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The importance of Reeds and Cattail for tourism in the marshes of Iraq with a plan for a tourist village

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Abstract

The marshes of Iraq were known as the Qasab region due to the large presence of reeds in them, which constitutes the basis of the economic life of the inhabitants of this region. The oldest human civilizations were established in the marshes, some of whose effects are still common. After entering the Marshes of Iraq to the World Heritage List in 2017, the relentless pursuit of the development of tourism activity started by relying on all available capabilities in which the reed and cattail plants play a fundamental role in it in a manner that preserves the existing environmental diversity and creates an economical, tourist and cultural renaissance. This research is an attempt to identify the most important tourist patterns that can be active in the marshes of Iraq and how to take advantage of the presence of reed and cattail plants in supporting these tourist patterns by proposing a scheme for a tourist village inspired by the traditional environment of the Iraqi marshes**.**

Keyword: *Phragmites australis*, *Typha domingensis*, marshes, tourist village

Introduction

The marshes occupy a large proportion of the southern part of the alluvial plain in Iraq. It is located between latitudes 30.50 and 32.50 north and between longitudes (44-48) east. It is bordered on the east by the Iranian border and the edge of the plateau from the west, which is the area between the city of Al-Amarah in the north, Basra in the south and east, and Suq Al-Shuyoukh in the west (Abdul Latif 2008). It is considered one of the unique models of freshwater flow in arid and semi-arid areas and areas rich in natural cover and livestock. Its vast water areas, with the reed and cattail forests they enjoy, have become one of the best warm areas in the world suitable for migration and hatching of birds and from all parts of the earth, with their environmental suitability, to raise buffaloes and fish for the livelihood of hundreds of marsh dwellers.

During the preparation of this research, many studies and researches that were concerned with reeds and cattailin terms of the structural aspect or as part of the distinctive environment of the marshes, , were also reviewed several studies related to the design of tourist villages in areas with tourist temptations, which served as the paved way for the researcher to complete this research The research of (Al-Hiti *et al*., 2016) showed that there are anatomical differences between the reed and sedge plants that are very clear in the roots of the two plants and the structure of the stem as

well as the leaves, these variations and differences facilitate the process of comparing and differentiating between both types and how each type complements the work of the other when they are present in the same environment. As for research (Saeed and Abdullah 2017), it dealt with the natural ingredients that serve eco-tourism in the marshes of Iraq, including the types of natural plants spread in the marshes, the most important of which are the reed and sedge plants, the role of these two plants in the daily life of the marsh dwellers, and the most important industries that depend on reeds and papyrus. The research concluded that the marshes of southern Iraq possess the natural ingredients that enable them to establish a distinct tourist movement and that the marshes' embrace of many historical places can contribute to attracting tourists interested in such places, in addition to the presence of many popular industries that can be developed to sell it to tourists as a souvenir about these areas. As for the study (A-Hashimi, 2006), it was concluded that the tourism components in the marshes of Iraq, which if exploited optimally, make Iraq an advanced tourist country, by choosing Marsh Al-Saheen to plan a typical tourist village in it and can be circulated in other marsh areas that will be Exploiting and employing the various tourist components in it, because this village is similar to the residential villages in the region in terms of the form of construction and the way of using the means of transportation so that it reflects the image of the traditional village of the marsh. Still, it is in line with the requirements of the tourist resorts in terms of providing various tourist services that the tourists feel comfortable in.

As for the study of the General Authority for Tourism and Antiquities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2017, it included an calligraphy and writing and the launch of water systems, positive law, art, music, and integrated analysis of the economies of the Tabuk region and its distinct tourism components and an attempt to choose the most important investment opportunities in the field of tourism. The study included details about building a tourist village in Al Wajh, the most important components of this village, aspects of the expected tourist offer, the services provided, the targeted segments, and the marketing and promotional policies the proposed prices for services. In addition to a description of all the project facilities in terms of area, construction costs, operational costs, administrative structure, workers' wages, and maps of the facilities in the project.

