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Affecting factors on the performance of online marketing in the tourism industry

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Abstract:
Despite the increasing growth of affiliate marketing in Iraq, especially in the tourism industry, researchers have not paid much attention to this field. The purpose of this research was to investigate the effective factors on measuring the performance of online marketing in the country's tourism industry. Considering that this research was a descriptive survey in terms of its development goal and in terms of the method of gathering information, first a set of criteria for measuring the performance of affiliate marketing were identified with review studies. After interviewing the tourism marketing experts, the questionnaire was distributed among the statistical sample, i.e. the tourism activists of the country. After collecting the questionnaire, data analysis, extraction and ranking of appropriate criteria were done to measure the performance of online marketing in the country's tourism industry. The results of this research showed that the six factors of display capabilities, communication capabilities, financial factors, creation of competitive advantage, attraction capabilities and brand creation are important factors for measuring the performance of affiliate marketing in the country's tourism industry.
Keywords: Marketing, affiliate marketing, performance measurement, tourism.

Introduction:

Measuring the performance of both types of offline and online marketing has been the subject of numerous research articles (Pauwels et al., 2016) and it has always been an important concern for marketing managers. Despite the number of articles on this topic, there are still many uncertainties in this area (Hataminasab et al., 2016) For example, it is still largely unclear which marketing measures of an organization should be selected as meaningful marketing indicators for senior management accountability (Eusebio et al., 2006), How to evaluate the online marketing performance and internet marketing activities of the organization (Tolstoy et al., 2022).

However, research on marketing performance measurement in the offline domain shows significant gains(Kahn & Myers, 2005) ,It seems that the emerging Internet and information and communication technology will solve the problems of online marketing measurement and turn the slippery marketing practice into a measurable organizational function (Ryan, 2016). In fact, the Internet and online tracking have enabled marketers to quantify the nondescript areas of marketing activity. However, the Internet has not solved many existing measurement problems. On the contrary, it has added new complexities to the measurement of marketing performance. For example, it has shifted marketers' focus from the actual measurement process to tracking and

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analyzing existing solutions, making technology-related questions the forefront of marketers' agendas (Seggie et al., 2007).

From a theoretical point of view, these developments have raised new research questions and highlighted existing theoretical gaps. For example, these changes indicate that existing theoretical frameworks developed to measure traditional (offline) marketing performance are outdated and inapplicable to online marketing. These developments also show that frameworks designed to evaluate Internet marketing performance still remain relatively unknown, scarce and scattered. Even though the internet marketing literature has added to performance measurement research, the existing works so far have only focused on the performance measurement of multiple activities and the chosen channel of online marketing (Saura, 2021), Therefore, the field of internet marketing performance measurement is still an evolving topic and needs more research. Since scholars have considered marketing performance measurement as a non-generalizable and context-specific construct, this study also examines the specific measurement of Internet marketing that is widely used in practice , But it is still not much talked about in the literature and focuses on affiliate marketing (Duffy, 2005). In the literature, affiliate marketing refers to marketing in which products and services are introduced and sold to customers through a third party. Nowadays, with the formation of new marketing methods, one of the popular methods in digital marketing is affiliate marketing (Bala & Verma, 2018).

The tourism industry positively contributes to and strengthens the national economy(Al Bdairi, 2024). Today, 93% of tourism shopping services at the international level are done through internet networks. In the tourism industry, affiliate marketing and strategic partnerships can generate traffic for websites of hotels, airlines, car rental companies, tour operators, and also for non-tourism organizations, such as insurance companies. Compared to other industries, the use of affiliate marketing is quite evident in the tourism industry, and limited research on the topic suggests that the tourism industry has the largest number of affiliate marketing users (Mariussen et al., 2013).

