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THE SYRIAN GENERAL AUTHORITY FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE AS AN APPROACH TO ENHANCE TOURISM MARKETING

Abstract:

Syrian culture today faces significant challenges, ranging from the destruction of historical sites during the war to the illicit trafficking of antiquities. This research aims to analyze the role of establishing the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage in enhancing the tourism marketing of cultural heritage and to provide recommendations for decision-makers on how to manage cultural heritage sites in Syria. It seeks to leverage specialized expertise in this field to contribute to enhancing Syria's mental image and to present a comprehensive plan for revitalizing this human heritage, transforming it into a foundation for achieving sustainable development. The central idea revolves around establishing the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage, endowed with administrative and financial autonomy, to unify efforts between the government, local communities, and international organizations. This aims to integrate heritage preservation with innovative marketing strategies based on digital technologies such as 3D documentation and virtual reality, enabling interactive tourist experiences that blend history with modern appeal.

The research adopted a descriptive approach with an analytical method, studying the reality of Syrian cultural heritage and analyzing the challenges it faces. Its results confirmed the necessity of establishing the Authority, which would eliminate the current administrative fragmentation among relevant ministries. It is envisioned not merely as an administrative entity but as an integrative mechanism linking the scientific preservation of heritage with economic development through sustainable tourism. This research is not limited to proposing an institutional model but also attempts to study how to achieve a balance between protecting heritage as a human value and transforming it into a tool for development, enhancing Syria's mental image as a tourist destination. Consequently, it presents a vision that integrates historical authenticity with technological innovation, making heritage a bridge for dialogue between the past and the future, and between Syria and the world.

Keywords: Cultural Tourism, Digital Documentation, Tourism Marketing, Virtual Reality, Mental Image, Tourist Destination.

I. Introduction

Cultural heritage emerges as a supporter of shared identity and a living memory that reshapes communities' connections to their past and present. Syria holds a special place in this dynamic, representing a unique cultural blend embodied in numerous sites. However, this legacy has faced existential challenges where archaeological sites became war zones, artworks were subjected to theft, and the legal and institutional structures aimed at protection eroded, leading to a tragic situation highlighting a society rich in heritage struggling to save it from oblivion.

In light of this situation, this study presents a new vision for reimagining the role of Syrian heritage, not merely as a repository of memories but as an engine for enhancing Syria's mental image. The proposed solution is the establishment of the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage, an innovative institution aiming to transcend current administrative divisions by unifying efforts among relevant ministries, local communities, and international partners.

This Authority is based on three interconnected pillars: The first is a scientific-technical pillar, focusing on using advanced digital documentation technologies like 3D scanning to create a virtual archive preserving details of threatened sites. The second is an economic-marketing pillar, aiming to develop digital platforms providing tourists with an integrated experience combining augmented reality and historical narratives. The third relates to the social aspect, targeting the revival of traditional crafts and involving local storytellers in shaping heritage narratives.

This vision extends beyond physical preservation to linking heritage with daily life, where archaeological sites become vibrant places hosting art festivals and creative workshops, inspired by the living heritage model promoted by UNESCO. The proposals emphasize the necessity of transforming archaeological sites into innovative tourist destinations, considering heritage diversity and the need for reconstruction.

The study also clarifies the importance of international cooperation, particularly in recovering stolen artifacts using advanced legal procedures and supporting restoration projects through global funding mechanisms.

1- Research Problem

This study is based on the main problem: How can the establishment of the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage contribute to enhancing and developing means of tourism marketing for Syrian heritage to strengthen Syria's mental image as a tourist destination, and what mechanisms and visions can be implemented within this Authority to achieve this goal? The sub-questions that can be raised are:

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1. What roles and responsibilities can the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage undertake?
 2. How can the Authority develop effective marketing strategies to attract cultural tourism to Syria?
 3. What are the legal and administrative procedures and mechanisms for establishing this Authority and ensuring its independence and effectiveness?
 4. What role can international partnerships and cooperation with global organizations like UNESCO play in supporting the efforts of the proposed Authority to enhance the tourism marketing of cultural heritage, and how can this relationship be leveraged to achieve tourism sustainability?

2-Importance of the Research

The importance of this scientific research lies in proposing the establishment of the Syrian General Authority for Heritage as an innovative institutional entity that redefines the role of heritage from merely a witness to the past to an active driver for the future of cultural tourism and the creative tourism economy. The scientific importance of this research is its contribution to filling the research gap related to integrating the institutional dimension (establishing a specialized authority) in protecting and marketing cultural heritage tourism. It provides a theoretical framework for understanding the integrative relationship between heritage preservation and the development of innovative marketing strategies in the digital age. It proposes an institutional model based on coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders locally and internationally, particularly in the context of enhancing tourism sustainability. As for the practical importance, the research offers practical proposals regarding the design of the organizational structure of the proposed Authority, defining its roles (managing cultural sites, digital heritage marketing, coordination with international entities), which helps decision-makers implement them on the ground. It presents applicable solutions for revitalizing cultural tourism in Syria, such as adopting interactive digital platforms or creating tourist routes linked to tangible and intangible heritage.

