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Sustainable Tourism Development in Border Regions: A Case Study of Kermanshah Province

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Abstract

This research uses a case study of Kermanshah province in Iran which has variety of historical, cultural and natural attractions. It is imperative to place emphasis on such attractions in a bid to inform the governments and investors in appropriate planning of tourism so as to achieve the set goals. It is applied research. For this article, we used an analytical and descriptive research methodology. Documental and library research techniques were used to gather data and relevant information for this research. Systematic data collection and information from library and documentary search. Kermanshah also faces several barriers and challenges, including insufficient infrastructure, weak marketing activities, inadequate tourism management, and increasing interest in foreign travel. To capitalize on its vast tourism potential, Kermanshah needs comprehensive planning, infrastructure development, effective marketing strategies, and coordinated tourism management. These efforts are essential to overcome the identified challenges and encourage sustainable tourism in the region. Kermanshah has the potential to position itself as a prominent global sustainable tourism destination, contributing to socio-economic development and cultural exchange..

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, border regions, tourism potential, barriers, challenges, Kermanshah Province

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1. Introduction

Tourism has emerged as a multifaceted global industry with substantial socio-economic, environmental, and cultural implications. One of the critical aspects in the realm of tourism planning and development is the determination of the position and status of this industry within specific regions (Vaezi et al., 2018). Evaluating tourist destinations and identifying areas with the potential for tourism growth are fundamental steps that lay the foundation for future tourism endeavors (Whitmore et al., 2018). Today, the concept of sustainability plays a central role in the field of tourism. The paradigm of sustainability has become a global concern, particularly evident in the domain of tourism studies and academia (Wang et al., 2020). Sustainable tourism, when considered through the lens of regional development, offers a means to address detrimental consequences of unmanaged growth in the tourism sector (Nelson et al., 2002). As the tourism industry evolves and faces shifting global dynamics, sustainable tourism has emerged as a novel concept, aiming to mitigate the adverse effects of tourism-related activities. This new concept has gained prominence as a strategy to counteract the destructive impacts of tourism development, especially in regions bordering other countries (Kousis, 2000). For many border regions, the lack of facilities, suitable investments, and socio-economic development has historically rendered them marginalized (Hall, 2000). Consequently, issues such as smuggling, drug trafficking, and illegal activities often arise due to poverty, unemployment, and inadequate resources in these border areas (Hall, 2000). Each of these border regions possesses the potential to

significantly increase its income through various means, primarily by attracting tourists to the country (Nouri et al., 2015). Additionally, the presence of domestic and international tourists fosters cultural exchange and intellectual development among local communities (Nouri et al., 2015). However, the weak positioning of border regions in tourism development stems from geographical isolation, detachment from industrial-economic hubs, and disparities across various social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Kermanshah Province in Iran, our focus in this research, stands at a unique crossroads. It is a region endowed with a diverse range of historical, cultural, and natural attractions, yet it has remained largely unexplored in the global tourism landscape. Unlocking the potential of these assets, coupled with a well-devised sustainable tourism strategy, could transform Kermanshah into a key tourism destination. This

transformation is especially critical due to its strategic location near the border. In a rapidly changing world, where tourism has become an alternative source of income, a driver of employment, and a bridge for cultural exchange, Kermanshah is poised for tourism industry growth.

