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## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM AND ITS RELATION TO ARCHITECTURE – CASE STUDY: AI-BAHA CITY, THE EMIRATE OF AL-BAHA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Tourism is a key factor for change and tourism functions as a catalyst for the transition from traditional ways of life to the so-called modern forms of society. Accordingly, tourism often brings with it new trends and behavioural standards. Especially in third-world countries, these influences can be different due to many factors, including the type and size of the tourism project, the number of visitors and the nature of the destinations. Ecotourism is, in response, a natural tourism that contributes to conservation by generating funds for protected areas and creating jobs for the local communities that it affects. There is a relationship between architecture, land and tourism, which forms the basis of new urban landscapes that is driven by the phenomenon of tourism can affect urbanisation processes and how they are perceived, leading to the use of renewable urban spaces that help to change forms of social aggregation. Therefore, urban tourism studies are very interesting because urban places are unique and all differ from one another. Cities differ in terms of standards, locations, jobs, landscapes and cultural heritage.

The objective of this research is to explore the types of ecotourism that can be exploited in the Emirate of Al-Baha, highlighting the different elements of the environmental tourism attractions that already exist. The results of this study clarifies the concept of tourism that is based on visits to natural areas, conservation and environmental sustainability – such as increasing community revenues and conserving natural resources, improving environmental quality and developing infrastructure.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Ecotourism, Architourism, Urban tourism, Sustainable, Infrastructure.

### **1. Introduction**

The tourism industry is one of the largest industries in the world growing rapidly throughout the last years. For decades, the tourism industry's growth has a key role to increase economic activity for many countries [1]. In an era of heightened environmental consciousness and increased accessibility to remote areas, ecotourism has emerged as one of the fastest growing markets in the tourism industry that is based on natural environments. Ecotourism is defined as 'Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people' (The International Ecotourism Society [TIES], 1990).

The promotion of the tourism industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is making slow progress due to the lack of official and popular interest. Tourism has become a fully-fledged industry and service provider in which the joint official and popular efforts are crucial for its promotion. However, there are many other intertwined factors that may affect promoting the tourism industry. Although the Al-Baha region enjoys natural tourism resources, there are obstacles facing its promotion. Tourism has become an industry that serves a wide range of customers. The region's tourism potential needs both development and promotion to succeed. Since the tourism industry needs an awareness to be fostered regarding its ecological and touristic dimensions, this study tries to highlight some important factors that affect the attraction of tourists and those interested in promoting the region's heritage and its tourism services [2].

The KSA has launched its future vision, the 'Saudi Vision 2030', which covers many sectors including tourism. By 2025, the tourism industry is expected to generate about 930,000 jobs [3], making tourism industry in the KSA is very promising and that it needs more capital and technological investment – investments which are mainly the concern of the public and private sectors [4].

### *1.1 Statement of the problem*

In order to assist government agencies and tourism companies in Al-Baha city, it is necessary to study the architectural and infrastructural requirements within the development of tourism and ecotourism and compare their evolution to other touristic cities. This facilitates the maximum level of comfort for the tourists and thus can help in the development of tourism in Al-Baha city.

### *1.2 Objectives of the research paper*

This research aims to investigate the ecotourism and its relationship to architecture. Furthermore, this research also aims to raise awareness of the importance of ecotourism in Al-Baha city. The results of this study will help the government agencies and companies working within tourism to find suitable solutions for tourism development

### *1.3 Structure of the research*

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: the second section concerns the relationship between architecture and tourism while the third section explains the cases for the study. The fourth and last section involves the analytical study conclusions and the recommendations for stakeholders.

## **2. Tourism**

There have been numerous case studies of tourism in specific cities, written either in the hopes of anticipated future benefits or as a warning of future feared costs. Many texts stress the role of tourism as an instrument of urban economic development or as a component or catalyst for local urban revitalisation and regeneration. Terms such as 'recreational business district', 'tourist historic city' or 'urban tourism precincts' reflect longstanding attempts at relating tourism to cities [5]. The tourism industry should respect the needs and values of local people, support the concept that local people should determine their own development, actively encourage local community engagement in tourism projects, promote the active partnership of local people and communities in tourism development, involve the widest range of local associations, actively support local enterprises and cooperatives which provide

services, goods and crafts, support locally owned shops, restaurants and guide services, involve local people through employment at all levels, encourage the development of home-based tourism accommodation and facilities and prevent disruption to, and the displacement of, local people. Tourism, perhaps more than any other activity, depends on quality, human and natural environments and resources [6].

Tourism is a powerful agent of change. International tourism plays a key role for the transition from traditional ways of life to so-called modern, Western forms of society. Accordingly, tourism often brings with it the introduction of new behavioural trends and norms. Especially in third-world countries, these impacts vary according to many factors, including the type and scale of the tourism enterprise, visitor numbers and the nature of the destinations [7].

### *2.1. Types of tourism*

The types of tourism have been dynamic throughout time – they vary a lot. The types of tourism presented in a given period are generated by the needs of its objectives, the level of cultural and social facilities and the existing means of transport. Tourism is categorised into the following genres, which are as follows: cultural and educational tourism, medical tourism, religious and pilgrimage tourism, sports tourism, political tourism, social tourism, natural tourism (or ecotourism, the subject of this paper), rural tourism and agricultural tourism [8].