3- Research Objectives

In light of new governmental visions for culturally and economically rebuilding Syria after years of war, this research aims to achieve the following:

1. Provide applicable recommendations to decision-makers on how to manage and market cultural heritage sites in Syria and leverage specialized expertise in this field.
2. Analyze the role of establishing the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage in enhancing the tourism marketing of cultural heritage and identify the necessary mechanisms and visions to activate this role.
3. Define the roles and responsibilities that the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage can undertake to enhance tourism marketing, by specifying tasks related to heritage protection, documentation, and marketing.

4. Propose effective marketing strategies to attract cultural tourism to Syria through innovative marketing tools (such as digitization, promotional campaigns, and communication with the audience in target tourist markets).

4- Research Methodology

This research adopted a descriptive approach with an analytical method. The reality of Syrian cultural heritage was studied, and the challenges it faces were analyzed, such as the destruction of archaeological sites during the war and the illicit trafficking of antiquities. Successful international experiences in managing cultural heritage, such as the Italian and Saudi models, were also analyzed to benefit from the lessons learned in building the proposed Authority.

This represented an integrated methodological framework that helped provide a comprehensive vision of the reality of Syrian cultural heritage and develop a practical conception for establishing the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage and its role in enhancing the means and methods of tourism marketing, taking into account all institutional, legislative, and marketing aspects.

5- Research Terms

Cultural Heritage: The shared legacy expressed by societies over time, encompassing tangible elements (e.g., historical buildings, artifacts, archaeological sites...) and intangible elements (e.g., oral traditions, performing arts, traditional industries and crafts...), which form the basis of the national identity of a society and contribute to preserving humanity's cultural diversity. Cultural heritage is a bridge between the past and the present and reflects the continuous interaction between humans and their environment [UNESCO, 2003].

Tourism Marketing: The process of planning and implementing a set of strategies designed to promote and develop tourism services and products, including destinations, events, and facilities related to travel, aimed at attracting and drawing tourists and achieving their satisfaction. This type of marketing relies on understanding the needs and desires of the target market, analyzing competitive trends, and using tools such as digital marketing, brand management, and designing rich programs and offers that meet customer expectations. It also includes managing customer relationships and promoting sustainable tourism to ensure long-term growth of the sector [Kotler, Philip, Bowen, John, and Makens, James. 2020. pp. 31-46].

General Authority for Cultural Heritage: A government entity concerned with protecting the national cultural heritage (tangible and intangible), managing archaeological and historical sites, and preserving cultural heritage through policies and legislation that ensure its sustainability for future generations. Its tasks include documenting heritage, monitoring sites, restoring historical monuments, and enhancing community awareness of the importance of heritage through educational and awareness programs. It works to register heritage sites on international lists (such as the UNESCO World Heritage List) and supports

scientific research and development projects related to cultural tourism [General Authority for Cultural Heritage. 2021].

Intangible Heritage: Intangible heritage refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity [UNESCO, 2003 Convention, Art. 2.1].

Tangible Heritage: Includes tangible cultural property that reflects the historical and civilizational identity of societies, such as archaeological sites, historical buildings, artistic pieces, manuscripts, artifacts, and architectural structures. This type of heritage is distinguished by its scientific, artistic, and symbolic value, serving as a witness to human development throughout history [based on principles from UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1972].

Marketing Strategy for Cultural Heritage: A systematic plan aimed at promoting awareness of cultural heritage and making it an attractive destination for tourists and interested parties while preserving its historical value and community identity. This strategy relies on market analysis, identifying the target audience, and using innovative marketing tools such as digital, promotional, and participatory tools to highlight the cultural uniqueness of heritage sites and link them to quality tourist experiences. It also includes enhancing partnerships with local and international entities and ensuring a balance between economic investment and preserving heritage for future generations [Al-Juhani, Maha bint Abdullah, and Al-Hammadi, Khaled. 2022. pp. 45-67].

6-Research Boundaries

The boundaries of the research are: **Temporal:** Reliance on data available up to the date the research was conducted. **Spatial:** The research focused on Syrian cultural heritage. **Subject:** Studying the role of the proposed Authority in the tourism marketing of Syrian cultural heritage, contributing to enhancing Syria's mental image as a tourist destination.

7- Previous Studies:

Study by Kobar Abdullah, 2023, titled: "Heritage Tourism and its Role in Activating Interest in the Cultural Heritage and Historical Landmarks of the Local Community": This study addressed the role of heritage tourism as a tool to enhance interest in tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Algeria. It proposed a strategy to promote this type of tourism by enhancing community awareness, developing infrastructure, and using social media. Key findings included: the necessity of creating specialized bodies to manage heritage and

coordinate efforts among different sectors; the importance of linking heritage preservation with revitalizing the tourism economy; and the need for marketing policies based on local cultural identity.

Study by Al-Ghafri, Mahmoud, 2024, titled: "Financing Cultural Heritage Projects in Syria During the Crisis: Reality, Opportunities, and Challenges": This research discussed the challenges of financing cultural heritage projects in Syria during the crisis and proposed establishing a financial support fund for heritage through cooperation between the public and private sectors and the local community. It also addressed the role of international partnerships in supporting these projects. The importance of this study lies in providing a practical model for financing heritage projects during crises, emphasizing the role of the local community in preserving heritage, and highlighting the importance of sustainable financing to ensure heritage protection. Key results included emphasizing the necessity of establishing a Syrian heritage fund to support small and medium projects, the importance of developing a legal and institutional environment to encourage investment in heritage, and the need to raise local community awareness about the importance of participation in heritage preservation.

