

THE POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPING SLUM TOURISM IN IRAQ: STRATEGIES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

In a world witnessing rapid transformations and accelerated urban growth, Iraqi cities face significant challenges stemming from uncontrolled urbanization, forced displacement, and escalating political conflicts. These factors have led to the spread of informal settlements, which have been self-constructed by their residents without formal planning. In the face of these challenges, slum tourism has emerged as a new opportunity to rethink traditional development concepts, offering a fresh perspective that highlights the human and social dimensions within this complex context. It has shifted from merely reflecting extreme poverty and spontaneous migration to serving as a means of revitalizing informal settlements by investing in the

residents' values and creative potential. This shift has transformed slum tourism from a unique tourism experience to a symbol of sustainable urban renewal. It aims not only at material development but also at creating social change, integrating residents into the global economy, and enhancing quality of life.

This research attempts to address the knowledge gap concerning the potential for activating slum tourism in Iraq, with the aim of enhancing these areas and transforming them into urban zones that integrate with the city fabric, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of informal settlements. The importance of the research lies in exploring the prospects of slum tourism in Iraq as an emerging sector filled with both challenges and opportunities. It requires a comprehensive analysis to

leverage this type of tourism as a tool to break the cycle of poverty and uplift informal settlements by developing them and incorporating them into the urban landscape, drawing on successful global experiences to improve their appearance and enhance quality of life sustainably.

To achieve these goals, a socio-inductive methodology was used, including the identification of key strategies to activate and develop slum tourism. This methodology was applied in two stages. The first stage involved constructing a comprehensive theoretical framework of strategies and implementation mechanisms based on studies and experiences from both Arab and international contexts. The second stage focused on selecting local samples and conducting field surveys, including questionnaires targeting local community members (as tourists) and interviews with slum residents themselves (as beneficiaries). The potential values of the theoretical framework were then presented to experts from relevant fields for evaluation and weighting.

KEYWORDS: Slums, Slumming, Slum Tourism, Slums Development, Sustainable Urban Development,

* INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the rapid transformations characterizing urban development in the modern era, new challenges emerge that cast shadows over urban communities. Among these challenges are slums, which significantly impact all aspects of social, economic, and environmental life. As the urban fabric of cities accelerates, the problem of informal settlements worsens due to unregulated growth, population expansion, and urban transformation, compounded by difficult economic conditions. This situation leads to a buildup of crises, ranging from inadequate infrastructure to declining levels of public services.

In this context, the phenomenon of "slum tourism" clearly stands out, having become a focal point for the world as a type of tourism that seeks to overcome its appeal. It reflects a contradiction between the aspirations of tourists and the reality of impoverished communities. Its scope has notably expanded in the early 21st century, becoming a global trend that has spread to many countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Slum tourism is no longer merely a means to combat poverty; it has established itself as a major force in global commerce, attracting more than one

million tourists annually (Al-Saeh, 2016).

Slum tourism is relatively new and remains largely unexplored. Academic writings on the subject have only begun to crystallize, with the first study conducted by ⁽²⁾(Michael Stevens) in 2005 published in Pop Matters. Since then, more than 200 articles and research papers have emerged from various parts of the world. The first conference on this tourism trend was held in England in 2010, leading to the establishment of a network for those working in or with slum tourism (Abdlhamid, 2021, p. 30).

Michael Stevens: An American educator, television host, and editor, he graduated from the University of Chicago with a degree in psychology and English literature. He is the founder of the television program Mind Field, which explores a specific pattern of human behavior in each episode through analysis and a series of experiments.

Slum tourism has been described using various terms, such as township tourism, poverty tourism, slumming, and slum tourism, in an attempt to understand the real life of the world's poorest communities (Elmanzlawi, 2021). This type of tourism involves individuals visiting impoverished neighborhoods,

strolling through their streets, and getting closer to the lives of the poor to learn about their lifestyles (Hassan, 2020). Behind all these different terms, there are various concepts of slum tourism that help in understanding this phenomenon (Panagopoulos, 2016).

According to Freire-Medeiros (2009), slum tourism is an integral part of reality tourism, while Frenzel et al. (2015) suggest that slum tourism intersects with other forms of tourism, such as dark tourism, volunteer tourism, and development tourism. The relationship between poverty and tourism is not limited to how tourism impacts poverty; it also involves how poverty is used as a tourist attraction, with poverty itself becoming a subject of tourist exploration (Frenzel, 2015).

The appeal of slum neighborhoods as tourist attractions is enhanced by the image of the (cosmopolitan metropolis) that was gaining popularity at that time. This concept is expressed through slum tourism, which refers to cultural diversity and the contrast in urban composition and its variety: wealth and poverty, modernity and antiquity, equality, and spatial classification (Steinbrink, 2012). It consists of three main dimensions that shape our understanding of this type of tourism:

1- First, Poverty: The relationship between poverty and tourism is not limited to how tourism impacts poverty; it also involves how poverty is used as a tourist attraction. It serves as a general framework that showcases the economic and social reality of impoverished communities (Steinbrink, 2012, p. 21-22).

2- Second, Morality: Slum tourism does not differ significantly from traditional tourism, which seeks to commodify landscapes, culture, art, and residents into goods through a simultaneous process of production and consumption. Therefore, it is illogical to reject slum tourism as a means of alleviating poverty due to questionable practices and ethics while simultaneously promoting other forms of tourism to achieve the same goal (Steinbrink, 2012, p. 22).

3- Third, Power: Slum neighborhoods have become highly valuable not only for tour organizers and travel agencies but also for the residents of these slums themselves, as well as for tourists and visitors, and even for governments and international organizations. This cumulative value creates a field where complex and powerful relationships develop between these groups, shaping slum tourism as a phenomenon (Panagopoulos, 2016, pp. 34-35).

Slum tourism is also considered a form of pro-poor tourism (Ashley et al., 2006, p. VIII) and is an integral part of reality tourism. It overlaps with other forms of tourism, such as alternative, volunteer, and social tourism, and is viewed as sustainable tourism. This sustainability is primarily due to its reliance on local environmental resources (material, human, and natural), which are utilized to create a conducive environment for offering a distinctive local tourism product while maximizing the benefit from these resources for as long as possible (Elmanzlawi, 2021). Additionally, it encompasses social and cultural diversity and the variety in the local economy, crafts, and handicrafts, which together represent components of the local economy on one hand and attractive elements on the other (Abdlhamid, 2021). Consequently, it empowers the community and provides a platform for local residents to represent and interpret their territories and participate in sustainable urban development (Rusata, 2023).