Literature review:

As mentioned earlier, marketing performance has been an under-researched topic. Currently, more attention has been paid to the marketing performance in the offline field, and then attention has been paid to the online field ((Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009) , (Kamal, 2016), (Ryan, 2016).However, it seems that the responsibility for advancing marketing performance measurement has gradually shifted from theorists to practitioners. While general studies of traditional marketing performance are rich in both theorists' and practitioners' communities, subsequent research on Internet marketing performance, and subsequently affiliate marketing performance, is much more scattered and industry-oriented, and mostly industry-initiated.

Traditional marketing performance

The general literature on marketing performance is vast. In this literature, the approach of measuring marketing performance is by using production-oriented evaluation, which is to measure marketing performance quantitatively, For example, in terms of market share and revenue, and deals with more complex qualitative evaluations of integrated marketing communications, where marketing performance is generally made up of the collective impact of marketing activities.

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Marketing performance measurement approaches are numerous and varied in the general marketing literature. One of the factors that causes such diversity is the weak theoretical concept of the key structure of marketing performance, which is often interchangeable with the different structure of marketing effectiveness and efficiency (Gao, 2010; Kahn & Myers, 2005). The literature that differentiates between these constructs defines marketing performance as a multidimensional construct that generally includes effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency. Effectiveness is explained as the ability of an organization to implement its goals in given environmental conditions, which may include competition, market demand, and organizational capabilities. Efficiency is depicted as the relationship between input and output, and adaptability is described as the ability of an organization to adapt to fluctuations in the environment.

The diversity in the interpretation of the structure of marketing performance has led to diversity in performance measurement methods, many of which are in different lines of thought and with little commonality. Some of the most important studies include a marketing effectiveness model by Kotler(1997), a performance model for service industries by Yoon and Kang(2005), a conceptual framework for measuring marketing return on investment by Sergi et al.(2009), a performance improvement model by Connor and Tynan(1999), and the American Information System Marketing Dashboard(Unisys) to measure marketing performance and value. These models use different measurement standards and include differences in financial and non-financial criteria. Examples of financial measures they use are turnover, profit margin, sales, marketing budget, return on investment, return on capital employed and inventory turnover (Eusebio et al., 2006). Intangible measures also include loyalty, relative perceived quality, consumer satisfaction, number of complaints, awareness, brand equity, brand recognition, purchase intention, and customer lifetime value. Regardless of the different measurement standards and the different meanings these measurement methods have in relation to the structure of marketing performance, all of these mentioned methods have a theoretical and basic origin, something that cannot be claimed based on several practical approaches to start Internet marketing.

Internet marketing performance

The field of internet marketing performance measurement is largely practical. Although there are some significant scientific works on this topic, these works are still limited and varied in their approach to performance measurement. In line with the concept of integrated marketing communications (Jensen & Jepsen, 2008) , it has been proposed to evaluate online marketing activities based on media to media and channel to channel, and various ways to measure performance have been stated (Ryan, 2016). For example, we can refer to separate and different performance measurement frameworks for websites , online advertising (Kumar & Kohli, 2007), and classified ads.

In addition to the fact that different online media require separate measurement methods, another reason for the difference in measurement methods in Internet marketing research is the difference in the scientific understanding of Internet marketing. Two streams of literature have been identified in this field. One of these currents treats Internet marketing as an additional element in traditional integrated marketing communications and refers to the Internet as electronic communications. Another stream shows Internet marketing as an independent discipline separate from traditional integrated marketing communications (Jensen & Jepsen, 2008). Different interpretations of

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Internet marketing and its place in marketing theory have been influential in different ways to measure its performance. According to some researchers (for example (Ewing, 2013; Jensen & Jepsen, 2008), the first stream of literature that treats Internet marketing as an additional element in the traditional marketing communication mix is bound to face challenges, including that new electronic channels cannot be considered incremental improvements to traditional marketing and therefore, it cannot be measured in the same conditions. Emerging Internet channels require new (improved or completely different) measurement methods to be able to access complex online marketing activities (Ewing, 2013). Improved methods are necessary because companies can use multiple online marketing channels at the same time. For example, companies can market through their own website, advertise on partner websites, and use search engine marketing, through portals such as Google and Yahoo and promote their products through online communities, social media, email, and advertising. Also, new measurement methods are necessary for Internet marketing because the Internet not only enables companies to use different media to access global markets and interact with customers cheaply and in real time, rather, the Internet equips online marketing managers with new tracking and measurement tools. Reliance on these tools by organizations is unavoidable; therefore, the integration of these tracking solutions with theoretical frameworks seems mandatory (Ewing, 2013).