Study by Smith, John. & Lee, Karl. (2018), titled: "The Role of Heritage Institutions in Promoting Cultural Tourism: A Case Study of UNESCO World Heritage Sites": This study discussed the role of international organizations like UNESCO in preserving global cultural heritage and marketing it as tourist destinations. It focused on case studies of heritage sites in Italy and Spain and examined how to enhance cooperation between local governments and international bodies to increase tourist attraction. The results of this study indicated that heritage bodies promote integration between heritage preservation and creating economic opportunities through tourism, and that coordinated marketing of heritage sites increases visitor numbers by 30% and improves the country's mental image.

Study by Rossi, Marco. (2020), titled: "Cultural Heritage Bodies and Economic Development: Lessons Learned from the Italian Model": This study analyzed the experience of the "Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage" in managing archaeological and artistic sites and how it contributed to transforming them into innovative tourism products. It discussed mechanisms of financial and legislative support to ensure project sustainability. The findings of the study were that establishing a specialized heritage authority reduces administrative fragmentation and increases marketing efficiency, and that linking heritage with cultural festivals increases tourist interaction with local identity.

Study by Thompson, Liam. (2021), titled: "The Economic Impact of Heritage Preservation on Tourism: Evidence from the United Kingdom": This research examined the impact of English Heritage on the British tourism sector by

analyzing financial data from sites like the Tower of London and Stonehenge and measuring the economic return on heritage preservation. The findings concluded that every pound invested in heritage preservation yields a four-fold tourist return, and specialized bodies facilitate attracting external investments to fund restoration projects.

Study by Dupont, Claire. & Yamamoto, Hiroshi. (2022), titled: "Cultural Heritage and the Formation of National Identity: A Comparative Study between France and Japan": This study compared the French Heritage Authority and the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs, analyzing how heritage is used to build the national brand to attract tourists. Key results from this study included that bodies integrating heritage with symbolic narratives (like the Samurai in Japan) succeed in creating tourist distinction, and that combining tangible (buildings) and intangible (traditions) heritage enhances the tourist experience and lengthens their stay.

Through the previous studies, we reached consensus results:

- The existence of a heritage authority enhances strategic planning and reduces role and task duplication.
- Successful tourism marketing depends on linking heritage to national identity and employing modern technical tools.
- Cooperation between the public and private sectors is necessary for financing heritage projects and ensuring their sustainability.

They confirm that there are no direct Syrian studies on establishing a cultural heritage authority, but Arab experiences such as in Morocco and Saudi Arabia provide successful models that can be inspired by. The results of previous studies are used in the research project to build upon, aiming to design a tourism marketing strategy based on Syrian cultural identity.

II. Objectives for Establishing the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage

The proposed objectives were developed based on three main pillars: (Scientific Preservation - Community Utilization - Smart Marketing). (Table 1).

Table (1) - Proposed Objectives for Establishing the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage

	Objectives	Proposed Implementation Mechanism	Expected Results
1	Documenting and Protecting Syrian Cultural Heritage	Creating a comprehensive digital archive for archaeological sites such as Palmyra and Aleppo, and intangible heritage like Syrian music and ancient languages, and using this archive to design interactive tourism platforms such as augmented reality applications that showcase the history of the sites through folk tales.	Digitally preserving heritage and transforming it into interactive tourism experiences
2	Rehabilitating	Restoring damaged archaeological sites such	Transforming sites

	Damaged Sites and Reconnecting Them to Cultural Identity	as the Krak des Chevaliers using sustainable techniques and relying on specialized scientific staff and local labor to preserve traditional methods, then transforming the restored sites into smart tourist destinations by designing cultural tourism routes that combine visiting the monuments and watching live performances of intangible heritage such as the Dabke dance [UNESCO, 2021].	into smart tourist destinations that connect tangible and intangible heritage
3	Enhancing Digital Marketing Through Global Platforms	Developing marketing campaigns using artificial intelligence techniques to analyze tourists' preferences and create customized content in multiple languages, highlighting Syrian cultural diversity such as mosques, churches, and old markets [Al-Azaiza, Mohamed & Al-Zaboun, Omar, 2019, pp. 245-260].	Targeted tourism attraction through global platforms while enhancing the image of cultural diversity
4	Engaging Local Communities in Heritage Preservation and Marketing	Training youth in traditional crafts and documenting oral narratives related to archaeological sites, and marketing interactive tourism experiences such as workshops where tourists participate in making traditional crafts [Al-Hammad, Mohamed, 2020, pp. 589-601].	Empowering the local community and turning heritage into a source of income through participatory tourism experiences
5	Strengthening International Partnerships for Sustainability	Collaborating with organizations such as ICOMOS and the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH) to fund projects and using these partnerships to build a positive image of Syria as a safe destination by publishing international reports showing progress in heritage preservation.	Ensuring project sustainability through international funding and rebranding Syria as a safe destination
6	Supporting Scientific Research	Funding joint research projects with local and international universities to study Syrian cultural heritage and publish them in specialized scientific journals, and using research results to produce reliable promotional materials.	Developing knowledge of Syrian heritage and converting research into accredited promotional tools
7	Raising Local and Global Awareness of	Organizing awareness campaigns in collaboration with civil society organizations and social media, highlighting	Raising local and international awareness of the

	Syrian Heritage	stories of Syrian human heritage related to the sites, and using these campaigns to promote heritage tourism and cultural identity.	value of Syrian heritage and making it a tool to support heritage tourism and strengthen cultural identity
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Source: The Authors. Based on [UNESCO, 2021; Al-Azayza, Muhammad, and Al-Zaboun, Omar, 2019; Al-Hammadi, Muhammad, 2020].

