



**Journal of Association of Arab Universities
for Tourism and Hospitality (JAAUTH)**

journal homepage: <http://jaauth.journals.ekb.eg/>



THE IMPORTANCE OF APPLYING EQUESTRIAN TOURISM TO DEVELOP SPORT TOURISM INDUSTRY IN EGYPT

Ghada Mohamed Farahat Nashwa Samir ELSherif Yara Wael Ahmed,

Tourism Studies Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Helwan University

ARTICLE INFO

Abstract

Keywords

Sports tourism;
Equestrian tourism;
Sports Marketing;
social media; Horse
shows.

(JAAUTH)
Vol.23 , No. 2 ,
(2022),
pp.290 -67

This paper focuses on the importance of applying equestrian tourism in Egypt as a competitive advantage to the Egyptian tourism destination in general and the Egyptian sport tourism sector in particular with specific emphasis on investigating the perceptions of the competence of Egypt as a suitable destination for implementing equestrian tourism activities and the extent to which it possesses the resources/requirements of implementing the range of equestrian-related activities and events for the benefit of all its stakeholders.

The existing literature on sport tourism recognizes it as a significant socio-cultural and economic phenomenon that has clearly developed in contemporary society alongside the continuous developments of outdoor and adventure tourism activities in various destinations across the globe.

Sports tourism is one of the most rapidly expanding divisions of the tourism business. As a result, the government and sports organizations should be focused on developing all forms of sporting activities, particularly those involving horses. Egypt offers the characteristics essential to become one of the most important horse commercial centers and a famous equestrian tourist destination.

Introduction

The existing literature on sport tourism recognizes it as a significant socio-cultural and economic phenomenon in contemporary society. In recent years however, this phenomenon has clearly developed, alongside the continuous developments of outdoor and adventure tourism activities in various destinations around the world. In this context, it has been defined as “all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, practiced in casually or in an organized way for non-commercial or commercial reasons and necessitating travel away from home”. Thus, it could be described as a type of tourism that combines both sports and tourism or identifies tourism activities involving sports (Gozalova, et al., 2014).

Contribution of Equestrianism to the Tourism Sector

Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing market segments in the tourism industry and is receiving increased attention for its social, cultural, environmental, and economic impacts upon host destinations. However, previous work on tourism impacts has focused exclusively on tourism as a whole with no differentiation among the different types of tourism that may be present in a destination (Hritz & Ross, 2010).

As for Equestrian tourism, it is a rapidly growing sector which is regarded as a form of active recreation of adventure tourism, ecotourism or tourism focused on nature (Gabriela & Liliana, 2021). In this context, Examples of Equestrian activities include - but are not limited to - horseback riding, hiking with donkeys, traveling the countryside with horse-driven caravans, attending sport events, shows, or festivals *etc.* (Renata et al., 2018).

Traditionally, Equine or Equestrian tourism has been described as involving using horses for tourists riding, either in led groups, or perhaps as 'horse rental' (Rhys, et al., 2015). However, it has been suggested that the definition should be widened to encamp "all equestrian activities undertaken by equine-oriented tourists outside their normal place of residence including leisure riding, competition (amateur participatory, professional participation and spectator), events (fairs, festivals, shows), travel to purchase horses, trekking, beach riding, location-based riding, and training and tuition" (Les Haras nationaux, 2011).

Being perceived as part of the various sub-sectors of the tourism industry, it has been argued that Equine tourism activities, whether passive or active may be practiced under the umbrella of not only sports tourism but also nature-based or outdoor tourism; adventure tourism; rural tourism; tradition and heritage tourism; and event tourism with a diverse range of horse-related activities both actively, through riding, competition and training, and passively, through spectating and involvement in horse shows, festivals and other spectacles (Rhys et al., 2015).

It has also been argued that equestrian tourism is characterized by high level of specific spending (Erika & Eva, 2009).

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Equestrian Tourism in Egypt

As for the status of Equestrian tourism in Egypt, the most prominent problem that it is faced with is the decreased support that the equine sport sector receives at the national level which consequently results in the limited contribution of such sector in the diversification of the Egyptian tourism product in general and the Egyptian sport tourism product in particular (Hassan, 2016).

