

# THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES PLANNING TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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## *Abstract:*

**Purpose:** The main objective of the research is to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in the Egyptian tourism sector locally and globally, through the strategic role of human resources planning by maximizing value added, developing innovation and knowledge and increasing the quality of service provided.

**Practical implications:** The state seeks to adopt the human resources planning of Egyptian tourism companies to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in the light of the sustainable development strategy.

**Originality/ value:** The approach should be to adopt human resources planning in companies to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. This research paper covers the framework of achieving the competitive advantage of tourism companies.

**Findings:** The dimensions of human resources planning have a strategic role in increasing the rates of innovation, development and value added for tourism companies that achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** Human Resources Planning, Innovation Management, Research and Development, Sustainable Competitive Advantage, Sustainable Tourism Development.

**JEL:** M1

## **Introduction**

In the shadow of globalization, business organizations are witnessing ideological and dynamic developments that lead to strategic analysis and planning. As each organization, whether companies or governments, has a strategic vision that is realized by studying and predicting all current variables in the future, the strategic vision of human resources planning will be realistically efficient and effective in organizations if practical and technological bases and standards are adopted, which contributes to a good understanding of the administrative function and development of human capabilities and skills and improves the competitive advantage of organizations.<sup>(1)</sup>

The sustainable competitive advantage is one of the most important contemporary axes and issues and strategic in various sectors locally and internationally, especially the tourism sector. The competitive advantage requires the provision of diverse sources of knowledge and new resources and explores new ways to meet the needs of customers. This is done by studying and analyzing the current situation, providing advanced means and building the structures of human trust between the organizations to achieve value added for achieving development and excellence.<sup>(2)</sup>

Tourism sector is one of the most important strategic investment sectors supporting the economic, human and development sectors in Egypt. The report of the chairman of the Holding company for tourism and hotels indicated that the activity and

results of the company, which include (9) companies for the financial year 2017/2018, had significant improvement as the current activity revenues amounted to about 2.6 billion Egyptian Pounds, an increase of 31% for fiscal year 2016 / 2017, and the net profit increased by 30% compared to the fiscal year 2016/ 2017 to reach 690.8 million Egyptian Pounds.<sup>(3)</sup>

### **Main Text**

The global interest in the real wealth of any country is to maximize human resources. States or organizations develop human resource capabilities and skills through qualifying and training to deal with the latest changes and achieve economic, social and cultural progress<sup>(4)</sup>. The beginning of the interest in planning human resources in the sixties was based on the operations of organizations in how to transfer the current workforce to a better arrangement, while the modern planning for human resources is related to the forecast of the needs of the future human resources and data collection and the development of comprehensive, accurate planning and effective training to achieve the desired objectives.<sup>(5)</sup>

**In the context of human resource development**, many researches revealed that 95% of the large companies have strategic plans and objectives. The need to explore the relationship between human resource management and organizational performance has been shown. HRM practices are linked to the results of business performance through human resource performance strategy, which relates to business growth potential (revenue and growth management), human resources management cost structure (cost management of manpower), cost structure of operations (operations management) and technology strategy (research, development and profitability management) thereby improving the efficiency of human resources.<sup>(6)</sup>

Planning is generally an integral part of an organization's activity and is part of the strategic and operational management process, as human resources planning includes demand for labour, understanding and management of associated costs<sup>(7)</sup> as they represent assets that must be adopted efficiently and effectively to achieve the objectives of the organization. (Gautam, T. & Poudyal, S, 2018) emphasized that human resources management is the philosophy, policies and practices related to the management of individuals within an organization. Organizations must support the planning of human resources, which are a major source of competitive power: business expectations, demand management for workers and supply in the market, maintaining the balance between employment expectations and demand expectations.<sup>(8)</sup>

The study (Jusubaliev, D, 2015) examined the importance of using Information Technology and knowledge in achieving the comprehensive development of human resources. It focused on adopting the requirements of the international community to develop human resources through the use of technological and information indicators in digital transformation in order to increase the growth rate of the knowledge-based economy.<sup>(9)</sup>