Figure (1): The Growth of the Slum Tourism Phenomenon, Source: Researcher based on Frenzel, 2015

* The Problem of Research

The research problem lies in the lack of knowledge regarding the potential to activate slum tourism in Iraq, with the aim of improving these areas and transforming them into urban zones that interact and integrate with the city's fabric, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of slum areas.

* The Importance of Research

The importance of this research lies in exploring the future of slum tourism as an emerging field that presents multiple challenges and opportunities, achieving a balance between sustaining this type of tourism, environmental protection, and improving the quality of life in impoverished communities. This approach aims to break the cycle of poverty, enhance and develop slum areas, integrate them into the urban fabric, and transform them into fully developed, sustainable urban zones.

* The Hypothesis of Research

The research hypothesis states that strategies for developing slum tourism have a positive impact on activating tourism in these areas, understanding its actual effect on slum neighborhoods, and achieving sustainable urban development for impoverished communities.

* The Aims of Research

The aims of this research focus on building a comprehensive knowledge framework around slum tourism as a contemporary urban phenomenon that explores the social and cultural values embedded within impoverished communities, alongside the creative potential of their residents. It seeks to highlight the pivotal role of this tourism in fostering development within these areas, contributing to a clearer vision for identifying the most effective strategies to activate and grow this tourism at the local level in a way that achieves integration between slums and the broader urban fabric.

* Methodology

The study adopts a social-inductive approach within two main axes: The theoretical axis, which aims to construct a comprehensive theoretical framework around slum tourism and to distill the key strategies necessary for activating and developing slum tourism based

on global studies and applications; and the practical axis, which focused on selecting local samples and conducting field research. This included distributing surveys to local community members as tourists and holding direct interviews with slum residents as beneficiaries. Subsequently, the extracted values were presented to expert specialists for evaluation and determination of weighted priorities, contributing to the achievement of the desired goals.

*** The History of Slum Tourism**

Moving beyond the traditional concept of tourism, which is limited to visiting places for enjoyment and leisure, a new idea has begun to spread—specifically within impoverished neighborhoods. This can be termed "slum tourism," which attempts to explore the real-life conditions of some of the world's poorest communities. People visit these areas, walk through their streets, and get closer to the lives of the poor to better understand their way of life (Hassan, 2020). Slum tourism has a rich history; it is not a new phenomenon but rather dates back to:-

1- Early 19th Century: Slum tourism first emerged as a form of specialized tourism focusing on visiting impoverished areas in England—specifically, Britain. In September

1884, slum tourism was recognized in the (Oxford) Dictionary with the term (Slumming it) (Shepard, 2016). The New York Times published an article highlighting this new trend in recreational activities, marking a shift in specialized tourism with the introduction of slum tourism. Rather than being avoided as off-limits, these areas became places of curiosity. The trend spread to the United States, where wealthy residents started exploring neighborhoods like (Bowery) and (Five Points) in New York's East Side. These were poor areas inhabited mainly by immigrants, where affluent tourists visited to "see how the other half lives," revealing their curiosity about communities vastly different from their own in background and lifestyle (Panagopoulos, 2016, p. 21).
2- Early 20th Century: Slum tourism declined but regained popularity in the mid-1990s. This resurgence was driven by increased awareness of humanitarian issues, which became a primary factor in reviving this form of tourism. The revival was also influenced by significant societal developments worldwide, the most notable of which include (Hamad, 2021, p. 60):

First, the interest of nations in tourism and recognition of its importance.

Second, the discussion of slum tourism in numerous academic works, which significantly influenced tourists' perceptions of impoverished neighborhoods.

Third, the active role of media in popularizing the concept of slum tourism, especially after certain films highlighted the topic of slum areas, drawing global attention to them.

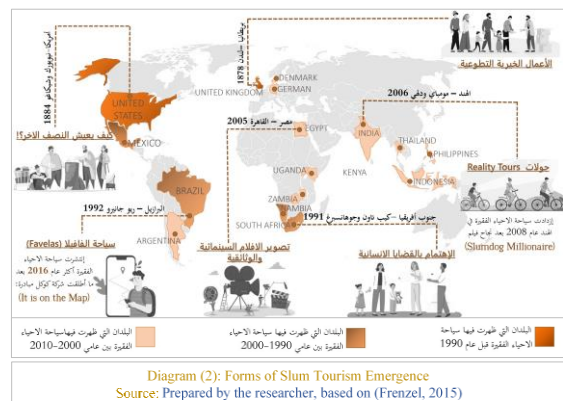
3- The Early 21st Century: The traditional image of slum tourism as an urban phenomenon shifted, transforming it into a legitimate global tourism form that has fostered a relationship between poverty and tourism, attracting thousands of visitors annually. Individual initiatives have emerged to activate slum tourism in certain countries. For example:

1- First: In India, Reality Tours and Travel offers guided tours to slum areas in Dharavi, where the number of visitors has grown to over 15,000 annually, compared to barely 150 previously.

2- Second: In Brazil, Google launched the initiative It is on the Map in 2016, a virtual tour of the slums in Rio de Janeiro presented in a 360-degree format, establishing it as a global reference for often-overlooked communities (D'Cunha, 2016).

3- Third: In Egypt, slum tourism emerged in 2005 when American environmental activists (T.H. and Sybille Culhane) began (Solar CITIES Urban Eco Tours) in the districts of Al-Darb Al-Ahmar and Manshiyat Naser (the Garbage City) in Cairo, guided by local tour leaders (Fabian Frenzel, 2012, p. 7).

Additionally, there have been several initiatives in Cape Town, South Africa; Kibera, Kenya; and Mexico, which collectively receive about 300,000 international tourists annually (Daniel, 2014). Visiting slums offers a chance to see a completely different side of areas often labeled as "slums," encouraging tourists to work as volunteers or provide support through collaboration and partnerships (Teacher, 2023).



* Types and Levels of Slum Tourism

(Ausland) categorizes slum tourism generally into three types:

1- Educational Travel: Aimed at providing learning and cultural

enrichment opportunities through travel and exploration. This type includes visits to historical and cultural sites; participation in workshops and educational courses; learning about the local language and culture; and involvement in nature- and environment-related activities (ACIS, 2015).