Kermanshah Province in Iran is one of the border regions endowed with vast potential for tourism (Nouri et al., 2015). Despite these potentials, it has often been overlooked. This province is home to a wealth of historical, natural, religious, and human assets that, for the most part, remain untapped . Unlocking the potential of these assets, coupled with a well-devised sustainable tourism strategy, could transform Kermanshah Province into a key tourism destination, particularly in light of its strategic border location .The growth of the tourism industry globally has enabled many developing countries to improve their socio-economic, cultural, and economic indices considerably (Whitmore, et al., 2018) . This sector not only provides an alternative source of income but also addresses issues such as unemployment, low incomes, foreign exchange deficiencies, and cultural misconceptions .Considering these factors, Kermanshah Province, a region that has experienced significant adversity due to conflicts, is poised for tourism industry growth . Our focus for this research is Kermanshah Province in Iran that occupies a very specific position. It is a tourist destination that boasts several historical, cultural, and natural attraction sites but which have for long been unexplored by the global tourists' circuit. By leveraging these resources as well as formulating an effective sustainable tourism plan, Kermanshah can become a significant tourist center. Its location close to the border makes this transformation to be very essential. As the world changes at a faster rate with tourism becoming an alternative source of income as well as being a driver of employment and a link in cultural exchanges, Kermanshah is ready for growth in its tourism industry sector. Kermanshah's emerging potential for a flourishing tourism industry in a fast-paced world that increasingly regards tourism as a source of revenue, job provider, culture messenger. This province possesses historical, natural, religious, and cultural attractions that have largely remained undiscovered (Nelson et al., 2002). To maximize the potential of this region, a meticulous and scientific approach to tourism planning is indispensable. This research aims to evaluate the existing conditions, identify and threats opportunities, in the tourism sector, and propose strategic solutions that align with the principles of sustainable tourism .

2. Tourism Potential of Kermanshah

Kermanshah, With its enormous size of 11,111.01 square kilometers, is a province of Iran that shares its borders with Kurdistan to the north, Lorestan and Ilam to the south, Hamedan to the east, and Iraq to the west. There were 3,911,006 people living in the province of Kermanshah as of the 2011 Census on Housing and Population. (Population and Housing Census report, 2019).

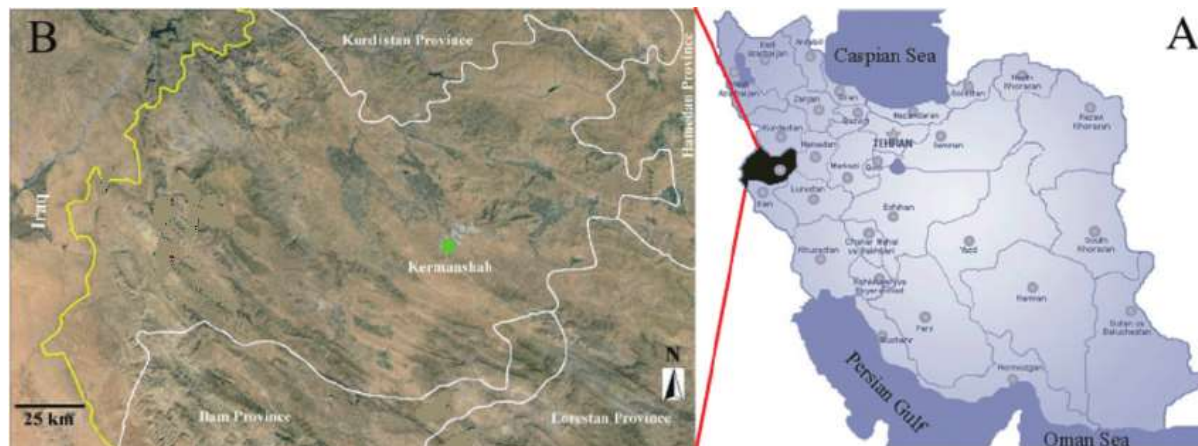


Fig 1: Map of Kermanshah Province (General Department of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Kermanshah Province, 2018)

With 31 counties, 8 cities, 9 districts, and 81 rural districts, this province is a territory with a varied topography and rich cultural legacy. One of the most promising regions for the growth of rural tourism is Kermanshah. landmarks, breathtaking natural formations, and a climate with four different seasons. even so Kermanshah has not yet completely exploit into the advantages of rural tourism, despite its potential. The province is renowned for its natural beauty and historical significance, and because of its abundance of tourism attractions, it is regarded as one of Iran's best provinces. Unfortunately, because of a lack of efforts and a concentration on a small number of important tourist locations, which frequently ignores the enormous unrealized tourism potential in other rural regions, this potential has not been completely realized. It is imperative to create a strategic strategy for rural tourism in Kermanshah in order to overcome this problem. Such a plan necessitates a thorough comprehension of the existing circumstances and knowledge of the challenges and obstacles. This study aims to analyze the issues and problems that rural

tourism faces in Kermanshah, including background factors, actors, and interventions in the field. (Population and Housing Census report, 2019).