A study was conducted to explore human resource strategies and their impact on business activities and sustainability in investment business practices. It was found that 50% of companies did not use HR strategies in an effective manner, which affected their presence in the business world. The study relied on many axes in building Human Resources Strategies that led to the success of business companies in the long term, such as empowerment of employees, inspirational motivations, the principles of transformational leadership and total quality management.<sup>(10)</sup>

The study (Lee, E. & Jung, K. & Sul, J., 2019) emphasized the importance of human development variables across 15 countries from 2006 to 2016, which presented

a basic plan for sustainable development through the development vision of the environment, society and economy, and in the framework of the analysis and methodology of the study. Many programs were used and had a positive impact on sustainable development, such as: Human Development Index (HDI), Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Effective Assistance. Human development planning is considered one of the strategic elements to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. <sup>(11)</sup>

The study (Distanont, A & Khongmalai, O., 2018) was conducted in the context of creating competitive advantage of sustainable business under the factors of global economic changes. In the light of the results of literature and experimental research and analysis of the results of research, it can be stated that innovation is the strategic tool in the competition to create a competitive advantage compared to developed countries. It has been shown that knowledge management in business enterprises improves business performance and competitive advantage. <sup>(12)</sup>

Sustainable competitive advantage is one of the most important administrative and economic aspects of companies. Malaysian companies have focused on supporting the development of HR skills and levels by improving training levels and Technological Information Systems, thus creating competitive advantage against competitors in the market. The results of the study of 220 companies have confirmed that innovation contributes directly 73.5% to competitive advantage and economic growth. <sup>(13)</sup>

**In addition**, a study has shown that the strategic key to competitiveness is the sustainability of competitive advantages based on identifying and focusing on customer requirements. The competitive sustainable advantage is to increase the attractiveness of the organization compared to competitors. The most important requirements and skills of human resources needed to achieve sustainable competitive advantage are as follows: to be valuable, to be rare, should not be accessible, not to have a strategic alternative. Therefore, the study has focused on several criteria: efficiency, quality, innovation and intellectual capacity. <sup>(14)</sup>

The risks of globalization and rapid technological revolutions are among the most important changes that organizations have taken. Therefore, companies have tended to create and gain a long-term competitive advantage through the effective integration of human resources as well as other resources to achieve a distinguished position in the labour market; it has been shown through applied research by survey methodology and descriptive study. <sup>(15)</sup>

The tourism sector is one of the sources of national income that the state is keen to develop and in 2017 saw a central interest in sustainable tourism and green tourism. The Holding company for tourism and hotels has been interested in restructuring its own companies using an electronic system in marketing as well as developing the company's transportation means, linking booking systems with hotel management companies, developing websites and the tourism system to ensure quality of service, cost reduction and contracting with international companies; to complete the Egyptian tourism projects and the implementation of new projects developed to provide a sustainable competitive advantage leading to tourism development. <sup>(16)</sup>

### **1. Study Framework**

The Egyptian Holding Company for Tourism and Hotels was established by the Law of Public Business Companies No. 203 of 1991. The strategic vision of the company depends on being one of the most successful companies and a locomotive for tourism development locally and internationally. Its main objective is to develop the national economy in the fields of tourism, hotels and other economic activities carried

out by tourism companies and related activities within the framework of the general policy of the state.<sup>(17)</sup>

The Mission of the Holding Company for Tourism is to participate in the promotion of tourism through the provision of excellent hospitality and accommodation services, the welfare of guests, the development and maintenance of regular hotels and tourist facilities and contracting with international hotel management companies that have a trademark classification such as The Ritz-Carlton, Marriott, Accor, Mövenpick, Sheraton, Oberoi, Helnan, Steinberger and prepare qualified workers to achieve the desired objectives.<sup>(18)</sup>

