



Mansoura University
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels

**CULTURAL HERITAGE THEMATIC-BASED INTERPRETATION
AS AN APPROACH FOR ENHANCING HERITAGE TOURISM
IN EGYPT**
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التفسير الموضوعى للتراث الثقافى كوسيلة لتعزيز السياحة التراثية بمصر

تشتهر مصر بتراثها الثقافى المتنوع ، إلا أن البيانات الرسمية تشير إلى انخفاض في نسبة السياحة الثقافية، مقارنةً بنمط السياحة الترفيهية ، الأمر الذى أفقد مصر قدرتها على استغلال ميزتها التنافسية المتمثلة فى التراث الثقافى المتنوع (ديلي نيوز إيجيبت، ٢٠١٥)

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة إمكانية تعزيز السياحة الثقافية من خلال تقديم مسارات سياحية معتمدة على التفسير الموضوعى للتراث الثقافى المصرى. تم توزيع عددا من استبيانات على شريحة من منظمى الرحلات وكذلك شريحة من المرشدين السياحيين بمدينة الأقصر .

كشف نتائج الدراسة إلى التفسير الموضوعى للتراث الثقافى سيكون له تأثير إيجابى على السياحة الثقافية، حيث سيسفر هذا النهج عن مجموعة من المزايا، تتضمن : تنوع المنتجات

السياحية الثقافية، واستهداف شرائح متنوعة من السائحين المهتمين بنمط السياحة الثقافية ، وتوسيع النطاق الجغرافي للسياحة الثقافية في مصر، وزيادة عدد المجتمعات المحلية المستفيدة من قطاع السياحة. ولتحقيق ذلك أوصت الدراسة بضرورة إجراء مزيد من البحوث والدراسات لتحديد المواضيع للوقوف على الموضوعات التي يمكن أن تثري تجربة السياح وتعكس ثراء التراث المصرى. كذلك تدريب المرشدين السياحيين على كيفية شرح تلك المسارات الجديدة . كما أوصت الدراسة بضرورة وجود استراتيجية تسويق فعالة لتسويق تلك المسارات وجذب شرائح مختلفة من السائحين ، وكذلك ضرورة تحسين الخدمات السياحية بالمقصد التي سوف تُدرج بتلك المسارات.

Cultural Heritage Thematic-based Interpretation as an approach for Enhancing Heritage Tourism in Egypt

Abstract:

Egypt is renowned for its cultural heritage, yet official data reveals a decline in cultural tourism, with most inbound tourists seeking recreational activities. This underutilization of Egypt's cultural heritage hinders its competitive edge (Daily News Egypt, 2015).

This article explores the potential of thematic-based interpretation of Egyptian cultural heritage to revitalize heritage tourism. Questionnaires were administered to Egyptian tour operators and tour guides in Luxor, a well-known a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Research findings suggest that adopting thematic-based interpretation would positively impact cultural heritage tourism, as this approach will bring forth a multitude of advantages, ranging from diversifying heritage tourism products, catering to different cultural-oriented tourist segments, expanding the geographical reach of Tourism, and Increasing the number of local communities benefiting from the tourism sector. To fully realize these benefits, more research is needed to identify authentic themes that would enhance the authentic experience of the tourists, training for tour guides on these new themes is essential to ensure their adeptness in conveying these newfound themes with authenticity and expertise, also effective marketing strategy to engage potential customers is needed, improving tourism services is crucial for lesser-known destinations that will be integrated into newly-designed cultural heritage tourism itineraries.

Keywords: Thematic Tourism, Thematic Interpretation, Egyptian Heritage, Heritage Tourism

Introduction

Egypt is known for its diversified cultural heritage resources; it encompasses a great number of archaeological sites and museums which represent the tangible side of the cultural heritage. Also, Egypt is home to diversified ethnic groups including the Bedouins, Nubians, Upper Egyptians, Lower Egyptians, Arabs, and Berbers, the matter that resulted in its richness in intangible cultural heritage elements including traditional handicrafts, performing arts, Oral traditions and expressions, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. (Mustafa, 2021; UNESCO, n.d.; Abu Bakar et al., 2011)