Nevertheless, arguably, equestrian sport has recently become a new trend in the tourism product in Sharm El-Sheikh attracting a wide spectrum of Arab and foreign tourists. This is due to the existence of the Equestrian Center in Sharm El-Sheikh which hosts many Egyptian and Arab equestrian championships. Since its establishment, the Equestrian Center hosted about fifteen Arab and Egyptian championships including six international ones (Egyptian Equestrian Federation, 2021). The term equestrian tourism often refers to horse tourism or equestrian tourism that includes recreational horseback riding in fields outside equestrian centers or settlements. (Teresa & Baranowska, 2012). This also includes riding tournaments,

visits to festivals in which horses participate, especially trips that combine a love of horse riding with a desire to experience a particular landscape personally. In this context, it is clear that various activities carried out under the flag are included (Rhys et al., 2015).

Research Problem

Despite the positive economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts of equestrianism on tourism destinations that support this type of sport, the development of equestrian tourism in Egypt is still minimal to date due to the decreased emphasis that is put on this sport sector as a contributor to the diversification of the country's tourism product.

Research Significance

The current research is intended to highlight the significance of the potential contribution of equestrianism in developing the Egyptian sport tourism sector with particular consideration to the ample impacts and benefits of this type of sport on the diversification of the country's tourism product.

Research Objective

The research aims to explore the extent to which equestrianism can contribute to the development of the sport tourism industry in Egypt with particular emphases on investigating the challenges affecting the competitiveness of Egypt in the international equestrian tourism market.

Research Hypothesis

Giving more consideration and support to equestrianism-related activities and events in Egypt will contribute to the development of the country's sports tourism industry and hence, the diversification of its tourism product.

Tourism Segment of Equestrian Tourism

When we look at equestrian sports from a tourism perspective, we quickly understand the importance of historical, cultural, social expression, and identity perspectives (Huggins, 2013).

Riders seek leisure, unlike tourists who are riders themselves or are somehow associated with the world of horses. These tourists can act both as spectators and as active participants, so it is generally important to distinguish between equine tourism and equestrianism, so there is a double focus on equine activity (Nagy & J, 2015).

This situation requires deliberate and sustainable selection of destinations, events, hero travel routes, and promotional and advertising materials. For this reason, equestrian tourism is considered a related sector of cultural, sporting, urban, rural, MICE and traditional tourism (Ham, 2020).

Sport Tourism in Egypt

Sport tourism contributes to the enhancement and diversification of the tourism product offered by the Egyptian destinations with the ample activities that it encompass including - but not limited to - diving, snorkeling, water skiing, fishing, and yachting, mountain climbing, cycling (State Information Services, 2015).

However, many restrictions do exist in relation to the development of sport tourism in Egypt among which are: (a) the poor infrastructure available in support practicing and/or accommodating some types of mega sport events and their associated services and facilities, (b) the lack of accurate statistics on the size of the sport tourism domain in Egypt and the

extent to which it contributes to the national economy, (c) the decreased level of national awareness of the importance of sport tourism and its corresponding economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts on local communities as well as society at large, and (d) the limited number of Egyptian tourism organizations interested in promoting sport tourism (State information services, 2015).

Most tourist governmental and private investments are only for other patterns than sports such as entertainment. Most investment of hotels focus mostly in areas distant from the local population congestion such as the governorates of the Red Sea and South Sinai (Abdel-Fadeel et al., 2013). There are several challenges and threats facing sports tourism in general and equestrian specially which are represented in the following:

To start with, overpopulation and pressure posed by infrastructure facilities such as transportation, roads and electricity that reduces the results of the efforts of the government in development. In addition, the political regional tensions that the Middle Eastern countries are currently facing which has the highest impact of not only tourism, but also the rest of the manifestations of life. Furthermore, the presence of competition from many tourist destinations seeking to increase their share of sports tourism, such as Greece, United Arab Emirates, and Cyprus. The successive crises affecting the tourism sector, such as the global financial crisis and its impact on the global demand for tourism, including sports tourism (Qaddahat et al., 2017).

Equestrianism in Egypt

Despite the fact that it dates back to ancient times in Egypt (Teresa & Monika, 2012), the practice of equestrianism and horsemanship in Egypt is quite minimal to date due to various reasons among which are the limited number of venues that offer equestrianism-related facilities in addition to the high cost of practicing equestrianism which is in many cases beyond the financial capabilities of many young fans of this type of sport (Hussein, 2018).