The strategy of the Ministry of Public Business Sector analyzes and examines the variables that affect the performance of the economic sectors, including the tourism sector, in order to formulate a plan for their development. The study of the tourism sector shows that it owns a large number of hotels and tourism assets that can be better exploited to achieve more profits. The study and analysis show that companies are making lower profits than their potential <sup>(19)</sup>. **In the framework of the above mentioned**, the most important aspects of the study of the tourism sector and hotels will be reviewed, which includes (9) the companies as follows:

**Table (1)**  
**Total Performance Indicators for Tourism and Hotels Companies**  
**In Egypt for 2018** <sup>(20)</sup> (Value in Thousand pounds)

M	Statement Years	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
		1	Activity revenues	868054	1265461	1360932
2	Investments	473591	402019	415618	286495	219456
3	Net Profit	(313258)	59140	278058	530231	690829
4	Number of Employees	12543	12290	11282	10913	10341
5	Average wage of the worker	40474	44670	48437	50960	56662

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher and based on the Report of the Public Sector Information Center for Holding Companies, Egypt, 2017.

**From Table (1), the researcher concludes the following:**

1. The largest revenue for tourism companies in 2018 was 2,652,166 Egyptian Pounds, while the lowest revenues in 2014 was worth 868,054 Pounds.
2. The lowest volume of investments for tourism companies was worth 219,456 Egyptian Pounds for 2018, while the sector achieved the highest volume of investments in 2014 - 473,591 Egyptian Pounds.
3. In 2018, tourism companies achieved the biggest net profit of LE 690,829, while tourism companies in 2014 recorded losses of LE 313,258.
4. The largest average wage for workers in tourism companies in Egypt in 2018 was 56,662 Egyptian Pounds, followed by 2017 - 50,960 Pounds, while the lowest average wage for workers in 2014 was worth 40,474 Pounds.

5. There is a convergence between the number of employees in tourism companies for the years 2014 and 2015, respectively: 12,543 employees and 12,290 employees.

## **2. The Problem of the Study**

The Egyptian tourism sector faces many challenges, which has led to a decline in investment rates, low levels of technological development, low levels of employment and low quality rate services in companies. In addition, the losses of tourism and hotel companies require the need to identify the causes of deterioration and find solutions and practical proposals to meet the challenges of this strategic sector and determine the strategic role of human resources planning in achieving sustainable competitive advantage in tourism companies in Egypt.

## **3. The Importance of the Study**

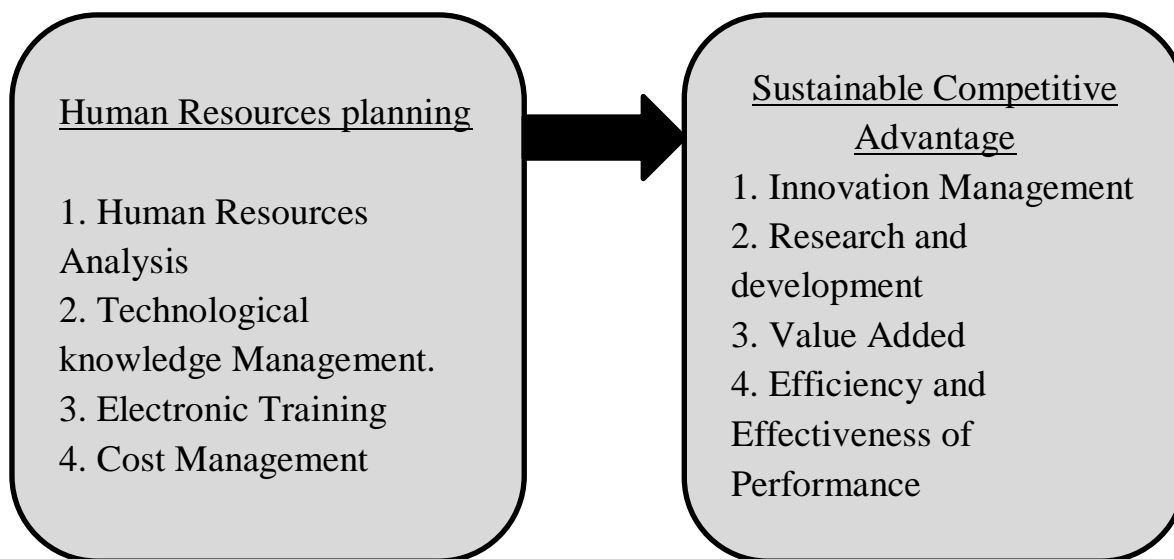
- 3.1. Human resources planning is one of the strategic issues in business management.
- 3.2. To highlight the role of human resources planning in creating competitive advantage and finding sustainable solutions to the economic and strategic problems of the Egyptian tourism sector.
- 3.3. The research helps identify the indicators of human resources planning and sustainable competitive advantage in the tourism sector that contribute to the development and improvement of the performance of individuals.
- 3.4. The research aims at analyzing and studying the relationship between human resources planning and sustainable competitive advantage in the tourism sector as well as proposing a framework to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in the tourism sector.