3. Geographical Scope of the Research

Kermanshah is located in the western section of Iran, ranging from 45 degrees and 25 minutes to 48 degrees and 6 minutes east longitude, and from 33 degrees and 4 minutes to 35 degrees and 17 minutes north latitude, relative to the GMT. Kurdistan has border to the north, Hamedan and Lorestan to the east, Ilam to the south, and Iraq to the west. Kermanshah has a joint border of approximately 330 kilometers with Iraq.

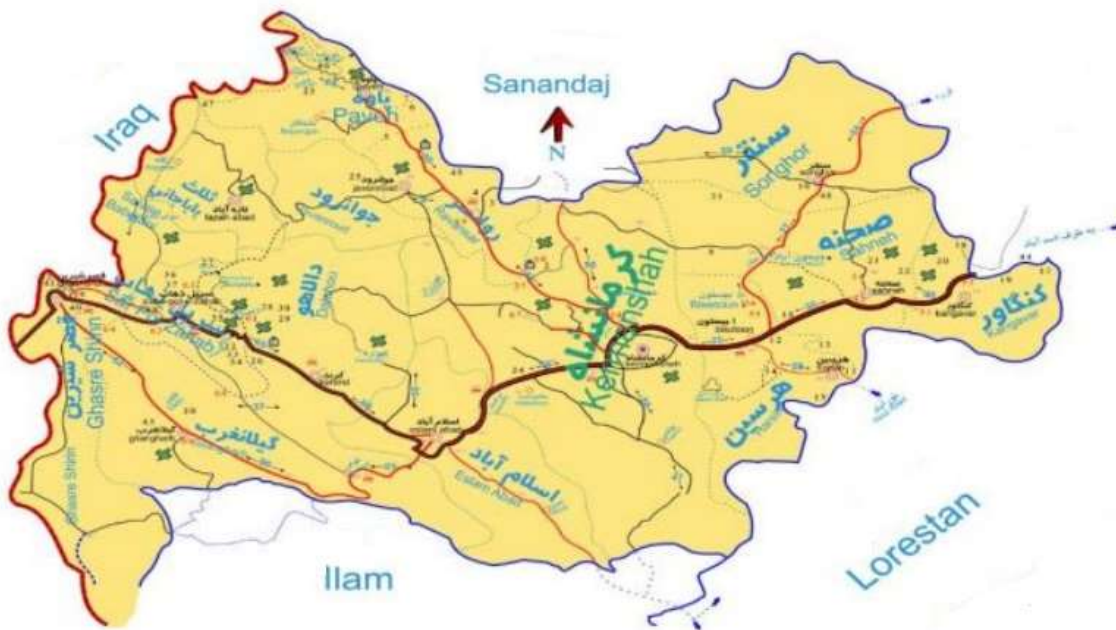


Fig 2: Tourism map of Kermanshah province (General Department of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Kermanshah Province, 2018)

The province is home to a wealth of unique attractions, such as thousands of historical sites, with 1,900 of them registered. Notable sites include the Behistun Inscription, one of the world's largest rock reliefs, the Taq-e Bostan, ancient temples, and the incredible Parau Vertical Cave, which is the largest vertical cave in Asia (UNESCO, 2021). The province boasts numerous rivers, 770 springs, 74 waterfalls, and a temperate climate with four distinct seasons, making it a standout

destination for tourists (General Department of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Kermanshah Province, 2018).

Kermanshah's tourism potential is vast, but realizing it requires strategic planning that extends beyond a few select destinations. This province has the opportunity to become a prominent tourism hub in Iran by tapping into its diverse natural and historical assets.

4. Historical Attractions in Kermanshah

Kermanshah, a province located in western Iran, boasts a rich historical heritage that has the potential to attract tourists from around the world. The region is home to various historical attractions, each bearing witness to the ancient civilizations and cultures that have thrived in the area. These attractions play a significant role in the province's tourism development efforts, as they offer a glimpse into the rich history of Kermanshah.