Results

The people of southern Iraq generally refer to the ponds or low areas filled with water in south Iraq and the sedimentary plain and in which reeds, cattail, and other swamps plants as the marshes (Al-Juwaibrawi 1993). It abounds in all forms of diversity and biological richness. It is characterized by a fertile living environment and natural areas full of living creatures from rare birds, unique land and water animals and diverse plants, and the breadth of their natural richness and geographical location, in addition to being a resting area and a major transit point for millions of migratory birds from Russia and Europe to Africa in the winter. It is also a breeding area for many types of Gulf fish and freshwater fish, and the United Nations Environment Program has established it as one of the most important centers of biodiversity in the world, so it is considered one of the elements of tourist attractions in Iraq (Al-Ansari, 2008). It possesses a world heritage that recorded the first launch of

literature. The marshes included the history and legacy of the Sumerian civilization and

other civilizations that followed. Many archaeological sites are spread in the areas of the marshes of Iraq. There are more than 1,200 archaeological sites in the marshes, of which only 5% were excavated, which made them among the natural, cultural sites that numbered no more than 27 sites in the world according to the World Heritage List (Al Omari and Kazar, 2017). The inhabitants of the marshes are among the first people who came up with the idea of dwelling above water. They are the first to use this idea with the simplicity of the tools, where they build their homes on islands they pave themselves from reeds called (Jabbash) and collected (Jbayish), which is a mixture of cattailreeds, dirt and animal dung, so it sinks into the water Gradually it formed more like an artificial island (Abu Jari, 2012).

The natural and human components in the marshes of Iraq represent the foundations of the tourism offer, which can be exploited to activate several tourist patterns. The tourism offer is defined as what the tourist area offers and contains tourist components, whether they are natural, historical, or industrial attractions, in addition to services and goods that may affect individuals to increase a particular country and its preference over another (Elias *et al*., 2002), and the types of tourism patterns that can be activated in the marshes of Iraq can be shown in figure 1.

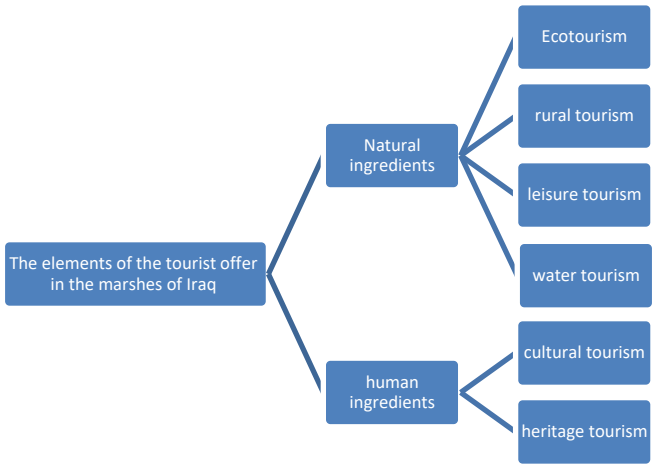


figure 1: The types of tourism patterns

The World Environment Fund defines ecotourism as “traveling to natural areas that have not been polluted, and their natural balance has not been disturbed, to enjoy their landscapes, plants, wild animals and civilizations in the past and present (Al-Hawamdeh and Al-Hamiri, 2006). According to this definition, the marsh areas are considered the most suitable places to activate this type of tourism. The beauty and charm of the marshes and their uniqueness with a special aesthetic

character, some colors astonish the tourist. The presence of reeds and cattail in different colors, green and yellow-golden, in addition to the numerous lakes and streams of clear water with a blue similar to seawater and fresh in taste, and the various wild and migratory birds flying in the sky and the various types of fish in its waters encourage the revitalization of recreational tourism. Rural areas with a special status constitute an influential factor of tourist attractions for many considerations. They are rich in heritage sites and natural resources and still maintain social aspects, customs, and traditions, as they are one of the most suitable places to practice rural tourism. Most of the areas of the marshes are suitable for practicing various well-known water activities and organizing tourist tours in the marshes, in addition to the suitability of the area to hold festivals, water events and races with motorboats and sailing (Hamid 2017). And the marshes are not a natural environment that is seen through its vocabulary in water and plants only, It embraces a human society that lives in its shadow, deals with it, and is in harmony with its precursors. It has its own rather unique characteristics and characteristics, and it also has its own customs, traditions, ideas, values and beliefs that form its cultural pattern in its social construction. Therefore, it is a base for revitalizing cultural tourism which is defined as tourism that aims to increase people's knowledge by encouraging their cultural needs and getting to know countries and regions unknown to them, It is linked to learning about classified monuments, archaeological sites, peoples, their customs and traditions, as well as learning about traditional industries and various cultural events (Bin Ghadban, 2014) and heritage tourism It means all the dynamic tourism activities and events that use what they have of the cultural resources and treasures of the national heritage, and graduate and market them in a civilized and aesthetically attractive manner in order to serve the social system in a way that serves the sustainable economic process, and it exercises its positive role in showing the bright and beautiful image of the country (Timothy and Boyd, 2006).

