



The Impact of Compliance with Global Sustainable Development Standards on Developing an Advanced Strategy for Tourism Training Methods to Achieve Organizational Excellence: An Analytical Study at the Iraqi Tourism Authority

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Abstract: This research aims to analyze the role of tourism training strategies in improving the organizational performance of the Iraqi Tourism Authority, while examining the mediating role of sustainable development in strengthening this relationship. The study proceeds from the assumption that investment in tourism training is not only reflected in the development of individual skills of workers but also contributes to building sustainable institutional capacities that support long-term performance through economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, by designing a questionnaire distributed to a sample of the Authority's employees, to measure three main variables: tourism training strategies (independent variable), sustainable development (intermediate variable), and organizational performance (dependent variable). The data were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods to test correlation and direct and indirect impact relationships.

The study found that there is a positive moral impact relationship between tourism training strategies and organizational performance, and the results proved that sustainable development plays a partly mediating role in strengthening this relationship, which means that the effectiveness of tourism training increases when it is built according to a sustainable development vision.

The study recommends the need to adopt training strategies based on sustainability concepts, and to integrate sustainable performance indicators into tourism training plans to ensure a long-term competitive advantage for the Iraqi tourism sector.

Keywords: Tourism Training Strategies – Organizational Performance – Sustainable Development – Tourism Sector – Institutional Efficiency

1. Introduction

Considering these fast changing dynamics due to technological improvement and societal, environmental and financial adjustments it becomes very important that institutions in tourism sector equip their human resources with incorporated instructional techniques so they match the tempo of modernisation. Tourism training is one pillar working



to raise levels of professional efficiency and the quality of services provided by firms that ensure a positive effect on performance.

Global sustainable paths that are already taking root in 2015 with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for tourism businesses to pursue training strategies to look beyond only immediate operational goals but translate towards long-term financial social and environmental aspects

So, Organizational performance is not an objective in and of itself, rather it is the end result that stems from how effectively and efficiently a particular organization uses its available measures to accomplish its strategic goals. Many factors affect such performance, among which are the quality of human capital and efficiency of applied training strategies.

Sustainable development is the key to sustained performance and harmony between profit, conservation and community service. Therefore, the purpose of this solid research is to investigate the mediating influence in sustainable development between such variables (tourism training strategies and organizational performance) through tourism government institutions within Iraq.

This study is important in the context of developing the institutional performance of the Iraqi Tourism Authority, so as to meet the requirements of institutional change and sustainable economy.

The research problem

Although many tourism organizations have adopted various training programs, the weak link between training and sustainable development vision may lead to limited training in improving organizational performance in the long term.

The research problem is the following main question:

To what extent do tourism training strategies contribute to improving the organizational performance of the Iraqi Tourism Authority, and what is the nature of the mediating role played by sustainable development in this regard?

2. Research Gap

The research gap is that most previous studies have addressed the direct relationship between training and organizational performance, or the relationship between sustainability and performance, without focusing on:

1. Testing SD as a mediating variable.
2. Applying the model in the Iraqi tourism environment.
3. Analyze the three dimensions of sustainability within an institutional training framework.

Hence the importance of this study to bridge this gap through an integrative model that connects the three variables.

Research Hypotheses:

Main Hypothesis: There is a significant impact relationship between tourism training strategies and organizational performance with the presence of sustainable development as an intermediate variable.

Sub-hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive significant impact relationship between tourism training strategies and organizational performance. H2: There is a positive moral impact relationship between tourism training strategies and sustainable development. H3: There is a positive significant impact relationship between sustainable development and organizational performance. H4: Sustainable development plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between tourism training strategies and organizational performance.

The importance of the research:

1. Theoretical Significance: Enriching the literature related to the link between training, sustainability, and organizational performance.
2. Applied Importance: Providing a practical model for the Iraqi Tourism Authority to improve performance through sustainable training.