### *2.2. Ecotourism*

Ecotourism is a form of tourism driven primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures. Partakers in ecotourism visit relatively undeveloped areas in the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. Ecotourism practices a non-consumptive use of natural resources contributing to the visited area through labour or financial means [9].

Ecotourism is a form of nature-based tourism that is aimed to provide learning opportunities while highlighting local and regional benefits, demonstrating environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability [10]. It involves travel to remote or natural areas which enhances the understanding and appreciation of natural environments and their cultural heritage, avoiding damage or deterioration of the ‘environment and the experience for others’ [11]. Another element of ecotourism is the idea of traveling to enjoy the natural diversity of life and human culture without causing damage to either [12]. The idea of ecotourism contributing both towards socioeconomic and environmental benefits burst into the public consciousness during the 1990s [13].

It can now be considered as one of conservation biology’s hottest ‘buzzwords’ [14]. Ecotourism is described by Goodwin as a ‘Low impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through a contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for local people and therefore protect their wildlife heritage area as a source of income’ [15].

## **3. Architecture and urban tourism**

### *3.1. Architourism*

Architecture is a commodity of touristic consumption and objectified cultural capital. Visitors are not drawn by tourist attractions but by the ‘qualities of place and culture’ – ‘architecture’, ‘people’, ‘food’, ‘culture’ and ‘diversity’ [16]. Architecture and tourism have always had a close relationship. As architecture is a part of our everyday

environment, it is impossible to ignore it, especially if it has historical, cultural and artistic meaning. Today, tourists have become more demanding, traveling for the sake of something refreshing and new. Recently, tourism has faced a new phenomenon – architourism, where tourists travel to see architecture, with architecture being not only a part of a destination but the sole reason to travel to it. This phenomenon is very new and still under vast and extensive research, which is why it was a challenge for the author of this thesis to undergo a solo research project about the influence that architecture has on tourists and their touristic experiences [17]. There is a relationship between territory, architecture and tourism, and this is the basis for new urban landscapes: The phenomenon of tourism can influence the processes of the urbanisation of places and how they are perceived, generating renewed urban metaphors and helping to change social forms of aggregation and modes of communication [18].

Architecture is viewed as one of the products of ecotourism that can best contribute towards sustainable development. A given host destination or community is explained as an organism that has spiritual and physical interactions with its surrounding environment. In addition, architecture is explained as a part of the social products that contribute to the interaction between a society and its surrounding environment and towards being sustainable through the use of spaces, materials and renewable sources of energy. The main cultural outcomes for architecture that are used as a product of ecotourism are the same as the anticipated cultural outcomes for the sustainable development of ecotourism. These outcomes include an awareness of the local people, their cultural and environmental capital and their heritage, and the engagement of local people in the sustainable development process through architecture that is used in ecotourism development [19].

### *3.2. Urban tourism*

The concept of urban tourism is very broad and it consists of all kinds of entertainment activities that are conducted within cities. The improvement of an urban environment and the perfection of all kinds of services and facilities are all great attractions for tourists. A successful example of an urban tourism site requires good and suitable transport links, a well-blooming market, better trade, a good atmosphere for shopping, the latest developed information and technology, great services and leisure activities, modern urban land and a rich urban culture. Therefore, many people decide on many different types of cities as destinations for their holidays and the urban tourism in those cities is well-known[20]. Urban tourism appears to be limited exclusively to the study of the links between tourism and the city. For a very long time urban geography has been confused with the study of the city; only recently has attention been placed on tourism as an urban phenomenon. Based on these premises, we can identify tourism as a form of urbanity, a relationship with the space that starts from a project, an intention that regards the practice of areas and places within a city [20]. Urban tourists arrive in a city in concentrated numbers on specific days and there are significant seasonal variations. Therefore, there is pressure on the service of economic development goals, giving priority to issues such as their urban image and iconic cultural projects – projects such as major events (festivals or events of cultural importance, for example) and iconic buildings. The touristic experience within cities is measured in days and hours, even minutes in the case of cultural attractions and even in seconds in terms of particular locations. Tourists always have a partial and incomplete knowledge about the local culture and can often lack sensitivity towards the heritage that they are experiencing: The complexity of a city is reduced to a simplistic past, often lacking in depth and context [21].

### 3.2.1. Key factors of urban tourism evolution

It is estimated that urban tourism has evolved under a complex range of factors, some of which hold great influence over the development of urban tourism: increased leisure time, population revenue growth, transport development, socio-demographic changes, changing travel motivations, improving city images, an increased demand for business trips, requests for personal interest visits, urban environmental degradation and terrorism [22]. Urban tourism consists mainly of three elements; namely, its primary elements, secondary elements and additional elements, as shown in table 1 [20].

### 3.2.2. Advantages of Urban Tourism

Urban tourism, if correctly developed, planned and managed, may generate advantages and benefits both for urban communities and for the overall society [23]. Tourism encourages the development of some new cultural and commercial facilities and improvements that can be used both by the residents and the tourists. Tourism permits the collection of the necessary funds to preserve natural, archaeological and historical monuments, art and cultural traditions and, most of all, it improve the quality of the environment [24].

**Table 1.**

Urban tourism [20].

