

Assessment of the environmental impact as an implement for the sustainable touristic planning of heritage areas in Arabian cities

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ABSTRACT

with the increasing promotion of the touristic development concept and the emergence of the cultural tourism as one of the most important touristic market sectors particularly in the developing countries; the concern of heritage areas and its touristic marketing have become a challenge for both planners and decision makers Besides what the touristic projects in heritage areas realizes of an economic benefit and work opportunities and an enhancing income level for local inhabitants. Certain passive urban and economic and social impacts may happen. hence by, the need for new approaches through which the touristic development in the aforesaid areas may be dealt and be parameters of the concept of sustainability which aims basically to realize the balance among the tourism industry, the visitors, the environment and the present and the future local societies. the modern discussion of the sustainable touristic development have necessitated the development of this concept from more definitions and general bases in order to apply it practically through an implement which can be adopted by the planners and the concerning touristic and environmental authorities . the research adopts the hypothesis of the possibility of using technique of the assessment of the environmental impacts in the field of the touristic development of heritage areas in Arabian cities to realize its sustainability by taking into consideration the aforesaid technique in the touristic planning process as an implement for the developmental decision making and the choice of the ideal option for the development.

Key words: Heritage areas, Environmental impacts, Sustainable touristic, Decision makers

Introduction

Following the widespread of the adoption of tourism as an approach for the development of heritage areas in Arabian cities in accordance with the enhancing economic benefits and the appearance of the negative impacts of the touristic development on the urban and social aspects of heritage areas, the importance of the recognition of the dimensions of the touristic development process and its positive and negative impacts on both the heritage area and the local society has been emerged in addition to the need for new approaches through which the touristic development in these areas can be dealt from the perspective of sustainability. Although the researches and the studies in the field of the sustainability of the touristic development in the natural environments have been varied, there has been little orientation concerning the sustainability of the touristic development in the heritage environments in Arabian cities, hence by, An urgent need for researches and studies in the aforesaid field has been necessitated.

The objective of the research:

Besides what the touristic projects in heritage areas realize of an economic benefit and work opportunities and an enhancing income level for local inhabitants, certain passive urban and economic and social impact may happen. The problem of the research is to set an implement for the planning of the touristic development in heritage areas in away realizing the balance among the economic benefits from tourism and the preservation of the characteristics of the heritage area and the respect of life styles and the cultural values in order to guarantee the sustainability of the touristic development process on the long term.

The objective of the research:

The research aims to conclude a means for taking into consideration the assessment of the environmental impacts with their different dimensions in the decision making process when developing heritage areas in Arabian cities touristic ally to realize their sustainability through the introspection of urban and economic and social indicators to be taken Into consideration when dealing with heritage areas in any touristic development project.

The methodology of the research:

The research follows the analytical method through the review and the analysis of the theoretical studies in order to define the concept and the principles of the sustainable touristic development in heritage areas in Arabian cities and through the review and the collection of the most important urban and economic and social determinants of these projects in order to introspect general indicators for them. Through these determinants the general bases for the touristic development policies in these areas can be set in accordance with their distinguishing characteristics. The research also follows the applied method in the analysis of the case studies of some touristic development projects in certain Arabian cities to define the most important urban and economic and social impacts of such projects.

1-the touristic development of heritage areas through the sustainability frame:

With the increasing promotion of the touristic development concept the important role of tourism is being taken into consideration for the realization of a comprehensive development in heritage areas. During the seventies of the last century the orientation towards tourism as a means revive the economy of heritage areas and their infrastructure, to realize work opportunities, to generate an income and to enhance the environment level has begun. But, with the increasing promotion of the touristic role in heritage areas, the widespread of. The touristic developmental in heritage areas has become an argument where it was perceived that tourism can realize work opportunities with small wages for non- skilled classes of the society and that it requires the expenditure on the visitors while the priority should for the local inhabitants. Of the other criticisms against tourism which have been emerged in urban areas being the attraction of large numbers of visitors to cities which causes crowding, services deterioration, cost increase of urban management, in addition to the flows of tourists which may not be welcome by the local society. (Law, Christopher, 1996)