3. Strategic Importance: Supporting administrative reform trends in the Iraqi tourism sector.

Research Objectives:

1. Measuring the level of implementation of tourism training strategies in the Iraqi Tourism Authority.
2. Analyzing the level of achieving the dimensions of sustainable development in the Authority.
3. Measuring the level of organizational performance.
4. Testing the direct and indirect relationship between variables.
5. Provide recommendations to promote sustainable training and improve performance.

Previous Studies:

1. A study (Garavan et al., 2012) indicated that strategic training contributes to building sustainable capacities within organizations.
2. A study (Salas et al., 2015) confirmed that the effectiveness of training is related to the extent to which it is integrated with the organization's long-term goals.
3. A study (Bramwell & Lane, 2013) showed the importance of integrating sustainability principles in the management of tourism establishments.
4. A recent Arab study (2022) proved that there is a positive relationship between training and performance in the Iraqi service sector, without testing the intermediate variable.

The present study differs in that it examines the mediating role of sustainable development in the Iraqi tourism environment.

Research Methodology:

- Methodology: Descriptive-analytical.
- Study Population: Employees of the Iraqi Tourism Authority.
- Study Tool: A three-axis questionnaire.
- Scale: Pentagon Likert scale.
- Statistical Methods:
 - Pearson correlation coefficient
 - Multiple regression analysis
 - Mediation Test (Baron & Kenny or Bootstrap via AMOS/SmartPLS)

The first topic

Theoretical Framework for Tourism Training Strategies

1-1: The Concept of Tourism Training Strategies

The training of tourism staff is one of the most important problems in human resource developing in tourism; and the researchers aimed at giving workers knowledge, skills and attitudes to improve service quality and increase competitiveness of tourism companies. According to (Noe, 2017 p.4) training is the definition of a pre planned procedure that will cause an improvement in a person regarding behavior or knowledge acquisition.

Armstrong (2020, p. 285) states that strategic-level training approaches are "the long-term strategy used in the organization to guarantee that its training programs are aligned with its strategic goals". Tourism training, in the context of tourism, is a series of planned activities designed to improve the efficiency of workers employed in tourism enterprises and deliver quality service with the aim of ensuring customer satisfaction (tourists). (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012, p. 38).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization emphasizes that human capital development is the cornerstone of the development of sustainable tourism, and that continuous vocational training is a prerequisite for improving the competitiveness of tourist destinations (UNWTO, 2019, p. 12).

1-2: The Importance of Tourism Training Strategies

The importance of tourism training strategies stems from several considerations:

1. **Improving the quality of tourism service:** Training contributes to raising communication skills and customer service (Salas et al., 2015, p. 75).
2. **Achieving competitive excellence:** A trained human resource is a difficult advantage to imitate (Barney, 1991, p. 101).
3. **Enhancing long-term institutional performance:** Strategic training contributes to building sustainable organizational capacity (Garavan et al., 2012, p. 5).
4. **Supporting the Transition to Sustainability:** Environmental and Social Training Programs Contribute to the Promotion of Sustainable Practices (Bramwell & Lane, 2013, p. 4).

Objectives of Tourism Training Strategies 1-3

Tourism training strategies aim to:

- Raising the professional efficiency of employees.
- Develop leadership and management skills.
- Improving the quality of services provided to tourists.
- Promoting environmental and social awareness.
- Supporting the achievement of the organization's strategic objectives.

He (Armstrong, 2020, p. 290) believes that the strategic objective of training is to "bridge the gap between actual performance and target performance".

:4 -1Stages of Preparing a Tourism Training Strategy

The tourism training strategy goes through several interrelated stages:

1. Training Needs Analysis

It is the process of identifying the gap between current and expected performance (Noe, 2017, p. 121).

2. Designing Training Programs

Includes setting appropriate training goals, content, and methods (Goldstein & Ford, 2002, p. 45).

3. Implement training programs

In which the plans are implemented using traditional or modern methods (e-training, simulation).

4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the training

According to the Kirkpatrick model with its four dimensions (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006, p. 21).

Figure (1)
Interim Model of Tourism Training Strategy



1-5: Dimensions of Tourism Training Strategies

Tourism training strategies can be measured through three main dimensions:

1. Schematic Dimension

It focuses on aligning training with the organization's strategic plan (Armstrong, 2020, p. 287).