Urban Tourism						
The Primary Elements					The Secondary Elements	The Additional Elements
Cultural Facilities	Sports Facilities	Amusement Facilities	Physical Characteristics	Socio-cultural Features		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Museums</li> <li>•Art galleries</li> <li>•Theatres</li> <li>•Cinemas</li> <li>•Concert halls</li> <li>•Convention centres</li> <li>•Other visitor attractions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Indoor stadiums</li> <li>•Outdoor stadiums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Night clubs</li> <li>•Casinos and bingo halls</li> <li>•Organised events</li> <li>•Festivals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Historical street patterns</li> <li>•Interesting buildings</li> <li>•Ancient monuments and status</li> <li>•Parks and green areas</li> <li>•Waterfronts (harbour, canal, river)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Liveliness of a place</li> <li>•Language</li> <li>•Local customs and costumes</li> <li>•Cultural heritage</li> <li>•Friendliness</li> <li>•Security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Accommodation</li> <li>•Catering facilities</li> <li>•Shopping</li> <li>•Markets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Accessibility</li> <li>•Transportation and parking</li> <li>•Tourist information (Maps, Guides, etc.)</li> </ul>

## 4. Case study (Al-Baha)

Al-Baha is the headquarters of the Governor, the local councils and many branches of governmental departments. Receiving the state's special attention, the city of Al-Baha is abounding in educational, touristic and medical institutions. The 'Pearl of Resorts' is the name given to Al-Baha by the visitors who become acquainted with the city. The sites of Khayal al Masna' and al-Aqiq were major gold-mining areas, while the village of Kuna is home to over one hundred building structures that date back to South Arabian civilization.

### 4.1. Geography, location and climate

Al-Baha lies in the south west of the KSA, between the holy city of Makkah and Aseer. It is the smallest of the Kingdom's provinces (11 thousand km<sup>2</sup>). It is surrounded by a number of cities, including Beesha to the east, Taif to the north, Al Qunfuda to the west and Abha to the south. This tourist city is situated in an area characterised by natural tree

cover and agricultural plateaus. It consists of six towns, the most important of which are Beljarshi, Almandaq, Almekhwah and Baha city (the centre of the Province). The Province is comprised of 31 administrative centres and has a population of 533,000. The climate in Al-Baha is greatly affected by its varying geographic features. The climate in Al-Baha is mild comparing to other Saudi's cities with temperatures ranging between 12–23 C. Due to its location (above sea level), Al-Baha's climate is moderate during summer and cold in winter. Rainfall is higher in the mountainous region, with falls within the range of 229–581 mm. The average rainfall throughout the whole region is 100–250mm annually [25].

#### 4.2. The ecotourism attractions in Al-Baha







Al-Baha is a unique landscape area which is the most important characteristic of the region in general. The natural beauty of the region includes mountainous highlands, many forests scattered in the highlands, diverse plants and mountain animals. The visitor has great fun in the areas overlooking the Tihama plains.

**Table 2.**




The Ecotourism Attractions in the Emirate of Al- Baha [25].

The Ecotourism Attractions in the Emirate of Al-Baha					
Al-Baha	Baljurashi	Al-Mandak	Al-Makhwah	AL-Aqeq	Qalwa
Raghadan Park	Al Janabeen Park	Al-Khalab Park	De Ain	Tiba Park	Alqrai Park
Prince Mashary Park	Al-qom Park	Amdaman Park	Mount Shada	Thard Valley Park	Ruba Park
Prince Mtab Park	Shukran Park	Park Noon lunch	Nwan Dam	Waterfall Park	Mount Nice
Muttaf Park	Umm Ghaith Park	Al Ghadeer Park	Lbwa Valley	Dam Park	
Mehran Forest Park	Hzana Park	Centennial Park			
Gdr Forest Park					
Almadah Park					
National Wealth Park					
Shahba Forest Park					




**Table 3.**  
The Natural Tourism Attractions in Al-Baha [26].

The Natural Tourism Attractions in Al-Baha		
Raghadan Park	It is one of the most beautiful parks in the Al-Baha area. It is located on the edge of a cliff. It offers wide views down the cliff and of the valley. It is equipped with all services and overlooks the King Fahd obstacle road which connects the Al-Baha with the Makhwah.	
Prince Mashary	It is located on the northwest of Al-Baha. Many services are available and there is a waterfall descending into a pond surrounded by rocks, which in the past was a source of water for the local population.	
Prince Mtab Park	Located in the centre of Beni Kebir, in the middle of the road linking the cities of Al-Baha and Biljurchi, this park is situated on the top of a mountain covered with juniper trees. It offers endless panoramic views for its visitors.	
Mehran Forest Park	Located 2 km south of Al Bah City, it is located in a region completely covered with small plants throughout the year; a real delight for all who look at its beauty.	
Gdr Forest Park	It is located in the northwest of Al-Baha, 10 km from the centre of the city. It can be accessed by visitors with ease and it boasts many services. There is a waterfall in a pool surrounded by rocks.	
National Wealth Park	Al-Baha is located on the road to Taif. It is located 30 km away from Al-Baha city.	



**Table 4.**  
The Natural Tourism Attractions in Baljurashi [26].

The Natural Tourism Attractions in Baljurashi		
Al Janabeen Park	Al Janabeen Valley is located southeast of Balgharshi province, 13 kilometers to the south, where the researcher can discover the beauty of nature and greenery	
Al-qom Park	This park is located 20 km south of the city of Balgharshi on the south road. The park is characterised by the spread of wild olive trees	
Shukran Park	It is about 20 km from Balgarshi province on the tourist road, which is a link between the governorate and the parks on the main road connecting to Asir region.	