Viewing the negative impacts of the touristic development on the urban and the social aspect, of heritage areas, the need for new approaches through which the touristic development in the aforesaid areas may be dealt has been emerged. That has been synchronized with the adoption of the sustainable touristic development concept in the field of the natural environment which had a great concern as an approach for the control of the touristic development, the realization of its continuity and the prevention of the deterioration of the natural environment. The researches and the studies in the field of the sustainability of the touristic development in the natural environments have been varied but there has been little orientation concerning the sustainability of the touristic development in the heritage environments.

The orientation towards the relation between tourism and the concept of sustainability in heritage areas has directed the vision towards tourism to be regarded as an implicit part of the sustainable development process which aims basically to realize the needs of the present and the future local societies, followed by the

Appearance of the sustainable touristic development concept in heritage areas which aims to the realization of the balance among the tourism industry, the visitors, the environment and the local societies and as an integral part of the sustainable development process which is a touristic development particularly in the developing countries to realize the economic and the social benefits for their local societies and for the enhancement of their living standards.

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) in the year 2001 defined the sustainable touristic development that it is which realizes the needs of the present tourists and the hosting areas with the protection and the support of opportunities for the future through the management of the whole resources by away realizing the urban and the economic and the social needs of the aforesaid area with the preservation of the cultural integration and the life supportive systems. (www.world-tourism.org, 2001) Through the review of the different definitions of the sustainable touristic development concept in heritage areas, the general principles and bases for this concept can be determined as follows:

The touristic sustainability: By guaranteeing the tourists feeling of satisfaction through realizing his basic cultural and recreational and services needs and ensuring that his touristic experience in the heritage site realizes enrichment and enjoyment.

The economic sustainability: By realizing the utmost economic benefit and the possible material profits from the touristic projects and realizing work opportunities for the local areas inhabitants and contributing in the enhancement of their incomes with accounting the urban and the social costs within the economic feasibility

The urban sustainability: by protecting and reviving the valuable heritage urban resources in the long term and preserving the featuring characteristics of the heritage area and protecting its urban structure through the proportionality between the bulk of the touristic activities and the capacity of the area.

The social-cultural sustainability; by realizing the activities of tourism to the whole classes and guaranteeing the local satisfaction and equating among the generations to enjoy the heritage resources and sharing the citizens in the touristic development process and the protection of the local cultures variety.

But the modern discussions of the sustainable touristic development have necessitated the development of this concept from mere definitions and general bases in order to apply it practically through an implement which can be adopted the planners and the concerning touristic and environmental authorities. The research adopts the

hypothesis of the possibility of using the technique of the assessment of the environmental impacts in the field of the touristic development of the touristic development of heritage areas in Arabian cities to realize its sustainability.

2-The assessment of environmental impacts as an implement for the realization of the touristic development in heritage areas:

The concept of the assessment of the touristic impacts has appeared as a result of the widespread world concern of the problems of the environment and of the increasing need of submitting a specific quality of reporting on the environmental changes resulting by the developmental projects so that the decision maker might concentrate on for the choice among the projects and the measurement of the probable environmental and economic and social impacts as a result of the execution of the projects and the different options