Bistoon Historical Site (Code 1A) The Bistoon Historical Site, often referred to as Bistoon or Behistun, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is renowned for its historical significance, particularly the Bistoon Inscription, which dates back to the reign of Darius the Great in the 6th century BC. The inscription, carved into the cliffside, provides invaluable insights into the Achaemenid Empire, its language, and the historical context of the time (UNESCO, 2021). Tourists are drawn to Bistoon to witness this ancient relic and immerse themselves in the history it encapsulates.

Tâq-e Bostân (Code 2A) Tâq-e Bostân is another historical gem in Kermanshah. This site is renowned for its rock reliefs, which date back to the Sassanid period (224–651 AD). The carvings depict royal figures, battles, and significant events from this era. Tâq-e Bostân provides a unique opportunity for visitors to appreciate the art and history of the Sassanid Empire, offering a window into a bygone era.

Anaitha Temple (Code 3A) Anaitha Temple is an archaeological wonder situated in Kermanshah, with historical roots tracing back to the Parthian period (247 BC–224 AD). This temple, dedicated to Anahita, the ancient Persian goddess of water, fertility, and wisdom, signifies the cultural and religious heritage of the region. The temple's architecture and historical significance make it a site of interest for both archaeologists and tourists (Rakibin, 2015).

Shapur Cave (Code 4A)

The Shapur Cave is an enticing historical attraction. It is named after Shapur II, a Sassanid king, and contains rock reliefs illustrating the king's grandeur and victories. This cave is a testament to the artistic and historical achievements of the Sassanid dynasty. Tourists visiting the Shapur Cave can explore these impressive carvings while delving into the history of the region (Rakibin, 2015). These historical attractions in Kermanshah offer a fascinating journey into the province's historical narrative, showcasing the rich tapestry of civilizations that once thrived in this region. The historical significance of these sites contributes significantly to Kermanshah's tourism potential, attracting visitors keen to explore the legacy of the past. Table 1, focuses on the historical attractions in Kermanshah, and it provides a list of categories, corresponding codes, and their priority levels. The priority level indicates the importance of each category concerning historical attractions for tourism.

No.	Historical Attraction	Priority Level	Description
1	Bistoon Historical Site	10	Bistoon Historical Site, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, holds immense historical significance with the famous Bistoon Inscription dating back to the Achaemenid Empire, providing valuable insights into ancient history [UNESCO, 2021]. Tourists are drawn to Bistoon to witness this ancient relic and immerse themselves in the history it encapsulates.
2	Tâq-e Bostân	8	Tâq-e Bostân is another historical gem in Kermanshah, renowned for its rock reliefs dating back to the Sassanid period. These carvings depict royal figures, battles, and significant events from this era. Tâq-e Bostân offers a unique opportunity for visitors to appreciate the art and history of the Sassanid Empire, offering a window into a bygone era.
3	Anaitha Temple	6	Anaitha Temple is an archaeological wonder with historical roots tracing back to the Parthian period. This temple, dedicated to Anahita, the ancient Persian goddess of water, fertility, and wisdom, signifies the cultural and religious heritage of the region. The temple's architecture and historical significance make it a site of interest for both

No.	Historical Attraction	Priority Level	Description
			archaeologists and tourists.
4	Shapur Cave	4	The Shapur Cave is an enticing historical attraction named after Shapur II, a Sassanid king. It contains rock reliefs illustrating the king's grandeur and victories. This cave is a testament to the artistic and historical achievements of the Sassanid dynasty. Tourists visiting the Shapur Cave can explore these impressive carvings while delving into the history of the region.

Table 1: Historical Attractions of kermanshah (General Department of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Kermanshah Province, 2018)

5. Cultural Attractions in Kermanshah

Kermanshah, a province in western Iran, is a treasure trove of cultural attractions that showcase the diverse heritage of the region. These cultural sites serve as a testament to the traditions, arts, and customs of the people who have called Kermanshah home for centuries. Visitors to the province are afforded the opportunity to immerse themselves in the vibrant cultural tapestry of the area.

