



## Study and analyse the role of branding of tourist attractions in the sustainable development of tourism

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### Abstract

The tourism sector is considered a leading industry in the world, and despite the remarkable development this sector has witnessed, it has significant impacts on different countries. The status of a tourist destination can be improved by paying attention to its development standards, and at the same time, branding plays a vital role in tourism growth. Tourism destination branding includes activities and programs that distinguish the destination and enhance the emotional connection between the tourist and the destination. This study aims to examine the impact of tourism standards from the citizens' point of view and determine the tourism brand of the city of Muthanna from the elites' point of view. The research is applied and uses a descriptive and analytical approach. Data were collected through two documentary methods and a survey with a statistical community of 30 experts in the field of tourism. The impact of tourism standards on people's opinions was also analyzed using SPSS software and a statistical sample of 384 people. The city of Al-Muthanna, with an area of 51,740 square kilometres, was identified as the research area. The research results showed that the tourism situation in Muthanna could be better and acceptable and that tourism experts prioritize indicators of well-being, safety, hospitality, and the standard of luxury. The accommodations were chosen to be the tourist brand of Al-Muthanna City.

**Key words:** Tourism, brand, Al-Muthanna, tourism destination

### Introduction and statement of the problem

Tourism and leisure time in the postmodern era is considered as a right and has become the basis of human life and existence (Popli, Yazdi and Soqaei) 2012, 38 and it is mentioned as a very complex activity that has common aspects with other sectors of society and economy (Rakanaldin Eftekhari , 2014 Tourism as one of the most important industries of sustainable development creates great cultural, social and economic opportunities for different cities (Chahar Balesh, 2015) to the extent that some countries have been able to solve many problems such as unemployment, low to cover the level of per capita income and the lack of foreign exchange income (Akbarpour, Saraskanroud, 1390, 104-94), despite having many attractions, the tourism industry in Iraq plays a very small role in the country's economy (Tolaei, 1386). It is considered one of the most talented areas in this field and its many natural, historical and cultural attractions are well-known (Kazemi, 1386.) Tourism has not only played a role in advancing the national economy and foreign exchange earnings, but it is also a clean activity free from any pollution. And at the same time, it creates new jobs and causes direct income and multiplies the indirect money cycle, and it is one of the fastest ways to return capital



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(Motiyi Langroudi and Nosrati, 2017, 2017) and it is one of the best possible options to move towards sustainable development.

The term "sustainable development" was used for the first time in 1970 AD in the "Kokoyuk Declaration" regarding the environment and development, but it was first officially presented by Brantland in 1987 in our joint future report (Mansouri, 2007). It has been stable. Sustainable development is a process in which natural, social, physical, economic, financial, commercial, energy, agricultural, industrial, and all other policies are designed and will lead to development that is economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable (Yousfi et al., (2004) Sustainable development is a political concept and achieving the goals of sustainable tourism strongly depends on the distribution of power and the political system of the society (Anhalt, 2004). From the 1990s, the movement from tourism to the sustainable development approach of tourism began (Bass, 2002, 2) and the concept of sustainable development entered tourism literature. Tourism is blamed for the role it plays in creating several economic costs, including increasing inflation, unequal distribution of economic benefits, low pay and seasonal jobs, excessive use of resources, as well as outsourcing jobs to foreigners (Khan.) 371-376, 2019, 3 in addition. Tourism is accused of environmental destruction and cultural and social degeneration (Vaver) 4, 107, 2006; However, the positive effects of tourism have been in the center of attention in both groups of developed and developing countries, and urban tourism is also included in the subcategory of tourism (Hall, 2000, 5; Stone and Stone, 2011, 6). Urban tourism has become an important issue in the 1980s. Tourism literature has become one of the main types of tourism, which, despite its importance, has not yet reached its real position in scientific literature, and its definitions are often vague and its structure is unclear. However, urban tourism currently constitutes about 37% of the world's tourists. and it is expected that this trend will continuously increase (Wang et al., 2010, 162-178). Cities as tourist destinations have multi-purpose functions. They are the entry gate to the country, the residence centers and the starting point for traveling to other nearby areas. (Noorbakhsh and Akbarpour, Saraskanroud, 1390, 104-94) In today's competitive world where cities are trying to outdo each other in various fields, urban tourism has also become an area for cities to compete, and in this regard, branding and marketing for tourism destinations are more important. It is already popular. In fact, the brand of a city in tourism is the winning edge of a city in economic and social competitions for development in tourism (Sharbatian, 139-181).