III. Internal Statute or Bylaws:

The Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage shall be established as an independent entity aiming to protect tangible heritage (archaeological sites, historical buildings) and intangible heritage (traditions, arts, languages) and enhance its role in sustainable development. The internal statute shall be developed by leveraging successful international experiences and adopting flexible management, allowing the statute to be updated every three years based on periodic evaluations and international developments. It will also rely on scientific expertise in legal and administrative affairs, based on the following strategic objectives:

- Preserve cultural heritage.
- Digitally document heritage and create a permanent national archive.
- Activate the role of heritage in the economy through cultural tourism.
- Enhance national cultural identity.
- Recover smuggled artifacts through international cooperation.

When building the internal statute, it must also rely on:

- International standards such as ICOMOS principles and UNESCO conventions.
- Arab and global models such as Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Italy, and France.
- The local community and the specificity of Syria's diverse heritage and reconstruction needs.
- The integration of the four dimensions of heritage: tangible, intangible, natural, and memory.

Accordingly, an initial foundation can be proposed to move towards a comprehensive internal statute that includes, in its articles and clauses, the following:

Preamble and definitions related to the work of the proposed Authority, such as: Management – Ministries – Heritage...

1. Legal Framework, including: National legislation and laws, and International conventions.
2. Administrative Structure: Composition – Tasks – Powers.
3. Human Resources: Employment – Training – Volunteering.
4. Funding and Financial Management.

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5. Cultural Tourism and Marketing Strategy.
 6. Management of Archaeological Sites.
 7. Evaluation and Accountability: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Periodic Reports – Grievance Mechanism.

IV. Administrative or Organizational Structure:

The structure is based on a hybrid model combining centralization (in strategic planning) and decentralization (in field implementation), focusing on: integration between departments, flexibility, and transparency in managing resources and information. Consequently, it links heritage protection, documentation, and tourism marketing, involving specialized personnel in cultural heritage management capable of keeping pace with challenges and transforming this heritage into a source of national income through the employment of innovative marketing strategies.

I – Top Management (Strategic):

1-Chairman of the Board: The Prime Minister.

2- Board of Directors: Comprising 15 members with the following tasks and powers:

- Setting the general policy and strategic vision for the Authority in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNESCO heritage agenda.
- Approving strategic plans.
- National and international coordination.
- Approving financial budgets.
- Selecting the Head of the Authority and their deputies based on competence and experience in heritage and management.
- Monitoring performance.

II – Executive Management (Tasks and Responsibility):

1-Head of the Authority:

- Proposing the vision and national strategy for protecting and marketing Syrian cultural heritage in coordination with relevant ministries and international organizations.
- Overseeing the implementation of the Authority's operational plan.
- Official representation at scientific and cultural forums and signing agreements with various entities locally and internationally.
- Crisis management in the event of natural and humanitarian disasters.
- Approving annual budgets and projects.
- Appointing directors and site managers within the operational management based on competence and professional specialization.
- Issuing executive decisions to activate policies and achieve the Authority's objectives.
- Ensuring transparency in the management of cultural, financial, and human resources.

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- Adhering to ethical charters in dealing with heritage.

2- Deputy Head of the Authority for Administrative Affairs:

- Supervising human resources management, including recruitment, performance evaluation, and developing training plans to enhance employee efficiency.
- Developing employment and promotion policies in accordance with laws and regulations, and ensuring compliance with labor rules and equality.
- Developing organizational structures and job descriptions to ensure operational efficiency.
- Preparing the annual budget in coordination with technical directorates and monitoring expenditure to ensure optimal resource utilization.
- Overseeing financial reports and internal audit, ensuring transparency in handling national and international grants.
- Following up on external funding and preparing accountability reports for donors.
- Participating in developing long-term strategic plans for heritage preservation, considering priority setting and objectives.
- Developing administrative policies and reviewing them periodically to keep pace with best practices.
- Ensuring compliance with Syrian laws and relevant international conventions for heritage protection.
- Managing audit processes, monitoring compliance with professional ethics standards, and combating corruption.
- Supervising procurement and supply processes for equipment and materials needed for heritage conservation projects.
- Managing logistics for heritage events (conferences, workshops, exhibitions...) and maintaining the Authority's facilities and properties.
- Promoting integration between administrative and technical directorates to ensure effective project implementation.
- Managing partnerships with NGOs and the local community to enhance participation in heritage preservation.
- Developing emergency plans to protect heritage sites from natural disasters and humanitarian crises, training work teams on rapid response mechanisms, and establishing an early warning system for risks.
- Supervising the documentation of administrative procedures and decisions for archiving (paper and digital) and preparing periodic reports on the Authority's performance.
- Supporting the adoption of modern technologies to improve management and promoting sustainable practices in the Authority's operations.
- Encouraging scientific research in the field of site management and heritage administration, supporting the publication of academic research on the

Authority's experiences, and organizing workshops for capacity building in project management and strategic leadership.