## **4. Study Objectives**

- 4.1. The main objective is to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in the Egyptian tourism sector through the strategic role of HR planning by maximizing human resources, exploring human resources strategies and improving the quality and efficiency of individuals for the growth in the business world.
- 4.2. To identify the causes of the deterioration of the Egyptian tourism sector and identify the factors that have led to weak growth rates in the sector under study.
- 4.3. To analyze the strategic role of HR planning to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in the Egyptian tourism sector.
- 4.4. To identify the most important indicators for measuring human resources planning and sustainable competitive advantage, while identifying the basic pillars of building and creating a sustainable competitive advantage in the tourism sector.
- 4.5. To try to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, in the framework of the strategic role of human resources planning in the tourism sector in Egypt.
- 4.6. To make recommendations that contribute to achieving a sustainable competitive advantage in the Egyptian tourism sector.

**5. Model of Study Variables and Measurement Indicators**

**5.1. Study Variables Model**



**Figure (1)**

**Sample Study Variables**

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher.

**5.2. Measurement Indicators**

**Table (2)  
Measuring Indicators**

<b>Human Resources Planning</b>	<b>Sustainable Competitive Advantage</b>
1. Employment request 2. Cost and profit rate 3. Technological infrastructure 4. Information Systems and update knowledge 5. The efficiency of human structures 6. Technical skills of Human Resources 7. Qualifying programme of new individuals 8. Planning budget	1. Innovation rate 2. Quality and development rate 3. Technological innovation rate 4. Budget for development 5. R & D rates 6. Standard and effectiveness of performance efficiency 7. Job satisfaction 8. Value Added

**Source:** Prepared by the Researcher.

**6. Analysis of the relationship between Human Resources Planning and Sustainable Competitive Advantage in the Tourism Sector**

The state plays a distinctive role towards sustainable development in the various sectors to achieve competitive advantages. In view of the fact that tourism industry in Egypt is one of the most diverse and vital industries in the world, the country is preparing many studies and scientific and applied researches to develop the Egyptian

Tourism Sector., Where Egypt's diverse History, Cultural heritage and unique geographical features made it a destination for Tourism of all kinds, Recreational, Environmental, Health, Cultural and Religious as well as Sites of Strategic Importance.<sup>(21)</sup>

The strategic development of any sector begins with the preparation of qualified human resources. In order to build strategic plans with a strategic dimension to the sector, the strategic objective of HR planning is focused on its operational plans and organizational objectives. Planning is based on identifying strengths and weaknesses through SWOT and customer survey. The grades are classified by the workforce plan, grade structure and job evaluation system.<sup>(22)</sup>

**Within that framework**, human resources planning can be defined as the process by which management determines how to move the organization from the current workforce arrangement to a better order by obtaining the appropriate number of staff, and in place at the right time and with appropriate procedures for both the individual and the organization.<sup>(23)</sup>

