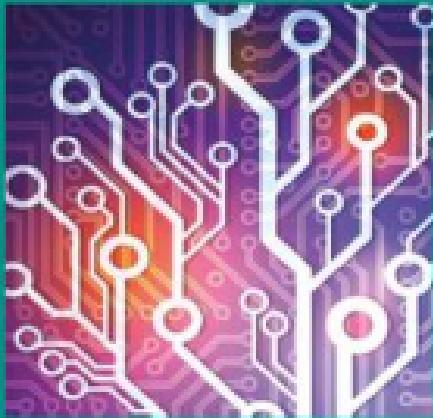


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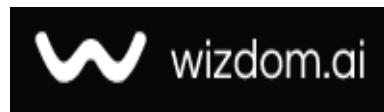
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Digital Human Resource Capabilities and Strategic Success in Iraqi Tourism: Kapasitas Sumber Daya Manusia Digital dan Kesuksesan Strategis dalam Pariwisata Irak

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Abstract

General Background Digital transformation has become a defining feature of contemporary organizational management, particularly in service-oriented sectors such as tourism. **Specific Background** Tourism companies in Iraq face increasing pressure to modernize human resource practices through digital knowledge, technical skills, and digital leadership. **Knowledge Gap** Despite this necessity, limited empirical evidence explains how digital human resource capabilities are systematically linked to strategic success in Iraqi tourism organizations. **Aims** This study aims to examine the relationship between digital human resource capabilities and strategic success dimensions within tourism companies operating in Baghdad, Karbala, and Najaf. **Results** Using a descriptive-analytical approach and data from 123 managers and employees, the findings reveal a statistically significant relationship between digital capabilities and strategic success, with digital leadership showing the strongest explanatory contribution. **Novelty** The study offers context-specific empirical evidence from religious tourism organizations, integrating digital human resource capabilities with strategic success indicators. **Implications** The findings provide practical insights for tourism managers and policymakers seeking to strengthen adaptation, survival, and growth through structured digital human capital development.

Keywords: Digital Human Resource Capabilities, Strategic Success, Tourism Companies, Digital Leadership, Iraq

Key Findings Highlights:

Digital leadership demonstrates the highest contribution to organizational adaptability and continuity.

Technical skills remain the most operationally developed capability among tourism firms.

Strategic outcomes are strongly explained by combined digital capability dimensions.

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Introduction

Contemporary management thinking is focused on finding the ideal model for organizations seeking leadership in a business environment characterized by rapid digital transformation. Among the essential requirements for achieving this desired image, "digital human resource capabilities" have emerged as an indispensable foundation. Excellence is no longer limited to traditional performance, but is now contingent on having a workforce with the technical and cognitive skills to adapt technology to serve organizational goals. These capabilities represent the integrated system of technical and leadership paths that constitute the independent variable in the current research. In the same vein, investing in these digital capabilities and directing them towards formulating a flexible future vision is what guarantees the organization's achievement of "strategic success," which is the dependent variable in this research and reflects the organization's ability to adapt, survive, and grow in performance. Here, the research problem emerges in the digital gap suffered by some tourism companies, represented by the decline in interest in attracting digital competencies from the outputs of tourism academic institutions, as well as the weak adoption of technical training policies that contribute to honing the skills of current cadres, which has led to a decline in the level of response to modern strategic challenges. The current research aims to measure the level of understanding among management and employees in tourism companies of the importance of digital human resources capabilities and how they reflect on the path to overall strategic success. To achieve this, a research sample of 123 administrative leaders and employees from a group of tourism companies active in the tourism market (Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf). Their opinions were surveyed using a rigorous scientific questionnaire, which was statistically processed using advanced software (SPSS/AMOS).

Structurally, the research was organized into four main sections. The first section was devoted to the methodological framework, while the second reviewed the theoretical foundations of the variables. while the third section dealt with the practical aspect and data analysis, leading to the fourth section, which included a set of conclusions, recommendations, and proposals to enhance the digital and strategic reality of the organizations under study.

Section 1: Methodology

First: Research problem

Tourism organizations in Iraq, especially those working in the religious tourism sector, face enormous challenges in keeping pace with the rapid technological advances imposed by the knowledge economy. The problem lies in these organizations' reliance on traditional management styles that lack the "digital capabilities" necessary to effectively manage human resources, which has negatively affected their ability to achieve "strategic success."