Affiliate marketing performance

A literature review of affiliate marketing performance shows that so far few researchers have engaged in this topic (Duffy, 2005; Edelman & Brandi, 2015) and the majority of publications in affiliate marketing originate from empirical and practical literature (Kunitzky, 2010).

Most specific definitions of affiliate marketing describe it as a distribution channel whereby affiliate marketers make merchant offers available to customers, a financial incentive for word of mouth, or a part of online marketing (Ibeh et al., 2005). Two transaction models are available: 1) the transaction can either happen directly on the affiliate website (for example Expedia), or 2) The transaction can take place on the merchant's website (for example, a Hilton hotel), in which case the affiliate marketer is not responsible for the sale, but is responsible for generating and driving leads to the merchant's website that are most likely to make a transaction.

In addition, affiliate marketing is defined as an online tool to promote and introduce the seller and his products and services. For example, the literature has discussed whether there is a relationship between the structure of any online advertising and affiliate marketing. Some experts put affiliate marketing under the umbrella of online advertising, or even treat advertising and affiliate marketing as a structure and express it as affiliate advertising, while other theorists make a fundamental difference between advertising and affiliate marketing and consider them as different constructs, despite the fact that similar methods, for example advertising, may be used in both cases.

As it was said earlier, measuring the performance of affiliate marketing in the tourism industry has received less attention from researchers (Mariussen, 2012). In his research, by using interviews, questionnaires and setting up online forums, Mariosen collected the opinions of tourism industry experts in relation to measuring the performance of affiliate marketing and after analyzing the data, he presented a 9-step model to measure the performance of affiliate marketing in the tourism industry which is shown in Figure 1. From Gregory et al's point of view, affiliate marketing is a type of contemporary marketing based on the Internet, which is considered one of the most common

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methods of attracting customers in the tourism industry. Affiliate marketers must prove their worth to customers and reduce customer doubts by providing structural guarantees and background information on their website. Mohamed & Fahmy (2013) also stated in his research that affiliate marketing is the main path for marketing strategies in electronic businesses in the future; they have listed the desire to build trust in the customer as well as the benefit of social guidance as criteria that will have a significant impact on the affiliate marketing of tourism websites.

Identifying and creating enabling conditions
Defining affiliate marketing goals
Selection and design of advertising media
Adjustment of commission fee
Selection of criteria
Determine when to submit reports
Affiliate marketing setup
Checking the enabling conditions
Comparison of performance with established criteria

Figure 1: Affiliate Marketing Performance Measurement Model (Mariussen, 2012)

Research methodology

From the point of view of the goal, this research is a part of developmental research, and from the point of view of data collection and analysis, it is considered a descriptive survey. At first, a research questionnaire was designed with the initial study of factors influencing the measurement of affiliate marketing performance and using library studies. The questionnaire has two parts: 1) Demographic information including gender, age, level of education, place of work and experience, 2) Criterion selection questions that include criteria in the affiliate marketing performance measurement literature. Table 5 lists the criteria and their equivalent labels in the AMOS & SPSS software.