Central to the existence of venues that provide and support equestrian activities, horse fans who do not own a horse, have either to participate in an equestrian club or go to Nazlet El-Samman area where they can practice horse riding and its related activities (Egyptian Equestrian Federation, 2021).

The Development of Sports Industry in Egypt

Egypt's sports infrastructure has developed significantly in recent years. This is, when the government, with the support of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, drew up comprehensive plans for the development of the Cairo Stadium Authority, the sports city east of Port Said, Nasr City to host the Olympics, and the city of horses, the new administration Capital (Ahram Online, 2021). The government also aims to improve the sports and youth sector through several projects and programs that provide comprehensive sports services (Ahram online, 2021).

Methodology

The research involved two phases of data collection. The first phase aimed at the collection of data from a variety of both online and off-line secondary sources including textbooks, published scientific papers, official reports, *etc.* The second phase aimed at the collection of primary data through the conduction of semi-structured interviews with fifteen key representatives in twelve tourisms, sport, and Equestrian-related entities in Cairo. These are classified as follows:

No.	Organization	Number of Interviews
1	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	2
2	Egyptian Tourism Authority	2
3	Ministry of Youth and sports	2
4	Egyptian Olympic committee	1
5	Egyptian Equestrian Federation	1
6	Egyptian Horse Racing Federation	1
7	Arabian Horse Association	1
8	Elzaharah Stud for Horses	1
9	Egyptian Agricultural Authority	1
10	Aljazeera Equestrian Club	1
11	Elhaida Farm and Stud	1
12	Elsharki Farm and Stud	1
Total		15

In an attempt to explore the potential role of equestrian activities in developing sport tourism in Egypt, and to investigate the challenges facing the Egyptian destination in this respect, the interviews were structured around five basic themes: The demand on equestrian tourism in Egypt; The official efforts paid towards developing the equestrian sport industry in Egypt; Technological Awareness and New Application; Procedures for applying equestrian tourism in Egypt and The Vision of sports events especially equestrian ones in Egypt

The Research Questions

The interviews comprised five questions that focused on the extent to which the Egyptian destination is ready to and capable of hosting equestrian events as a new sports tourism activity that aims to enhance the contribution of sports to the Egyptian tourism product. These questions evolved around five main themes: Demand on Equestrian Tourism, Efforts paid by official Bodies in support of Equestrianism in Egypt. Technological Awareness and New advancements, Management of Sports Event, and Vision for Equestrianism in Egypt. Each of the previously mentioned themes has been further classified into a number of sub-themes as shown in the following table.

Main theme	Sub-themes
Demand on Equestrian Tourism	-Changes in tourism demand -Tourists' complaints -The size of the tourism market in Egypt -Safety and security -Tourists with local interactions.
Efforts paid by official Bodies in support of Equestrianism in Egypt	-The status of the sports institutions in Egypt -the current situation of sports institutions in Egypt -The prospects of engaging new sports trends especially equestrian ones
Technological Awareness and New Applications	-Online data analytics -Plans for future development.
Sports Event Management	-Procedures for Applying equestrian tourism in Egypt including Planning, Implementation and Wrapping up.
Vision for Equestrianism in Egypt	-Image of the equestrian as a kind of tourism and what is required from this kind of events to suit the Egyptian atmosphere

Data analysis and discussion

Following the secondary and primary data collection process, qualitative data analysis has been conducted involving a range of processes and procedures that change the qualitative data that has been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations that are being investigated. It is usually based on an interpretative philosophy that aims to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data

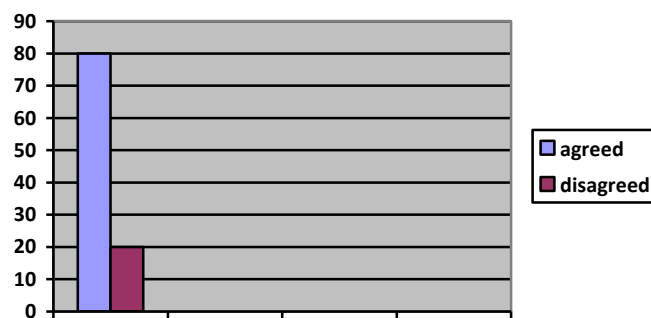
In this respect, the five themes previously-mentioned in table 2 revealed the following:

First: Tourism Demand Regarding Equestrian Tourism

80% of the interviewees agreed that there is a global shift in tourism demand towards sports tourism and that such shift should be highly considered by tourism destinations when setting their marketing strategies with particular empathies on the role of social media in this respect. As for the current demand on sports tourism in Egypt, the interviewees' referred that despite the popularity of equestrianism in the many Middle Eastern countries, the situation of equestrian sports in Egypt is quite minimal to date. The remaining interviewees representing 20% of the

study sample believed that the current change in tourism demand particularly regarding equestrian tourism is strongly in correlation with the unstable economic condition the world is experiencing nowadays which has urged tourists in potential markets either to postpone their travel plans for some time until the ongoing circumstances become more economically suitable or to seek low-cost tourism services and facilities which certainly do not include equestrianism due to its high cost. In this context, one of the interviewees said:

"Tourists nowadays look for low-cost services. Thus, they tend to substitute a luxurious accommodation premises with a low-quality one in order to save costs.why there is no tendency towards equestrian tourism because it's so expensive".



80% agreed
20% disagreed

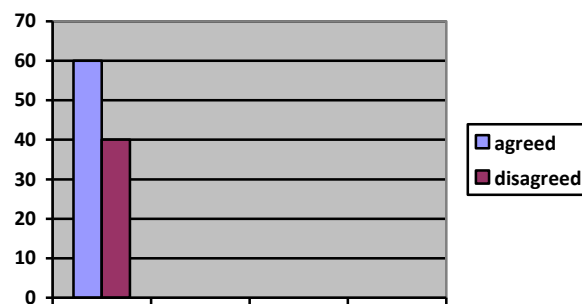
Second: Efforts paid by official bodies in support of Equestrianism in Egypt

Some of the interviewees mentioned that since the African Cup of Nations for Football which was held in Egypt in 2006 that is perceived to be the first mega sports event to be held in the country, the Ministry of Sports has been more concerned with sports events and it managed to put more funds in support of organizing different types of sports events. As for equestrian sports in particular, a number of interviewees referred that the Ministry of Sports tends to allocate specific funds to promote equestrian events and boost their tourism-related activities.

However, other interviewees stressed on the fact that promotion of sports events in general and equestrian events in specific is not a responsibility of the Ministry of Sports alone but other official and non-official bodies as well have to contribute to the marketing and promoting such events. In this context, the interviewees assured that since the previously-mentioned mega event, a collaboration between the Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Tourism in Egypt to promote sports events took place.

In this respect, an interviewee mentioned:

“Since 2006 during the African cup of nations for football, the Ministry of Sports has collaborated closely with Ministry of Tourism to bring the country to a larger spectrum of viewers across the world.”



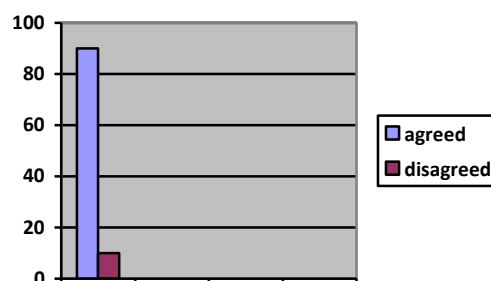
60% agreed
40% disagreed

Third: Technological Awareness and New Applications

Most of the interviewees stressed on the fact that among the most successful means of promotion of equestrian tourism in Egypt as well as every where else is the use of the different applications of social media on one hand and the awareness and adequate implementation of new technological trends in tourism including Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Robotics, as well as all the wide spectrum of wireless travel trends.

In this respect, an interviewee stated that:

“The biggest change to the sports industry has been the advent of social media. There are millions of users for sports brands to promote themselves in social media such as Twitter and Facebook. When it comes to sports event marketing”



80% agreed
20% disagreed

Fourth: Sports Event Management

The promotion of Egypt as a sports tourist destination extended beyond just domestic and international advertising during the establishment or hosting of a sporting event. It happens as a result of how the sporting event is managed from the beginning so the interviewees agreed that every sport event has a life cycle which consists of: Planning, Implementation and Wrapping up. In this respect, it has been mentioned that the first stage involved illustrating the purpose of the event and the type of the client whether the event intends to focus on athletes, spectators or media. It was also mentioned that the organizers have to illustrate the purpose of the event whether: participation, awareness, fundraising or celebration. Another important thing that has been mentioned is the budget where the interviewees explained that sources of funding a sporting event depend on the type and scope of the event and that the budget includes: tickets sales, merchandise, broadcasting and sponsorships among others.