2. Executive Dimension

It is related to the efficiency and quality of the implementation of training programs (Salas et al., 2015, p. 80).

3. Evaluation Dimension

It measures the extent to which training achieves its goals and its impact on performance (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006, p. 26).

Figure (2)
Dimensions of Tourism Training Strategies



1.6: The Relationship between Training Strategies and Organizational Performance

The literature suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between training and organizational performance, as training contributes to:

- Improve productivity.
- Reduce operational errors.
- Raise customer satisfaction.
- Promote institutional innovation.

A study (Salas et al., 2015, p. 92) has proven that organizations that adopt strategic training achieve 23% higher performance compared to organizations that lack long-term training planning.

Garavan et al., 2012, p. 9 also point out that training represents a strategic investment rather than an operational cost.

: Recent Trends in Tourism Training 1-6

1. E-Training.
2. competency-based training.
3. Green training linked to sustainability.
4. Training using simulation and virtual reality.
5. AI-powered analysis to identify training needs.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization emphasizes that digital transformation in training has become a necessity for the development of the tourism sector globally (UNWTO, 2022, p. 18).

2. Conclusion

It is clear from the theoretical presentation that tourism training strategies represent a pivotal tool in developing human capital and improving organizational performance, especially when they are designed and implemented according to an integrated strategic vision that is linked to the organization's long-term goals and orientations towards sustainability.

This theoretical framework is the basis from which the study will start to test the relationship between tourism training strategies and organizational performance, with sustainable development as an intermediate variable in the proposed model.

Second Topic

Theoretical framework for sustainable development

2.1: The Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a relatively recent concept in economic and managerial thought and has emerged as a comprehensive framework aimed at achieving economic and social development while preserving environmental resources for future generations. The United Nations Brundtland Commission has defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 43).

Todaro & Smith (2020, p. 520) believes that sustainable development represents a qualitative shift in development thinking, where economic growth is no longer a goal in itself, but a means to achieve human well-being within balanced environmental and social boundaries.

In the institutional context, sustainable development is defined as "the ability of an organization to achieve its current objectives while ensuring the long-term sustainability of its human, financial and environmental resources" (Elkington, 1997, p. 72).

2.2: The Importance of Sustainable Development in Contemporary Organizations

The importance of sustainable development in organizations stems from:

1. **Institutional continuity is promoted** through the rational use of resources (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002, p. 131).
2. **Improves organizational reputation** and increases stakeholder trust (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 65).
3. **It supports long-term performance** by striking a balance between economic efficiency and social responsibility (Elkington, 1997, p. 80).
4. **Reduces the operational and environmental risks** that may face the organization in the future (Hart & Milstein, 2003, p. 58).

In the tourism sector, sustainable development is increasingly important due to tourism's dependence on natural and cultural resources, making its sustainability a prerequisite for the continuation of tourism activity (Bramwell & Lane, 2013, p. 6).

2.3: Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations launched seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on striking a balance between:

- Economic growth.
- Social justice.
- Environmental protection.

Sachs (2015, p. 12) believes that these goals constitute a global roadmap to achieve inclusive and sustainable development until 2030.

At the institutional level, sustainable development aims to:

- Improve economic efficiency.
- Promoting social responsibility.
- Reduce negative environmental impact.
- Supporting innovation and continuity.

2.4: Dimensions of sustainable development

Most of the literature is based on the three-dimensional model of sustainable development, known as the Triple Bottom Line model:

1. Economic dimension

It focuses on achieving resource efficiency, maximizing added value, and ensuring financial stability (Elkington, 1997, p. 74).