A brand in tourism is nothing but a classification of memories in the tourist's mind. Lack of branding means that the customer may not be aware of the tourism destination or its identity. This means that during the decision-making process of choosing a travel destination, the customer considers a destination that has a distinctive position in his mind (Kavertzis, 14, 2006). Brand value is the value given to a product through its name. It can be (Rainisto) 2, 2003; Therefore, the power of the brand is the result of the knowledge and opinion of the consumers about their experience of the good experience of the consumers from the brand (Lee and Liu, 2011). and changing their behavior is to visit the destinations (Blain, 2001, 328-338). 4. The destination brand can play a coordinating role among many economic and social activities and be attractive to all tourism stakeholders (Roka and Villiers.) 329- 314, 2008, 5 brands help to promote the regional advantages of the city. Actually, the place brand considers both domestic and foreign markets (Hall, 2010, 71); Therefore, the brand has the necessary creativity for sustainable development in the field of tourism in regions and cities, because the superiority of everything in a normal state is one of the important principles in the sustainable development of tourism; (Rangebrian, 176-175, 2014, considering all the aspects and issues in the city of Al-Muthanna or paying attention to the potential in the city, which includes all the tourism indicators, in a final summary of all the indicators of turning a city into a brand and tourism destination, this question The answer will be

whether the city of Al-Muthanna has the ability to achieve sustainable development of tourism by using tourism standards or not? In figure (1), the conceptual model of the research is drawn.

## Research Institute

In a research, Kim et al. (2018) 1 investigated the visible effect on brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, brand loyalty and