As for the implementation phase, the interviewees mentioned that it is the phase of bringing the event to life: including the transportation plans, resources of the event venue, in addition to venue plans including: stadiums, tracks, etc. among the comments that have been mentioned in this context are the following:

“There are 2 kinds of venue: competition venue which is the place that is hosting the actual event and non-competition venue which is related more to the people involved (airports, train stations, accommodation, and media center)”

“In the competition venue there are 2 main places in any kind of sports events: front of the house (spectators and what they can see) and back of the house (operations, locker rooms, management office, media center)”

As for the last stage, Wrapping Up which involves writing reports about the event, the lessons learnt and the preparation for the next event.

Most of the interviewees agreed that the most important phase in any sport event is the wrapping up phase because it shows the impact of the event and how successful it was.

Among their comments in this respect is:

“It is De-briefing and evaluation, decommission of venues and function areas and final reports about the event outcomes, values and efficiency”

Fifth: The Future Vision for Equestrianism in Egypt

As for the future vision of Equestrian sports in Egypt, the interviewees referred to the following:

- An integrated marketing and promotion plan is used by the Ministry of Tourism, which has offices all around the world.
- A coordinated effort of collaboration with the Sports and Youth Ministry, state governments, and private and public sectors does exist.
- Promotion for Egypt as an equestrian tourism destination in print and electronic media, participation in international events, organizing conferences about any new events that is related to equestrian sports, production of brochures and materials, and brochure support/joint advertising with travel agencies and tour operators are all examples of ways to promote any event.
- The fundamental aspects of promotional efforts carried out overseas via social media are included in the hospitality strategy, which includes asking the media and tourism professional to visit the nation.

- More communication between the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the equestrian federation to reach more spectators during any kind of events that will be hosted by Egypt.

Results

1. Egypt has the biggest horse stud in the Middle East for Arab horses that should be used correctly for the horse shows, and investments from public and private sectors should collaborate for that purpose.
2. Promotion for Egypt as an equestrian tourism destination in print and electronic media, participation in international events, will enable sports industry to develop
3. Starting media marketing for the equestrian sport build brand awareness towards sports industry in Egypt
4. Equestrian tourism could be an effective type of sport tourism in Egypt.
5. Equestrian tourism in Egypt is not famous as other kinds of sports tourism although it is very popular in the middle east
6. Equestrian tourism is one of the most successful trends in the world.
7. Egypt is less reliant on individual sports tourism as a destination.
8. Shortage of sponsorship and funding for individual sports events especially those related to equestrian events and the small number of private clubs that can afford to fund and host any kind of equestrian event.
9. Lack of infrastructure and lack of investments in the equestrian platform in Egypt.
10. Lack of horses' care and transportation means in general which is the main core of any equestrian events.
11. Disappearance of any media coverage at any kind of individual sports events. Maybe one or two local channels cover the whole event. This leads to smaller profits out of commercial earnings.

Recommendations

After illustrating the main result of the research study, it is necessary for recommendations to be offered in order to get possible solution (Mohamed, 2010). Accordingly, the following recommendations are advised to be reviewed and examined by researchers in the future:

1-Compared to horse riding establishments, which demand personal interaction with the horse, attracting visitors and consumers to horse shows and festivals is easy. Due to the fact that these organizations solely value enjoyment of viewing and do not require horse care or boarding expertise

2-For the Equestrian Tourism, projects that can draw attention of investors should be prepared

3-It is necessary research about demands of the customers. What types of tourists coming to Egypt are buying equestrian tourism products? What are their expectations and are their expectations met? How much money they are willing to pay? How many of them have their own horse? How was the riding experience? What other activities they are occupied in? And so on.

4-The sports industry should utilize the digital marketing strategies to engage their fans and improve the sales of their brands and mutual communication. It is very helpful to sports industry to know the expectations of their fans and followers.