2- Leisure Tourism: Defined simply as tourism undertaken during free time, allowing people to relax and experience an environment different from their own (Travelperk, 2023).

3- Volunteerism Labor: Refers to unpaid volunteer work undertaken as a social responsibility, where individuals dedicate their time and effort to help others or support specific causes (Bloomerang, 2022). Studies show that slum tourism operates across several levels, as follows:-

1- Geographical Scope Level: This can be local, regional, or international, depending on the targeted area.

2- Tourist Experience Level: This may range from a simple observational experience, allowing tourists to learn about everyday life there, to more interactive and immersive experiences, such as participation in local activities (Fabian, 2015, p. 242).

3- Organizational Level: These initiatives may be community-led or part of broader tourism, developmental, or social strategies overseen by governmental entities or international organizations (Abdlhamid, 2021, p. 43).

4- Objective Level: Objectives may focus on understanding the local culture or contributing to improving the quality of life (Sohyun, 2024). These levels are influenced by various factors, including geographical location and accessibility, local and regional organization, tourism promotion, and tourist demand.

*** THE MAIN MOTIVATIONS OF SLUM TOURISM**

One of the primary reasons for the emergence of slum tourism is that impoverished communities have sought alternative means to boost their economies. This coincided with the advent of photography and filmmaking, which increased tourists' desire to see these areas firsthand. As a result, some tourism companies began incorporating slum tourism into their programs, developing strategies to attract tourists and involve local residents in tourism activities (Elmanzlawi, 2021, p. 31).

*** THE MAIN MOTIVATIONS OF SLUM TOURISM**

First, Exploration: Tourists seek new experiences and explore unknown places that need rejuvenation, often through guided tours that highlight the historical aspects of towns and the intriguing contrast of slum areas.

Second, Interest in Social and Human Issues: Tourists aim to understand the cultural and social aspects of life and living conditions in impoverished communities by witnessing the reality on the ground and directly experiencing the harsh lives of their inhabitants.

Third, Presenting the Real Picture: Tourists wish to gain an authentic experience of slum tourism and its dynamics, ensuring that the image portrayed by the media reflects reality. This perspective does not romanticize poverty as merely a form of entertainment but reveals the true conditions of these communities.

Fourth, Desire to Make an Impact: Tourists seek sustainable travel experiences that allow interaction with impoverished communities through volunteer work, supporting small projects, and providing assistance. The main motivations for slum tourism differ between tourists and local residents (Macanas, 2023, p. 7):

1- Tourists: They look for destinations that differ from typical tourist spots (attraction factors).

2- Residents: They seek new sources of income to alleviate poverty and express their concerns and conditions more effectively.

Thus, not all tourists in slum areas are searching for the same experiences.

Historical classifications show that professional tourists (researchers, artists, journalists, urban planners, and activists) explored slums for professional reasons, playing a significant role in developing infrastructure, providing services, and enhancing tourism activities, which facilitated access to these areas (Fabian et al., 2015, p. 241).

*** SUSTAINABILITY IN SLUM TOURISM**

Slum tourism has been considered a factor of development since its modern inception up until the last decade, as it relies on local environmental resources (material, human, and natural) fundamentally, maximizing their benefits. In addition, it capitalizes on social and cultural diversity, as well as traditional industries, which together represent components of the local economy on one hand and factors of attraction on the other (Elmanzlawi, 2021, p. 31). According to

(Theodoros 2016), the concept of sustainability is applied in the context of slum tourism through fundamental principles of sustainability, focusing on four qualitative indicators: empowerment, opportunities, participation, and education (Panagopoulos, 2016, pp. 65-70):

Opportunities: Slum tourism provides numerous economic benefits for impoverished communities, such as:-

- 1- Primarily employing local residents.
- 2- Increasing income.
- 3- Supporting small businesses and local industries (ibid, pp. 66-67).
- 4- Discovering the unique talents and creative potentials of residents that each community possesses.

Participation: Residents of slum areas are naturally linked to forms of new tourism at two different levels (ibid, pp. 66-67):-

- 1- As an essential part of the tourism product, where their daily lives and socioeconomic conditions attract tourists who come to see their trades and learn about the challenges they face in their living environment.
- 2- As cultural intermediaries, they provide a true and comprehensive picture of their lives and culture, helping to correct prevalent stereotypes about their areas. Additionally, they are involved in the

decision-making processes related to the development and improvement of their neighborhoods and living conditions. This partnership among government, local communities, and the private sector is considered an essential part of the sustainable development concept and is necessary to meet residents' needs and enhance their effective participation.

Education: Education in slum tourism is one of the foundations of cultural sustainability, represented by the ability to acquire knowledge and achieve a deeper understanding of local culture, traditions, and the challenges faced by residents of these areas through interaction with tourists and participation in their daily experiences.

Empowerment: The experience of tourists in slum areas affects their understanding of the urban spaces they visit and the changes in their collective perception. They recognize that poverty is a tangible social issue rather than an inherent characteristic of slum areas. They also realize that these urban spaces are marked by cultural diversity, human life, and complex social and economic relationships (social empowerment). Furthermore, the issues of marginalized people are placed at the

forefront of the international political scene to serve as a voice for them. Although this does not provide a solution to global social problems, it reflects an increasing interest in finding solutions (political empowerment) (ibid, pp. 68-69).

These indicators allow for an approach through which slum tourism is understood as a social, economic, and cultural force (ibid, p. 52), or in other words, as sustainable tourism.

* OBJECTIVES OF DEVELOPING SLUM TOURISM

The significance of slum tourism is manifested through several core dimensions:-

First, the social and economic dimensions. Second, the physical dimension concerning housing and community structures. Third, perceptions of safety or risks, vary between slum residents and visitors. Thus, slum tourism is an approach or strategy, rather than a theory or model, as it contributes effectively to empowering the community. (Paul, 2016, p. 96).