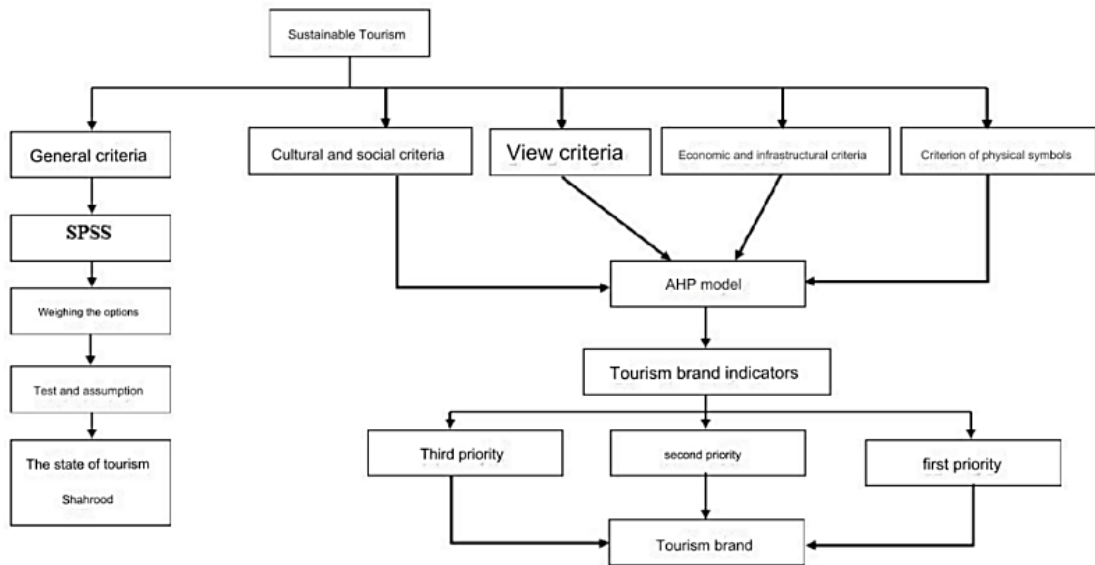


Figure (1) conceptual model of research findings

destination attachment to a literary festival. The results obtained from the theoretical implications related to the way famous endorses the destination brand. and the continuity of the festival communities. The results of this study also have practical concepts related to the way festivals can be held effectively in the visit of the host. It is also believed that the results significantly help in understanding the effectiveness of approval in an event context. Taski (2018) 2 investigated the consumer-oriented special value model for destination brands in a research titled cross-brand credibility test and cross-market. The results showed that familiarity and image are two prominent elements that explain loyalty in both models. Although both consumer value and brand value have mediating effects on loyalty, the model was different for different destinations, for different nationalities, and to some extent for different genders, and it was consistent for visitors and non-visitors of a destination brand. Khan et al. 2018 (3) examined the role of destination brand image in tourists' revisits. In this research, the attractions of Greece and China have been used.

The results of the research show that the brand image of the destination has a significant relationship with the revisiting of tourists, considering the different performance of the two countries. Fernandez and Mitan (2014) in their article entitled "Relation between branding and urban development" compared Plymouth, England and Malaga, Spain, concluded that the city of Plymouth has been able to create a brand and attract tourists from the ideal of freedom and acceptance of cultures, but the city of Malaga, It considers its brand to be moderate weather and Picasso's paintings as a symbol of strengthening communication, embracing culture, value and creativity. Zangi Abadi et al. (2013) in their articles entitled "Survey and Analysis of Urmia's Tourism Spaces" came to the conclusion that Urmia's tourism space is influenced by historical spaces and covers most of the central part of the city. However, this part of the city has a low quality of tourism services, so it was suggested that tourism and spatial dynamics of tourism can be increased with tourism planning.



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Saif al-Dini et al. (2009) investigated and analyzed the urban tourism capacity of Isfahan based on the behavioral pattern of tourists and the host community, the research findings show that due to the large volume of tourists, the host community has felt the adverse effects, which has reduced the quality of tourism in Isfahan. and tourism facilities have not been able to play an appropriate role in this regard. Kamandari and Mostofi al-Mamalek (2014) analyzed the urban tourism space of Kerman in order to provide tourism routes. The results of the research show that in order to provide a suitable spatial model for determining special tourism routes, there must be a complete, comprehensive and systematic approach to all the elements involved in the subject.

Warsi and Safarabadi (2013) in a research investigated the role of cultural and social factors of tourism in the development of urban tourism in Isfahan, the results indicate that the management index of tourism spaces has the highest coefficient and factors of tourism services with the lowest coefficient compared to other variables in determining the development of tourism in the city. have played a role Dio Salar et al. (2013) investigated the role of urban management in the sustainable development of urban tourism in the city of Noor. The results and findings of the research show that the tourism situation in the city of Noor is unfavorable according to the components of sustainable development.

Parhizkar et al. (2015) in their research on the sustainable development of tourism came to the conclusion that by creating changes in the infrastructures and attracting facilities and proper investment and coordination between the social justice sector in Srein region, the quality of life and well-being of the citizens will be improved. Divandari et al. (2013) in a research presented a model for branding large-scale recreation, accommodation, tourism and sports projects in the country with a local approach and found that causal conditions, fields and interventions for branding these types of projects have the greatest effect on attracting tourists. Manourian et al. (2013) in an article titled Urban Branding Process Model for Iraqi Metropolises designed a model for this purpose. In this research, in addition to examining the causal and intervening conditions, the process of urban branding of Iraqi metropolises and its characteristics have been extracted and presented during the research. Haidari Chianeh et al. (2014) in an article entitled Analysis of the role of brand image on the development of urban tourism, a case study of Tabriz metropolis, investigated the relationship between brand image after travel and tourism development and came to the conclusion that these two have a positive and meaningful relationship.