Traditional Arts and Crafts (Code 1B) Kermanshah is renowned for its traditional arts and crafts. The region is home to skilled artisans who excel in various crafts, such as carpet weaving, felt-making, and rug production (Keshavarzi, 2019). Visitors have the chance to observe the intricate process of creating these handwoven masterpieces and can even purchase unique souvenirs to take home.

Ethnic Diversity (Code 2B) Kermanshah boasts significant ethnic diversity, with various ethnic groups, including Kurds and Lurs, contributing to the province's cultural fabric (Rafiei & Zanganeh, 2014). The coexistence of multiple ethnicities has enriched the local culture, resulting in a dynamic blend of traditions, languages, and customs.

Linguistic Diversity (Code 3B) The linguistic diversity in Kermanshah is a distinctive feature of the region. Various dialects, including Kurdish, Luri, and Persian, are spoken, reflecting the province's

multicultural heritage. This linguistic variety adds depth and complexity to the cultural landscape. Folklore and Customs (Code 4B) Kermanshah is home to a rich tapestry of traditions and folklore. The province hosts various festivals, including Nowruz, the Persian New Year, and other cultural celebrations that highlight the cultural diversity of the region. These events are an excellent opportunity for tourists to engage with local traditions, music, dance, and clothing. Exploring cultural attractions in Kermanshah offers an enriching experience for tourists interested in immersing themselves in the local traditions, cuisine, and arts. It provides insight into the dynamic and diverse culture that has flourished in the region for centuries . table2, highlights cultural attractions in Kermanshah. It includes a list of cultural categories, their codes, and priority levels. Priority levels indicate how significant each category is in terms of cultural attractions for tourism. (table 2).

No.	Cultural Attraction	Priority Level	Description
1	Traditional Arts	10	Kermanshah is renowned for its traditional arts and crafts. The region is home to skilled artisans who excel in various crafts, such as carpet weaving, felt-making, and rug production. Visitors have the chance to observe the intricate process of creating these handwoven masterpieces and can even purchase unique souvenirs to take home.
2	Ethnic Diversity	8	Kermanshah boasts significant ethnic diversity, with various ethnic groups, including Kurds and Lurs, contributing to the province's cultural fabric. The coexistence of multiple ethnicities has enriched the local culture, resulting in a dynamic blend of traditions, languages, and customs.
3	Linguistic Diversity	6	The linguistic diversity in Kermanshah is a distinctive feature of the region. Various dialects, including Kurdish, Luri, and Persian, are spoken, reflecting the province's multicultural heritage. This linguistic variety adds depth and complexity to the cultural landscape.
4	Folklore and Customs	4	Kermanshah is home to a rich tapestry of traditions and folklore. The

No.	Cultural Attraction	Priority Level	Description
	Customs		province hosts various festivals, including Nowruz, the Persian New Year, and other cultural celebrations that highlight the cultural diversity of the region. These events are an excellent opportunity for tourists to engage with local traditions, music, dance, and clothing.

Table 2: Historical Attractions of kermanshah (General Department of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Kermanshah Province, 2018)

6. Natural Attractions in Kermanshah

This table outlines some of the captivating natural attractions that Kermanshah has to offer. These natural wonders make the province an appealing destination for travelers seeking to explore the beauty of the outdoors and experience the diverse landscapes of western Iran.

Rivers and Lakes (Code 1C) Kermanshah is adorned with several picturesque rivers and lakes, including the Qareh Su River, Merg, and Razavoor. These water bodies provide idyllic settings for picnics, relaxation, and even water sports (Saleh & Mohammadi, 2018). **Lush Forests and Greenery (Code 2C)** The province is characterized by its lush forests, particularly in regions such as Paveh and the Oramanat Valley. The dense vegetation and verdant landscapes of these areas are an oasis for nature enthusiasts and trekkers (Khaleghi & Jahanbakhshi, 2019). **Natural Wonders: Caves and Mountains (Code 3C)** Kermanshah boasts several awe-inspiring natural wonders, including the Quri Qaleh Cave and Tagh-e-Bostan. The province is also home to the towering heights of the Paraw Mountain range. These geological formations and landscapes offer opportunities for exploration and adventure (Rahmati & Khosravi, 2020). **Hot Springs and Thermal Baths (Code 4C)** Kermanshah is famous for its therapeutic hot springs and thermal baths, including those in the Bisotun region. These mineral-rich springs are believed to have healing properties and are frequented by those seeking relaxation and relief from various ailments (Rahmati et al., 2018). Visitors to Kermanshah can immerse themselves in the province's natural