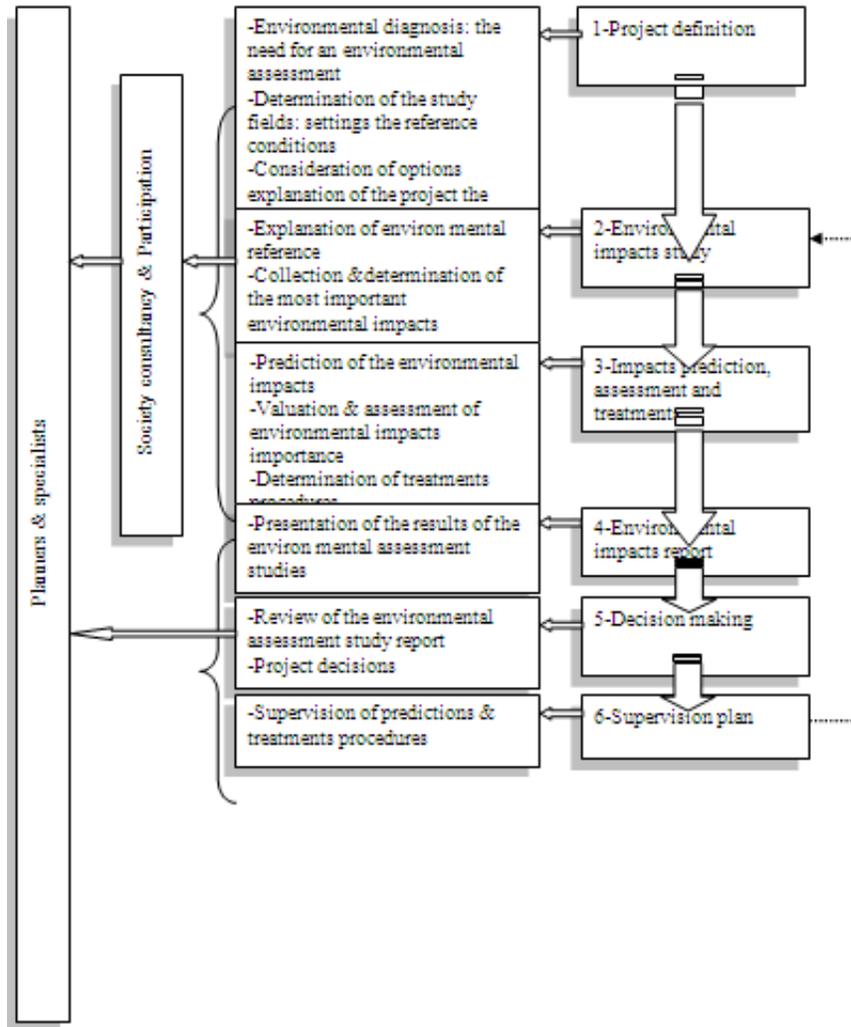


Fig. 1: Main stages each implies a number of steps Source: the researcher

It is possible through the prediction of the resulting impacts of the execution of the development on a certain site the planning of the development and the decision making in a way maximizing their positive impacts and minimizing their negative impacts after the definition and the analysis of the main characteristics of the environment. They determine priory's the factors which may have impacts on the ability to realize a desirable

Development or those which the proposed activities may affect. By the results of the Study of the environmental assessment, the developmental decisions can be determined by orienting them towards the environment preservation and the development control in order to realize their targets in addition to the determination of the need extent to minimize the probable negative impacts. (Khalid Muhammad F, 1999)

The technique of the assessment of the environmental impacts had an increasing concern in modern time in the field of the touristic development for its potentialities in the assessment of the sustainability and its practical application by the prediction of the different impacts of the development processes before they happen through the review of the literature related to the assessment of the environmental impacts, the general methodology of this technique can be determined in six main stages each implies a number of steps as shown in figure (1).

The methodology of the assessment of the environmental impacts is followed in the projects related to the natural environment, of which are the touristic development projects, where the target is to determine any possible reversible environmental sequences of the project on the elements of the natural environment and the bio environment in addition to the social economic elements in the area, in order to be taken into consideration through the planning process to ensure the sustainability of the project. As for the projects of the touristic development in heritage areas, the most studies for these projects are related to the assessment of their economic feasibilities or their impacts on the cultural heritage of the area without any relation to the economic and the cultural aspects of the project and in separation to the other important characteristics of the area as its heritage and its social and economic and urban characteristics which may be called the social and the economic and the urban environments..