Since centuries ago, tourism has been a topic that people have paid special attention to, but in the last half century, with the growth and development of industries and the mechanization of society's life, in order to get out of the repeated situation of the cycle of work and life within the framework of the home, they went to areas other than their place of residence. let them sit Due to its strong role in creating employment and increasing the income of the host communities, tourism has shown its necessity in using all the components of sustainable development, and this necessity in many cases shows itself as a single component for the development of tourism and the economy of the region, which is one of these The components are branding in tourism, therefore, it is necessary to know and understand the indicators related to tourism and branding to achieve sustainable development. This research has been conducted with the aim of investigating tourism indicators and criteria for determining the tourism brand in Al-Muthanna, so the following question is asked. Has tourism in Al-Muthanna been able to achieve stability based on the existing criteria, including the brand?

## research method

In relation to prioritization in order to determine the most suitable component for the tourist to be attracted to the tourist destination, many studies were conducted in which different criteria and components with different dimensions were used. This issue has been mentioned in internal and external researches, but in this



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research, the effective indicators used in the tourism branding of Al-Muthanna city are considered from criteria such as physical, economic, visual and cultural symbols and from indicators such as nature, recreational accommodation. , historical attraction, comfort and accommodation facilities, cultural attractions, infrastructures, hospitality, security, and travel experience (research findings) have been used. This research seeks to determine whether branding is effective in the sustainable development of tourism or not. According to the research question and by using the survey research method, we came to study and study in relation to the research topic and the proposed question. In a part of the research, the impact of branding in the development of tourism has been studied and analyzed. This research can be divided into two parts from a methodological point of view. The first part includes studies and documentary reviews and the second part includes survey studies among experts and also a combination of Al-Muthanna citizens and tourists.

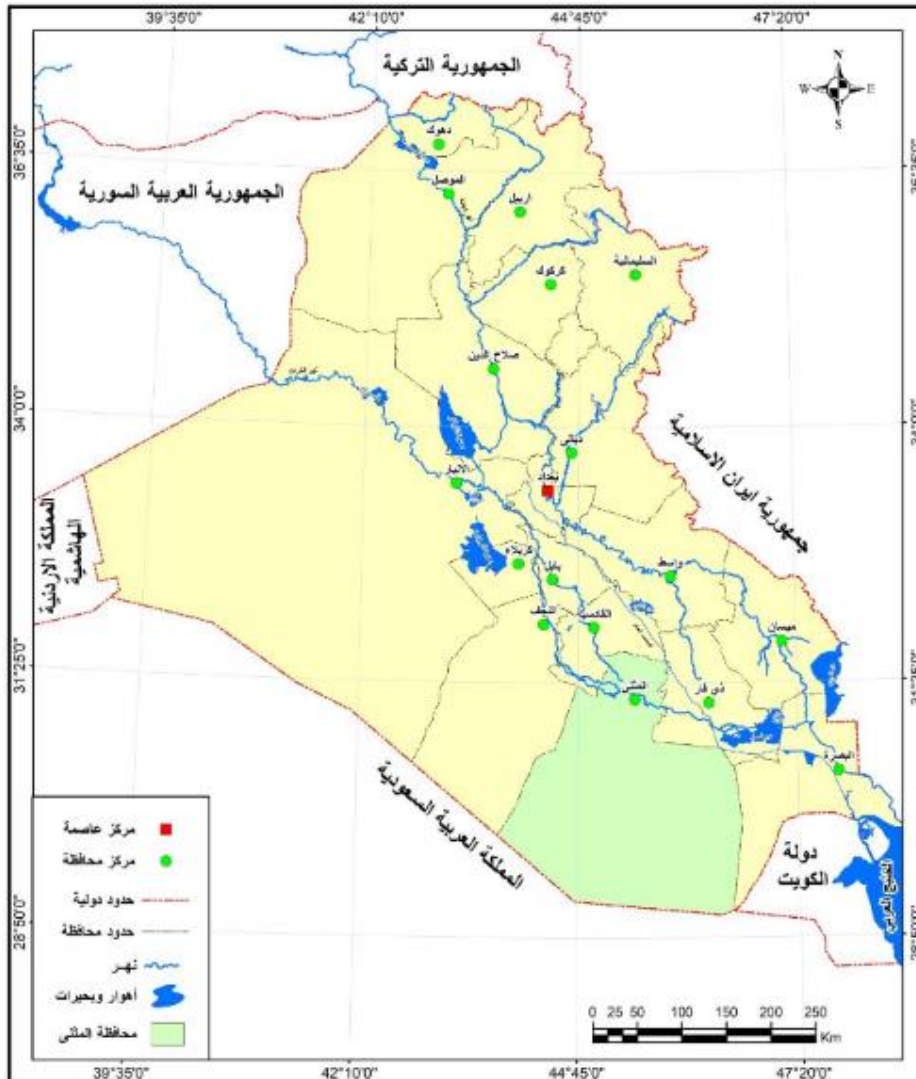
In fact, the research method in the current study is applied in terms of its purpose and descriptive and analytical in terms of its nature and method; Collecting information is based on exploratory theoretical foundations in both documentary and field forms. In this research, AHP model has been used to determine the weight of criteria and indicators as well as their prioritization. In the current research, there are 30 people as a sample in the elite group, including the entire statistical population of postgraduate and doctorate graduates in tourism geography active in executive and educational institutions. Each of the effective indicators on tourism branding has been evaluated and analyzed from the point of view of elites and experts, and it has been determined which criteria and indicators are in the priority of attracting tourists as a brand, and tourists choose to travel to Muthanna with more importance to it. In the other part of the researcher-made questionnaire with Cronbach's alpha of 0.893 and with a statistical sample of 384 people resulting from Cochran's formula, the impact of tourism criteria according to people's opinion was analyzed with SPSS software. This part of the research deals with the issue of whether tourism in Muthanna can achieve sustainable development by using the mentioned components. Since the current research is conducted in a survey method, Cochran's formula was used to estimate the number of samples and 384 people including citizens, tourists and travelers present in the city were selected as a statistical population and a questionnaire of over 20 questions was designed and compiled. These 20 questions were divided into four separate sections with the topics of tourist attractions, existing facilities and infrastructures, the general condition of Muthanna city and the planning of the division officials and were surveyed using a Likert scale and its components were analyzed and investigated.