Many varieties of plants have adapted to life in the marsh environment amidst the swamps and the intensity of heat and relative humidity. They descend from wild plants, the most important of these plants and the most widespread are the reed and cattailplants, where the reed plant spreads in the deep areas of the marsh except for the parts free of vegetation occupied by clear water. Which represents the deepest parts of the marsh (Al-Hiti *et al.,* 2016), and it is in most areas of the marshes, but it is less or absent in the temporary marshes and in the areas close to the population centers, as the buffalo gnaws it before its rise, and it is considered one of the prominent emerging plants, which is part of the Its vegetative sum is under the surface of the water (Abu Jerry, 2012).

The cattailis a tall, sturdy leafless aquatic plant that can grow up to 4-5 meters (13-16 feet) tall. Cattailweeds form an assemblage of triangular green stems that grow from thick woody roots where the stem is topped by a group of thick, bright, thin filaments resembling stems, about 10 to 30 cm (4-10 ft) long. It resembles a feather duster when the plant is young (Al-Hadithi et al., 2016). Reed and cattail plants are similar in many characteristics, such as the environment in which they live, the nature

of the leaves, the type of sweating, the type of stomata, and others, but several differences can be identified between them

Reeds	**Cattail**
1. Lives in the deep areas of the marshes 2. Its length reaches 5-6 meters 3. It is affected by the turbidity of the water 4. It abounds in the interior of the marshes in the form of forests 5. It is mainly used in the construction of houses and furniture	1. It spreads on the outer edges of the marshes 2. Its length reaches 4 meters 3. Resists water salinity 4. It is widely spread near residential villages 5. It is mainly used in the manufacture of Elkhart

The uses of reeds and cattail by the residents of the marshes in their lives and their residence in these areas, where it is used in the manufacture of trees, as the reed plant constitutes the primary material basis in the manufacture of beds, where it is made of mattresses for housing and service facilities in the region, in addition to the entry of the reed plant in the processes of decorating and furniture housing It has a heritage specific to the environment, and the craft of making carpets in the marshes represents the first place among the crafts of the inhabitants of the marshes (Fawzi and Al-Qarmali, 1969), Reeds and cattail are also used as the raw material in building housing, or what is known as sarifa, which is more common in the marshes area. Its area in most cases is about (25 m^2) and its length is more than its width (Theseker, 1956)

Reeds are used in constructing hostels, and the host is one of the civilized and social manifestations in the marshes of Iraq. It is not for housing but rather for hospitality and meetings. It is a large-capacity reed house or building made of huge pillars of strong reeds called (Shabab) collection of alum and large reeds "Bawari" plural of "baria", which in the Akkadian language means the hollow reed (Khalaf, 2005) and from two side walls built of reeds and mats as well (Al-Hasnawi, 2004).

Reeds and cattail are also used in the construction of Chabayish and its singular (Gabasha), which are islands on which the inhabitants of the marshes built their homes of reeds and cattail, which are artificial islands due to the exposure of the islands to the tyranny of the marsh waters during the time of the flood and the lack of land area. Layers of clay, reeds, and sedge on top of each other, then he pressed them and put pegs to stabilize them (Hamid, 1986).

As for the other uses of reeds and cattail in the lives of the people of the marshes, they can be explained by the following points

1- Reeds and Cattailare considered to be plants capable of purifying water by taking nutrients and dissolved pollutants in the water in which they live and providing a clean environmental habitat from pollutants for many other species.

2- Because of its place of spread cattail is used to preserve the embankment of river banks to prevent the risk of floods

3- The reeds are used in the dates season as mattresses for the press halls and a cover for the stacks of dates. The reeds are also spread on the sailing and commercial ships designated for transporting dates.