Human resources planning is influenced by various factors such as technological development, economic changes, globalization and changing labour force. Planning relates to forecasting future human resources needs, developing and implementing programmes such as employment and training. Therefore, the process of human resources planning needs the following steps: evaluating the current human resources capacity, forecasting the needs, gap analysis, developing HR strategies to support the overall strategy, including the following strategies: restructuring / training and development / recruitment.<sup>(24)</sup>

The study (Bai, J & Wang, W., 2017) concludes that Technology, R & D and knowledge transfer are the most important HR practices that support innovation and create value for organizations. The study was based on the basic strategic human resources model such as (SNELL, Strategy-core Ability-core Human Resource) and (AMO, Ability, Motivation & Opportunities) which are linked to human resources, social resources and organizational resources.<sup>(25)</sup> **The researcher sees that** the interest of organizations in planning human resources builds the roots of innovative culture and the exploration of human talent that creates competitive advantage.

With the rapid spread of competitive advantage in recent decades and the economic development in China, a study in collaboration with a strategic management research shows that adopting new knowledge clients, increases the chances of sustainability to achieve value added and improve sustainable competitive advantage.<sup>(26)</sup>

The study (Georgiev, R. & Velushev, M., 2018) confirmed that one of the basic requirements for the strategic competitiveness of organizations is to link the competitive advantages of organizational and financial resources with value added thus enhancing their competitive position. The study also focused on the competencies and time to achieve competitiveness in the framework of different models and policies for the development of any country.<sup>(27)</sup>

The State of Bulgaria has adopted the Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialization (ISSS, Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization) to achieve the objectives of the Europe Strategy 2020, which is based on the use of the innovation model and strengthening of the infrastructure of advanced technology activities in order to enhance the comparative advantage, while increasing national competitiveness through the establishment and financing of alliances and competitive activities. In addition to the unique location of Bulgaria, being a Member State of the European Union has promoted its competitive and economic growth.<sup>(28)</sup>

The researcher believes that achieving sustainable competitive advantage is achieved through the strategic planning of human resources in various sectors, especially the tourism sector. **Considering the above mentioned**, the researcher analyzes the relationship between human resources planning and competitive advantage in the Egyptian tourism sector through the following elements:

#### 6.1. The role of Human Resources Planning in improving the performance of the tourism sector

In recent years, scientists have been concerned with human resource systems and practices through two main factors: a) maximizing return on investment through training and recruitment of human resources and knowledge acquisition; b) taking advantage of the potential competitive advantage of human resources to achieve strategic value and organizational objectives<sup>(29)</sup>. In the framework of the adoption of human resources in (150) Polish organizations, the study (Bombiak, E. & Kluska, A., 2019) indicates that human resources management plays a vital role in translating the policy of sustainable development into practical reality by building an integrated human resources system based on basic practices.<sup>(30)</sup>

**In light of the above mentioned**, the researcher considers that planning human resources is one of the most important strategic requirements that lead to improving the growth rates in various sectors, especially the tourism sector. The Egyptian tourism sector is considered one of the important strategic sectors because it is one of the sources of national income. In addition to the fact that it possesses tourist and archaeological areas of different civilizations, it can be turned into a strategic tourist shrine for various countries of the world by adopting the development of skills and talents of human resources to attract tourists and maximize tourism rates in Egypt.

#### 6.2. The impact of achieving sustainable competitive advantage in the Egyptian tourism sector

At present, sustainable development is the idea of civilizational development aimed at meeting the needs of current generations while preserving future generations by reducing the negative effects on administrative and economic growth and creating value added to achieve long-term competitive advantage<sup>(31)</sup>. Adopting knowledge management strategies and maximizing the value of innovation lead to the improvement of competitive advantage (Wang, H & Han, P. & Liu, W., 2018). They indicated that fast changing requirements led to the adoption of knowledge management strategies, research and development policies and confidence building among organizations to improve sustainable competitive advantage.<sup>(32)</sup>

**Considering the above stated**, the researcher believes that the Egyptian tourism sector needs innovative and creative ideas and axes to reach the desired objectives, which include: attracting tourists, developing tourist areas of various kinds and technological competitive advantages through developing tourist and hotel facilities and improving tourism services, developing human resources skills to achieve sustainable technological tourism leadership.