The objectives of slum tourism can be summarized as follows:-

Table 1. The main goals of Slum Tourism

NO	Main Goals of Slum Tourism	
1	Improving Economic Conditions	a. Enhancing the economy of impoverished communities; b. Strengthening connections between tourism companies and local residents. c. Encouraging local community participation in tourism development (Ashley, 2001).
2	Improving Social Conditions	a. Enhancing safety. b. Reducing potential hostile attitudes. c. Making the area more attractive by decreasing the number of beggars, implementing visual improvements, and enhancing the environment (Cooper, 2005).
3	Promoting Awareness and Understanding	a. Raising awareness of the social issues and challenges faced by residents of these neighborhoods. b. Serving as a means to create awareness of the plight of the urban poor in impoverished communities among both foreign and local tourists.
4	Enhancing Cultural Interaction	a. The relationship between tourists and slum residents is one where the concept of power is closely tied to slum tourism; b. Tourist attractions within slum areas serve as points of connection and social spaces that enable cultural interaction and exchange (Pitt, 1999).
5	Urban Development of Local Areas	Transforming slums into fully urbanized areas through: a. Improving the urban environment of slums by developing public and tourist facilities. b. Integrating them into the urban fabric of the city by expanding accessibility through road networks and linking the tourism infrastructure in slum areas with heritage and historical sites (Elmanzlawi, 2021).
6	Promoting Sustainable Development	a. Linked to issues of urban improvement, management, and spatial renewal (Panagopoulos, 2016). b. Serves as a means for local development and a driver of economic growth. c. Acts as a tool for cultural communication and social interaction.



Diagram (3): Objectives of Slum Tourism Development, Researcher based on (Yeganegi, 2015)

* MAIN STRATEGIES OF DEVELOPING SLUM TOURISM

The strategies for developing slum tourism play a central role in addressing the challenges faced by residents of slums, acting as a comprehensive remedy for these areas. They contribute to creating positive changes and giving slums a unique character that makes them attractive tourist destinations. This is achieved by integrating them into the urban fabric as vibrant, lively areas, improving their infrastructure, and transforming them into artistic canvases that tell stories of solidarity,

creativity, and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Furthermore, these strategies, through their integrated policies, support local small-scale projects, breathe new life into the local economy, create job opportunities, and improve living standards for residents. The following strategies have been derived from successful global experiences:-

1- Social Urbanization Strategy: This is considered one of the most successful urban renewal experiences in Latin American cities, focusing on social improvement and community participation as the foundation for developing and organizing poor areas. This strategy contributes to stimulating tourism growth in slums by establishing a strong sense of place and aims to enhance social interaction and improve the quality of life in these areas, making them vibrant urban centers.

2- Sustainable Urban Transformation: This strategy focuses on promoting sustainable urban transformation in slums within Cairo, Egypt, and developing tourism by linking community-driven initiatives with technology to enhance the integration of industrial environmental systems. It aims to empower communities, improve infrastructure, and foster two-way

interactions, allowing tourists to have a complete educational experience, which helps change the negative stereotypes often associated with these areas while clearly conveying the message of integration.

3- Community Development Strategy: This strategy emphasizes improving the image of slums in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; promoting intercultural understanding; engaging local residents in developing and providing tourism experiences; creating economic opportunities; and enhancing the infrastructure of poor communities. It aims to improve safety, social conditions, and economic situations in slums, achieving integration within the urban environment and connecting with the main parts of the city.

4- Creative Urban Development: This strategy focuses on using creativity, culture, and innovation as tools to achieve sustainable growth and promote positive change in impoverished areas of South Africa. It involves linking these areas to city centers and facilitating tourist access to stimulate economic opportunities that address social and economic challenges, developing new creative tourism products, and integrating culture into local and regional development as an economic

resource and a catalyst for development in slums.

1. **Urban Upgrading and Greening:** This strategy focuses on making poor communities in Jakarta, Indonesia, more environmentally and socially sustainable through stimulating interventions, including improving accessibility and linking them to the modern city, enhancing infrastructure, and adding green spaces and social interaction areas. It aims to encourage social and cultural activities within slums, involve residents in decision-making processes, and use the internet as a means to promote and raise awareness of the importance of supporting these neighborhoods.

Code	Implementation Mechanisms	Secondary Strategy	Primary Strategy	No.
X1	Connecting slums with the main streets of the city.		Contextual interventions.	1
X2	Enhancing interaction between slums and other communities.			
X3	Repairing buildings and renovating their facades.		Improving the existing infrastructure.	
X4	Repairing streets and internal alleys.		Improving the existing infrastructure.	
X5	Transforming neglected spaces into active places.		Improving the existing infrastructure.	
X6	Markets for selling local products.		Adding new uses and elements.	
X7	Popular restaurants and cafes.		Contextual interventions.	
X8	Squares for hosting events and festivals.			
X9	Walking and cycling paths.			
X10	Public gardens and green spaces.			
X11	Involving residents in the planning and decision-making process.			2
X12	Public security policy, combating corruption, and eliminating crime.	Publicity Programs.		
X13	Education and Awareness-raising Policy for Residents.			
X14	Linking slum areas with tourist attractions in the city.		Integrative interventions.	
X15	Installing solar panels on rooftops to generate clean energy.		Improving existing infrastructure.	
X16	Public squares for gatherings and events.		Conservation interventions.	
X17	Workshops for handicrafts and traditional arts.		Promoting traditional arts.	
X18	Educational programs to teach residents global trends in the energy sector.			
X19	Investing in local markets, building relationships, and creating economic opportunities.		Integrative interventions.	
X20	Marketing and promoting to change the negative image and create a positive image.			
X21	Linking slums to the main official streets of the city.		Interconnectivity interventions.	3
X22	Changing the overall appearance of slum areas.			
X23	Using modern transportation systems such as trains, etc.			
X24	Improving public spaces and providing recreational areas.	Change	Contradictory interventions.	
X25	Providing tourism facilities (hotels, restaurants, etc.).			
X26	Adding prominent elements that contrast with the urban environment, such as vertical transport, towers, etc.	Addition		
X27	Public security policies to ensure safety for visitors or tourists.			
X28	Community programs and initiatives to train local residents.		Publicity and Programs	
X29	Marketing and promotion aimed at enhancing tourism and improving the area.			
X30	Public funding for local associations and encouraging tourism activities.			
X31	Connecting slums with city centers and facilitating access.		Connectivity Interventions	4
X32	Improving Existing Infrastructure.			
X33	Developing special areas to serve as a hub for cultural and tourism activities.	Improving Existing Infrastructure.		
X34	Developing new spaces for social interaction.			
X35	Small shops selling local products.			
X36	Popular restaurants and cafes.		Contextual interventions.	
X37	Creating walking paths and seating areas.		Adding new uses and elements.	
X38	Grass art, open-air exhibitions, and musical performances.			
X39	Art studios for interaction and participation in art.			
X40	Artistic initiatives that encourage the development of new creative tourism products as an economic resource to address pressing challenges.		Publicity and Programs	
X41	Marketing tourism through local development programs to change the negative image.			
X42	Connecting slums with the main city and improving accessibility.		Integrative interventions.	5
X43	Improving roads and internal alleys.		Improving existing infrastructure.	
X44	Providing basic services (water, electricity, etc.).		Contextual interventions.	
X45	Creating public parks and green spaces to improve air quality and aesthetic appearance.		Adding new uses and elements.	
X46	Transforming neglected urban spaces into green areas for recreation and social interaction.			
X47	Involve residents in the decision-making process and encourage social and cultural activities within slum areas.			
X48	Raising environmental awareness among residents and promoting healthy and clean practices.	Publicity and Programs		
X49	Using the internet as a tool for promotion and raising awareness about the importance of collaboration to support and empower impoverished communities.			
X50				