## Introduction of the studied area

The spatial boundaries of the study area are represented by Al-Muthanna Governorate, with all its borders and administrative unit, which occupies the southern part of the Middle Euphrates region. It is bordered to the east by the governorates of Dhi Qar and Basra, to the north by Al-Qadisiyah Governorate, to the west by Najaf Governorate, and to the south and southwest by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, map (1). Al-Muthanna Governorate consists of (11) administrative units consisting of (5) districts and (6) districts, with an area of (51,740) km<sup>2</sup>, or 2.13% of the area of Iraq, which is (434,128) km<sup>2</sup>.

As for its astronomical location, it is located between latitudes (05.29-41.31) north, and longitudes (50.43-32.46) east, map (2.)

Map (1) Geographical location of Al-Muthanna Governorate in Ir



Source: Ministry of Water Resources, General Authority of Survey, Map Production Department, Administrative Map of Iraq, scale 1,000,000:1, Baghdad, 2020  
 Map (2) of the administrative units of Al-Muthanna Governorate





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Source: Ministry of Water Resources, General Authority of Survey, Map Production Department, Administrative Map of Al-Muthanna Governorate, scale 500,000:1, Baghdad, 2020

## Research findings

### Descriptive information results

The characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age, education level, type of job, average monthly income were asked. In the gender section, among the 384 respondents, 82.77% were men and 18.22% were women; In the age group section, 0.31% of the total sample is between 21-30 years old, 65.10% between 31-40 years old, and 75.46% between 41-50 years old. 50.32 percent of the respondents are between 51-60 years old and 14.9 percent are over 60 years old. Regarding the level of education, 43.4% of the total sample had a doctorate, 57.27% had a master's degree, 74.49% had a bachelor's degree, 64.9% had a post-diploma, 15.3% had a diploma, and 47.5% had a bachelor's degree. . In the employment status section, 72.43% of the respondents are self-employed, 50.29% have government jobs, 80.20% of the respondents work in private companies, and 90.5% work in military and police institutions. Self-employed people form the dominant class, and in the frequency distribution of income status, 54.42% of the total sample has an income of less than one million dinars, 67.31% has an income of one million to one million and 500 thousand dinars. 35.13% income from 1 million and 500 thousand dinars to 1 million and 750 thousand dinars. And 42.12% have an income above two million dinars.