3- Deputy Head of the Authority for Technical Affairs:

- Supervising archaeological and field research by coordinating with scientific archaeological missions, directing research teams in documenting archaeological sites, analyzing data, and reviewing scientific results to ensure compliance with ethical and professional standards.
- Coordinating with specialists to design periodic maintenance programs for endangered heritage sites, applying principles of minimal intervention to preserve historical authenticity [Jokilehto, Jukka. 1999. p. 215].
- Managing the digital documentation of cultural heritage using modern technologies to create a digital archive of Syrian heritage.
- Coordinating with Arab and international organizations and entities, preparing detailed technical reports for UNESCO and ICCROM to support the inscription of Syrian sites on the World Heritage List.
- Participating in Arab and international seminars, meetings, and workshops to exchange experiences on heritage management.
- Reviewing legislative policies, laws, and regulations related to cultural heritage, and proposing amendments to protect cultural property.
- Working on developing and implementing training programs for technical personnel according to scientific and technical specialization.
- Ensuring the publication of research project results conducted by the Authority in specialized peer-reviewed journals.
- Ensuring compliance with heritage ethics standards, applying the principles of the ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage 2017 in all projects, especially concerning respect for the rights of local communities [ICOMOS. 2017. p7].
- Assessing the scientific impact of projects undertaken by the Authority and their contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

III – Operational Management:

1. Directorate of Executive Support and Communication.
2. Directorate of Cultural Sites Management.
3. Directorate of Documentation and Digital Archiving.
4. Directorate of Scientific Research and International Cooperation.
5. Directorate of Information Technology and Innovation.
6. Directorate of Legal Affairs.
7. Directorate of Administrative Development.
8. Directorate of Marketing and Media.
9. Directorate of Shared Services.
10. Directorate of Finance.

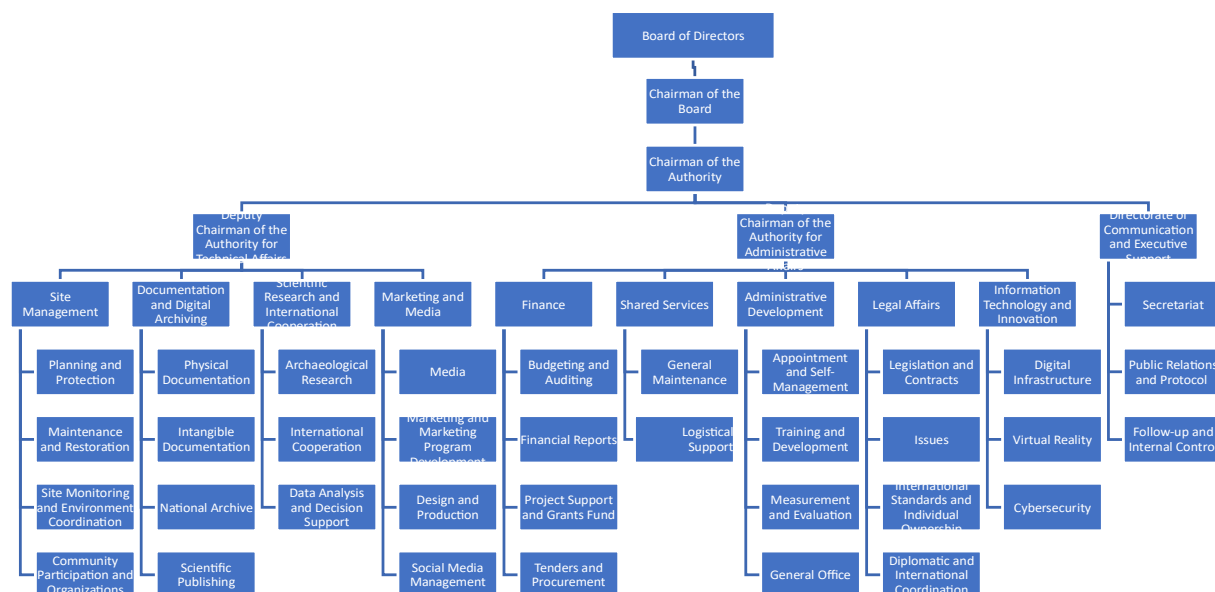


Figure (1) - Proposed Organizational Structure for the Proposed Authority - Source: The Authors.

From a theoretical perspective, the proposed model contributes to the development of research studies on heritage management by integrating concepts of good governance (such as transparency and accountability) with technical and artistic innovation and creativity (such as digital documentation and virtual reality), based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNESCO 2030 Agenda.

Practically, a viable institutional mechanism has been proposed that relies on the integration of technical and administrative departments, while enhancing partnerships between the public and private sectors, local community stakeholders, and international organizations. This contributes to reducing the risks of neglect and politicization that threaten heritage under various circumstances.

However, the success of this model depends entirely on providing a suitable environment enabling it to perform its tasks and role. This includes: legislative reform that criminalizes attacks on both tangible and intangible heritage; training national personnel capable of employing modern technologies; and securing sustainable funding through innovative partnerships with the private sector and international organizations. Its implementation also requires enhancing community awareness of the importance of heritage as a national identity, which the Community Participation Department seeks to achieve through well-designed and practical awareness campaigns.

The effectiveness of the proposed model remains subject to future studies that evaluate the achievement of balance between archaeological conservation priorities and economic development pressures, alongside the necessity of monitoring the impact of geopolitical factors on the sustainability of the project proposing the establishment of the Authority.