The research proposes the use of the technique of the assessment of the environmental impacts as an implement of the sustainable touristic planning of heritage areas in Arabian cities which its only use is in reporting on the environmental impacts of the touristic development after the touristic layout or project is set and not through the project planning process. Hence, The assessment of The environmental impacts can be functioned as a protective procedure and net only The review and the validation in a late stage and as an implement for the decision making by being integrated and taken into consideration through the touristic planning process, hence, the optimum option for the development can be chosen as shown in figure (2).

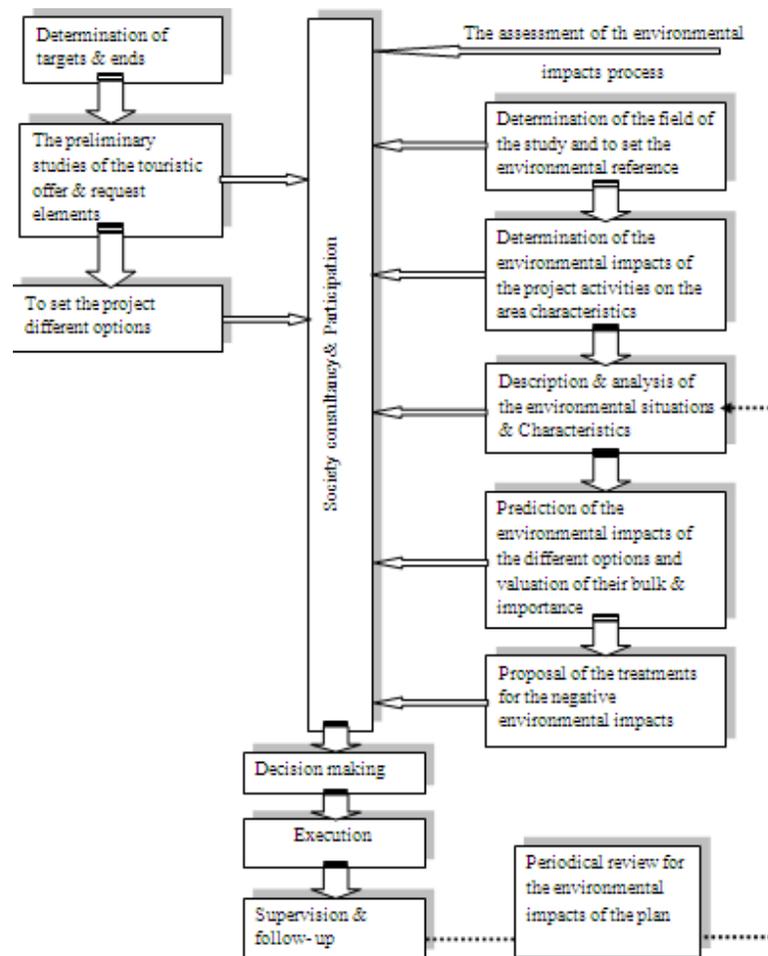


Fig. 2: Taking into consideration the assessment of the environmental impacts process into the touristic planning Source: the researcher

3-The environmental impacts of the touristic development projects in heritage areas in Arabian cities:

The most important environmental impacts of the touristic development in heritage areas in Arabian cities on the urban and the economic and the social aspects can be collected and determined through the review of the literature in this field and through the analysis of certain touristic development projects in Arabian cities as follows:

3-1-The touristic development impacts on the urban environment:

While tourism can be a reason for the survival of the urban heritage and for funds provision to preserve it, it can be a reason for its deterioration and its destruction. That reveals the conflict between tourism and the cultural heritage where tourism may be regarded as a two-edged weapon as UNESCO has referred. Some researchers view positive impacts of tourism on the heritage urban environment through the realization of an incentive for both the local inhabitants and the governmental authorities to preserve it in order to realize the needs of the tourists. Other researchers concentrate on the negative impacts of tourism due to the large numbers of the tourists which are attracted services which may have impacts on the characteristics of the cultural heritage.