Label	Criteria	Refrence
q1	Profits from affiliate marketing for businessmen (company implementing tourism projects)	‹Laudon & Traver 2010
q2	Earnings from affiliate marketing for merchants	2002 ‹shen
q3	Rate of return on investment 3 from affiliate marketing for merchants	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008 ‹
q4	The amount of sales from affiliate marketing for the merchant	Brettel & Spilker-Attig 2010‹
q5	Merchant fee for affiliate marketing	2002‹shen

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q6	Number of merchant sales invoices	‹ Goldschmidt et al 2003
q7	Trader's last month's profit	2012‹ Mariosen
q8	Number of orders to the merchant	2012‹ Mariosen
q9	Merchant market share from affiliate marketing	2012‹ Mariosen
q10	Earnings per thousand visits to the merchant's website	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008‹
q11	Time spent on merchant website	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008‹
q12	Merchant website traffic	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008‹

q13	The number of visits to the merchant's website	‹Laudon & Traver 2003
q14	The average number of pages visited on the merchant's website after clicking	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008‹
q15	Return rate 2 (is the number of people who leave after entering the merchant's site without viewing any other pages)	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008‹
q16	The number of clicks on the merchant's website	2002‹ Shen
q17	The click rate on the merchant's website	2002‹ Shen
q18	The number of comments on the merchant's website (for example, on blogs, social networks)	2000 ‹Comm
q19	Conversion rate (percentage of website visitors who actually make a purchase)	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008‹
q20	The number of downloads of merchant website files	2003‹ Goldshmidt
q21	The number of searches on the merchant's website	2002‹ Shen
q22	The number of new customer (tourist) registrations on the merchant's website	2003‹ Goldshmidt
q23	The number of predefined activities on the merchant's website	Laudon & Traver 2003‹
q24	The appearance of advertising messages	2012‹ Mariosen

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q25	The total number of impressions of merchant website ads	2012، Mariosen
q26	Increasing merchant brand reputation from affiliate marketing	Bandiopadhiay et. al 2000،
q27	Brand equity 6 (a set of assets and liabilities associated with the brand name and symbol)	Bandiopadhiay et. al 2000،
q28	Awareness of the brand 1 (the extent and strength of the merchant's brand presence in people's minds)	Bandiopadhiay et. al 2000،

q29	The number of followers (trader followers for (example, in social networks))	2000، Comm
q30	Number of likes (for example in social networks)	2000، Comm
q31	The ratio of new customers to existing customers	2012، Mariosen
q32	The number of calls received by the merchant	2012، Mariosen
q33	The number of emails received by the merchant	2003، Goldshmidt
q34	Stakeholder satisfaction from affiliate marketing	2012، Mariosen
q35	The number of customer complaints about the merchant	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008،
q36	The level of customer satisfaction with the merchant	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008،
q37	Customer loyalty to the merchant	Michopolou & Buhalis 2008،

After the initial design of the questionnaire, the opinions of university professors and e-commerce specialists were used to check its validity, and then the completion phase of the questionnaires began. The statistical population in this research is tourism activists in Iraq. Tourism activists are officials of tourism offices, hoteliers, and travel ticket sellers, experts active in various departments of tourism companies, including sales, marketing, information technology and financial departments, focusing on those who use electronic business tools such as the websites and Virtual pages are used in this field. Considering that it is very difficult to carry out research on all members of the statistical population, therefore, the sample population whose size was determined based on Morgan's table of 982 people was used. Due to the sending of more questionnaires, finally 915 questionnaires were obtained for analysis. Due to the descriptive nature of the current research, a field questionnaire was used to collect the required data and the questionnaires were distributed in

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meetings (6 meetings) of tourism events and conferences of Tourism Up in Kerbala and a number of tourism offices of the country. Therefore, it was tried to complete the questionnaire not only from a specific region of the country, but to be a random sample from all regions of the country. More detailed information about this sample will come in the data analysis section.

In order to check the validity of the questionnaire, several interviews were conducted with relevant professors. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used for the reliability of this questionnaire. This coefficient, which was calculated both for the total questions of the questionnaire and for individual questions, has a value greater than 0.7, which confirms the reliability of the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, the collected data were summarized and classified using statistical methods. For this purpose, using exploratory factor analysis and using the SPSS software, the data was first summarized in the frequency distribution table and then the graph related to the summarized data was drawn. In this research, in addition to the exploratory factor analysis method, in order to check the validity of the factors and their resulting indices, the confirmatory factor analysis test is also used by the AMOS software. Finally, by using the Friedman test, the identified factors and the resulting criteria are prioritized. The research steps are summarized in Figure 2.