beauty, from its waterways and dense forests to its geological wonders and healing hot springs. These natural attractions provide opportunities for outdoor activities, relaxation, and experiencing the unspoiled landscapes of this remarkable region. Table 3, discusses natural attractions in Kermanshah. It presents various categories of natural attractions, their respective codes, and priority levels. Priority levels denote the importance of each category regarding natural attractions for tourism.

No.	Natural Attraction	Priority Level	Description
1	Four-Season Climate	10	Kermanshah is adorned with a four-season climate, making it a year-round tourist destination. Visitors can experience the beauty of all seasons, from the lush springs and mild summers to colorful autumns and snow-covered winters.
2	Forested Areas	8	The province is characterized by lush forests, particularly in regions such as Paveh and the Oramanat Valley. The dense vegetation and verdant landscapes of these areas are an oasis for nature enthusiasts and trekkers.
3	Rivers and Water Bodies	6	Kermanshah is adorned with several picturesque rivers and lakes, including the Qareh Su River, Merg, and Razavor. These water bodies provide idyllic settings for picnics, relaxation, and even water sports.
4	Scenic Landscapes	4	Kermanshah boasts several awe-inspiring natural wonders, including the Quri Qaleh Cave and Tagh-e-Bostan. The province is also home to the towering heights of the Paraw Mountain range. These geological formations and landscapes offer opportunities for exploration and adventure.

Table 3: Natural Attractions of kermanshah (General Department of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Kermanshah Province, 2018)

7. Local Attractions in Kermanshah

Bazaars and Local Markets (Code 1D) Kermanshah is dotted with traditional bazaars and local markets that showcase the province's rich handicrafts, spices, and local products. Notable bazaars include the Taq-e-Bostan Bazaar and the Bazaar-e-Qadim. These bustling markets provide a glimpse into the local trade and offer an array of authentic souvenirs and goods (Javanmard, 2017). Culinary Delights (Code 2D) Kermanshah is renowned for its distinct culinary culture, with a focus on local dishes and traditional flavors. Must-try local specialties include Dande Kebab, Kalleh, and Saghzi Kermanshahi. Local eateries and restaurants offer a delectable journey through the province's gastronomic heritage (Movahed, 2016). Traditional Music and Dance (Code 3D) The province of Kermanshah boasts a vibrant musical tradition, particularly in the realms of folk and regional music. Local musical events and performances, such as Daf and Sorna, are integral to the region's cultural identity. Dance forms like the Dozaleh Dance are also part of the cultural heritage (Faraji et al., 2019). Local Art and Craftsmanship (Code 4D) Kermanshah is known for its traditional arts and crafts. Visitors can explore local workshops and galleries that showcase handicrafts like rug weaving, felt making, and carpet design. These artisanal creations are intricately woven with the cultural fabric of the province (Amiri & Shahsavari, 2017). Festivals and Celebrations (Code 5D) Kermanshah hosts various festivals and cultural celebrations throughout the year. Notable events include the Chaharshanbe Suri, Nowruz, and the Chal Chalen Folklore Festival. These festivities offer an immersive cultural experience, marked by music, dance, and local customs (Najafpour et al., 2018). Exploring Kermanshah's local attractions is an excellent way to engage with the rich and diverse culture of the province. These attractions invite visitors to savor local flavors, appreciate traditional arts, and immerse themselves in the region's vibrant heritage. table 4 is dedicated to local attractions in Kermanshah. It lists different categories of local attractions, their corresponding codes, and priority levels. Priority levels indicate the significance of each category concerning local attractions for tourism.