**Table 5.**  
The Natural Tourism Attractions in Al-Mandak [26].

The Natural Tourism Attractions in Al-Mandak		
Al-Khalab Park	This park is situated to the northwest of Al-Mandak and boasts several notable features such as falconry, sycamores and litter. The park has umbrellas, seating areas, children's games, water courses and lighting.	
Amdaman Park	It is located in the north of the Al-Mundak Province and is one of the most beautiful parks, boasting pristine and attractive nature. It is characterised by its dense vegetation. Its area is large and it has abundant junipers, aldos and wild olive trees.	
Al Ghadeer Park	10 km north of the Al-Mundak Governorate, this park, which is covered with plants, wild olive trees and junipers, has many basic facilities that provide the visitor with the comfort and entertainment of the land itself.	

**Table 6.**  
The Natural Tourism Attractions in Al-Makhwah [26].

The Natural Tourism Attractions in Al-Makhwah		
De Ain	It is located on a mountain connecting Saraya with Tihama, which is 24 km from the city of Baha. The Rush Valley overlooks complex buildings separated by complex rock breaks inspired by the use of foundations and walls of buildings.	
Mount Shada	It is a high mountain located west of Al-Makhwa Governorate. It has spectacular views of the vast countryside around it. There are also some inscriptions and ancient writings from Thamoudis and even drawings of some animals, most notably the Arabian Oryx and the falcon.	

### 4.3. Al-Baha heritage buildings

The buildings in this area are built with stone for the first 2-3 meters, and then supplemented by mud in horizontal dams. The walls of the buildings are well built with cement and water; usually 40-50 cm - from 20 to 30 cm - to protect mud walls from heavy rain. It is noteworthy that the buildings shrink with the height of the walls so that the building appears in the form of a pyramid and uses clay to reflect the walls from the outside. It is usual for residents to draw facades for decorating houses. The houses are also decorated around the edges of doors, windows and ceilings, as well as around the lower parts of the walls, usually with geometric shapes and bright colors that consist of yellow, red, blue and green. The stone is used only in the construction of houses, and the buildings in this architectural style take different forms of quadrangular, rectangular or circular





shapes, regardless of their functions, whether the building is residential, military or even a grain store. These stone buildings employ the following architectural styles [27].

## 5. Cameron highlands

The Cameron Highlands in the state of Pahang is one of the oldest hill stations in Malaysia. Located at a 1500-m altitude, visitors can enjoy a cool, bracing climate. In 1885, William Cameron, a researcher who came to this region for a mission, discovered these Highlands. Forty years after their discovery, the Cameron Highlands were subjected to a development plan and were converted into a hill station. The existing road belongs to that era where the Cameron Highlands were one of the oldest and largest hill resorts in Malaysia [28].

**Table 7.**

Al-Baha Heritage Buildings [27]






Al-Baha Heritage Buildings		
Scattered Stone Buildings	This type of housing is constructed of irregularly shaped mountain stones, some of which are filled without mortar and naturally fill the remaining spaces created by the smaller broken stones. The doors and windows were decorated from the outside by adding other stones in a darker color.	
Stone Buildings Combined	There are some slight differences in the design of stone buildings in terms of the size of buildings from one location to another - walls often increase in size and height, and the names of spaces within the building may vary. For example, in the exhibition (at the top of the building) there is a special room for the head of the family. This space is accompanied by open space for the purpose of observation as well as some small openings that are also exploited for monitoring and protection.	

The Cameron Highlands have shown tremendous growth and expansion over the last decade; growth that has been associated with hydroelectric power generation, agriculture, urban and infrastructural development and tourism activities. The growth and expansion of the Cameron Highlands region brought many benefits to the state of Pahang and the country [28]. The Highlands are the most treasured natural heritage site of the country and they are a popular tourist destination. Travel reviews give the impression that the Cameron Highlands possess the most scenic landscapes in Malaysia [29].

### 5.1. Attractions in the Cameron Highlands

The region is characterised by extensive tea plantations. People mostly come to the Cameron Highlands to escape the heat. Besides the tea plantations, there are also the following attractions: the Mossy Forest, the Rafflesia tour, strawberry farms, rose gardens, a Chinese temple, a cactus valley and vegetable gardens [30].




**Table 8.**  
Attractions in the Cameron Highlands [31]

Attractions in the Cameron Highlands		
Mossy Forest	The Mossy Forest (or Cloud Forest), the trees look magical as they are all covered in green moss... The Mossy Forest is located on the slopes of Mount Brinchang, a few hundred meters from the peak of the mountain.	
BOH Tea Plantation	This scenic area comes right out of a tea commercial. The massive tea plantation stretches as far as the eye can see. There are beautifully green tea bushes everywhere. The tea factory is open to the public every day except for Mondays (and public holidays).	
Strawberry Farm	The cold climate makes it suitable for cultivating strawberries all year round throughout the Highlands, with most farms concentrated at Tanah Rata, Brinchang and Kea Farm.	
Rose Valley	Located in the Tringkap, the Cameron Highlands, the Rose Valley houses an amazing 450 varieties of roses in all shapes and sizes, ranging from the black rose, to 20 fragrant varieties of the hornless rose plant, to the colourful 'miniature'.	
Sam Poh Buddhist Temple	is located in Brinchang. It is built high upon a hill overlooking Brinchang town. Due to its location, the temple has a good view of Brinchang town and the houses that dot the little hills surrounding Brinchang.	