### Tourist Attractions

Based on table number (1) that all the indicators have been examined and tested in general, the assumption that HO is not significant, therefore the assumption of HI is confirmed; Its meaning is that tourism in the scope



of studies has a long distance to reach sustainable development in this field according to the study of the relevant components, and the facilities and services as well as the planning and state of the city from the perspective of the citizens have not been able to have much effect on the sustainable development of Al-Muthanna tourism. have in such a way that most of the polled cases were far lower than the optimal level and this issue is completely dependent on proper planning at the regional level.

Table (:1) test table

common	Average	Standard deviation	chi-square	Degrees of freedom	meaningful
Tourism components	3.0411	1.138	69.490	4	0.000

(research findings)

### Criteria and indicators for choosing a tourism brand

Urban branding is an essential factor for the development of policies and policies in cities; Because on the one hand, it causes the economic growth and development of cities and on the other hand, it acts as a channel to identify the identity of the city. The brand can become a suitable motivation factor for tourists to visit and return again. The reputation of a place is not created in a vacuum and it is not only because of the choice of tourists, but the marketers of a tourist place must create the image of the place in such a way that it can compete with the main competitors, so the brand can have a direct effect on the satisfaction of tourists from the destination. In the surveys carried out by the experts active in tourism, four general criteria were considered to determine the tourism brand of the region, so that according to the opinions of the experts, it is determined which of the considered indicators has the most points and is prioritized. The effective criteria for determining the tourism brand in Al-Muthanna are identified in the four main dimensions of physical, economic and infrastructural indicators, visual sight and landscape and cultural and social indicators as follows:

A- indices of physical symbols; B- economic and infrastructure indicators; C - visual indicators of sight and view; T - Cultural and social indicators (research findings).

Then, a number of indicators that are a subset of criteria are taken into consideration, which are extracted based on the evaluation of experts' opinions, and due to the comprehensiveness of these indicators, they are included in the four subgroups of criteria, which include nature, recreational accommodation, historical attractions, comfort and accommodation facilities, attractions It is culture, infrastructure, hospitality, security, and travel experience (research findings). By examining the criteria and indicators, we come to the conclusion that whether the considered components are suitable for the Muthanna tourism brand or not; Therefore, by weighting the indicators based on the AHP model, the most important applied indicators are examined based on the score (Table (3), (2), Chart (6)).

Table (2): relative preference matrices of criteria

standard	Physical symbols	Economic and infrastructure	sight and view	Cultural and social
Physical substances	1	0.2	0.33	0.165
Economic and infrastructure	5	1	2	0.33
sight and view	3	0.66	1	0.25
Cultural and social	6	3	4	1

(research findings)





Table (3): weight characteristics and prioritization of the investigated criteria

standard	Weight	rank
Physical substances	0.081	4
Economic and infrastructure	0.317	2
sight and view	0.167	3
Cultural and social	0.435	1

(research findings)