Preparing a list of criteria and designing a questionnaire (based on literature review)
Checking the validity of the questionnaire using the opinions of university professors and experts
Checking the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Conceptual model extraction using exploratory factor analysis
Model testing using confirmatory factor analysis
Prioritizing factors and criteria using the Friedman test

Figure 2: Research steps

Data Analysis

After designing and distributing the questionnaire, 391 completed and usable questionnaires were collected and the demographic information of the respondents is as follows:

35.3% of respondents are women and 64.7% are men. 4.6% of the respondents are people under 58 years old, 36.1% are people between 58 and 42 years old, 41.4% are people between 41 and 92 years old, 10.7% are people between 91 and 12 years old and 7.2 % is made up of people over 55 years old. 4.6% of the respondents have a diploma or less, 12.5% have an associate degree, 55% have a bachelor's degree, 25.6% have a master's degree, and 2.3% have a doctorate. 10.7% of respondents are from Baghdad province and 89.3% are from Kerbala province or other provinces. 19.2 percent of the respondents work in the sales department, 48.1 percent in the marketing department, 14.6 percent in the information technology department, 9.2 percent in the financial department, and 9 percent in other departments of the company/organization active in the field of tourism. 40.7% of respondents have less than 5 years of experience, 30.9% have 1 to 53 years of experience, 17.6% have 53 to 43 years of experience, and 10.7% have more than 43 years of experience.

In order to determine the appropriateness of the collected data, Keyser-Meir-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett tests were used. The value of 0.821 KMO index and the result of Bartlett's test show that the

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research data can be reduced to a number of basic and fundamental factors and the sample size is sufficient.

Table 4 shows the rotated matrix of the components, which includes the factor loadings of each of the remaining variables after rotation. The factor load of the variables that was less than 0.5 (q4, q6, q7, q8, q11, q12, q16, q20, q21, q23, q29, q30q32, q33, q34 are removed from the table). Also, each criterion is considered in the factor that has a higher factor load.

Table 2: Sextet identified factors, criteria or variables of each and factor loadings

	1	2	3	4	5	6
q10	0.025					
q25	0.885					
q24	0.834					
q13	0.814					
q14		0.033				
q18		0.853				
q17		0.770				
q15		0.684				
q22		0.600				
q1			0.836			
q3			0.826			
q2			0.766			
q5			0.650			
q37				0.823		
q9				0.788		
q31				0.743		
q19					0.707	
q36					0.680	
q35					0.628	
q28						0.600
q27						0.625
q26						0.477

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As can be seen, 6 factors were identified, each of which was named with a name that could well describe its criteria or variables. Figure 9 shows the resulting conceptual model.