* FIELD STUDY

The study relied on an inductive social approach, aimed at collecting accurate data from key stakeholders (residents, tourists, experts) to assess the impact of slum tourism in Iraq. The survey was conducted between January 2023 and July 2024, involving the collection of primary data through questionnaires and interviews, followed by statistical analysis. The objective was to derive final results and identify the most effective strategies for developing slum tourism in Iraq,

using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the actual performance of the strategy against the defined goals. Values below 60% indicate a weak strategy, while values between (60% and 70%) suggest an acceptable strategy with potential for improvement. Values between (70% and 90%) reflect the effectiveness of the strategy and its success in achieving the specified objectives (Kaplan, 1996).

*** CRITERIA OF SAMPLE SELECTION**

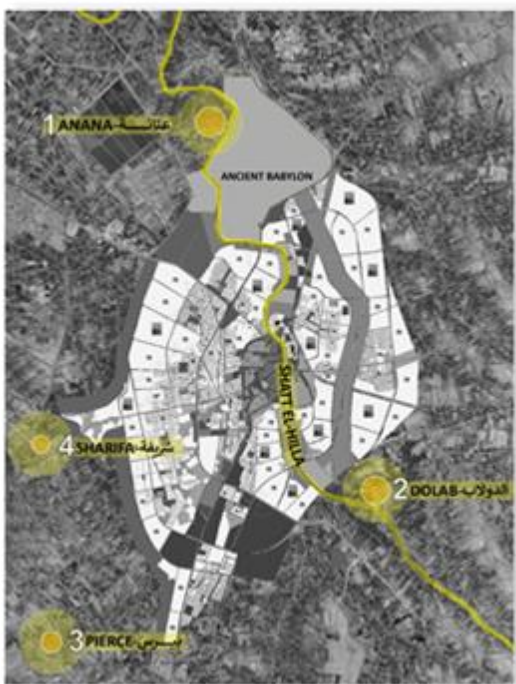


Diagram (4): Selected Samples, Based on Hilla Master Plan

Defining the level of application and designating a specific area as a case study is a critical necessity. This research will focus on the slum areas in the city of Hilla to understand the motivations of the

local community and their desire to visit these neighborhoods, as well as to explore residents' opinions and their stance on activating tourism in their areas and its role in improving their living conditions. This will contribute to identifying effective strategies that meet their current needs and work to enhance their neighborhoods, transforming them into attractive tourist destinations.

There is no precise information regarding the actual number of slum areas in the city of Hilla. However, the Urban Planning Directorate estimated the presence of 46 informal housing clusters in 2016 (Nasr and Abbas, 2018), without specifying whether this includes only slum areas or informal settlements in general. Based on the master plan for the city of Hilla from 2006 to 2030, the samples were determined according to several indicators that were tested for validity in each of the four samples:

- 1. Proximity to urban centers. 2. Self-construction and improvement. 3. Structures with development potential. 4. Local economic activity. 5. Population density and housing conditions. 6. Community ties and creative values. 7. Security and safety.

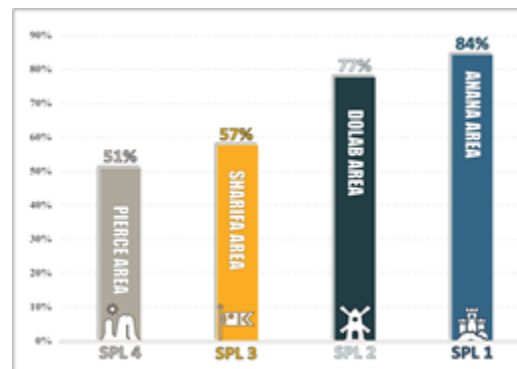


Figure (1): Percentage of Criteria Fulfillment for Each Sample, Source: Researcher

The results show that these criteria were met by Sample 1 at a rate of 84%, and by Sample 2 at 77%, followed by Sample 3 at 57%, and Sample 4 at 51%. Based on this, Samples 1 and 2 (Anana and Doulab) will be selected for further study as they best meet the criteria, making them the most suitable for conducting the research, as illustrated in the chart.

6-2. ANANA Slum

* The Selection of Anana as a Case Study

The choice of Anana as a case study is based on several key factors:

Firstly, the Geographic Location: Anana enjoys a strategically advantageous location, with its name tied to the goddess of love and war, "Inanna," in Babylonian civilization. Situated near the ancient city of Babylon—one of Iraq's most significant historical landmarks (a cultural attraction)—and the Hilla River (a natural attraction), Anana holds potential as a site that could attract tourists and cultural enthusiasts.