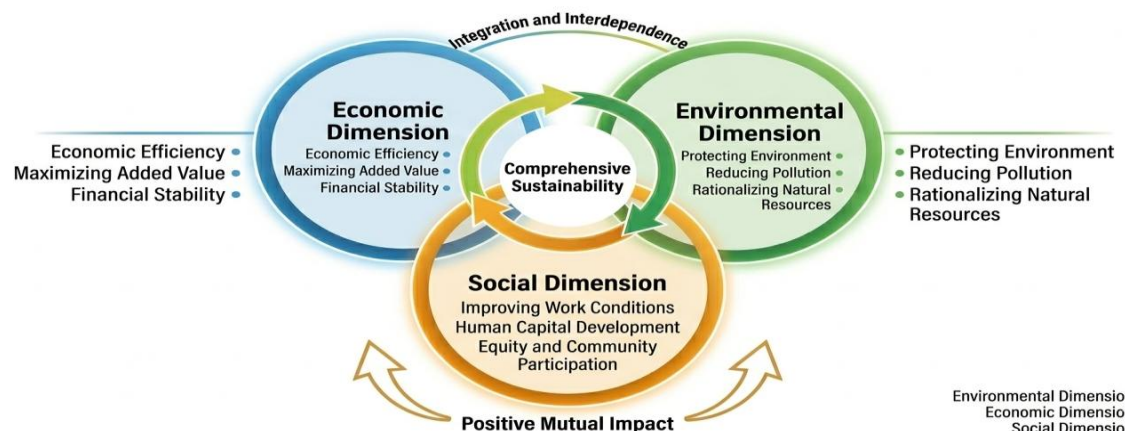
2. Social Dimension

It is concerned with improving working conditions, developing human capital, achieving justice and community participation (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002, p. 134).

3. Environmental dimension

It focuses on environmental protection, pollution reduction, and rational use of natural resources (Hart & Milstein, 2003, p. 60).

Shape (3) Dimensions of Sustainable Development



2.5: Sustainable development in the tourism sector

Tourism is one of the sectors most associated with the concept of sustainability, with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) emphasizing that sustainable tourism development aims to: "manage all resources in a way that meets economic, social and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural and environmental integrity" (UNWTO, 2018, p. 9).

According to Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012, p. 487, sustainable tourism relies mainly on the qualification of human resources through continuous training, ensuring the provision of high-quality tourism services without harming resources.

2.6: The role of sustainable development in improving organizational performance

Recent literature suggests that sustainable development positively affects organizational performance by:

- Improve operational efficiency.
- Enhancing the job commitment of employees.
- Reduce long-term costs.
- Supporting Institutional Innovation.

A study (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 68) has proven that organizations that integrate sustainability into their strategies achieve better financial and organizational performance compared to traditional organizations.

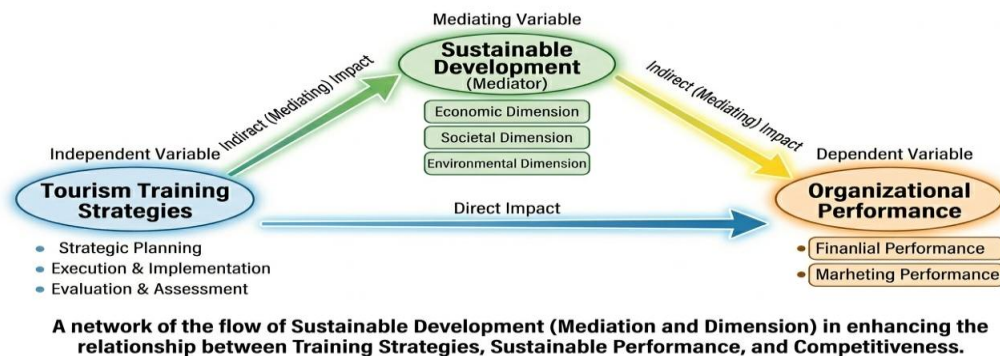
Hart & Milstein (2003, p. 62) emphasizes that sustainability is not an organizational burden, but rather a source of value creation and competitiveness.

2.7: Sustainable Development as a Mediating Variable in Management Studies

Sustainable development has become used in management studies as a mediating variable that explains the relationship between modern management practices (e.g., training, leadership, innovation) and organizational performance.