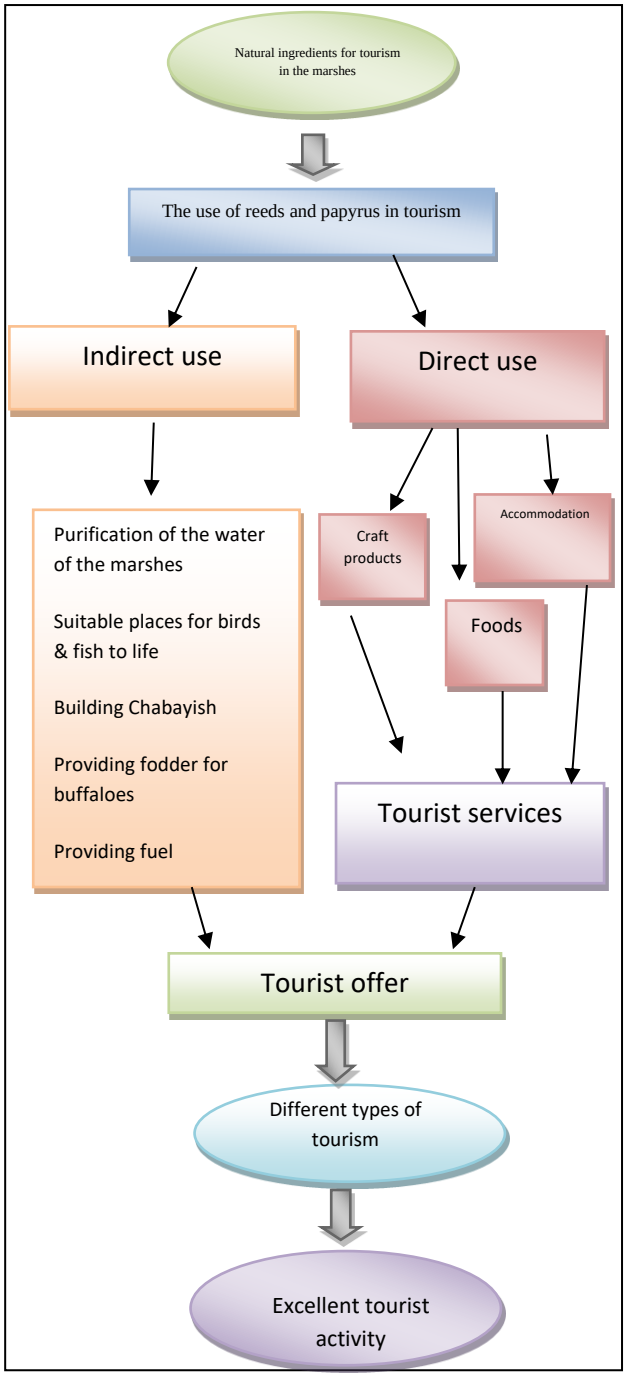
4- Reeds and cattail, when they are soft, are grazing material and fodder for animals, especially buffaloes and cows.

5- Reeds are used in the manufacture of "**mutal**" a common fuel type in the marshes.

In addition to the previous, the cattail plant is used to make a special kind of candy known "Al-Kharit", concerning the way it was collected and prepared. In the spring, the cattail plant bears fruit in the upper part, a yellow substance that wraps half a meter in length around a somewhat solid stick of

cattail sticks, distinguished from all of them as it is the only one solid stick while the rest is very soft. Whoever wants to prepare (Al-Kharit) must first stir that material between his fingers from the bottom to the top. It gathers little by little a group of not a few of those fruits that must be collected at a certain time, before that fruit naturally turns into another substance called "**naffash**" that has completely different uses than (Al-Kharit), for example, mixed with clay for building purposes (Alwan, 2013).
The importance of reeds and cattail for any tourist activity can be shown in figure 2.

Any tourist activity that can be established in the marshes requires the availability of the basic pillars of tourism that comply with the conditions of UNESCO when inscribing the marshes on the World Heritage List, namely:
1- Providing suitable accommodation and the shelter mentioned above services and using reeds and cattail in building rest houses and popular cafes while preserving the ways of living of local communities and preserving the nature and shape of the building.



Figer 2: The use of reeds and cattail in tourism

2- Find specialized restaurants in the area that offer local foods appropriately, depending on the wealth of fish, birds, and buffalo milk.

3- Providing local transportation and paying attention to waterways to form transportation routes and take advantage of them for tourist tours using "Al-Mashhouf" or "balam" because it is an attractive factor for tourists

4- Providing shrines and sites for viewing, reviving folklore aspects, local industries, social customs and local heritage, and developing complementary services.