5.2. Cameron Highlands Heritage Buildings

There are three identified English colonial buildings in this resort. They are the Bala’s Guest House, the Smokehouse and the Lake House Hotel. All three structures portray the appearance that can be found within buildings of historical value in Britain. All three buildings boast a Tudor revival outlook; hence, the large number of visitors who flock to the areas where these buildings are located [32].

**Table 9.**  
Cameron Highlands Heritage Buildings [32]

Cameron Highlands Heritage Buildings		
The Bala's Guest House	is one of the oldest colonial buildings built during the pre-war era and it is preserved in its original structure to enhance its natural beauty. The Bala's Guest House chalet has 25 cottage-style rooms, offering accommodation to visitors who want to experience an English environment	
The Smoke House	The Smoke House in the Cameron Highlands provides another interesting setting that displays British heritage. This English Tudor-style hotel, built in 1939, is situated adjacent to a beautiful golf course. Guests are drawn in by the golf course as it is in a prime location on a verdant hill.	
The Lake House	The strong character of British-ness is portrayed by the rose garden in the compound, thus making it a complete example of British architecture. The Lake House thrives on the romance of being in England, set in a rustic environment while promising the visitors the 'olde world' feel that they desire.	

## 6. Analytical study

Three methods were used to assess the role of tourism in Al-Baha: exploratory field observations, a questionnaire survey and a comparative analysis. The main purpose of the field observation was to identify the locations and routes most frequented by tourists. The objective of the questionnaire survey was to determine the effects of tourism within the region of Al-Baha as perceived by architects and members of the Department of Architectural Engineering. Comparative work in tourism in terms of income levels and architectural equipment between Al-Baha city and the Cameron Highlands.

### 6.1. General axis

The results of the field study (136), representing a sample of academicians (51.5%), revealed 70 respondents, 49 of them with an income ranging between 10–20 thousand Saudi Riyals and 21 of them having an income between 20–35 thousand Saudi Riyals. Engineers and university students accounted for 48.5% (66) of the respondents and the majority of their income levels ranged from 5–10 thousand Saudi Riyals. It turned out that all these respondents were males, possibly because males have greater freedom to practice tourism activities and the women usually accompany men on their journeys. The results of the field study showed that the age group between 15 and 24 years old was the highest category (43.4%). They were followed by the age group (4) that were aged between 25–39 years old (27.9%). They were followed by the age group of the people who were 40 years and above in 1960 (21.3%), while in the fourth category, the age group consisted of people who were 60 years or older (7.4%).

The results of the field study revealed that the best tourist attractions in Baha are mountainous regions (57.4%). Parks and gardens ranked second with 25%, followed by resorts with 8.8% (7.4%) – as shown in table 10. Table 11 shows that the best environmental tourist attractions were the Al-Baha Governorate (36.8%), which was followed by Baljurashi (20.6%). The village of De Ain comes in fourth place (14.7%) and the last ranking attraction was the heights of the mountains of Shada, with 11% (8%). The survey showed that the mountainous highlands and parks are the best tourist attractions (at 78%) in Al-Baha, while the mountain heights are the best tourist attractions in the governorates of Baljurashi (21%) and Almanq (17%).

**Table 10.**  
The Best Tourist Attraction Areas in the Emirate of Al-Baha

Attractions	Frequency	Percent
Caves	2	1.5
Mountain Highlands	78	57.4
Parks	34	25.0
Resorts	12	8.8
Tihama Plains	10	7.4
Total	136	100.0

**Table 11.**  
The Best Environmental Attractions in the Emirate of Al-Baha

Area	Frequency	Percent
Al Baha City	50	36.8
Almanq	22	16.2
Baljurashi	28	20.6
Shada Heights	16	11.8
Village of De Ain	20	14.7
Total	136	100.0

**Table 12.**  
Relations between the Tourist Area and the Best Environmental Attractions

Tourist Attractions in the Area	Best Environmental Attractions					Total
	Mountain Highlands	Parks	Tihama Plains	Resorts	Caves	
Al-Baha City	24	22	2	2	0	50
Baljurashi	21	6	2	0	0	29
Almanq	17	0	0	4	0	21
Village of De Ain	4	6	4	6	0	20
Shada Heights	12	1	2	0	1	16
Total	78	35	10	12	1	136

### 6.1.1. The axis of economic tourism activity

As demonstrated in table 13, the study showed us that there are problems facing investors in the field of ecotourism. Only 12 respondents (8.8%) believed that there were problems facing investors, while 124 respondents (91%) believed that there were no problems facing investors. The study showed that there is a good role for the private sector in terms of supporting ecotourism. It was found that 86 respondents believed that there was an effective role for the private sector – good and acceptable (44.1%) and very good and excellent (19.1%) – while 50 respondents (36.76%) thought that there was a clear weakness in the role of the private sector.

**Table 13.**  
Relation between Problems Facing the Private Sector in Supporting the Tourism Environment

Problems Facing Investors	Private Sector in Supporting Tourism Environment					Total
	Weak	Acceptable	Good	Very good	Excellent	
Yes	28	15	7	10	0	60
No	2	2	6	0	2	12
Somewhat	20	10	20	8	6	64
Total	50	27	33	18	8	136

As shown in table 11, the survey showed that the level of public facilities in Al-Baha is good. Only 18 respondents (13.2%) believed that there was a weakness in the level of public facilities in tourist areas, while 118 respondents (86.8%) did not see that there was a weakness in the level of public facilities in the tourism areas. The study showed that the prices of services provided by public utilities in tourist areas were good, where it was found that 112 respondents believed that the prices ranged from good to acceptable (57.35%) and very good (23.52). Twenty-four respondents (17.64%), however, believed that the prices were expensive in tourist areas.