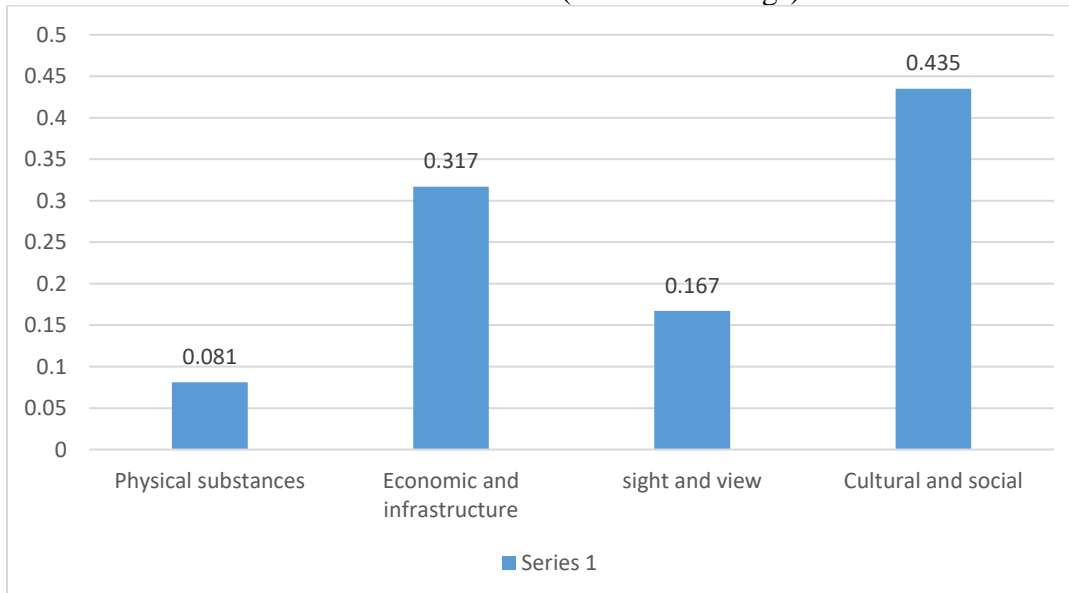


Diagram 6: Ranking of branding of Muthanna based on the studied criteria

The four considered criteria are determined based on the AHP model and priority matrices, then by giving points to the indicators of each criterion, its rank and weight are determined and analyzed one by one. Table (3) shows the relative importance of the general criteria of physical symbols, economic and infrastructural indicators, visual indicators of view and landscape, cultural and social indicators, which cultural and social criteria has the highest weight (0.435), also table (4) shows the weight of the indicators Study based on AHP model.

Table (4): The obtained weight of the study indicators based on the AHP model

Indicator	Indicator weight	Indicator	Indicator weight
Nature	0.59	welfare amenities	0.161
Infrastructures	0.103	Cultural appeal	0.097
hospitality	0.133	Historical charm	0.108
security	0.139	Recreational accommodation	0.088
Travel experience	112	Total	1



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(research findings)

After prioritizing and ranking the four main criteria of Tekbehtak branding indicators, the evaluated indicators are nature, recreational accommodation, historical attractions, accommodation and welfare facilities, cultural attractions, infrastructure, hospitality, security, and travel experience. The first index that was studied and did not get a very good score is the nature index, which after the study and analysis, it was determined that this index does not play an important role in determining the brand for the tourism of Muthanna city, considering the low score it has earned, therefore, considering The climatic and weather conditions as well as natural conditions in the region cannot be recognized as a brand and have priority. The second indicator that was investigated and measured is the index of recreational accommodation in the city, which is mainly considered in terms of its quantity, therefore, it was determined after the investigation, despite the fact that recreational accommodation has a high degree of importance in tourism and can be one of the priorities for determining the region's tourism brand. but due to the lack of proper and 100% coverage of these accommodations for tourists, it cannot be considered as a brand for Muthanna tourism.

The third index that was studied and analyzed is the index of infrastructures, which according to the appropriate score it has received, can be placed in the top priority and considered as the tourism brand of the region, but it does not have the main priority. The fourth index under investigation is the index of historical attractions, which can actually be considered as the tourism brand of Muthanna city due to the good score it has earned, but compared to some indicators, it has a lower score and cannot be prioritized in determining the brand. The next index to be investigated is the security component in tourism. Security is an intermediary index and is emphasized in all social, cultural, economic, etc. fields, but security in tourism can be an influential index due to the essence and function of the word tourism, in fact, considering the current situation of Muthanna city and also the appropriate score that is obtained from the total opinions of experts. has obtained, it can be considered as the brand of the region, but considering the generality of its use, this index cannot be placed as the first priority and tourism brand that is specific to Muthanna city.