Table 4: Local Attractions

No.	Local Attraction	Priority Level	Description

No.	Local Attraction	Priority Level	Description
1	Local Cuisines	10	Kermanshah is renowned for its distinct culinary culture, with a focus on local dishes and traditional flavors. Must-try local specialties include Dande Kebab, Kallesh, and Saghzi Kermanshahi. Local eateries and restaurants offer a delectable journey through the province's gastronomic heritage.
2	Local Handicrafts	8	Visitors can explore local workshops and galleries that showcase handicrafts like rug weaving, felt making, and carpet design. These artisanal creations are intricately woven with the cultural fabric of the province.
3	Local Markets	6	Kermanshah is dotted with traditional bazaars and local markets that showcase the province's rich handicrafts, spices, and local products. These bustling markets provide a glimpse into the local trade and offer an array of authentic souvenirs and goods.
4	Traditional Music and Dance	4	The province of Kermanshah boasts a vibrant musical tradition, particularly in the realms of folk and regional music. Local musical events and performances, such as Daf and Sorna, are integral to the region's cultural identity. Dance forms like the Dozaleh Dance are also part of the cultural heritage.

Table 4: Local Attractions (General Department of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Kermanshah Province, 2018)

8. Barriers and Challenges to Sustainable Tourism in Kermanshah

Sustainable tourism development in Kermanshah faces several barriers and challenges that need to be addressed for the region to fully harness its tourism potential. These challenges are

significant impediments to the growth of the tourism sector. One of the primary challenges is the insufficient infrastructure (Afshari, 2020). Kermanshah lacks proper accommodations, transportation, roads, and airports, which hampers its ability to attract and accommodate tourists. Without adequate facilities and transportation options, potential visitors may be discouraged from exploring the region. Weak marketing activities (Gholipour & Aghaei, 2017) pose another significant obstacle to sustainable tourism development in Kermanshah. The region suffers from a lack of effective marketing efforts, hindering its ability to promote its unique attractions and engage potential tourists. Inadequate marketing prevents Kermanshah from reaching a wider audience and showcasing its tourism potential. Furthermore, inadequate tourism management (Gholipour & Aghaei, 2017) is a critical challenge. Kermanshah lacks a well-structured system for managing tourism, leading to mismanagement and inefficient resource allocation. Proper tourism management is essential for a coordinated and sustainable approach to tourism development. Economic factors also play a role, such as rationalizing subsidies and potential fuel price increases (Amiri & Shahsavari, 2017). These changes can significantly impact the affordability and attractiveness of tourism in Kermanshah, potentially discouraging potential visitors. A growing interest in foreign travel among the local population (Gholipour & Aghaei, 2017) may divert domestic tourists to international destinations, reducing the number of visitors to Kermanshah. This shift in travel preferences poses a challenge to the region's tourism sector. Moreover, Kermanshah faces competition from attractive tourism destinations in neighboring regions, such as the Kurdish Autonomous Region of Iraq (Amiri & Shahsavari, 2017). These competing destinations may lure potential tourists away from Kermanshah. Addressing these barriers and challenges is crucial for Kermanshah to unlock its tourism potential and develop a sustainable tourism industry. By investing in infrastructure, enhancing marketing efforts, improving tourism management, and addressing economic factors, the region can overcome these hurdles and create a thriving and sustainable tourism sector.

9. Discussion

Kermanshah has an enormous tourism power deriving the variety of its natural, historic and cultural treasures. Key attractions in every category are identified and placed within this hierarchy, depending on how significant they are for tourism development. The historical sites that include Bistoon historical site as well as Tâq-e Bostân sheds more light on the past civilisation as much as the cultural heritage of such sites that includes arts from different tribes among other