In Petra city in Jordan which has been implied in the list of the World Heritage Sites in 1985, the number of the existing hotels has been raised from 5 hotels in 1985 to 60 hotels in 2006. So the responsible authorities stopped issuing building permissions for hotel construction which have become deforming the general view of the area. The study by the UNESCO for the development of Petra city has recommended the necessity of the prevention of any touristic hotels due to the rarity of water in the area and the consumption of water reservoir the tourists which hardly cover the needs of the local inhabitants. As a result of the intensive touristic development the land uses of the area have been changed: while 96% of the lands of Moses Valley were used for agriculture during the period between 1910 and 1930, they have been decreased to only 49% in 1990 in reference to the study of UNESCO which has recommended the necessity for the capacity of any hotel in Petra city not to exceed 200 rooms. Of the risks which the area has become exposed, the nomads dependence on tourism in their way of living through horses hire and local traditional products selling while they have been living among the ruins of Petra city until 1985 cultivating and taking care of the cattle where their numbers have been increased from 40 families in 1985 to 250 families in 1999. The growth of tourism has led to the attraction of other nomads from AlOaqbah city who have bought lands in Petra city to settle there, hence by, the lands prices have been raised. The situation has made those nomads to add other random storeys over their existing buildings which have been risen forming such deformation of the archaeological site.

(Petra national park management plan, UNESCO, 2000):

3-2-The impacts of the touristic development on the economic environment:

The economic impacts of tourism usually have more concern than the other aspects in most of the assessments of the touristic development in the countries of the third World in particular. The varied anthology in this field may be considered much concerned with the positive benefits and impacts of tourism, such as the earned income from the tourists exchange and expenditure and the realization of new work opportunities in the area. But there are negative economic impacts of tourism as inflation and the prices increase and the loss of the optional opportunities of the development and the loss of the original economic activities of the area and the decay of its effectiveness and the seasonality of work jobs.

In Fas city in Morocco which has been implied in the list of the World Heritage Sites in 1977, UNESCO called in 1980 a world expedition aiming to the protection of the city and to the enhancement of the degree of awareness towards the heritage and the cultural importance of the city, but it failed to provide the financial support and the necessary fund for the city preservation project. An economic analysis has been done in order to recognize the impact of the project on the profit of tourism assuming that the number of the nights which the tourist may stay in the city will increase from 109 to 3.5 touristic nights. Also, an economic assessment has been done for the influence of the project on the increase of the value of the lands and the lease value of the properties.

In ancient at-Tibah village rehabilitation project in Petra city as a touristic hotel, 200 work opportunities for a period of two years have been provided during the works of the village rehabilitation in addition to 171 job opportunities at the hotel. The area has witnessed after the occupancy of the project an economic activity and an increase in the value of the lands where the price of the square meter of the land has been risen five times.

3-3- The impacts of the touristic development on the social environment:

For a recent time there has not been a concern of the study of the social –cultural impacts of tourism, the economic benefits of the tourism industry has been a sufficient reason for the negligence and giving apart the probable social – cultural impacts. The concern of the most touristic studies particularly in the developed countries has been directed by the influences of the hosting society on the tourism industry more than the influences of tourism on the society. But, with the promotion of the concept of the sustainable touristic development, the concern of the social cultural impacts of the touristic development on the hosting society has begun in order to ensure its real use and its acceptance of tourism and to create the ambient welcome atmosphere for the tourists for the continuity of attracting them. (Lea, John, 1992)

While tourism can enhance the positive cultural interaction between the local citizen and the tourist and contribute to the revival of the local culture , it may lead to demographic changes and the labor organization change and the social differentiation among the society inhabitants and the change and the decay of the local culture and the creation of the social anxiety and the local unsatisfaction.