**Table 14.**  
Prices of Services Provided by Public Utilities in Tourist Areas

Public Utilities in Tourist Areas	Prices of Services Provided by Public Utilities in Tourist Areas					Total
	Weak	Acceptable	Good	Very good	Excellent	
Weak	8	8	2	0	0	18
Acceptable	8	10	10	4	0	32
Good	8	13	27	6	2	56
Very good	0	3	5	16	0	24
Excellent	0	0	0	6	0	6
Total	24	34	44	32	2	136

### 6.1.2. Awareness

Table 15 shows the relationship between the general concept of environmental tourism and the role of the local authority. The study showed that there was a clear weakness in the role of local authorities in terms of preventing the negative effects of environmental tourism: While 120 respondents (88.24%) believed that there was a clear weakness, respondents (11.76%) did not believe this. The study also showed that the level of the general concept of environmental tourism seems to be improving. It was found that 81 respondents believed that the awareness of ecotourism was good and acceptable (59.55%), some believed (16 respondents) that it was very good (39.7%) and others believed (31 respondents) that there was a clear weakness in the concept of ecotourism (22.79%).

**Table 15.**  
General Understanding of the Concept of Ecotourism in Society

General Understanding of the Concept of Ecotourism in Society	The Role of Local Authorities in Preventing the Negative Effects of Ecotourism			Total
	Yes	No	Somewhat	
Weak	10	4	16	31
Acceptable	6	7	30	43
Good	6	4	28	38
Very good	8	0	8	16
Excellent	0	0	8	8
Total	30	16	90	136

### 6.1.3. The axis of infrastructure and urban planning

Table 16 shows the relationship between renewable energy sources and the communication in the areas of tourism that are being developed. The study shows us that there is a significant weakness in the use of energy sources in areas that are developed in terms of tourism by a large percentage. While 91 respondents (66.91%) selected *weak*, the study shows that the modernisation of the means of communication in areas that are developed in terms of tourism were excellent – it was found that 121 respondents (88.97%) believed this while 15 respondents (11.03%) did not believe the means of communication in such areas were good.

**Table 16.**  
The Use of Renewable Energy and Communication

The Use of Renewable Energy Sources in Areas	The Interest in Using and Updating of the Communication in Areas that Show Developed Tourism					Total
	Weak	Acceptable	Good	Very good	Excellent	
Weak	14	37	22	14	4	91
Acceptable	0	2	4	0	2	8
Good	0	2	7	6	0	15
Very good	1	0	1	12	6	20
Excellent	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total	15	41	36	32	12	136

Table 17 shows the relationship between sewage networks and green areas in the development of tourist areas. The survey shows that 104% of the respondents (76.47%)

thought that there was interest, while 32 respondents (23.53%) did not believe there was enough attention to sewage and rainwater networks in the areas being developed.

**Table 17.**

Increasing the Green Areas and Attention to Sewage Networks

Interest in Increasing the Green Areas in Developed Tourism Areas	Attention to Sewage Networks and Rainwater in Developed Tourism Areas					Total
	Weak	Acceptable	Good	Very good	Excellent	
Weak	12	2	2	6	0	22
Acceptable	12	14	12	0	2	40
Good	6	10	18	2	0	36
Very good	2	4	1	7	6	20
Excellent	0	4	2	6	6	18
Total	32	34	35	21	14	136

Table 18 shows the relationship between urban development and future studies and designs for environmental tourist attractions. The study showed that there was a weakness in the availability of future studies and designs for the urban development of tourist attractions by a large percentage: 106 respondents (77.94%) believed that there was a clear weakness while 30 respondents (22.06%) did not believe this. The study also showed that the current situation was conducive to the urban development of environmental tourist attractions. It was found that 130 respondents (95.58%) believed that this was true while 6 respondents (4.42%) did not believe that the current situation was conducive to the urban development of the region and, in turn, in attracting environmental tourism.

The results of the field study (depicted in table 19) revealed that there was a good interest in the phenomenon of environmental pollution and noise in the developing touristic areas: 88 respondents (64.7%) tended to have an interest, while 44 respondents (35.3%) believed there was weakness in the field.

**Table 18.**

Future Studies and Designs for Urban Development

Current Situation Conducive to the Urban Development of the Tourist Attractions	Future Studies and Designs for the Urban Development of the New Tourist Attractions					Total
	Weak	Acceptable	Good	Very good	Excellent	
Weak	2	3	1	0	0	6
Acceptable	8	8	13	2	0	31
Good	16	14	9	4	3	46
Very good	2	6	12	12	3	35
Excellent	2	4	2	6	4	18
Total	30	35	37	24	10	136

**Table 19.**

Environmental Pollution

Environmental Pollution	Frequency	Percent
Weak	44	32.4
Acceptable	35	25.7
Good	31	22.8
Very good	20	14.7
Excellent	6	4.4
Total	136	100.0

The results of the field study (depicted in table 20) revealed that there was attention to infrastructure and urban of tourist attractions (39.7%) and encouraging investors to develop tourism (16.2%). Increasing the green areas to take care of the environment and improve the transport network (11.8%) (10.3%) came as the lowest ranking of the most important obstacles to investment.