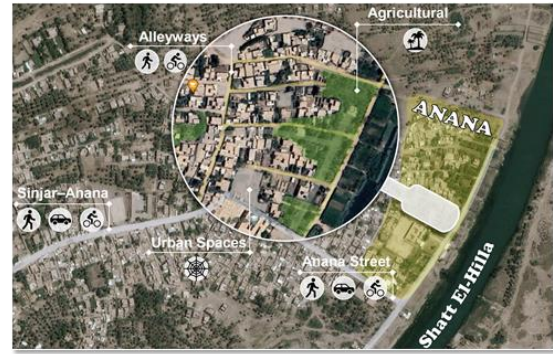


Figure (2): Urban Stimuli Surrounding Anana, Source: (Anana, 2022)

Secondly, Developmental Potential: The Anana area is characterized by development potentials that are feasible for improvement and enhancement, as follows: First

Figure (5): Location of Anana Area, Source: Prepared by Researcher based on (Google Maps, 2024)

Residential Buildings: Existing structures can be improved or rehabilitated. Second Basic Infrastructure: Currently very limited, with a need for substantial improvement or expansion. As individual incomes increase, this positively impacts their ability to repair and enhance their homes, even if not personally owned. This behavior reflects a sense of belonging and responsibility toward their living environment.

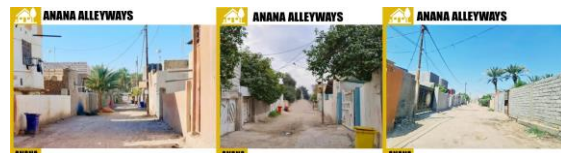


Figure (4): Residential Structures in the Anana Area Source: Anana, 2023

The construction style in Anana is characterized by a gradual approach, rather than building complete housing units. The essential

spaces are constructed first, followed by the gradual addition of other spaces according to the residents' needs.



Figure (5): Stages of House Construction in Anana, Source: Researcher

The following excerpt shows the residential structures that have been built gradually, reflecting the varying needs of the residents:



Figure (6): A section showing the existing residential structures in the Anana area, Source: Prepared by the researcher.

Thirdly, social connections and cultural values: The community is characterized by its cohesion and unique social values, where cooperation and solidarity prevail among its residents. They are known for their hospitality, warm reception, and sense of belonging, which reflect a vibrant culture and strong social bonds that enrich the visitors' experience and give it a unique character. Additionally, there are religious rituals, such as commemorating the event of Ashura, which is expressed through performances, representing one of the most prominent forms of street theater, as described by Al-Jubouri (Al-Jubouri, 2021).

Thirdly, Creative Potentials: The residents are distinguished by their cultural creativity and artistic

talents that embody their identity through traditional industries and handicrafts such as weaving, pottery, and woodworking. They transform simple materials into sustainable products that contribute to enhancing recycling. These industries



Figure (5): Some aspects of social life in Anana, source: Researcher; (Anana, 2023)

represent a vital economic activity that can be developed to support the local economy and convey social messages in a creative manner.



Figure (6): Traditional Handicrafts in Anana. Source: Researcher; (Anana, 2023)

* RESULTS

Analysis of Local Community Survey Results

Reliability and Validity of the Study Tool

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a value of 0.90, which exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.70. This indicates the stability and validity of the questionnaire used in this research.

* Demographic Information

The results indicate that respondents aged between 25 and 45 represent the largest proportion of the

sample at 72.8%, suggesting a strong representation of this age group in the study, which is the most common among respondents. Regarding educational levels, the results show that 34.6% hold advanced degrees, while 61.8% have university degrees across various fields, with only a small proportion (3.7%) without higher education qualifications. These results reflect the accuracy of the responses, with strong representation from diverse age and educational groups, indicating a high level of awareness and capacity for providing consistent and comprehensive answers. Notably, all respondents reside in Babil Governorate, with 73.6% living in Al-Hillah district and 26.4% in other districts of the governorate.

Table (2): Local Community Evaluations of Strategies in Babil Governorate,

Strategy of Social Urbanization (A)														
Overall	Ac			Ab						Aa		Mechanisms		
78.4	X13	X12	X11	X10	X9	X8	X7	X6	X5	X4	X3		X2	X1
	84	75	85	68	78	79	80	75	68	82	83	70	85	
Effective	81.3%			76.6%								77.5%		
Sustainable Urban Transformation Strategy (B)														
Overall	Bc			Bb			Ba			Mechanisms				
59.2	X20	X19	X18	X17			X16		X15		X14	Proportion		
	75	65	0	65			68		0		85			
Ineffective	46.6%			46%						85%				
Community Development Strategy (C)														
Overall	Cc			Cb				Ca		Mechanisms				
61.5	X13	X29	X28	X27	X26	X25	X24	X23	X22		X21		Proportion	
	43	75	59	75	5	70	68	5	35	85				
Acceptable	63%			36.6%						85%				
Creative Urban Development Strategy (D)														
Overall	Dc		Db						Da		Mechanisms			
73.3	X41	X40	X39	X38	X37	X36	X35	X34	X33	X32		X31		Proportion
	59	75	18	78	80	75	68	78	79	68	85			
Effective	67%		68%								85%			
Urban Enhancement and Greening Strategy (E)														
Overall	Ec			Eb			Ea			Mechanisms				
69.7	X49	X48	X47	X46	X45	X44	X43		X42		Proportion			
	75	1	85	68	68	65	82		85					
Acceptable	53.6%			70.7%						85%				

The results presented in Table (2) indicate, based on ⁽²⁾KPIs, that the local community in Babil Governorate identifies the strategies of social urbanization and creative urban development as the most effective, with a percentage of 78.4% for the former and 73.3% for the latter. This reflects the success of these two strategies in achieving the objectives related to activating and developing slum tourism locally and effectively. In contrast, the community development and urban upgrading and greening strategies scored acceptable performance rates of 61.5% for the former and 67.7% for the latter, indicating a need to adjust their mechanisms to enhance their impact. Meanwhile, the

sustainable urban transformation strategy was ineffective, with a score of 59.2%, indicating weak performance and an inability to achieve the desired goals.

*** Analysis of Interview Results from the Anana Area**

Demographic Information:
The results show that the first sample (Anana) consists of 56% females and 44% males, with a strong representation of the age group 20-40 years. There is a notable percentage of 40% of individuals without any formal education. In contrast, the second sample includes a higher percentage of males (60%), with most respondents in the age group 20-40 years and a secondary education level (50%).