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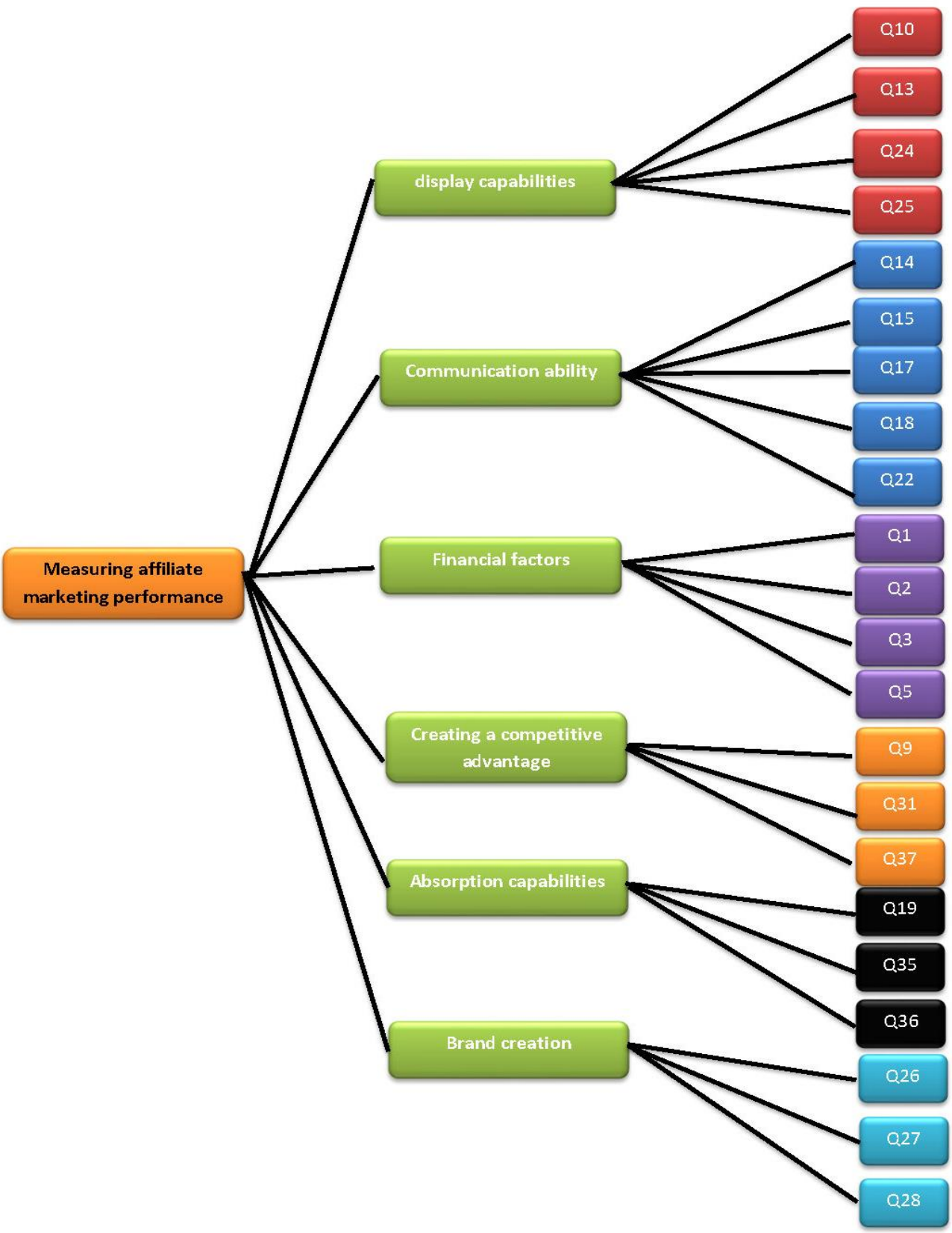

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online marketing in the tourism industry)

To measure validity (reliability), for each factor (AVE), the index (average variance extracted) is calculated. AVE shows what percentage of the variance of the studied factor was influenced by the indicators of that factor. The AVE index is used to measure factor validity and it is also referred to as convergent validity.

Researchers consider a value of more than 0.5 suitable for this index. Table 9 shows that the AVE index value for all factors is greater than 0.5; Therefore, each of the factors of the model has a good validity to measure the research variables.

Table 3: Values of standardized factor loadings and convergence validity index

Factor rank	Factor	Rating Average	Benchmark rank	criteria	Rating Average
1	Financial Factors	3/11	1	q1	2/63
			2	q2	2/45
			3	q3	2/52
			5	q5	2/51
2	Brand creation	3/05	1	q27	2/07
			2	q28	2/01
			3	q26	1/02
3	Creating a competitive advantage	3/01	1	q31	2/01
			2	q37	2/01
			3	q9	1/08
5	Communication ability	2/07	1	q22	5/45
			2	q15	3/08
			3	q17	2/72
			5	q18	2/63
			4	q14	2/03
4	Display capabilities	2/86	1	q24	2/63
			2	q13	2/42
			3	q25	2/55
			5	q10	2/51
6	Absorption capabilities	2/55	1	q36	2/04
			2	q35	2/03