5-Preparing training courses from the equestrian federation so that it's not too expensive to be a horse rider or an equestrian coach.

6-Making the prices of horse riding sport in clubs in an average rate so it's not only available to special groups of society.

7-Experimental scientists can provide insight into acceptable equid workloads and working conditions, the environmental impact of horse keeping and the impact of horse keeping on the environment, as well as appropriate welfare standards for sport and leisure horses.

8-Valid baseline measures, ethograms, desirable scores and evaluation tools can be readily developed through Equestrian social scientists.

9-Event organizers in horse shows events or equestrian events need to consider carefully how event programs and sites are designed and performed as event attendees have a variety of backgrounds and levels of knowledge (be that knowledge of language, of national norms and symbols, of the specific activity that is the focus of the event etc.).

10-The aim should be to ensure the event is accessible and enjoyable for the target market while still allowing for a measure of exclusivity for the connoisseurs among the attendees.

Conclusion

Egypt has a great and historical tradition of horses. Egyptians is commonly regarded as an equestrian nationality. Having a very important place in the world in the tourism sector, our country will provide a very important income to sports industry by increasing the sources of horse tourism.

It can be concluded that Egypt possesses the traits necessary to become one of the most significant hubs of the horse business and one of the most popular equestrian tourist destinations. This is due to its positive natural characteristics (Climate, terrain, flora, fauna), horse culture and traditions, well-known excellent horse breeds and the historical importance of the horse. The Egyptian horse industry will hopefully have a prosperous future, despite being influenced by the social, economic and cultural background of many previous decades and be a part in developing the sports industry in Egypt.

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أهمية تطبيق سياحة الفروسية لتطوير صناعة الرياضة في مصر

غاده محمد فرحات نشوة سمير الشريف يارا وائل احمد

قسم الدراسات السياحية - كلية السياحة والفنادق - جامعة حلوان

الملخص

تعتبر الفروسية ظاهرة اجتماعية اقتصادية معقدة، وتشارك في مجموعة متنوعة من عمليات التحول الاجتماعي والاقتصادي الأوسع. نظراً لتعقيدها، تعتبر الفروسية موضع اهتمام في مختلف التخصصات العلمية، بما في ذلك الدراسات السياحية، بمرور الوقت، أصبحت السياحة أكثر تخصصاً بشكل متزايد، بدءاً من أشكال الترفيه والتسلية إلى الأشكال النشطة أو الاستهلاكية أو الفراغية أو حتى الظاهرية.

تعتبر السياحة الرياضية الآن واحدة من أسرع قطاعات السوق نموًا في صناعة السياحة، وتحظى باهتمام أكبر نظراً لتأثيراتها الاجتماعية والبيئية والاقتصادية على الوجهات.

سياحة الفروسية في مصر، تشكل نوعاً معيناً من السياحة القائمة على النشاط، والحواجز التي تعيق تنميتها. عادة ما ينظر إلى سياحة الفروسية على أنها شكل من أشكال السياحة النشطة، والتي بدورها جزء من السياحة الرياضية. التغييرات التي لوحظت في تعريف حدود المناطق الريفية والحضرية، الناتجة عن الامتداد العمراني والتغيرات في الحدود الوظيفية، تشجعنا على طرح المناقشة في منظور متعدد التخصصات. النظريات الرئيسية التي يمكن أن تساعد في تحليل الوضع الحالي في الفروسية المصرية هي نظرية التبادل (تطبق على كل من الفروسية والخيول). وكذلك العولمة ونظريات التحديث. إلى حد ما، يمكن تطبيق نظرية التقليد أيضاً. ستساهم كل من هذه النظريات في تفسير وتحديث الفروسية المصرية ودورها في تطوير صناعة الرياضة في مصر، مع أهمية خاصة مرتبطة بتأثير عمليات العولمة والتقليد على التغيرات في رياضة الفروسية في مصر.

معلومات المقالة

الكلمات المفتاحية

السياحة الرياضية
الفروسية؛
سياحة الفروسية؛
السياحة النشطة؛
عولمة.

(JAAUTH)

المجلد ٢٣، العدد ٢،
(٢٠٢٢)،
ص ٢٩٠-٣٠١.