In Sidi Bu said city in Tunisia, due to the development of the intensive touristic services in the Centre of the city which has become crowded with the touristic activities , the restaurants and the coffee shops, the growth of tourism has been accompanied with the emigration of the local inhabitants from the area after the increase of the prices which caused the change in the way of life and the existence of a large number of foreigners in the area who have directed to buy the old houses and restore them. That led to the loss of the spirit and the proper style of the area created by its local inhabitants through their conventional way of life. In ancient at -Tibah village rehabilitation project in Petra city as a touristic hotel, the field surveys have revealed that some inhabitants did not desire the existence of the tourists in their conservative village in fear of the influence of the tourists behavior on the inhabitants of the village. (Sedky, Ahmad, 2002)

Al – Hafsiyah area development project in Tunisia which has been awarded various prizes, represents an example of the ability to revive the economic base and to vary the social texture of the ancient city inhabitants. By the return of the middle class to the social texture it has been a witness of the economic and the social integration of the inhabitants of the different classes. Through this project, which had positive social impacts, the old houses have been developed and the old market has been revived and the urban structure and style have been treated in addition to the compaction of the ancient city into the surrounding texture and the realization of material gains from the lands selling process by the whole project. (Sirag Ad-Din Ismail, 2002)

4- The environmental indicators of the touristic development in heritage areas in Arabian cities:

In order to apply the methodology of the assessment of the environmental impacts in the field of the touristic development in heritage areas in Arabian cities; the determinants of the touristic development impacts have been collected to conclude practical indicators through which the environmental impacts can be assessed and the extent of the sustainability of the touristic projects can be measured and the acceptable utmost limits of the environmental impacts can be determined when the touristic development projects in heritage areas in Arabian cities are planned. Through the review the impacts of the touristic development in heritage areas in Arabian cities; It may be said that those impacts are related to the characteristics of the heritage area which determine primarily the environmental impacts of the touristic development in these areas.

The characteristics of the heritage area can be determined through three main aspects namely: the urban environment, the economic environment and the social environment. These three aspects determine the specificity of the touristic development impacts and its intensity. All of the environments cannot last encountering the increasing numbers of the tourists and their flows by the same degree. The most negative impacts of tourism are occurred in the less flexible and the more sensitive environments as the areas of the extraordinary cultural background which are often afield for the intensive touristic development due to their proper attraction to the touristic. Whenever the local resources as the labor, the capital, the lands and the infrastructure are limited and rare; the competition among them is great and the cost of their use opportunities in tourism are also great.

The characteristics of the heritage area and the impacts of the touristic development on them due to these characteristics can be reviewed as follows:

1-The social- cultural environment: the social- cultural characteristics of the area inhabitants have an important influence on the degree of the development and the change in such area. Whenever the heritage area culture is extraordinary and featuring it is more attractive; but it is more sensitive to the influence of the touristic existence. The result is the change of the heritage area culture. The social characteristics of the area inhabitants determine the real benefit bulk of the economic impacts of the touristic development. The area which involve relatively unskilled qualification inhabitants and a few optional work opportunities; tourism can support providing work opportunities within it, then, the inhabitants desire and acceptance for the touristic development are greater. While the area which hasn't a social structure having the power to realize the requirements of the touristic development; its response to the economic impacts as foreign investment and the immigration to the area is more sensitive ; that changes the social- cultural structure of the local society at high speed and into

greater transformation. The beliefs and the thoughts of the local society and the degree of its acceptance to the other reflects the possibility of its participation in the touristic development process and hence its success.

2-The economic environments: the impacts of tourism are related to the economic structure of the heritage area. Whenever the economic base of the area is strong, developing and of greater bulk ; it becomes of more ability to gain the utmost benefits of tourism and of less costs. Whenever the investments for the development of the necessary basic structure of the touristic development and the needs of the tourists are provided; the local economic benefit of tourism becomes greater. As for small economies which often depend upon import; they often realize a limited benefits from tourism. When there is a industrialization in the area; it decreases the importance of the economic touristic role of the area. The economic characteristics of the area inhabitants determine the real benefit bulk of the economic impacts of the touristic development . the area which has a high percentage of non- employment and a few optional work opportunities; the touristic development have positive economic impacts and the inhabitants desire and acceptance for the touristic development are greater Whenever the economic relations between the tourism sector and the other economic sectors are stronger; the touristic multiplier becomes greater and the benefit bulk of tourism becomes greater.