5- Marketing and guidance services and preparing the population to receive tourists

The importance of reeds and cattailin this process is highlighted by finding a place that includes all these pillars in a distinctive way that adds to the nature of the marshes another dimension and achieves a kind of harmony between the environmental field and tourism and the preservation of its identity. From the foregoing, it is possible to propose a plan for a tourist village near Al-Hawizeh Marsh in the Maysan Governorate, built with reeds and papyrus.

Suggested Tourist Village Facilities The proposed village has an area of 30,000 m², overlooking the Al-Hawizeh Marsh, and it includes the following facilities:

1- Host

It represents the center of the village and the meeting place for the village guests, in which cultural and lyrical evenings are held and any other activities. It has an area of (110) m² consisting of 11 semi-arcs, separated between each arc by two meters and the width of the host is (5) meters. It is completely built with reeds and according to the approved traditional construction and is painted with a preservative to resist climatic changes and weather fluctuations and is furnished with rugs made of spun wool. Ceiling fans and ventilation holes in the host wall are used to ventilate the host. As for the lighting, it is by using economic lamps that depend on solar energy.

In addition to the presence of smaller hosts on both sides of the village, they are built with the same specifications, but with an area of (72) m² that can be prepared as halls for serving food to the village guests.

2- The huts

The number of 20 huts is distributed on both sides of the main host, the area of each hut is 40 m², and each hut includes the following facilities:

- A bedroom for two person with an area of 4 * 4 m
- Small bathroom with an area of 2 * 2 m
- Living room

These huts are built from locally manufactured bricks made of mud and straw and are furnished with furniture made of reeds or palm leaves such as beds, chairs and tables, the bathrooms relies on the use of oriental latrines, which drain their water into huge tanks located at the end of the village . As for the lighting in the huts, it depends on lamps that are lit using solar energy.

In addition to the huts that are used for housing the village guests, there are a number of huts at the end of the village that are used for housing the workers in the village and for preparing the food served to the guests and for the management of the village.

3- Marina boats

It is located on the side overlooking the lagoon, and can accommodate 10 boats

4- The chapel has an area of 50 m²

5- Sale booths

An area of 2000 m² is allocated at the front of the village near the boat marina to set up a group of Sale booths built from reeds treated with materials to prevent damage, and they provide the following services:

- Selling traditional and handicraft products produced by women from nearby villages
- Photographing in the traditional clothes of the marsh dwellers

- Rental of boats for tours and sale of fishing supplies
- Selling water, juices, canned goods and other items needed by tourists

6- Green spaces and children's playgrounds distributed in the sides of the village

7- Before starting to build the village, it is necessary to provide the necessary infrastructure for the success of the village, which includes:

A small desalination plant to supply the village with potable water

A small station for generating electricity using solar energy

A small sewage plant consisting of huge tanks to treat sewage before it is released into the marsh waters

8- A car park located outside the village, enough to park 50 cars and buses

As for the walkways of the village, they are paved with bricks, and the lampposts are low, and lanterns are hung at the end of them, lit using solar-powered lamps. To mark the paths and walks in the village, plants of trees, shrubs, or climbers that are tolerant to shearing and shaping are used. To form a low fence not more than half a meter high on both sides of the corridor to lead the visitor to a certain direction, and these plants can also be used to form the outer fence of the village. The spiny plants and succulents are plants that live in weather conditions of multiple climates, and the large and wide difference in shapes, colors and lengths of plants in this group gives a fertile imagination and wide possibilities for many uses of this group in landscaping the village. In addition to these facilities, there are places for inspection, medical care, maintenance, health facilities and information within the village

Beneficiaries of the services of this village

The village receives tourist groups coming from inside and outside Iraq who are interested in natural and environmental areas and are eager to see and learn about the details of the lives of the marsh residents. It is also possible to receive school trips and family trips for entertainment and participate in water tours by boat, and the village can be invested in the establishment of artistic and sports festivals.