Table (3): Evaluations of Anana Area Residents on Strategies for Developing Slum Tourism, Researcher

Social Urbanization Strategy (A)													
Overall	Ac				Ab				Aa				Mechanisms
81.05	X1	X1	X1	X1	X9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	3	2	1	0	79	68	82	78	79	85	8	3	
	79	65	88	68	79	68	82	78	79	85	8	3	88
Effective	77.3%				77.875				88%				Proportion
Sustainable Urban Transformation Strategy (B)													
Overall	Bc			Bb			Ba			Mechanisms			
55.75	X2	X1	X1	X17			X16				X15		
	0	9	8	75			68			0			
	78	65	0	75			68			0			72
Ineffective	47.66%			47.6%			72%			Proportion			
Community Development Strategy (C)													
Overall	Cc				Cb				Ca				Mechanisms
63.6	X1	X2	X2	X27	X26	X25	X24	X23	X22	X21			
	3	9	8	65	2	78	75	1	32	88			
	55	78	63	65	2	78	75	1	32	88			
Acceptable	65.25%				37.6%				88%				Proportion
Creative Urban Development Strategy (D)													
Overall	Dc		Db						Da			Mechanisms	
78.45	X4	X4	X3	X3	X3	X3	X3	X3	X3	X3	X31		88
	1	0	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	88		
	78	82	15	72	79	82	78	68	70	75	88		
Effective	80%		67.37%						88%			Proportion	

(2)(KPIs): These are considered an essential tool for evaluating the effectiveness of strategies because they provide clear and measurable

indicators of how well the specified goals are being achieved and help improve strategies based on actual data.

Urban Upgrading and Greening Strategy (E)											
Overall	Ec			Eb				Ea		Mechanisms	
73.16	X4	X4	X4	X46				X45	X44		X43
	9	8	7	79				68	85	85	
	68	0	88	79				68	85	85	
Effective	52%			79.5%				88%		Proportion	

The results presented in Table (3) indicate that the residents of the Anana area identified three main strategies for activating and developing tourism in their regions. The social urbanization strategy topped the list with a rate of (81.05%), followed by the creative urban development strategy at (78.45%), while the urban upgrade and greening strategy achieved a rate of (73.16%). In contrast, the community development strategy performed at an acceptable level of (63.6%), and the sustainable urban transformation strategy had a rate of (55.75%), indicating weak performance and an inability to achieve the desired goals.

*** Analysis of Expert Evaluations**

Validity and Reliability of the Study Tool:-

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which reached a value of 0.90, clearly exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70. This indicates that the

questionnaire possesses a high level of reliability and strong validity.

Demographic Information:
The results showed that the distribution of experts participating in the questionnaire indicates that 50% of them are specialists in urban design, 30% in architectural design, and 20% in urban planning. This distribution reflects a notable diversity in expertise and academic specializations among the participants.

Table (4): Expert Evaluations of Strategies for Developing Tourism in Slum Areas, Researcher

Social Urbanization Strategy (A)														
Overall	Ac			Ab						Aa		Mechanisms		
85.78	X13	X12	X11	X10	X9	X8	X7	X6	X5	X4	X3		X2	X1
	86	94	80	90	84	86	80	90	92	90	90	82	84	
	86.6%			87.75						83%				
Sustainable Urban Transformation Strategy (B)														
Overall	Bc			Bb						Ba		Mechanisms		
60.65	X20	X19	X18	X17			X16		X15		X14		Proportion	
	68	62	52	70			66		42		62			
	60.66%			59.3%						62%				
Community Development Strategy (C)														
Overall	Cc			Cb						Ca		Mechanisms		
64.8	X13	X29	X28	X27	X26	X25	X24	X23	X22	X21			Proportion	
	44	62	74	78	40	40	68	76	46	76				
	64.5%			54%						76%				
Creative Urban Development Strategy (D)														
Overall	Dc			Db						Da		Mechanisms		
78.54	X41	X40	X39	X38	X37	X36	X35	X34	X33	X32	X31		Proportion	
	78	80	74	72	82	82	73	56	40	86	86			
	79%			70.625%						86%				
Urban Upgrade and Greening Strategy (E)														
Overall	Ec			Eb						Ea		Mechanisms		
64.2	X49	X48	X47	X46	X45	X44		X43		X42			Proportion	
	64	52	56	60	66	86		66		66				
	57.3%			69.5%						66%				

The results presented in Table (4) indicate that expert evaluations highlight the effectiveness of the Social Urbanization and Creative Urban Development strategies in activating and developing tourism in slum areas at the local level. In

contrast, the strategies of Sustainable Urban Transformation, Community Development, and Urban Upgrading and Greening fall within an acceptable performance level, suggesting the need for adjustments to their mechanisms in order to enhance their effectiveness and achieve a greater impact.

Furthermore, the expert evaluations revealed that the local community's influence in determining the strategies for developing tourism in slum areas is significant. The study concluded that it is essential to involve stakeholders in the decision-making process to identify effective strategies for developing tourism in slum areas at the local level, as follows:-

- 1- First: The local community's influence in determining effective strategies for developing tourism in slum areas locally constitutes 15%, reflecting its important role in ensuring community acceptance and achieving effective participation.
- 2- Second: The influence of residents in slum areas on the decision-making process and the determination of effective strategies for developing tourism in their regions is 40%, as they are the most affected by the outcomes of development processes. This ensures that strategies are inclusive and effective, meeting the

actual needs of the residents and aligning with their future aspirations. 3- Third: The influence of experts in determining effective strategies for developing tourism in slum areas locally is 45%, due to their key role in providing technical knowledge and delivering strategic analyses based on accurate data, which enhance the effectiveness of these strategies more effectively.