V. Legal and Administrative Roles of the Proposed Authority:

A. Legal Role:

The Authority presents a comprehensive legal model that combines legislative reform and international commitment, focusing on cultural justice as part of social justice. However, achieving success depends on providing a supportive political environment and sustainable funding, with a focus on how national and international regulations and laws are applied, and their role in promoting transparency and accountability. (Table 2)

Table (2) - Axes of the Proposed Authority's Legal Role, its Mechanisms, and Legal Document.

	Axis	Procedures and Mechanisms	Legal Basis
1	Updating current laws	- Amend Syrian Law No. 222 of 1963 to include the protection of intangible heritage (such as traditional games and ancient languages). - Require construction projects to conduct prior archaeological surveys.	Syrian Law No. 222 of 1963 (amended).
2	Protecting intellectual property rights of heritage	- Establish regulations to organize the use of heritage symbols as trademarks with the approval of the authority.	UNESCO Principles (2003) for the Protection of Intangible Heritage.
3	Penalties and special courts systems	- Propose the establishment of a specialized heritage court in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice. - Form a specialized unit to cooperate with Interpol to combat smuggling.	The Hague Convention (1954) for the Protection of Cultural Property (Toman, J.1996.p203).
4	Implementation of UNESCO treaties	- Adopt the UNESCO Conventions (1972 and 2003) as the basis for policies. - Adopt the principles of the Faro Convention (2005) linking heritage to human rights [Blake, J. 2009, p. 45-73 + p. 134].	- World Heritage Convention (1972). - Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). - Faro Convention (2005).
5	Recovery of smuggled cultural artifacts	- Implement a legal mechanism in cooperation with Interpol and WIPO to track missing artifacts [Prot, L. V. & O'Keefe, P. J. 1984, p. 55].	UNIDROIT Convention (1995).
6	Legal framework for community participation	- Establish partnerships with local communities to document oral heritage. - Support community initiatives related	Principles of the Faro Convention (2005).

		to sustainable development.	
7	Performance and transparency indicators	- Monitor compliance of cultural sites with international standards. - Issue periodic reports open to the public.	- ICOMOS Charter for the Ethics of Heritage (2017). - UNESCO Principles of Good Governance (2015).

Source: The Authors. Based on [Francioni, F. 2008. p45]

B. Administrative Role:

The management of Syrian cultural heritage requires a comprehensive administrative model encompassing scientific preservation, community interaction, and smart marketing. Therefore, the administrative role of the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage is based on three main aspects:

1. **Management of Cultural and Archaeological Sites (Protection, Restoration, and Operation):** A comprehensive process aimed at preserving historical and human identity, relying on three fundamental pillars: protection, restoration, and operation.
2. **Protection of Intangible Heritage (Documentation, Dissemination, and Community Participation):** Intangible heritage (such as folk arts, languages, and customs) is considered as important as tangible heritage, but its protection methods differ.
3. **Cultural Marketing and Tourism Promotion (Local and International):** Cultural marketing transcends mere promotion to focus on building narratives that reflect the depth of cultural identity.

Considering the pillars of the core aspects in exercising the administrative function of the proposed Authority, some administrative challenges and proposed solutions emerge, including:

1. **Lack of Qualified Personnel:** Proposed solution: Joint training programs with international universities (e.g., University of Damascus and Sapienza University of Rome).
2. **Limited Funding:** Proposed solution: Attracting international grants through joint projects with organizations like UNESCO and ALIPH.
3. **Difficulty in Promotion:** Proposed solution: Focusing on digital marketing and cooperation with friendly countries (e.g., France, Germany, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia).

Thus, the proposed Authority can become a successful model for integrated heritage management if it relies on:

1. Decentralization in the field implementation of projects.
2. Technological innovation in documentation and marketing.
3. Strategic partnerships with both local and international communities.

C. Cooperation with Syrian Diplomatic Missions:

Syrian embassies abroad possess significant capabilities to support the preservation of Syrian cultural heritage, whether through recovering smuggled artifacts or promoting cultural heritage. The proposed Authority can coordinate

with these embassies to implement a comprehensive plan covering legal aspects (artifact recovery) and economic aspects (tourism marketing).

This cooperation is based on three fundamentals:

1. **Legal Tracing of Smuggled Artifacts:** Embassies and diplomatic missions rely on two main methods:
 - a. Cooperation with international organizations like Interpol and the World Customs Organization (WCO) to identify stolen artifacts using international databases, such as the UNESCO Database of National Cultural Heritage Laws.
 - b. Activating bilateral agreements with countries hosting these artifacts to legally pursue smugglers, leveraging the UNESCO Convention signed in 1970 which obligates member states to return stolen cultural property [UNESCO 1970. p7].
2. **Appropriate Marketing of Syrian Heritage:** Marketing transcends traditional promotion to aim at creating an attractive cultural narrative reflecting the diversity of Syrian heritage, such as the archaeological sites in Palmyra and traditional music. Embassies and diplomatic missions can:
 - Organize virtual exhibitions in cooperation with platforms like Google Arts & Culture to display artifacts digitally;
 - Innovate specialized tourist trips in cooperation with global travel agencies, focusing on the concept of sustainable tourism that respects the environment and culture;
 - and Support Syrian artisans by marketing their products in global markets, such as Art Basel fairs (Brown, A., & Smith, T. 2017. p156).
3. **Establishing International Cultural Partnerships:** These partnerships seek to transform Syrian heritage into a means for civilizational dialogue through:
 - a. Signing memoranda of understanding with global museums like the Louvre or the Metropolitan to hold joint exhibitions.
 - b. Cooperating with international universities to conduct joint archaeological research, enhancing Syria's academic standing.
 - c. Joining international networks like the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH) to support funding and provide technical advice.