### 7. A proposed framework for achieving sustainable competitive advantage in the tourism sector in view of the strategic role of human resources planning

Sustainable tourism development depends on tourism planning, As a scientific method aimed at achieving the largest growth at the lowest costs, where sustainable tourism development faces many challenges including low efficiency and productivity of work, economic decline, low level of technology, waste of human potential and low



levels of service provided to tourists. **In the framework of that**, the state has to adopt the principles of tourism sustainability in order to achieve the following competitive objectives: <sup>(33)</sup>

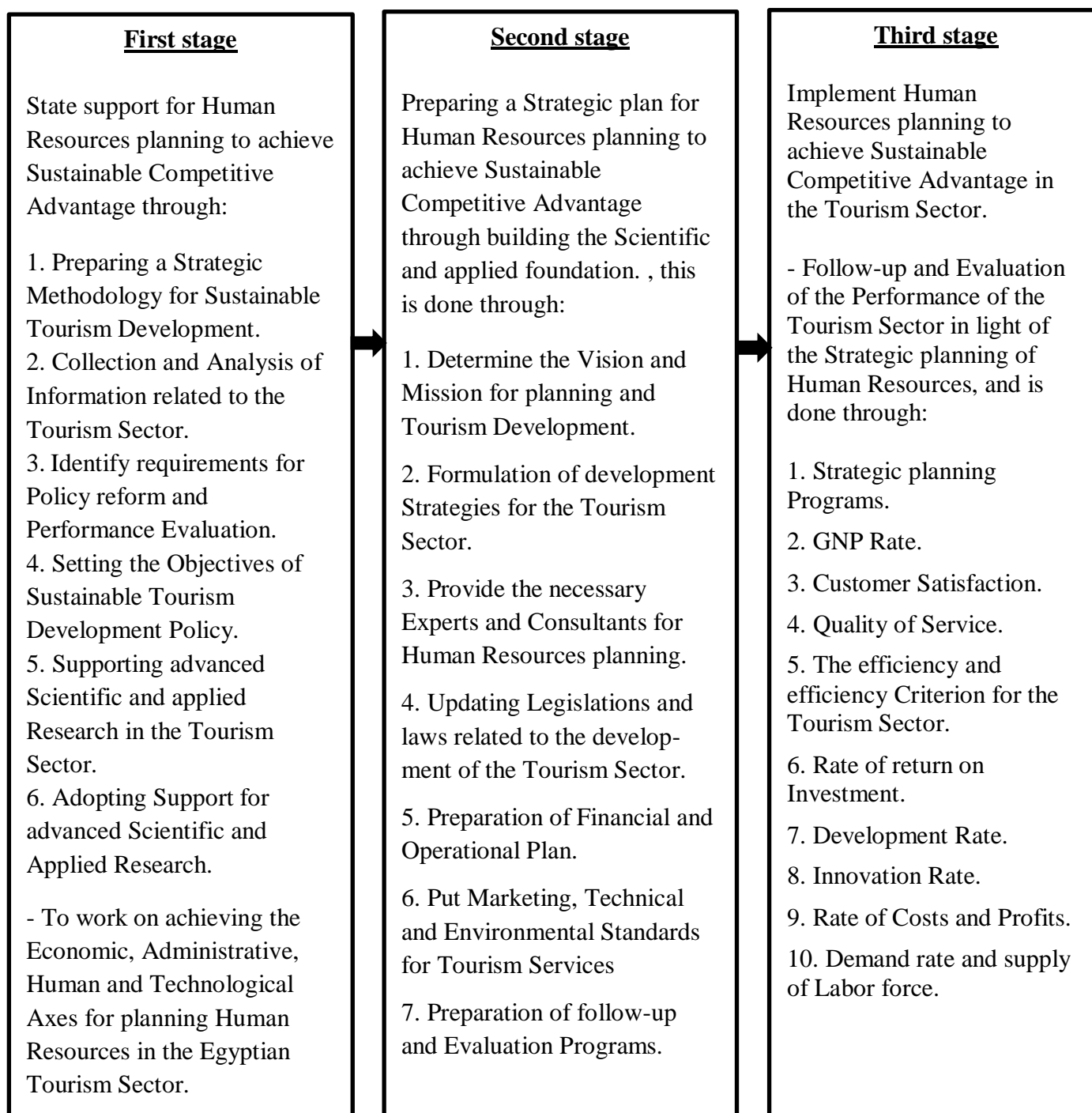
1. Establishing alliances with international companies and suppliers of tourism services.
2. Developing technological human resources.
3. Providing funding and appropriate investment.
4. Protection of cultural heritage and keeping it.
5. Promotion and marketing of Egyptian tourist areas.