Table (5) Effective Strategies for Developing Slum Tourism in Iraq, Researcher

Situation	The final percentage	The experts	The slums	The local community	The strategies
	100%	45%	40%	15%	
mini	83.6%	37.3%	34.6%	11.7%	Aa
	82.38%	39.48%	31.5%	11.4%	Ab
	81.27%	38.97%	30.2%	12.1%	Ac
✓	82.38%	38.58	32.1%	11.7%	Social urbanization
	69.8%	27.9%	29.2%	12.7%	Aa
	52.62%	26.68%	19.04%	6.9%	Ab
	53.79%	27.29%	19.6%	6.9%	Ac
●	58.69	27.29%	22.6%	8.8%	Sustainable transformation
	81.5%	34.2%	34.6%	12.7%	Aa
	45.2%	24.3%	15.5%	5.4%	Ab
	64.22%	29.02%	25.8%	9.4%	Ac
	63.64%	29.17%	25.3%	9.16%	Community development
	86%	38.7%	34.6%	12.7%	Aa
	69.06%	31.78%	27.08%	10.2%	Ab
	77.05%	35.5%	31.5%	10.05%	Ac
	77.37	35.32%	31.03%	10.98%	Creative development
	77%	29.7%	34.6%	12.7%	Aa
	73.77	31.27%	31.9%	10.6%	Ab
	54.62	25.78%	20.8%	8.04%	Ac
	68.46%	28.91	29.1%	10.44%	Upgrading and greening

The final results presented in Table (5-8) demonstrate the effectiveness of each of the following strategies: Firstly, the strategy of social urbanization is the most effective in activating and developing slum tourism at the local level. This is attributed to its comprehensive mechanisms, which include: Integrating slums with the urban fabric and the city's tourism system; Implementing specific contextual interventions that meet the needs of

the local community and yield effective results; Encouraging community participation and leveraging unique social values to enhance tourism appeal, build spatial identity, and improve quality of life. Secondly, the results showed the effectiveness of the creative urban development strategy in activating and promoting slum tourism locally. This effectiveness stems from mechanisms that include: Connecting slums with the city's tourist areas and facilitating tourist access; Understanding the local context and unique conditions of these areas, enabling contextual interventions that bring tangible improvements to infrastructure; Increasing economic opportunities and fostering cultural understanding between visitors and residents; Leveraging local cultural and creative resources to boost tourism appeal and develop distinctive tourist experiences. Thirdly, the community development and urban upgrading and greening strategies fell within the ac A. Undermining the Effectiveness of the Community Development Strategy: This is attributed to the implementation of mechanisms aimed at altering the overall appearance of impoverished areas and introducing urban elements that significantly conflict with the local

context of those areas (contradictory interventions). Additionally, the lack of involvement of residents in the decision-making process has led to a failure to meet the actual needs of the inhabitants and diminished the strategy's effectiveness in achieving its specified goals.

Weakness of the Urban Upgrading and Greening Strategy: This is due to its primary focus on improving existing infrastructure and raising environmental awareness among residents, without leveraging their values and potential to enhance tourism appeal and strengthen connections with other communities. This highlights the need to modify its mechanisms to improve their effectiveness.

Fourthly, the Ineffectiveness of the Sustainable Urban Transformation Strategy at the Local Level: This is attributed to the emphasis on installing solar panels and global trends in clean energy, while neglecting the specific challenges faced by slum areas and the needs of their residents. This limitation restricts the strategy's effectiveness in achieving the desired objectives and calls for a comprehensive reevaluation of its approach. ceptable performance range for the following reasons:

*** CONCLUSIONS**

8-1- Conclusions Regarding the Theoretical Aspect

1- It is clear from the above that slum tourism is a phenomenon that predates its naming, as its roots can be traced back to earlier periods characterized by people visiting unconventional places to explore the cultures and local customs of impoverished communities.

2- The emergence of slum tourism is a result of the increasing interest in social and humanitarian issues, which has effectively contributed to shaping tourism trends and influenced the choices and preferences of tourists, as a response to policies of isolation and removal of slum areas; thus, it has become an integral part of urban tourism.

3- Slum tourism is considered a means of local development; a driver of economic growth; a tool for cultural communication; a catalyst for achieving social justice; and a promoter of sustainable urban development, making it an effective contributor to achieving the eleventh goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which focuses on "Sustainable Cities and Communities."

4- Slum tourism is an effective tool for breaking the cycle of poverty by leveraging available cultural and social resources, enhancing

communication between tourists and local communities, and creating sustainable economic opportunities that foster local development and yield tangible social and economic benefits.

5- Slum tourism aligns with modern tourism concepts and intersects with several types of tourism; it can take on a cultural aspect that deepens visitors' understanding of local heritage and customs, or an educational aspect that reveals the social and economic challenges facing these communities. It also falls under alternative tourism as an alternative to traditional trips or adopts a responsible approach that seeks to provide benefits to local communities and protect their resources.

8-2- Conclusions Regarding the Empirical Study

6- Involving stakeholders (the local community, residents of slum areas, and experts) in the decision-making process, with influence ratios of 15%, 40%, and 45% respectively, is an urgent necessity for developing effective and comprehensive strategies for tourism development in slum areas in Iraq, ensuring that the actual needs of the residents are met.

7- The strategies of social urbanization and creative urban development have shown significant effectiveness in developing slum

tourism at the local level due to their comprehensive approach in addressing all challenges and available opportunities, as well as leveraging the unique characteristics of slum areas to attract tourists. In contrast, the strategies of community development and urban upgrading and greening demonstrated a lower level of effectiveness in achieving the desired objectives. Meanwhile, the sustainable urban transformation strategy proved ineffective in providing viable solutions within the local context.

8- The research concluded that the strategy of social urbanization is the most optimal for developing slum tourism in Iraq, as it fundamentally relies on effective community participation and the utilization of cultural and social values to activate tourism as part of alternative tourism that challenges the standards of traditional tourism and offers a new perspective on slum areas, thereby enhancing the integration between tourism and the local community.

* RECOMMENDATIONS

1- The research recommends adopting and implementing the effective strategies identified to activate and develop slum tourism in Iraq at both the local and national levels, aiming to improve living conditions in impoverished areas and

transform them into developed regions that interact and integrate with other parts of the city.

2- Organizing awareness campaigns to increase awareness among residents of slum areas about slum tourism as a necessary tool to ensure the future of these areas, enhance development, and improve living conditions. Additionally, promoting slum areas as a distinctive tourist destination through the use of social media and websites to attract visitors and raise awareness of their importance in the local community.

3- Encouraging travel agencies and relevant stakeholders to organize tours to slum areas to showcase local culture and enhance cultural and social interaction between tourists and local residents, as well as to participate in local cultural events.

4- The research recommends monitoring international developments in this field and directing policies for slum ownership toward empowering residents by granting them property rights and investing their potential in improving their urban environment, while enhancing their social and cultural values to attract tourism and transform their areas into real urban environments.

5- Encouraging the establishment of local associations and forming

partnerships between the government, private sector, and local community to ensure everyone's active participation in developing tourism in slum areas, contributing to the sustainable urban development of those areas, provided that it is managed properly.

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