Thus, the Authority, embassies, and diplomatic missions can achieve notable results by:

1. Transitioning from traditional diplomacy to cultural diplomacy.
2. Consolidating efforts within a single strategy based on digital data and effective partnerships.
3. Transforming heritage from a victim of war into a platform for development.

VI. The Role of the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage in Sustainable Tourism Marketing:

Syria faces a particular challenge in rebuilding its tourism industry after years of war, where archaeological sites (such as Palmyra, Old Aleppo, and Krak des

Chevaliers) are global symbols that need to be preserved and utilized appropriately. (Table 3)

Table (3) – Key Proposed Strategies the Proposed Authority Could Rely On.

	Main Objective	Proposed Procedures and Projects	Responsible entities for implementation	Supporting Entities
1	Reviving domestic tourism.	- Organizing awareness campaigns for the population about the value of heritage. - Encouraging scientific and study trips to historical sites.	- Ministry of Education and Ministry of Information. - Universities and non-governmental organizations.	- Civil society organizations. - Ministry of Culture.
2	Connecting tourist routes and community projects.	- Designing tourist routes that include rural villages (such as handicrafts). - Allocating tourism revenues to finance local projects.	- Local councils. - Associations working in rural development.	- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). - European Union.
3	Technology and reducing visual pollution.	- Developing multilingual electronic applications for tourist information. - Digital maps of protected areas.	- Local and international technology companies. - Digital tourism platforms.	- UNESCO. - Private sector.
4	Smart restoration.	- Using traditional building techniques (mud bricks). - Training artisans in restoration.	- Faculties of engineering and architecture. - Traditional craft centers.	- Grants from UNESCO. - World Bank.
5	Transforming damaged sites into educational opportunities.	- Establishing "open museums" in destroyed areas. - Documenting the history of the war and the importance of peace.	- International peace organizations (such as UNICEF). - Educational institutions.	- Global museums (British Museum). - World Heritage Support Fund.
6	Integrating intangible heritage.	- Organizing festivals for folk singing (Mawal) and traditional foods.	- Folk arts associations. - Local restaurants and hotels.	- Ministry of Tourism. - Private sector.

7	Sustainable infrastructure.	A. Renewable Energy: Encouraging the use of solar energy in tourist facilities near archaeological sites. B. Sustainable Transportation: Rehabilitation of railway lines (Aleppo-Damascus) and the use of electric trains. C. Water Management: Rainwater harvesting systems at archaeological sites and greywater treatment.	Ministry of Transport and Energy (in cooperation with international experts).	a. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). b. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. c. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
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Source: The Authors. Based on UNESCO sites, World Tourism Organization.

VII. The Role of the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage in Developing Tourism Marketing Methods

Syria is one of the world's oldest civilizations, possessing a rich cultural heritage that includes tangible landmarks like Palmyra and Krak des Chevaliers, as well as intangible heritage like the Samah dance, Muwashshahat, and Aleppine Qudud, reflecting a diverse and distinguished history and society. However, long years of political crises and armed conflicts have led to a decline in tourism, which was a primary source of national income. Therefore, the proposal to establish the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage came as an active institutional alternative to revive cultural tourism through the application of new marketing strategies, enhancing cooperation with local and international partners, and investing in modern technologies.

Thus, effective strategies must be built that balance cultural sustainability and economic feasibility to ensure the revival of heritage as a developmental resource, based on the following:

a. Increasing Heritage Awareness through International Classifications: Including Syrian sites on UNESCO's World Heritage Lists is an important step to enhance their global standing. Research indicates that places listed on these lists see an annual increase in visitor numbers of up to 30%, according to a 2021 UNESCO report. The Authority can strive to register new sites and work on developing integrated cultural tourist routes that enhance the connection

between archaeological landmarks and the tourist experience by providing a continuous historical narrative.

b. Empowering Local Communities as Partners in Marketing: Cultural marketing is not limited to promoting tourist attractions alone; it involves engaging local communities in the tourism industry. Successful cultural tourism relies on the living experiences offered by local residents, such as handicraft workshops or artistic performances. For example, the Authority could support projects to revive the art of Al-Hakawati (storytelling), transforming these activities into sustainable tourist attractions.

c. Improving Infrastructure: World Bank 2019 data indicates that 65% of cultural tourists prefer to stay in places that offer heritage experiences. Therefore, developing hotels within historical buildings (like the old Khans of Damascus) or restaurants serving traditional dishes (like Mujaddara and Aleppine Kebab) enhances the appeal of tourism. Additionally, success requires training tour guides in modern methods of historical narration, such as adopting interactive storytelling that links archaeological facts to folk tales [World Bank, 2019, pp. 22-25].