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			3	q19	1/02

After ensuring the acceptability of the identified factors according to the desirability of the indicators, we can achieve the general estimation and test of the conceptual model of the research through structural equation modeling. At this stage, we examine the effect of six variables of display capabilities, communication capability, financial factors, creation of competitive advantage, attraction capabilities and brand creation on measuring online marketing performance in the country's tourism industry. In Table 2, appropriate model fit criteria are calculated to determine the appropriateness of the structural model of the research, investigation and indicators, which indicate the model's approval.

Table 4: structural model fit indices

		Desired limit	Reported Value
Index	X2/df	<=3	2/327
	NFI	>=0/9	0/942
	CFI	>=0/9	0/946
	GFI	>=0/9	0/934
	AGFI	>=0/9	0/958
	RMSEA	<=0/08	0/028

Table 5 shows the coefficients of the path and the level of significance of the structural model of the research which significance level of less than 0.05 means that the model is approved.

Table 5: factor loadings (path coefficients) and their significance level: structural model of the research

Relation	Path Coefficient	Significance level
display capabilities <-- Measuring affiliate marketing performance	0.703	0.000
Communication ability <--Measuring affiliate marketing performance	0.759	0.000
Financial factors <--Measuring affiliate marketing performance	0.961	0.000
Creating a competitive advantage <--Measuring affiliate marketing performance	0.812	0.000
Absorption capabilities <--Measuring affiliate marketing performance	0.633	0.000
Brand creation <--Measuring affiliate marketing performance	0.828	0.000

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Friedman's test is a non-parametric test that is used to compare the average ranks among several variables (groups). In this research, this test has been used to prioritize the factors for measuring the performance of affiliate marketing. This test deals with the difference in average ratings. The statistical assumptions of this test are defined as follows:

Hypotheses Zero: There is no significant difference between the components of measuring the performance of affiliate marketing from the point of view of people.

Counter hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the components of measuring the performance of affiliate marketing from the point of view of people.

Table 6 shows the results of the Friedman test, which shows that the null hypothesis is rejected due to the value of the significant number being less than 0.05, therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference between the factors of measuring the performance of affiliate marketing and its indicators from the point of view of people.

Table 6: The results of Friedman's test to rank the factors and criteria in the structural model of the research

Factor Rank	Rank	Ranking Average	Criteria Rank	Criteria	Ranking Average
1	Financial factors	3.11	1	q1	2.63
			2	q2	2.54
			3	q3	2.42
			4	q5	2.41
2	Brand creation	3.04	1	q27	2.07
			2	q28	2.01
			3	q26	1.92
3	Creating a competitive advantage	3.01	1	q31	2.01
			2	q37	1.98
			3	q9	4.54
4	Communication ability	2.97	1	q22	3.08
			2	q15	2.72
			3	q17	2.63
			4	q18	2.03
			5	q14	2.63
5	Display capabilities	2.86	1	q24	2.52
			2	q13	2.44
			3	q25	2.41
			4	q10	2.05
6	Absorption capabilities	2.44	1	q36	2.09
			2	q35	2.03
			3	q18	1.92

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Conclusion

According to the statistics of the World Tourism Organization and UNESCO, Iraq can be among the first 10 countries in the world in terms of tourist arrivals due to its numerous attractions. But official statistics indicate that the annual turnover of the tourism industry in the world is more than 800 billion dollars, and Iraq's share is less than one thousandth of this turnover. Therefore, Iraq's very small share of the tourism industry shows that the tourism industry has not been able to fulfill its role as a factor of economic development of the country and the introduction of Iraq as a tourist and cultural country.