The rich tangible and intangible Egyptian cultural heritage faces inadequate representation on multiple levels. Firstly, there are only seven Egyptian sites registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list including Abu Mena Monastery, Ancient Thebes and its Necropolis, Cairo Historic City, Memphis, its Necropolis, and the Pyramid area from Giza to Dahshur, Nubian Monuments from Abu Simbel to Philae temple, Saint Catherine Monastery, Wadi

Al-Hitan "Whale Valley" (Mustafa, 2021; WorldAtlas, n.d.). Similarly, the intangible cultural heritage of Egypt faces challenges due to insufficient documentation, interpretation, and conservation efforts (Mursi, 2008) leading to the inscription of only six elements on UNESCO's representative list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. These elements include the festivals related to Journey of the Holy family in Egypt; Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah epic; Tahteb (stick game); Traditional hand puppetry; Date palm knowledge, skills, traditions and practices (among number of Arab countries); Arabic calligraphy knowledge, skills and practices (among number of Arab countries); and Hand weaving in Upper Egypt (Sa'eed) which is enlisted in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in need of urgent safeguarding (Mustafa, 2021; UNESCO, n.d.).

On the other hand, cultural heritage tourism in Egypt has been experiencing a decline due to several factors including shortage of comprehensive marketing campaigns that are designed to showcase the Egyptian cultural heritage diversified resources; as well as the prevalence of

conventional heritage tourism products offered by Egyptian tour operators which lack creativity and diversity in terms of interpretative themes, which resulted in creating a limited number of traditional itineraries which were developed based on spatial proximity of the well-known archaeological sites, without taking into consideration the varied range of interests of the customers. ((Daily News Egypt, 2015; Mustafa, 2021). This made the current cultural heritage tourism products in Egypt focus more on pieces not on the broader perspective, and cares more on overloading the visitors with a great amount of information about these pieces; this amount of information will be forgotten after a short time as there is no interpretive theme that could link these pieces together (Sam H. Ham, 1992).

This is particularly evident when discussing one of Egypt's renowned traditional cultural tourism offerings and the long classical Nile cruise starting from Cairo to Aswan. During this cruise, the tourists will be provided with the opportunity to explore numerous archaeological sites over a specific period of time, within a designated timeframe. However, these sites might appear somewhat similar to each

other especially to non-specialized visitor (Tour Egypt, n.d.).

The current traditional Egyptian cultural heritage tourism products contributed in limiting the geographical scope of heritage tourism in Egypt in only three destinations namely Cairo, Luxor and Aswan, and decreasing the visitor's duration of stay. In response to this situation, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has formed a plan to revive heritage tourism in Egypt and increase the number of cultural tourist. The plan included the allocation of 25% of its promotional campaign in favor of tourism in Luxor and Aswan (Daily News Egypt, 2015).

Literature Review

The Concept of Heritage

ICOMOS (1999) defined Heritage as “our legacy “inheritance” from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations” (Ezenagu, 2020, p.3). Broadly, heritage is divided into cultural and natural

heritage. The former is man-made while the latter is the gift of nature (Elgammal & Refaat, 2021).

Cultural heritage is divided into tangible and intangible cultural heritage; the tangible heritage has a purely material form such as archaeological sites and historic buildings. Intangible heritage is related to the various intangible aspects of culture such as traditions, languages and festivals, practices (National Park Service, n.d.).

Heritage Interpretation

There are a number of definitions of the term "Interpretation"; among these definitions is the one which was developed by Freeman Tilden who defined interpretation as "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information"(Freeman Tilden ,1976, p.8).

While heritage interpretation is defined as "a communication process, designed to reveal meanings and relationships of cultural and natural heritage, through

involvement with objects, artifacts, landscapes and sites” (Interpretation Canada, n.d.). It is also defined as an educational activity consisting of providing information on natural and cultural heritage to people visiting heritage sites and object (Nowacki, M. 2021).