Modern technology has become the cornerstone of managing cultural destinations, starting with the documentation of archaeological sites via 3D scanning and virtual reality technologies, to their smart marketing using big data analysis and artificial intelligence. These tools contribute to preserving heritage with high accuracy while simultaneously creating attractive interactive experiences for tourists that reflect civilizational depth and encourage investment. This transformation is considered an integrative model linking identity preservation with driving economic development through innovative channels via the following:

a. Digital Documentation: Technologies like 3D imaging and LiDAR are vital tools for documenting sites threatened with disappearance. Therefore, the digital archive is not only used for preservation purposes but can also be converted into virtual platforms enabling remote tourism, which suits a segment of tourists unable to travel due to security or financial constraints [Guttentag, D.A. 2010. p 637-651].

b. Augmented Reality (AR): AR applications help visitors see archaeological sites as they were hundreds of years ago. In a successful experience, the Louvre Museum used the "Louvre AR" app to display artworks with interactive explanations, leading to a 25% increase in visits. The Authority could adopt this model in Syria by developing an app showing virtual reconstructions of the Roman Theatre in Bosra or the Temple of Bel in Palmyra, thus enhancing the tourist experience and attracting the younger generation interested in technology [Guttentag, D.A. 2010. p 637-651].

c. Social Media Platforms: Meta's 2023 statistics indicate that 70% of tourists plan their trips via platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Therefore, the Authority can launch marketing campaigns targeting:

- Short video clips (Reels) highlighting cultural diversity, such as folk dance festivals, singing, and playing music.
- Collaboration with heritage-focused influencers, like travel bloggers who visit archaeological sites and share their experiences in multiple languages.
- Interactive maps on Google Earth showing tourist routes with information about each site.

Thus, the need emerges to rebuild the Syrian tourism brand according to an integrated strategic vision.

This vision is based on three fundamental pillars:

1. Rich Civilizational Heritage: Including world-classified archaeological sites.
2. Living Cultural Diversity: Embodies coexistence among various segments and spectra of society.
3. Digital Transformation: As a tool for documenting and marketing heritage in innovative ways.

Reviving the tourism brand requires:

- Developing an international communication strategy to correct the stereotypical image.
- Investing in modern technologies to present the tourism product.
- Enhancing partnerships between the public and private sectors.
- Focusing on sustainable tourism that preserves heritage for future generations [Al-Hariri, Nader, and Quteish, Lina 2022. pp.33-52].

Thus, the tourism brand becomes a strategic tool for economic development and cultural diplomacy, potentially contributing to rebuilding the national economy and enhancing Syria's position on the global tourism map, while preserving the authenticity and human values of heritage, as follows:

a. Developing a Visual Identity: Successful tourism brands rely on visual symbols that reflect cultural identity. The Authority could design a logo combining elements of Islamic architecture and Byzantine mosaics, using colors inspired by the Syrian environment. A consistent visual identity can increase its memorability by up to 40% among tourists [Baker, B. 2016. p. 89].

b. Media Campaigns: Tourism promotion requires active participation in international events, like the ITB Berlin exhibition, to showcase investment opportunities in Syrian tourism. Agreements could also be signed with documentary channels (like National Geographic) to produce films addressing restoration efforts at archaeological sites and their importance in human history, focusing on the human aspects of those working in heritage preservation.

c. Targeting Specialized Tourism: Instead of competing in mass tourism, Syria could focus on specialized categories and segments, such as:

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- Cultural Adventure Tourism: Organizing exploratory trips to unknown sites in the Badia (steppe).
 - Conference Tourism: Hosting international conferences on heritage in cities.
 - Religious Tourism: Developing routes for Christian pilgrimage.

Research Findings:

1. Necessity of Establishing an Independent Authority: The study confirmed that the current administrative fragmentation among ministries (Culture, Tourism, Antiquities) weakens heritage protection, necessitating the establishment of an independent authority with financial and administrative autonomy within a hybrid organizational structure.
2. Possession and Availability of Effective Marketing Tools: Virtual and augmented reality increase youth tourist attraction by 40%, while digital platforms (especially Instagram and TikTok) influence 70% of travel decisions.
3. Necessity of Creating a Digital Archive for Threatened Sites (Palmyra, Old Aleppo), and relying on Interactive Applications (AR applications that historically reconstruct sites).
4. Emphasis on the Importance of Involving Artisans and Storytellers in Shaping Tourist Experiences, which increases: sustainability of intangible heritage (like folk singing arts and Dabke) and attracts tourists seeking authentic experiences.
5. Implementing Educational Campaigns in Schools to Raise Awareness about the Importance of Heritage.

Research Proposals:

1. Issue a law to establish the Syrian General Authority for Cultural Heritage, granting it administrative and financial independence, and integrating some tasks of the (Culture and Tourism) ministries under its management.
2. Establish a sustainable financial fund with government funding and international partnerships.
3. Create a complete digital archive of Syrian heritage using 3D scanning and augmented reality technologies to document endangered sites. Develop an interactive tourist app in multiple languages offering virtual tours.
4. Move towards a digital marketing strategy focusing on youth through social media platforms with short content showcasing cultural diversity (like Aleppine Muwashshahat, folk dance arts) and collaborate with global tourism influencers to improve Syria's image.
5. Empower local communities by training youth in heritage crafts and restoration techniques. Additionally, involve local storytellers in developing tourist narratives.
6. Enhance cooperation with key international organizations:
 - a. UNESCO: To register new sites on the World Heritage List.
 - b. International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage (ALIPH): To fund restoration projects.
 - c. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO): To design joint tourist routes.

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7. Recover stolen antiquities by activating cooperation with Syrian embassies to track lost pieces. Organize mobile exhibitions in Europe to display recovered artifacts.
 8. Establish a specialized training center in partnership with international universities (e.g., University of Damascus and Sapienza University of Rome).

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