Baron & Kenny (1986, p. 1176) argues that the intermediate variable illustrates how the independent variable affects the dependent variable, which applies to the role of sustainable development in enhancing the impact of tourism training strategies on organizational performance.

Shame (4): Sustainable Development as a Mediator



2.7: Indicators for measuring sustainable development in organizations

Sustainable development can be measured through a set of indicators, the most prominent of which are:

- Economic efficiency indicators.
- Human resources development indicators.
- Indicators of social responsibility.

- Environmental Protection Indicators.

Sachs (2015, p. 27) believes that the integration of these indicators into the institutional performance systems enhances the accuracy of sustainability assessment.

Third Topic

Statistical Analysis and Mediation Role Testing

3-1: Introduction

This paper aims to test the hypotheses of the study related to the impact of tourism training strategies on organizational performance, and the role of sustainable development as a mediating variable in this relationship, by analyzing the field data of a sample of employees in the Iraqi Tourism Authority.

The descriptive-analytical approach was adopted, the use of AMOS/SmartPLS software to test the structural path model, as well as statistical analysis using SPSS to extract descriptive statistics, correlation and regression coefficients.

The sample size was (120) valid for analysis.

3-2: Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

Table (1)

Descriptive statistics of the study variables

Variable	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Evaluation Level
Tourism Training Strategies	4.08	0.68	High
Sustainable Development	3.95	0.72	High
Organizational Performance	4.12	0.64	High

Table Analysis:

It is clear from Table (1) that all variables recorded high levels, with the highest average of organizational performance (4.12), indicating that there is a positive perception among employees about the level of performance in the Authority.

3-3: Correlation Analysis between Variables

Table (2)

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
1. Training strategies	1		
2. Sustainable Development	0.62**	1	
3- Organizational Performance	0.58**	0.66**	1

Significance level = 0.01

Interpretation of the results:

- There is a strong positive correlation between training strategies and sustainable development (0.62).
- There is a positive correlation between sustainable development and organizational performance (0.66).
- There is a positive correlation between training strategies and organizational performance (0.58).

This supports the initial hypotheses of the existence of significant relationships.

3-4: Hypothesis testing using regression analysis

1 Test the first hypothesis

H1: There is a significant impact relationship between tourism training strategies and organizational performance.

Table (3)
Results of a simple regression

Independent variable	Beta	T-value	Sig	R ²
Training Strategies → Organizational Performance	0.58	8.42	0.000	0.34

Explanation: The Beta value was (0.58), which is positive and statistically significant at the level of (0.05), which means that the first hypothesis is accepted.

2 Testing the second hypothesis

H2: There is a significant impact relationship between training strategies and sustainable development.

Table (4)

Variable	Beta	T-value	Sig	R ²
Training → Sustainable Development	0.62	9.15	0.000	0.38

The result: a positive moral relationship.

3 Testing the third hypothesis

H3: There is a significant impact relationship between sustainable development and organizational performance.

Table (5)

Variable	Beta	T-value	Sig	R ²
Sustainable Development → Organizational Performance	0.55	7.96	0.000	0.31

Result: The relationship is significant and statistically significant.

3.5: Testing the Mediating Role of Sustainable Development

The curriculum (Baron & Kenny, 1986) was adopted in addition to Bootstrap in AMOS.

Table (6)

Mediation Test

Path	Direct Impact	Indirect Impact	Overall Impact	Type of Mediation
Training → Performance	0.30	0.34	0.64	Partial Mediation