Human Resources

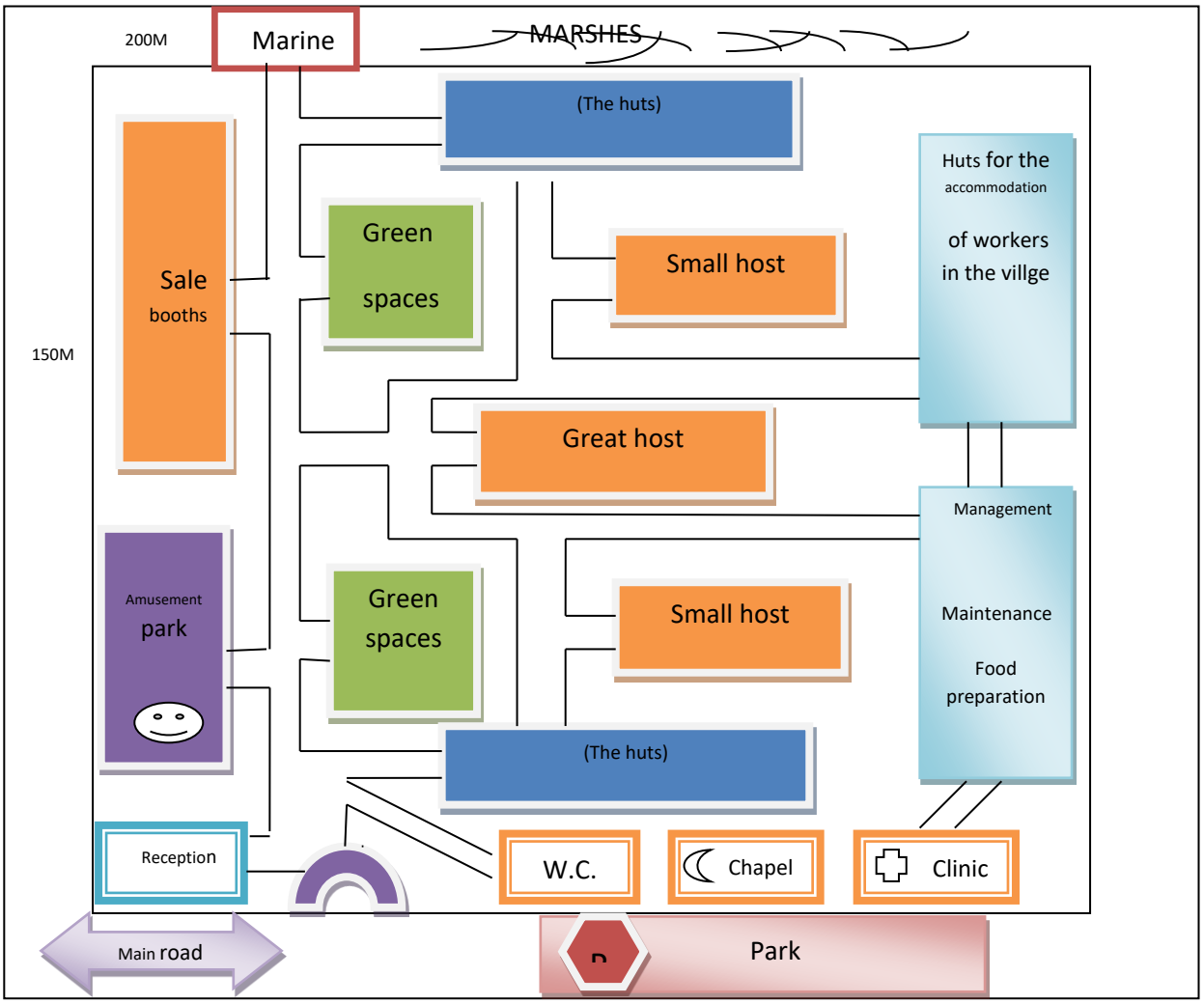
For the purpose of providing job opportunities and raising the standard of living for the local population, the management of the village and the provision of services to its guests depend on the human element of the residents of the surrounding areas of the village and under the direct supervision of the Tourism Department of the Maysan Provincial Council. Food items such as birds, eggs, fish, buffalo milk and its derivatives, as well as materials used in furnishing and furnishing rooms and hostels, and the use of boat owners from the local population to carry out water tours in the marshes for the village guests and visitors

Distribution of facilities and services in the tourist village

The following chart shows a proposed distribution of facilities and services within the village

Discussion

Tourism has become one of the main sources in the global economy; Iraq has a natural field, geographical diversity, and huge cultural legacies, it must adopt an effective policy to develop tourism, especially in the southern marshes region, where it extends over vast areas and represents one of the factors of tourist attractions because it contains a diverse world of wildlife and animals and



Source: Prepared by the researcher

vegetarianism, and together with the human factor and other complementary ingredients, constitute the elements of a distinct tourist product, and the research problem stems from the answer to the following question

Could the reed and cattail plants have a role in developing the tourist offer in the marshes?.