Another index to be studied and analyzed to determine the priority of the index to determine the tourism brand of Muthanna city is the hospitality index. This component is the ruling mood of Iraqians and a culture that has a long history, and naturally, Muthanna city also has warm and hospitable people in welcoming and welcoming guests. The appropriate factors to be placed in the final ranking and to be placed in the priority of determining the brand, but it is not placed in the final ranking of the brand for tourism in the region. The travel experience index, due to having the appropriate feedback that may exist for each tourist in his previous travel experiences, while he has obtained a suitable score, is a factor to be considered for attracting tourists in Muthanna, which can attract tourists due to the previous experiences of people in using the tourist area. It is influential, but it cannot be considered as a brand for Muthanna tourism.

The index to be studied next regarding the determination of Muthanna tourism brand is the component of cultural attractions. Muthanna city is a city that has a rich and religious culture. In this part of the review and analysis, it has obtained a good score, but despite having many values, it is not in the priority of determining the brand for the city. The next index that was studied is the index of accommodation and welfare facilities in Muthanna city, which has obtained the highest score among the indicators in the study and analysis, and can be considered as the region's brand for tourism, although Muthanna city has major weaknesses in This is the field, but as the first priority among all the indicators, it can be introduced as an important priority and the tourism brand of the region. The analysis and measurement of the indicators and their comparison with each other shows that the three components of comfort and accommodation facilities, security and hospitality,



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which respectively score 161, 139 and 133 have been obtained and are placed in the priority of choosing the tourism brand of Muthanna city, so it can be concluded that these indicators can be considered as the priority of this research and also the tourism brand of the region can provide the means to attract tourists in order to push tourism towards sustainable development.

## Conclusion

Average to very high percentage was evaluated; Therefore, the condition of tourist attractions from the point of view of city residents and tourists is good. In the criterion of facilities and infrastructures in Muthanna, the effect of this criterion in attracting tourists with medium to very high status is equal to 62% and the planning of tourism in Muthanna from moderate to very suitable status is equal to 66.4%. Also, the evaluation results of citizens and tourists through each One of the presented components in attracting tourists shows that the highest level of influence is related to the standard of cultural and social tourism attractions, general tourism attractions and economic tourism attractions, which were rated by 88, 94 and 70% of citizens as relatively suitable to completely suitable, respectively. In the same standard, the components of natural tourism and the number and amount of tourist attractions were evaluated as 76% and 68% relatively inappropriate to completely inappropriate, and its meaning is that tourism in the scope of studies has a long way to reach sustainable development in this field according to the study of the relevant components. and the facilities and services, as well as the planning and condition of the city from the citizens' point of view, have not been able to have much effect on the sustainable development of Muthanna tourism, as most of the surveyed items are much lower than the optimal level, and this issue is completely dependent on proper planning at the regional level, and in general The factors that were measured as an important factor in attracting tourists and improving the economic, social and cultural conditions of the city, which leads to sustainable development, have not been able to have much effect in the city of Muthanna. In the expert section, in order to determine the role of the tourism brand for Muthanna, four criteria were initially considered, and the cultural and social criteria obtained the highest score among the other criteria according to the surveys carried out, then nine indicators were considered until after the review The index with the highest score should be selected as the tourism brand. Therefore, after reviewing all the indicators, the comfort and accommodation index was chosen as the first priority to determine the tourism brand of Muthanna, and after that, the security index was placed, which according to the score obtained can be Along with other components, it should be considered as one of the most important indicators. Another indicator that has been chosen as the third priority is the hospitality of the people of the region, which can be considered as one of the tourism brands of the region. At the same time, the direction of tourism in the city of Muthanna is quite clear, but there is a clear path in development. Tourism in Muthanna that is done with planning is not observed, therefore, it is necessary to focus on proper planning to revive and stabilize the indicators considered by experts, as well as citizens and tourists, and use all the facilities in Muthanna to create a path to achieve sustainable development in Muthanna. Tourism and highlighting the brand and promoting it is necessary to attract tourists in all seasons of the year. Finally, in determining the priority and brand of tourism, the index of accommodation and welfare places is introduced as the first priority and brand of the tourism area, and they are placed in the next categories of security and hospitality.

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