3-The urban environment: the domain of the area and its content have an influence on the potentiality of the attraction of large numbers of tourists. Whenever the domain of the area is more extending ; it can encounter the existence of the tourists and the environmental impacts better. Whenever the local resources as the lands are rare; the competition for them and the costs of their use opportunities in tourism are greater. If the basic structure is insufficient and being over exploited in tourism, a conflict among the inhabitants and the tourists will result. Whenever the sensitivity of the area is greater such as the features of the archaeological buildings and the importance of the heritage sites; the risk of the unrecovered urban destruction becomes greater. But in the case of the deterioration of the heritage buildings and the failure in managing their operation in a way realizing an economic benefit sufficient for their restoration and their preservation; tourism may have positive impacts on creating new functions for the heritage buildings and hence conserving them.

Through the previous review of the determinants of the impacts of the touristic development; the indicators of the characteristics of the heritage area determining the environmental impacts of development can be set as follows:

Urban environment indicators:	Economic environment indicators:	Social- cultural environment indicators:
1. Functional negligence of heritage buildings	1. Inhabitants income level	1. Population numbers and population structure
2. The visual picture of the area	2. The economic activities variety	2. Non- employment percentage
3. The population density and the crowedness degree	3. The percentage of the activities related to tourism	3. The percentage of the professions and the crafts related to tourism
4. The percentage of the open space lands	4. The locality of the production of the economic activities	4. The educational level of the area inhabitants
5. the potentiality of the land use for tourism	5. The percentage of the lands possession by the area inhabitants	5. The degree of the acceptance of the 'Other'
6. Roads network energy capacity	6. The desire of the private sector for the investment in the area	6. The roots of the cultural values and the customs preservation
7. The efficiency of the infrastructure network		
8. Air pollution level		
9. Noise level		

Frame 1: The indicators of the heritage area characteristics determining the impacts of the touristic development. Source: the researcher

The proposed indicators are considered as a simple implement useful for assessing the extent of the sustainability of the touristic development projects which have been executed and their impacts and their different sequences have appeared and for supervising the sustainability development in the course of time through the supervision of the environmental indicators. By the measurement of the environmental indicators; the urban and the economic and the social changes related to the impacts of the development can be registered after being executed as the traffic flows and the air quality and the noise level and the labor hierarchy. These indicators provide information about the characteristics and the performances of the variables in both time and place and about the quality and the bulk of the environmental impacts. Hence the supervision of these indicators contribute in the project management in an effective way.

The proposed indicators are considered as a planning implement through which the touristic project can be directed towards the sustainability at the preliminary stages of its planning and the decision making support; that by the determination of the potentialities and the determinants of the heritage area for the touristic development and the proposal of its touristic planning bases in accordance with them in addition to the possibility of using it as an early alarm system in order to determine the negative orientations on the site before the passing of time

necessary for considering treatment decisions and to support the determination and the correction the unexpected impacts and to ensure effectively the consensus of the projects or the exceptional decisions.

5-The results:

Through the previous study the following results have been set:

1. The sustainable touristic development of heritage areas implies three basic dimensions: the urban sustainability, the economic sustainability and the social sustainability.
2. The technique of the assessment of the environmental impacts can be used for the prediction of the environmental impacts of the developmental projects for the choice among the different options.
3. The technique of the assessment of the environmental impacts can be used for the realization of the sustainability of the touristic projects in heritage areas through being implied into the touristic planning process before the decision making phase.
4. There are three basic determinants for the touristic development of heritage areas: the characteristics of each of their urban and economic and social environments. By analyzing the aforesaid three determinants through the measurement of their indicators we can predict the environmental impacts of the touristic development and hence by determine the developmental policies
5. The proposed indicators of the impacts of the touristic development are considered a simple implementation for the assessment of the sustainability extent of the touristic development projects which have been executed and which their different impacts and sequences have been appeared and for the observation of their sustainability development through the course of time.

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