Interpreting heritage is a crucial aspect of heritage management, given the diverse range of stakeholders involved, including: tourists, locals, developers, NGOs, governmental authorities, tour operators, travel agencies, airlines, facilitators, cultural preservation groups, business owners, media, research organizations...etc. Each stakeholder group has its own interests, characteristics and abilities, Therefore, adopting a "standardization" approach to heritage interpretation is not deemed effective in improving the results of such interpretation. Instead, a more tailored and customized approach is necessary to cater to the unique needs and preferences of these diverse segments (Hajjalikhani, M. 2008). Both locals and travelers from different backgrounds, requires carefully designed heritage interpretation, as it is important to take into consideration the way through which the interpretation is done, and what

stories/topics can be told and what has to be untold (Salazar, N. B. 2010).

Thematic Interpretation

Thematic interpretation is an approach of heritage interpretation, where the interpretation relies on a central theme (Thematic Interpretation, n.d.). According to Sam H. Ham (1992), this kind of interpretation is effective in communication with the audience/customers as they find thematic communication easier to comprehend and more interesting than communication which isn't unified by a clear theme. This kind of interpretation has been widely adopted for the development of heritage tourism products by different destinations all over the World, in order to expand its offer and meet the customers' demand, as the mass market has been gradually shifted into large number of niches (Đurašević, S. 2014). In 1998, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego developed thematic itinerary programs in California that coordinates culture and arts experiences in these three metropolitan areas (Tabata, R. S. 1999).

Heritage interpretive themes are an essential ingredient in presenting the heritage attraction to locals/tourists, and assisting them understand, value, appreciate the significance of the heritage resources, thus help them to get "the border picture" of the attractions (Veverka n.d.). Such thematic interpretation of cultural heritage has led to the emergence of a popular tourism style known as thematic tourism, this type of travel is designed primarily to cater to specific interests tourists, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in and enjoy their chosen area of focus (Durašević, S. 2014). The tour operators played a very important role in enhancing thematic tourism as they started to promote different interpretive programs which centered around different cultural heritage themes including but not limited to: local cuisine, local beverages, folk arts, folk music, local festivals, local architecture, traditional industries and handcrafts, wine and beer, pilgrimage routes, and local cultural practices (Durašević, S. 2014).

Trying to make full use of heritage thematic interpretation approach, a number of thematic routes/trails were developed, such routes/trails are considered tourism

products that row up natural or man-made attractions around a chosen topic or theme (Csapo, J. 2012). These routes/ trails could be “organic” and “purposive”. Organic routes/trails were designed and created for pilgrimage, trade, migration and railway; while the “purposive” routes are those routes which intentionally constructed to link a number of sites under a certain theme, in most cases, these routes are established to be used as a tourism product like for example culinary and wine trails (Timothy & Boyd, 2015).

In recent times, the quantity of thematic routes has significantly increased, with numerous countries worldwide adopting them as a strategy to enhance tourism demand in terms of seasonality and geography. This approach also serves to tap into untapped heritage resources concurrently. Such heritage routes didn't only promote innovative tourism products within the destination but it managed to link different countries together, and the clearest examples is the Cultural Routes programs which was launched by the Council of Europe in 1987. Its objective was to demonstrate, by means of a journey through space and time,

how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe contributes to a shared cultural heritage (Nagy, 2012). There are 48 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, with very different themes, among these routes are: Antiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes; Viking route; Iron Route in the Pyrenees; European Mozart Ways; European Route of Jewish Heritage; and Routes of the Olive Tree (Council of Europe, n.d.).

Numerous tourist destinations utilize cultural heritage thematic tourism not only to create innovative tourist products and meet customer demands but also to promote and market lesser-known destinations by showcasing them as attractive tourism offerings, thereby drawing tourists to visit (Timothy & Boyd, 2015).

Methodology:

Research Population and Sample

The main purpose of this article is to assess the extent to which thematic-based interpretation of Egyptian cultural heritage could be used as an effective tool to enhance cultural heritage tourism in Egypt. To fulfill the research's objectives, a quantitative methodology was adopted as two

separate questionnaires were designed to collect data from two random segments of tour guides and tour operators based in Luxor. The first questionnaire was tailored for tour guides, focusing on their understanding of thematic-based interpretation, its potential benefits, their perceptions of its impact on cultural heritage tourism in Egypt and the themes that can be turned into tourism products. The second questionnaire was designed for tour operators, seeking insights into their strategies for designing tourism packages, their utilization of thematic approaches, and their expectations regarding the appeal of such offerings to tourists.