**In the context of modern trends in sustainable development**, sustainable tourism development can be defined as the optimal exploitation of tourism sites and development of services to meet the needs of tourists, protect and support future development opportunities and achieve economic, cultural and social requirements. Tourism planning focuses on engaging the community in sustainable tourism development, maximizing social benefits, providing job opportunities, developing tourism resources and encouraging the public and private sector to invest in tourism in order to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. <sup>(34)</sup>

**Based on the above mentioned**, the researcher considers that strategic planning of human resources is one of the most important requirements for improving the tourism sector in order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, as the state today adopts sustainable development strategies to achieve administrative, economic and social goals. **Considering the above stated**, the proposed framework for achieving sustainable competitive advantage can be clarified in the light of the strategic role of HR planning as shown in the figure 2.

**Considering the above mentioned**, the researcher makes some recommendations for human resources planning that support sustainable competitive advantage in the Egyptian tourism sector as follows:

1. Preparation of comprehensive and flexible plans and strategy for the tourism sector in order to attract various tourists to Egypt and support the digital culture to achieve tourism leadership.
2. State support for the tourism sector through establishment of a fund to support tourism investment and achieve strategic alliances between the public and the private sector and coordination between them.
3. The adoption of new marketing methods compatible with the activities and plans of sustainable tourism development and the global tourism movement.
4. Reviewing and simplifying the legislation for investment in the tourism sector.
5. To establish technological training centres to qualify human resources in the tourism labour market and to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage.
6. Optimal exploitation of natural, cultural, therapeutic and religious tourism resources.
7. To identify the types of tourists coming to Egypt and determine their needs and desires.
8. Establishment of an international technology centre to support conferences and tourist promotions.



**Figure (2)**  
**The proposed framework for achieving sustainable competitive advantage in Egyptian tourism companies**

Source: Prepared by the researcher

### **Conclusion**

This article focuses on the most important strategic topics in the current era, which is the planning of human resources and its impact on achieving sustainable competitive advantage through studying the Egyptian tourism sector. The article reveals the adoption of the dimensions of human resources planning and its importance in achieving sustainable competitive advantage and its role in improving the performance

of tourism and the development of human resources, while taking some international models to be used in the future and achieve the sustainability of competitive advantage in the tourism sector under study.

The Sustainable Development Strategies (Vision 2030) are based on human development, achieving cultural excellence, building strategic youth leadership and administrative empowerment. They rely on technological systems in training to identify the opportunities and strategic solutions, prepare new investment projects and achieve interaction and competitive advantage of tourism.

The study is focused on the number of (9) tourist companies in Egypt by analyzing the framework of the study, preparing the model of study variables, measurement indicators. It analyzes the relationship between human resources planning and sustainable competitive advantage and the preparation of a proposed framework to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in the tourism sector in the light of the strategic planning of human resources.

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