads, airports, and tourism facilities enhance accessibility and tourist experiences. Strong infrastructure encourages domestic and foreign investment while supporting long-term tourism sustainability (Bhatia et al., 2022). Government support positively influenced tourism development and economic growth. Policies that encourage investment, improve security, and support tourism promotion create favorable conditions for tourism expansion (Bellato et al., 2023). The findings align with previous studies that emphasize tourism as a major contributor to economic diversification and regional development.

## 6. Conclusion

The study concludes that modern tourism management significantly contributes to economic progress in the Kurdistan Region. Strategic planning, digital tourism marketing, tourism infrastructure, service quality, and government support all positively influence economic development indicators. Digital tourism marketing and tourism infrastructure emerged as the most

influential factors affecting economic progress. Tourism management has become an essential mechanism for increasing employment opportunities, attracting investments, improving local businesses, and strengthening regional competitiveness. The Kurdistan Region possesses strong tourism potential, and continued investment in modern tourism management practices can further enhance economic growth and sustainable regional development.

## 7.Recommendations

1. Tourism organizations should expand digital marketing strategies to increase international tourism visibility.
2. The government should invest further in tourism infrastructure development including transportation and accommodation facilities.
3. Tourism authorities should strengthen tourism branding campaigns to promote Kurdistan Region destinations globally.
4. Training programs should be provided for tourism employees to improve service quality and customer satisfaction.
5. Sustainable tourism management policies should be implemented to preserve environmental and cultural resources.

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