The results of the field study (depicted in table 21) revealed that future studies should be considered to help develop ecotourism (23.5%), environmental awareness (19.1%) and attention to infrastructure in some tourist areas (13.2%). Both natural and human constraints, limited land availability and a weak tourism economy were all equal (11.8%).

**Table 20.**  
Obstacles to Investment

Obstacles to Investment	Frequency	Percent
Attention to infrastructure and urban planning of tourist attractions	54	39.7
Develop media and tourism awareness	22	16.2
Develop a strategic plan and tourist plans	14	10.3
Encourage investors to develop tourism	16	11.8
Increased green areas care for the environment	10	7.4
Build hotels, parks and restaurants	14	10.3
Improve the transport network	6	4.4
Total	136	100.0

**Table 21.**  
Improve the Level of Ecotourism

Improve the Level of Ecotourism	Frequency	Percent
Lack of future studies to help develop ecotourism	32	23.5
Natural and human constraints	16	11.8
Lack of awareness	26	19.1
Investors fear loss	12	8.8
Lack of infrastructure in some tourist areas	18	13.2
Little land available	16	11.8
Economic weakness	16	11.8
Total	136	100.0

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

### 7.1. Conclusions

The importance of ecotourism stems from the fact that it is a clean form of tourism that is based on the visiting, conservation and environmental sustainability of natural areas with emphasis placed on the attention to the positive effects of tourism – such as increasing the revenues of the local communities and preserving natural resources, improving the quality of the environment and developing the existing infrastructure. The importance of ecotourism is reflected in several aspects, be they environmental, economic, social, cultural or humanitarian. It is also important to pay attention to the negative effects of environmental tourism such as the destruction of the quality of the natural environment, the settlement of touristic areas and the pollution of water and air.

Ecotourism is one of the best types of tourism that can be utilised in the Emirate of Al-Baha. Al-Baha is characterised by a variety of natural attractions such as resorts and parks. The importance of these principles in terms of the development of ecotourism is less relevant to the principles of ecotourism in Al-Baha city specifically: The Emirate of Al-Baha is generally lacking in tourism facilities which are directly related to the development of a tourism industry. In addition to its small numbers and low capacity, the Emirate has a lack of workers, a prevalence of poor expertise and therefore often lacks the necessary specialisations due to a multitude of reasons.

The absence of environmental tourism awareness as a general concept and methodology in the city of Al-Baha, despite the fact that the city possesses many elements of ecotourism, is prevalent: Generally, there is a lack of interest in tourist media and the great role they play in highlighting the elements of environmental tourist attractions that are present in the city of Al-Baha. Furthermore, the lack of research and studies on the subject of ecotourism are further demonstrative of this lack of awareness of the environmental tourist attractions. The lack of coordination between the organs and institutions (official and non-official) which deal with environmental tourism in the city of Al-Baha is another sign of this lack of information.

## *7.2. Recommendations*

### **General recommendations that were recommended by researchers:**

- Pay attention to environmental tourism as it is one of the most important and newest types of tourism within the Emirate of Al-Baha.
- Increase the interest in the natural attractions within Al-Baha city – for example, amusement parks.
- Pay attention to the positive effects of ecotourism.
- Work to reduce the negative effects of environmental tourism in Emirate of Al-Baha.
- Promote the development of environmental tourism awareness as a concept and methodology Emirate of Al-Baha .
- Increase the cooperation and coordination between official and non-official bodies and institutions that are concerned with environmental tourism.
- There is a need to provide the best touristic services within the environmental tourist attractions of Emirate of Al-Baha.
- Increase the interest in tourist flags because of the great role they play in the development of ecotourism in Emirate of Al-Baha.
- There is a need to benefit from the experience of touristic countries to develop an ecotourism in the Emirate of Al-Baha.

### **Recommendations made to responsible tourism agencies and decision makers:**

- Raise the awareness of the potential tourists through educational publications and tours of various culturally important sites – for example, of the surrounding social and cultural environments.
- Do not show or condone prejudice that threatens the values, customs and cultural heritage of the host community.
- Increase the awareness of tourism among citizens, including the importance of preserving historic buildings and archaeological sites and consolidating the concept of ecotourism.



- Raise awareness of the importance of tourism statistics and organise awareness campaigns in this regard.
- Develop the elements that attract domestic and international tourism and open up new horizons beyond the traditional picture of tourism.
- Display a reflection of local cultural patterns within the criteria for the design of parks and environmental resorts in the context of the Saudi environment.
- Understand the necessity of utilising the expertise of the World Tourism Organisation in the field of ecotourism.
- Facilitate entry and exit procedures for tourists to and from Al-Baha city.
- Promote the significance of ecotourism in terms of the environment, economic, social, cultural and humanitarian elements.
- Increase the attention given to the principles of ecotourism because of their role in the development of ecotourism in Emirate of Al-Baha.
- Focus on the rules of ecotourism in Al-Baha city as it is the best approach to ecotourism investment.

#### **Recommendations for research centres:**

- Update the studies of the Saudi communities, expanding them to include studies from all societies, creating universality and giving an insight into all the possible aspects of life.
- Develop and update tools for measuring social and cultural environmental impacts and adapt them to suit the privacy of the Saudi communities.
- Study and develop the local building materials that are available in different Saudi environments and address the existing defects.
- Increase the amount of research and studies that deal with ecotourism development.