This problem is evident in the absence of modern digital mechanisms for selecting and attracting talent, and the weak bridges of cooperation between companies and academic institutions (tourism colleges and institutes) to supply the market with highly skilled graduates. It is also noticeable that companies are moving away from adopting effective digital training policies that contribute to transforming traditional human resources into "digital human capital." This has led to a weak response to strategic requirements and a decline in competitiveness in a work environment characterized by economic and social volatility and instability. Consequently, the failure to build and invest in digital human resources has prevented these organizations from achieving their desired levels of performance and strategic success.

Second: Research questions:

Based on the above, the research problem can be crystallized in the following main question and sub-questions:

Main question:

What is the nature of the relationship and impact between digital human resource capabilities and the achievement of strategic success in tourism companies operating in Iraq?

Sub-questions:

Third: The importance of the research:

The importance of the current research stems from two complementary paths, one of which reinforces the theoretical and cognitive aspect, while the other focuses on the practical and field aspect, as follows:

1. Scientific importance (theoretical track):

The scientific importance lies in addressing two vital variables that represent the interface of contemporary management in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as "digital human resource capabilities" are the main driver of the shift from traditional management to smart management. Individuals with digital knowledge and skills are the "strategic ammunition" of an organization in an environment characterized by fierce digital competition. The importance of this research lies in the fact that it links these capabilities to "strategic success," a concept that goes beyond short-term goals to focus on sustainability, competitive excellence, and innovation. Therefore, this scientific effort contributes to enriching the management library with a theoretical framework that illustrates how digital capabilities can be a bridge to sustainable strategic success.

2. Practical importance (applied field track):

The field importance is embodied in the nature of the vital sector addressed by the research, which is the tourism sector in the city of Baghdad, with a focus on religious tourism, which is the main pillar of the tourism industry in Iraq. The importance here is highlighted by:

- To what extent do the administrative leaders of tourism companies understand the concept and dimensions of digital human resource capabilities (digital knowledge, technical skills, digital leadership)?
- What is the level of strategic success reflected in the performance indicators of the companies under study (survival, adaptation, growth)?
- Do digital human resource capabilities contribute significantly and statistically significantly to enhancing the chances of strategic success for the tourism companies in the research sample?
- Iraq's unique location on the global and regional tourism map, which requires digital tourism management commensurate with this strategic importance.
- The need for tourism companies in Baghdad to adopt "digitization" in the management of their human resources to ensure the provision of professional services in line with the global expectations of visitors and tourists.
- Providing decision-makers in tourism institutions with scientific insights on how to invest in digital competencies to meet changing economic and social challenges and transform the tourism sector into a developed economic contributor based on technology and innovation.

Fourth: Research objectives:

The current research seeks to achieve a set of scientific and practical objectives, the most prominent of which can be summarized in the following points:

1. Intellectual rooting of variables by clarifying the conceptual frameworks and modern intellectual axes for both the independent variable (digital human resource capabilities) and the dependent variable (strategic success), and clarifying the nature of the interactive relationship between them in contemporary management thought.
2. Diagnosing the digital reality by highlighting the level of adoption of digital capability indicators by tourism companies in Baghdad, particularly in terms of attracting technical talent, developing the digital skills of employees, and the availability of digital leadership that supports innovation.
3. Measuring strategic performance effectiveness by clarifying the levels of understanding of senior management and employees of the dimensions of strategic success, and analyzing the extent to which the possession of digital capabilities is reflected in the adaptation, survival, and growth of the companies under study.
4. Develop a relational model by testing and analyzing the correlation and impact between digital human resource capabilities and the achievement of strategic success, to identify the role that digitization plays in bridging management gaps in the tourism sector.
5. Presenting a forward-looking vision by offering a set of practical proposals and recommendations derived from the field study, which contribute to enabling tourism administrations to build "digital human structures" capable of ensuring continued success and leadership in the changing tourism labor market.

Fifth: Conceptual Framework :

The hypothetical model serves as a mental and methodological map for the research, translating the study problem into clear paths that define the nature and direction of the relationships between variables. The hypothetical model for the current research was constructed to reflect the relationship between digital human resource capabilities and strategic success as follows:

1. Independent (explanatory) variable:

This is embodied in "digital HR capabilities," which are the set of skills and capabilities that enable human resources to work effectively in the digital environment, measured by the following dimensions:

- **Digital Knowledge**
- **Technical Skills**
- **Digital Leadership**

2. Dependent variable (response):

This is embodied in "Strategic Success," which expresses the final outcome of the organization's excellence and is measured by the following dimensions:

- **Adaptability**
- **Survival**
- **Growth**

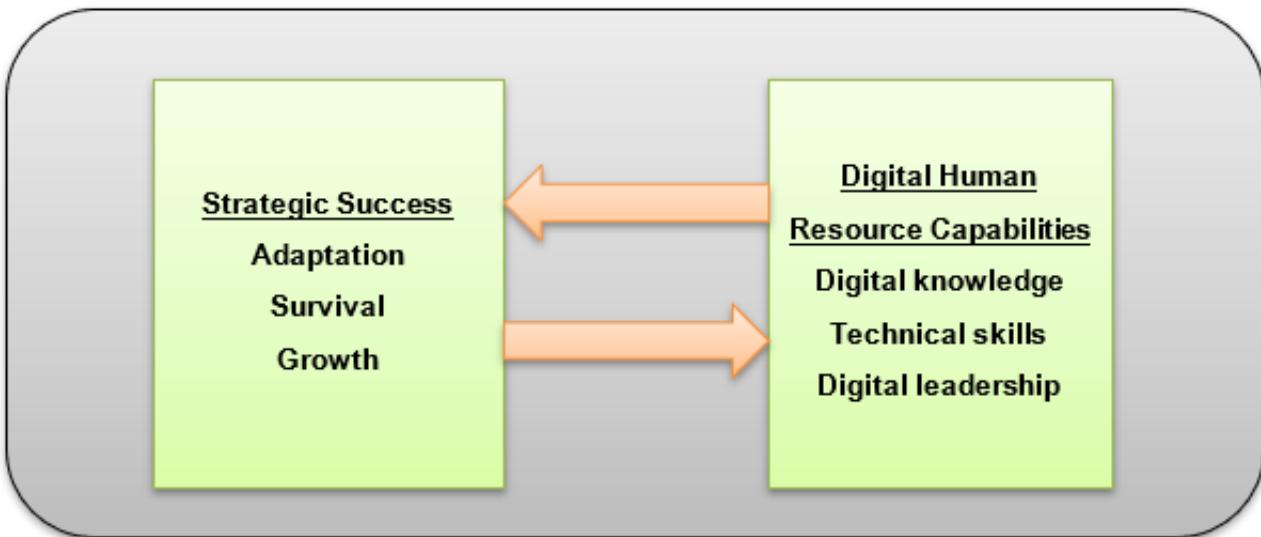


Figure 1. **Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

Sixth: Research Hypotheses

Based on the research hypothesis and in order to test the nature of the relationship between the variables under study, the main hypothesis and the sub-hypotheses derived from it were formulated as follows:

1- Main hypothesis: "There is a statistically significant relationship between digital human resource capabilities and the strategic success of the tourism companies in the research sample, ." This hypothesis gives rise to the following sub-hypotheses:

1-1 First sub-hypothesis: There is a statistically significant relationship between the dimension of digital knowledge and the strategic success of the tourism companies in the sample.

1-2 Second sub-hypothesis: There is a statistically significant relationship between the dimension of technical skills and the strategic success of the tourism companies under study.

1-3 Third sub-hypothesis: There is a statistically significant relationship between digital leadership and the strategic success of the tourism companies studied.

Seventh: Research Methodology:

The research methodology represents the procedural basis adopted by the researcher in investigating facts, collecting data, and interpreting the nature of the relationships between the variables under study; it is the philosophical and behavioral reflection of choosing the most appropriate scientific tools to address the study problem.

In light of the nature of the current variables (digital human resource capabilities and strategic success), the "Descriptive-Analytical Approach" was adopted due to its high suitability for field administrative and economic studies. This approach works on two levels:

- **Descriptive level:** through the diagnosis and reality of digital human resource capabilities in the tourism companies in the research sample, and determining the levels of strategic success achieved in them.
- **Analytical level:** By using advanced statistical tools to analyze the data collected through the questionnaire, testing hypotheses of influence and correlation, and deducing results that contribute to understanding how to transform digital capabilities into a sustainable competitive advantage.

The research also relies on an exploratory study method to explore opinions and trends in the tourism environment (Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf), providing a solid database to support strategic decision-making in these organizations.

Eighth: Data collection sources and methods:

The research relied on a dual data collection strategy to gather information and verify its hypotheses, which included the following two tracks:

A. Theoretical aspect (knowledge framework):

Concepts related to "digital human resource capabilities" and "strategic success" were covered through a comprehensive desk survey of reliable sources, which included:

1. Recent Arabic and foreign books and publications in the fields of digital management and strategy.
2. Peer-reviewed scientific journals, university theses, and relevant dissertations (PhD & MSc).
3. Global reports issued by international research centers and consulting firms (such as Deloitte and Gartner) concerned with digital transformation.
4. Information and data available on the Internet to ensure that the latest technical developments in the tourism sector are kept up to date.