The marshes are characterized as one of the rare forms in the world in terms of the historical and dynastic extension of the oldest civilization that is still breeding and communicating in its world. (with virgin forests, rivers on which no facilities were built, and primitive human societies) which are limited areas in the world, and the Iraqi marshes fall within these specifications. It is a region covered with water throughout the year and has unique geographical features. It is currently the first natural reserve in Iraq. It is also considered one of the most prominent wet sectors globally and one of the most important centers of biological diversity in the world because of the biological richness of these areas, rich in various types of aquatic life. Wildlife, plant diversity and rare birds. All this makes it a privileged location for the emergence of patterns of tourism activity that have its components and ways to activate it, such as

eco-tourism, which is friendly to the community as it is based on taking advantage of what is available in the community of resources and individuals and works on developing social relations and achieving and improving the process of modernizing society and transferring isolated communities to open societies. It works to keep society in a permanent state of work and reduce seasonal risks and the resulting anxiety and social unrest. In addition to the possibility of activating recreational tourism and rural tourism, which does not require huge superstructures or large investments because its main goal is to preserve the environment and create communication between the components of society. Also, the contact of the residents of these areas with participants in events and activities increases the possibility of self-development of people and trying to adapt to all results from the tourism activity in terms of economic, social, and cultural effects. In addition to what it achieves in terms of sustainable development of the resources of these areas, and what will be achieved from the development of the existing infrastructure, or that is required to be available for the success and prosperity of such types of tourism, and the result will be beneficial to the residents of these areas. In addition to this, the importance of revitalizing cultural and heritage tourism in these areas, as many governments have taken upon themselves the marketing of cultural and heritage areas in which tourism resources are available, such as historical and archaeological sites, which can be developed to attract visitors and tourists to these areas and satisfy their desires to learn about the heritage and attract material benefits for locals

These marshes, and since ancient times, have been characterized by the presence of reed and cattail plants, which are the basic ingredient in the lives of the inhabitants of the marshes. It is a natural wealth that can be employed and used to provide the requirements of different tourist patterns from the accommodation, furnishing, means of transportation, and other facilities that the tourist needs during his participation in tourism programs that include visiting The marshes. From this point of view, the researcher's expectations were for the tourist village that could be established in the Al-Hawizeh Marsh and make great use of reeds and cattail in the construction of its facility.

The design of the tourist village is the distribution of the elements of a specific program on the chosen site that achieves proper and appropriate functional relationships between the components of the program with different functions. In addition to the recreational services performed by these places, however, the village must meet special conditions to cover the investment needs, which achieves remarkable economic prosperity This may be done by giving the village a distinctive architectural character or creating a strong image to always remain in the memory of the tourist and also the harmony of the facilities with the natural components of the site in which the tourist village is located so that it becomes an element of nature. Thus, it is possible to achieve the economic and social goals and to reach the scheme in order to be integrated.

We have chosen the Al-Hawizeh Marsh as a proposed site for the tourist village for the following reasons:

1- Its proximity to the governorate center and Al-Kahla district.

2- The existence of a main land road that leads to the marsh

3- The spread of a number of residential communities near it

4- The water level of the marsh does not decrease during the summer

5- Availability of reed and cattail plants

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أهمية القصب والبردي للسياحة في اهوار العراق مع مخطط لقرية سياحية

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المستخلص

عرفت اهوار العراق بمنطقة القصب لوجود نبات القصب فيها بكثرة والذي يشكل اساس الحياة الاقتصادية لسكان هذه المنطقة. نشأت أقدم الحضارات الإنسانية في الأهوار ، ولا يزال بعضها منتشرًا. بعد دخول اهوار العراق الى قائمة التراث العالمي في عام 2017 ، بدأ السعي الحثيث لتطوير النشاط السياحي بالاعتماد على كل الامكانيات المتاحة التي تلعب فيها نباتات القصب والبردي دورا اساسيا بشكل يحافظ على االتنوع البيئي ويخلق نهضة اقتصادية وسياحية وثقافية. يعد هذا البحث محاولة للتعرف على اهم الانماط السياحية التي يمكن ان تنشط في اهوار العراق وكيفية الاستفادة من وجود نباتات القصب والبردي في دعم هذه الانماط السياحية من خلال اقتراح مخطط لقرية سياحية مستوحاة من البيئة التقليدية للأهوار العراقية.