According to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism (2023), the number of tour guides in Luxor City was (2579) tour guides. Furthermore, the number of tour operators in Luxor City was (2460) tour operators. Therefore, to determine the appropriate sample size of tour guides and tour operators in the research population, the researchers used the Robert Mason formula (Mason, 1999) as follows:

$$n = \frac{M}{[(S^2 \times (M - 1)) \div pq] + 1}$$

Where: n : appropriate sample size (334). M : population size (2579). S : The value of the standard score corresponding to the significance level is 0.95 that is dividing 1.96 by the error rate of 0.05 that equal (0.02551). P : sample proportion and neutral (0.50). q : complement of sample proportion (0.50). Likewise, applying the same previous equation to tour operators, the appropriate sample size of tour operators is (332).

Applying these values to the Robert Mason formula (1999) reveals that the appropriate sample size for this research is 334 tour guides and 332 tour operators but the researchers distributed 340 questionnaires to tour guides and 340 to tour operators but only 326 tour guides and 330 tour operators positively shared the questionnaire.

Survey Instrument

The survey tailored for tour operators consisted of 13 statements; it was designed to measure five major variables namely: diversification of the exhibited cultural heritage tourism products, targeting new segments of cultural

heritage-oriented tourists, increasing the demand on heritage tourism in Egypt, expanding the spatial scope of heritage tourism in Egypt, moreover, identifying the challenges and gaps of using thematic interpretation of Egyptian cultural heritage within the tourism sector. On the other side the survey tailored for the tour guides consisted of 15 statements to measure the same above mentioned five variables along with two additional variable focusing on identification of interpretive themes that can be developed from the Egyptian cultural heritage as well as identification of organic thematic routes /trails that can be revived through thematic based interpretation approach. In both instances, participants' perspectives were evaluated through the implementation of a comprehensive five-point Likert scale.

Primary Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 25) was used to analyze the obtained data. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used. There was a full description of the study sample as well as scale

reliability and validity tests. The correlations test was also utilized to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of this study.

Validity of the Research

Number of tourist guides and industry specialists were consulted to gather feedback and suggestions on the research instrument. To ensure the validity of the data collection instrument, the research used face validity. Each research objective was matched with its corresponding question using this manner.

Reliability of the Research

As a first stage, it is critical to examine the reliability of the study survey as well as the correlation between the study dimensions. Cronbach's α coefficient was tested for survey statement reliability and found to be greater than 0.7 for all variables, as shown in table (1.1); this suggests that all items are reliable, referring to appropriate measurement reliability. According to Hair et al. (2010), a Cronbach's α score of more than 0.7 is appropriate for reliability.

Table 1.1: Reliability

The Axis	Tour Guides		Tour Operators	
	No. of statements	Alpha Coefficient	No. of statements	Alpha Coefficient
Diversification of the exhibited cultural heritage tourism products	3	0.767	3	0.917
Targeting new segments and increasing the demand	3	0.752	3	0.742
Expanding the spatial scope of heritage tourism in Egypt	3	0.725	3	0.784
Challenges and gaps	4	0.756	4	0.810
Developing interpretive themes	2	0.947	---	---
Total	15	0.843	13	0.737

Results and Discussion

Research Variables Analysis

Diversification of the Exhibited Cultural Heritage Tourism Products

The purpose of this variable is to measure to which extent the cultural heritage tourism products in Egypt are diversified. The collected data is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1.2: Descriptive Statistics for Diversification of the Exhibited Cultural Heritage Tourism Products

The Axis	Tour Guides			Tour Operators		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
The current cultural heritage tourism product in Egypt are not well diversified	4.585	0.557	3	4.239	1.192	3
We are in need to diversify cultural exhibited tourism products in	4.880	0.393	1	4.430	1.120	1

Egypt						
Interpretive themes is a creative tool that would diversify the current tourism offerings	4.598	0.598	2	4.330	1.114	2
Total	4.688	0.432		4.300	1.057	

From the point of view of tour guides, Table No. 1.2 shows that statement "We are in need to diversify cultural exhibited tourism products in Egypt" comes at a first rank with a mean (4.880) and std. Deviation of (0.393). Then, statement " Interpretive themes is a creative tool that would diversify the current tourism offerings " comes at a second rank with a mean (4.598) and std. Deviation of (0.598). On the other hand, statement " The current cultural heritage tourism product in Egypt are not well diversified " comes at a last rank with a mean (4.585) and std. Deviation of (0.557). Finally, the total mean of the diversification of the exhibited cultural heritage tourism products was (4.688) with a standard deviation of (0.432), which indicated a high degree of agreement for all the diversification of the

exhibited cultural heritage tourism products phrases which means that this variable has a high level.