One of the important factors in the development of tourism is marketing and customer attraction. Today, companies related to this industry in the country have turned to affiliate marketing. These companies have entrusted the responsibility of providing products and services (airline ticket sales, hotel reservations, tour reservations, entertainment places tickets and similar things) to their customers to affiliate marketers, but they have paid little attention to measuring their performance. Therefore, in this research, the factors affecting the performance of online marketing in the country's tourism industry were investigated. Considering the factors affecting online affiliate marketing in the country's tourism industry, as well as the criteria of each of them, companies implementing tourism projects in the country can monitor their affiliate marketing process more closely and benefit from suitable marketers for this purpose. Also, affiliate marketers can plan and implement actions to improve the quality of their marketing according to the mentioned factors.

According to the results obtained from the exploratory factor analysis in this research, 6 factors were identified as effective factors in measuring online marketing performance in the tourism industry and the total number of criteria was reduced from 37 to 22 which we mention these factors and the criteria of each of them on below:

First factor: Display features include: profit per thousand visits to the website of the tourism planning company (Merchant), the number of visits to the website of the tourism planning company, the appearance of advertising messages, the total number of advertisements displayed on the website of the tourism planning company

The second factor: Communication ability includes: The average number of pages visited on the website of the tourism planning company after the click, the return rate, the click rate on the website of the tourism planning company, the number of comments on the website of the tourism planning company (for example, on blogs, social networks), the number of registrations of new tourists (customers) on the website of the company implementing tourism projects

The third factor: Financial factors include: Profit from affiliate marketing for the company implementing tourism plans, income from affiliate marketing for the company implementing tourism plans, rate of return on investment from affiliate marketing for the company implementing tourism plans, cost of the company implementing tourism plans for affiliate marketing

The fourth factor: Creating a competitive advantage includes: The market share of the company implementing tourism projects from affiliate marketing, the ratio of new tourists to existing tourists, the loyalty of tourists to the company implementing tourism projects

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The fifth factor: Capabilities include: Conversion rate, the number of complaints of tourists from the company implementing tourism projects, the level of satisfaction of tourists from the company implementing tourism projects

The sixth factor: Creating a brand includes: Increasing the brand reputation of the company that implements tourism plans as a result of affiliate marketing, brand equity, brand awareness

Also, conducting confirmatory factor analysis showed that the criteria selected for each factor are suitable indicators for their factors. Finally, using Friedman's test, the effective factors for measuring online marketing performance in the tourism industry, in order of importance, are: financial factors, creating a brand, creating a competitive advantage, communication capabilities, display capabilities, and attraction capabilities.

As it was said before, measuring the performance of online affiliate marketing in the tourism industry and providing related indicators have less attention of researchers. Therefore, it may not be possible to compare the results of this research with completely similar cases, but it can be said that in each of the relatively similar researches in the field of affiliate marketing, only a group of effective criteria on affiliate marketing have been addressed, for example Bandyopadhyay et al. (2009), to ads, brand value and income Mariosen(2012) have paid attention to the merchant market share resulting from affiliate marketing, but in this research, as seen, the comprehensiveness of the factors and criteria was considered and all the mentioned criteria in 6 categories of aforementioned factors should be reviewed and explained.

By applying the results of this research in the field of affiliate marketing in the online tourism industry of the country, it is suggested to benefit from the factors and criteria proposed for the evaluation of affiliate marketers, related organizations have evaluated the performance of affiliated marketers of the implementing companies of the country's tourism projects, and by applying appropriate measurement methods, they can improve the performance of marketers, and as a result provide business development in the field of tourism.

Despite the researchers' efforts, this research has limitations, some of which are:

In this study, the majority of respondents were tourism activists in Kerbala provinces, and a small percentage of respondents were activists from other provinces, which can be considered better conditions for future studies. The possibility of strengthening statistical analyzes and using group decision-making methods to explain the relative importance of factors instead of using the Friedman test can be considered in order to strengthen the results.

The possibility of examining the results of the research based on demographic studies and also creating a model for measuring the performance of affiliate marketing based on the criteria and factors resulting from the research can be proposed as suggestions for the continuation of the current research.

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