#### **Special recommendations for the General Authority for Tourism:**

- Keep in line with the new trends in international tourism towards, for example, ecotourism and other non-traditional tourist patterns.
- Engage in economic social and touristic reconstruction work to stabilise the local population, creating jobs for them, increasing their income and raising their standard of living.
- The concept of the environmental development scale should be extended to include all the surrounding environmental areas in order to prolong the period of residence in the region.
- Preserve the scarce natural resources of plants and animals through the establishment of nature reserves and the monitoring of the appropriate budgets for environmental development and upgrading.
- Provide qualified scientific cadres within the field of tourism, as well as provide high-quality training courses for people interested in becoming a part of said groupings.
- Ensure quality in the tourism sector in terms of the services provided in hotels, restaurants, communications and transportation such that appropriate prices must be established and specialised bodies for the supervision of tourist-related institutions must be formed.

#### **Recommendations addressed to the architects:**

- Cultivate a consideration of the human dimension, whether for users of, or those who will be affected by, the touristic buildings: This also includes the consideration of the building activities within the surrounding community and of all the facilities related to tourism activity.

- Review all the modern design trends of international environmental hotels to find out what may fit the Saudi society in its various natural, social and cultural environments.
- Examine the characteristics of the local communities to provide the development policies of parks and environmental facilities prior to the commencement of the project.
- Support design techniques incorporating community involvement and inclusion as a key element of the hotel, park or eco-resort design process.
- Adhere to the architectural and health conditions that protect the agricultural and animal resources and green areas from being attacked.
- Tighten the control of the construction process that may be carried out by investors through the requirements and standards of the planning design.
- Exploit areas of distinctive architectural style in order to provide the type of environmental facility known as an environmental hotel.
- Take into account the considerations of building design within the tourist sites.

#### **Recommendations for architectural education:**

- Emphasise the environmental dimensions of both the natural and social elements in education. This involves demonstrating, for the students, architectural examples of the most important natural environments in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the characteristics of existing communities.
- Introduce the students to the contemporary trends in the design of establishments which incorporate the participation of the communities in order to inform them of the working methods of these design approaches, highlighting their suitability for certain types of projects.
- Invite the faculties of engineering, archaeology, tourism and all related disciplines into the Kingdom to guide and coordinate teachers and students to conduct in-depth studies and develop perceptions that highlight the aesthetic values that relate to the ecotourism industry.

#### **Specific recommendations for local communities:**

- Develop a local public awareness of the importance of the concept of positive participation by holding workshops between tribal leaders and elders or the responsible governing body within the society and the local people (including all ages and communal groups).
- Support the concept of belonging to the local environment, local reality and local culture. This support includes the preservation of local cultural heritage, the maintenance of local construction methods and the revival of traditional methods of construction.
- Raise public awareness of the host communities and the team working in parks and eco-resorts to work side by side with the aim of producing a product capable of satisfying tourism needs and the requirements of local communities.

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## التمية المستدامة للسياحة البيئية وعلاقتها بالعمارة دراسة الحالة: مدينة الباحة ، إمارة الباحة

### الملخص العربي:

تعد السياحة عاملاً رئيسياً للتغيير وتعمل كعامل مساعد في الانتقال من أساليب الحياة التقليدية إلى ما يسمى الأشكال الحديثة للمجتمع. وفقاً لذلك تجلب السياحة في الغالب اتجاهات ومعايير سلوكية جديدة. وفي بلدان العالم الثالث يمكن أن تختلف هذه التأثيرات وفقاً للعديد من العوامل، بما في ذلك نوع وحجم مشروع السياحة وعدد الزوار وطبيعة الوجهات. السياحة البيئية هي استجابة للسياحة الطبيعية التي تساهم في الحفاظ عليها عن طريق توفير الأموال للمناطق المحمية وخلق فرص عمل للمجتمعات المحلية التي تؤثر عليها، وتشكل العلاقة بين الهندسة المعمارية والسياحة الأساس للمناظر الطبيعية الحضرية الجديدة، حيث ان ظاهرة السياحة يمكن أن تؤثر على عمليات التحضر مما يؤدي إلى استخدام المساحات الحضرية المتجددة التي تساعد على تغيير أشكال التجميع الاجتماعي. لذلك تعتبر دراسات السياحة الحضرية مثيرة للغاية لأن الأماكن الحضرية فريدة وتختلف جميعها عن بعضها البعض، وكذلك تختلف المدن من حيث المعايير والمواقع والوظائف والمناظر الطبيعية والتراث الثقافي.

الهدف من هذا البحث هو استكشاف أنواع السياحة البيئية التي يمكن استغلالها في إمارة الباحة، مع تسليط الضوء على العناصر المختلفة لجذب السياحة البيئية الموجودة بالفعل. توضح نتائج هذه الدراسة مفهوم السياحة الذي يقوم على أساس زيارات للمناطق الطبيعية، والمحافظة على البيئة والاستدامة البيئية - مثل زيادة إيرادات المجتمع والحفاظ على الموارد الطبيعية، وتحسين جودة البيئة وتطوير البنية التحتية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** السياحة، السياحة البيئية، السياحة المعمارية، السياحة الحضرية، الاستدامة، البنية التحتية.