On the other hand from the point of view of tour operators, Table No. 1.2 shows that statement 2 comes at a first rank with a mean (4.430) and std. Deviation of (1.120). Furthermore, statement 3 comes at a second rank with a mean (4.330) and std. Deviation of (1.114). On the other hand statement 1 comes at a last rank with a mean (4.239) and std. Deviation of (1.192). Finally, the total mean of the diversification of the exhibited cultural heritage tourism products was (4.300) with a standard deviation of (1.057), which indicated a high degree of agreement for all the diversification of the exhibited cultural heritage tourism products phrases which means that this variable has a high level.

Egypt has more than 2,500 archaeological sites scattered all over the country, 60% of which are ancient Egyptian, only few number are visited by tourists (The National News, 2022).

Both tour operator and the tour guides have all agreed that there is a growing need to develop new, creative and nontraditional cultural tourism packages that meet the diverse need of the customers and highlight the Egyptian diverse heritage assets. This aligns with the tourism reform strategy which has developed by the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism which highlights the necessity to vary the array of cultural tourism offerings. (Al-Mashat, 2018).

Targeting New Segments and Increasing the Demand

The purpose of this variable is to measure the potential of utilizing thematic based interpretation of Egyptian cultural heritage to attract new segments of tourists and increasing the demand of culturally-oriented tourist on Egypt. The collected data is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1.3: Descriptive Statistics for Targeting New Segments and Increasing the Demand

The Axis	Tour Guides			Tour Operators		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Targeting new segments is	4.607	0.612	3	4.603	0.570	1

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one of the main objectives of the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities						
Tourists now search for customized and authentic experience in their visits	4.699	0.521	2	4.575	0.685	2
Thematic based interpretation approach is a valuable tool in increasing the demand on cultural tourism	4.754	0.515	1	4.490	0.756	3
Total	4.687	0.450		4.556	0.548	

From the point of view of tour guides, Table No. 1.3 shows that statement 1 "Thematic based interpretation approach is a valuable tool in increasing the demand on cultural tourism" comes at first rank with a mean (4.754) and std. Deviation of (0.515). Furthermore, statement 2 "Tourists now search for customized and authentic experience in their

visits" comes at a second rank with a mean (4.699) and std. Deviation of (0.521). On the other hand statement 3 "Targeting new segments is one of the main objectives of the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities" comes at a last rank with a mean (4.607) and std. Deviation of (0.612). Finally, the total mean of targeting new segments and increasing the demand was (4.687) with a standard deviation of (0.450), which indicated a high degree of agreement for all the targeting new segments and increasing the demand phrases which means that this variable has a high level.

On the other hand from the point of view of tour operators, Table No. 1.3 shows that statement 1 comes at a first rank with a mean (4.603) and std. Deviation of (0.570). Furthermore, statement 2 comes at a second rank with a mean (4.575) and std. Deviation of (0.685). On the other hand statement 3 comes at a last rank with a mean (4.490) and std. Deviation of (0.756). Finally, the total mean of the diversification of the exhibited cultural heritage tourism products was (4.566) with a standard deviation of (0.548), which indicated a high degree of agreement for all

regarding targeting new segments and increasing the demand phrases which means that this variable has a high level.

Al-Mashat (2018) highlighted that one of the main objectives of the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism is to target new segments of customers. This objective is in line with the evolving preferences of modern tourists, as noted by Đurašević (2014). Today's tourists are increasingly seeking customized and authentic experiences rather than traditional ones.