B. Practical aspect (field study):

To achieve the objectives of the study in the tourism environment (Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf), the following tools were used:

1. Questionnaire: This was the main research tool, designed according to a five-point Likert scale to survey the opinions of the research sample (123 participants) on the dimensions of digital human resource capabilities and strategic success indicators. It was subjected to validity and reliability tests to ensure the accuracy of the results.
2. Interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with a select group of decision-makers and department managers in the companies under study, with the aim of understanding the real challenges facing the digital transformation process and its impact on strategic performance.
3. Field observation: The researcher conducted field visits to the headquarters of tourism companies to directly observe the level of "digitization" in administrative processes, assess the technical readiness of the workforce, and how this is reflected in the quality of tourism services provided.

Ninth: Research limitations:

The parameters of the current study are defined by the following frameworks, which outline the scope of the results:

A. Spatial Limits: The spatial scope of the study was limited to the headquarters of tourism companies operating in the tourism market (religious and recreational) in the following provinces: Baghdad, Karbala, and Najaf, due to the strategic and tourist importance of these cities in Iraq.

B. Temporal Limits: The time period covered by the field study for data collection and questionnaire distribution, which extended throughout the month of December 2025.

C. Human Limits: The study targeted administrative leaders and specialized cadres in the companies surveyed, including the following categories: (company owners, general managers, assistant managers, department heads, and administrative supervisors), as they are the group most capable of assessing the capabilities of digital human resources and the strategic success of their organizations.

D. Scientific and Subjective Limits: The research was limited to the study and analysis of the following variables:

Independent variable: digital human resource capabilities (digital knowledge, technical skills, digital leadership).

Dependent variable: Strategic success (adaptation, survival, growth).

X. Statistical Methods and Tools:

Statistical tools are the technical translators of raw data, converting field responses into indicators and digital information that contribute to testing research hypotheses and reaching accurate scientific conclusions. The current research relied on the advanced statistical software package (25SPSS V.) and the program (25AMOS V.) for data processing, according to the following methods:

1. Cronbach's Alpha: to measure the stability and internal consistency of the questionnaire items and to ensure the validity of the measurement tool for application.
2. Frequencies & Percentages: To describe the demographic characteristics of the research sample and determine the distribution of responses.
3. Weighted Mean: To determine the level of response of the sample individuals to the research variables (digital human resource capabilities, strategic success) and to know the weight of each item.
4. Standard Deviation: To measure the dispersion or convergence of the sample's responses from their arithmetic mean, which is an indicator of the homogeneity of opinions.
5. Coefficient of Variation: To compare the dispersion of the dimensions of the variables, which is more accurate than standard deviation in determining relative homogeneity.
6. Pearson Correlation: To test the nature and strength of the correlation between digital human resource capabilities and strategic success.
7. Simple Linear Regression Analysis: To measure the extent to which the independent variable (digital human resource capabilities) as a whole affects the dependent variable (strategic success).
8. Stepwise Multiple Regression: To determine which dimensions of digital capabilities (digital knowledge, digital

skills, digital leadership) are most influential and contribute most to strategic success.

9. Coefficient of determination (R^2): To indicate the explanatory power of the model, i.e., to know the amount of variance in strategic success explained by digital human resource capabilities.
10. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): Using AMOS software to test the quality of the hypothetical model's fit to the actual data and measure the direct effects between latent variables.

Eleventh - Research tool (questionnaire):

The questionnaire is the main tool used by the research to collect primary data and convert qualitative opinions into quantitative data that can be statistically measured. It was designed based on sound theoretical frameworks and previous studies related to my two topics (digital human resource capabilities) and (strategic success) to ensure that all dimensions of the variables under study were covered.

1- Questionnaire structure:

The final version of the questionnaire consisted of two main sections, as follows:

Section I (Descriptive Data): This section includes demographic and functional information about the sample individuals (gender, age, educational attainment, years of service, and job level) with the aim of diagnosing the nature of the human resources under study.

Section II (Research Themes): This section included paragraphs measuring the independent variable (digital human resource capabilities) and its dimensions, and the dependent variable (strategic success) and its dimensions. The researcher adopted a 5-point Likert scale () to determine the degree of agreement of the sample individuals, with weights ranging from (1) for "strongly disagree" to (5) for "strongly agree."

2- Sources for constructing the questionnaire:

The items in the tool were constructed based on international standards and rigorous scientific criteria. Table 1 shows the distribution of items and sources used for each variable:

T	Independent dependent variables	and Dimensions of the main Items variables	Source
1	Digital human resource capabilities	Digital knowledge 4	Westerman et al, 2014Kane et al, 2015Lanzolla et al, 2020