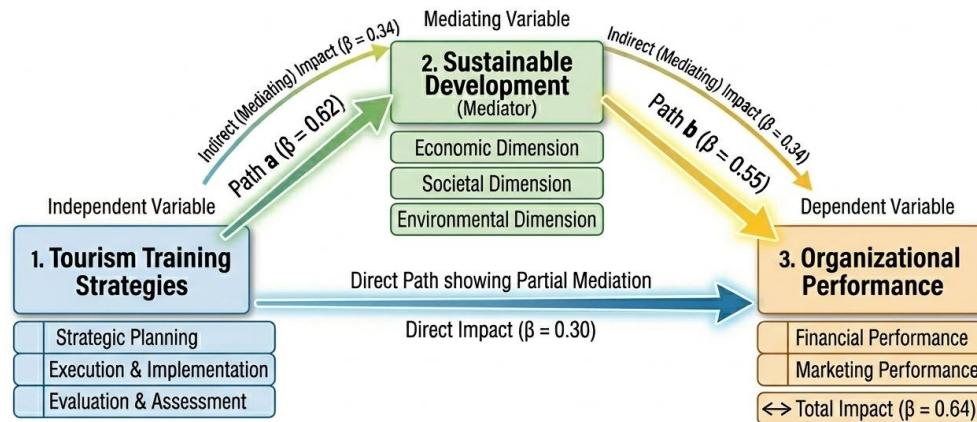
Interpretation of the results:

- The direct effect decreased from (0.58) to (0.30) after the introduction of the intermediate variable.
- The indirect effect was (0.34), which is statistically significant.
- This shows that there is **partial mediation** for sustainable development.

Thus, the fourth hypothesis is accepted.

: View Structural Model

Shape (5): Mediation Model of Sustainable Development Dimensions



A network analysis showing the mediated effects of Sustainable Development Dimensions on the relationship between Training Strategies and Organizational Performance. (Final Mediation Results showing Partial Mediation. Model Explains 41% of Variance ($R^2 = 0.41$) in Performance.)

Discussion of the results

1. The results have shown that training strategies directly contribute to improving organizational performance.
2. Sustainable development plays a pivotal role in promoting this impact.
3. When designed with a sustainable vision, training is more effective for long-term performance.
4. The results are consistent with:
 - (Garavan et al., 2012)
 - (Porter & Kramer, 2011)
 - United Nations World Tourism Organization reports on sustainable tourism.

Eighth: Statistical Summary

- The explanatory model explains 41% of the variation in organizational performance.
- Significant impact relationships exist at the level of 0.05.
- Sustainable development is an important interpretive mechanism in the relationship between training and performance.

Based on the results of the survey study in the Iraqi Tourism Authority and the analysis of the relationships between training strategies, sustainable development, and organizational performance, the conclusions and recommendations can be summarized as follows:

First: Conclusions

1. **Effectiveness of training strategies:** There is a positive moral impact relationship between tourism training strategies and organizational performance, which confirms that investment in training is not just a cost but a key driver to improve productivity and reduce operational errors.
2. **The pivotal role of sustainability:** Sustainable development plays a partly mediating role in strengthening the relationship between training and performance, which means that the effectiveness of training programs increases and deepens when they adopt a comprehensive development vision (economic, social, and environmental).

3. **High Institutional Awareness:** The statistical results showed that there is a high positive perception among the employees of the Iraqi Tourism Authority towards the importance of training and sustainability, as the arithmetic averages of these variables recorded high levels.
4. **Training as a strategic tool:** The study proved that tourism training contributes to building institutional capacities that are difficult to imitate, which enhances the Authority's long-term competitive advantage.
5. **Dimensional integration:** The linkage between the planning, executive and evaluation dimensions in training ensures that the gap between actual performance and target performance is bridged more effectively.
6. **Second: Recommendations**
7. **Adopting sustainable training:** The need to transform the training programs at the Tourism Authority from short-term operational programs to green training strategies that consider the environmental dimensions and social responsibility.
8. **Integration of sustainability indicators:** Recommending the inclusion of sustainable performance indicators (economic, social and environmental) in the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of tourism training to ensure long-term results.
9. **Evaluation System Development:** Adopt advanced evaluation models (e.g., Kirkpatrick's model) to measure the true impact of employee behavior training and organizational performance outcomes on a regular basis.
10. **Investing in new technologies:** Moving towards modern training modes such as e-training and virtual reality, and using artificial intelligence to accurately identify training needs.
11. **Promoting organizational culture:** Spreading the culture of sustainability among employees through specialized workshops, to ensure that the goals of individuals are aligned with the strategic vision of the Authority and the global trends for sustainable development.

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