things help tourists to explore life style of those who lived in this part The region's natural attributes as seen by its four season climates and amazing landscapes depict nature in it. Additionally, there are some local attractions like dishes of local cuisine, traditional music and dances that give an opportunity to be involved into the culture of Kermanshah. These attractions should be prioritized so that local authorities and business can give them proper promotion considering their tourism offers strategically. Even so, Kermanshah is faced with a number of barriers to sustainable tourism, such as. The above problems include lack of adequate infrastructure, poor marketing efforts, ineffective tourism management, raising subsidies, increased demand for overseas visits abroad and pressure from other competing locations. The province will therefore need to undertake comprehensive planning, develop its infrastructure, implement proper marketing strategies as well as coordinate tourism management effectively. Proper investment in improvement of accessibility such as accommodation, roads, airport, etc. should be made (UNWTO, 2017). Marketing tactics that would target a wider range of people can assist with this. Tourist experiences should not be disruptive to the historicity and other aspects of culture, hence the importance of coordinated tourism management. The province of Kermanshah has extensive tourism potential based on a number of reasons including history, culture, and nature. This study has outlined major attractions within each category and organized them according to their relevance for tourism development. The historical sites of Bistoon Historical Site and Tâq-e Bostân offer an insight into the ancient cultures. Also, people can explore the contemporary cultural sites like ethno-diversity and traditional arts. The area's natural charms, such as a year round seasonal character and picturesque scenes portray its natural beauty. In addition to this, one can explore Kermanshah's distinctive local features including local delicacies and the traditional music, dance, and costumes. This puts the local authorities and business at an advantaged position of using their limited resources for strategic purposes to promote the regional products. Nonetheless, it possesses enormous prospects for green travel in Kermanshah. Some of these are poor infrastructure, feeble marketing activities, weak tourism governance, rationalized subsidies, heightened preference for international travel and competition from neighboring destination. The success of this sector in the province is dependent upon addressing some major challenges that include a comprehensive planning as well as infrastructural developments, effective marketing, and optimal tourism management. Therefore, it is necessary for governments to focus on funding new infrastructure that improves accessibility

including facilities, roads and airports (UNWTO, 2017). In turn, effective marketing as well as effective promotion strategies should be implemented in order to draw a wider audience. Historical and cultural sites should be preserved without compromising convenient travels for the tourists. Such coordinated tourism management is a pre-requisite.

10. Conclusion

Kermanshah, possesses vast tourism potential stemming from its diverse historical, cultural, and natural attractions. This study has identified key attractions in each of these categories, ranking them by priority level based on their importance for tourism development. Historical attractions like the Bistoon Historical Site and Tâq-e Bostân offer insights into ancient civilizations, while cultural attractions, such as traditional arts and ethnic diversity, provide opportunities for visitors to engage with local customs and traditions. The region's natural attractions, including its four-season climate and scenic landscapes, showcase its natural beauty. Moreover, local attractions, such as local cuisines and traditional music and dance, offer immersive experiences in Kermanshah's unique culture. Understanding the significance of these attractions is essential for effective tourism planning and development. The prioritization of these attractions can guide local authorities and businesses in allocating resources and promoting the region's tourism offerings strategically. However, despite its immense potential, Kermanshah faces several challenges and barriers to sustainable tourism. These include insufficient infrastructure, weak marketing activities, inadequate tourism management, rationalizing subsidies, growing interest in foreign travel, and competition from attractions in neighboring regions (Hall & Page, 2014; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Addressing these challenges and harnessing the identified opportunities will be crucial for the province's tourism sector to flourish. To overcome these challenges and capitalize on opportunities, Kermanshah requires comprehensive planning, infrastructure development, effective marketing, and well-coordinated tourism management. It is vital to invest in infrastructure development, such as accommodations, roads, and airports, to enhance accessibility (UNWTO, 2017). Effective marketing and promotion strategies should be implemented to attract a broader audience. Coordinated tourism management is necessary to ensure the preservation of historical and cultural sites while facilitating tourist experiences (Weaver & Lawton, 2014). addressing the impact of subsidy rationalization and fuel price

increases on travel, as well as growing interest in foreign travel, may involve policy adjustments and incentives to encourage domestic tourism. Kermanshah should also focus on maintaining and promoting its unique cultural and natural attractions to remain competitive with neighboring regions (Sharpley & Telfer, 2002). The province of Kermanshah, with its rich heritage and stunning landscapes, holds tremendous potential for tourism. By addressing the barriers and maximizing the opportunities, Kermanshah can position itself as a prominent destination in the world of sustainable tourism.

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