Expanding the Spatial Scope of Heritage Tourism in Egypt

The objective of this variable is to assess the extent to which the utilization of thematic-based interpretation of Egyptian cultural heritage can expand the spatial scope of heritage tourism in Egypt. The collected data is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1.4: Descriptive Statistics for Expanding the Spatial Scope of Heritage Tourism in Egypt

The Axis	Tour Guides			Tour Operators		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Limiting the scope of heritage tourism in Egypt has caused negative effect on the tourism sector	4.487	0.738	2	4.572	0.600	1
Local communities in lesser-known destinations have experienced detrimental effects.	4.631	0.576	1	4.569	0.703	2
Thematic based interpretation can create thematic routes that link well developed destinations with less known ones	4.444	0.942	3	4.269	0.716	3
Total	4.521	0.616		4.470	0.564	

From the point of view of tour guides, Table No. 1.4 shows that statement 2 " Local communities in lesser-known destinations have experienced detrimental effects" comes at a first rank with a mean (4.631) and std. Deviation of (0.576). Furthermore, statement 1 "Limiting the scope of heritage tourism in Egypt has caused negative effect on the tourism sector" comes at a second rank with a mean (4.487) and std. Deviation of (0.738). On the other hand statement 3 "Thematic based interpretation can create thematic routes that link well developed destinations with less known ones" comes at a last rank with a mean (4.444) and std. Deviation of (0.942). Finally, the total mean of the expanding the spatial scope of heritage tourism in Egypt was (4.521) with a standard deviation of (0.616), which indicated a high degree of agreement for all the expanding the spatial scope of heritage tourism in Egypt phrases which means that this variable has a high level.

On the other hand from the point of view of tour operators, Table No. 1.4 shows that statement 1 comes at a first rank with a mean (4.572) and std. Deviation of (0.600). Furthermore, statement 2 comes at a second rank with a

mean (4.569) and std. Deviation of (0.703). On the other hand statement 3 comes at a last rank with a mean (4.269) and std. Deviation of (0.716). Finally, the total mean of the expanding the spatial scope of heritage tourism in Egypt was (4.470) with a standard deviation of (0.564), which indicated a high degree of agreement for all the expanding the spatial scope of heritage tourism in Egypt phrases which means that this variable has a high level.

Limiting the scope of heritage tourism in Egypt to three destinations namely Luxor, Aswan and Cairo has caused negative effect for both the tourism industry and the local populations residing in these less-promoted areas, it is essential to offer multiple tourism destination. As according to Heba Abd El Salam (2018) some customers want to dig deeper and see new places. This approach has further led to insufficient tourism infrastructure and services development in these lesser-known destinations. Consequently, the tourism sector has failed to contribute positively to these local communities in terms of employment opportunities and income augmentation.

Challenges and Gaps of Developing Thematic Based Tourism Products

The purpose of this variable is to measure the challenges and gaps of developing thematic based tourism product. The collected data is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1.5: Descriptive Statistics for Challenges and Gaps

The Axis	Tour Guides			Tour Operators		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
There is enough and sufficient market research to determine the topics/themes that are considered authentic and unique	1.266	0.866	4	2.257	1.119	3
Tour guides are familiar with new destinations	1.733	1.117	2	2.481	1.111	2
Tourism services are poor in such new destinations	4.705	0.596	1	4.563	0.664	1

There is an effective marketing plan to inform potential customers about new products	1.576	0.783	3	2.157	1.129	4
Total	2.320	0.654		2.840	0.820	

From the point of view of tour guides, Table No. 1.5 shows that statement 3 "Tourism services are poor in such new locations" comes at a first rank with a mean (4.705) and std. Deviation of (0.596). Furthermore, statement 2 "Tour guides are familiar with new destinations" comes at a second rank with a mean (1.733) and std. Deviation of (1.117). On the other hand statement 4 "There is effective marketing plan to inform potential customers with new products" comes at a third rank with a mean (1.576) and std. Deviation of (0.783). Moreover, statement 1 "There is enough and sufficient market research to determine the topics/themes that are considered authentic and unique" comes at a last rank with a mean (1.266) and std. Deviation of (0.866). Finally, the total mean of the challenges and gaps was (2.320) with a standard deviation of (0.654),

which indicated a low degree of agreement for all the challenges and gaps phrases which means that this variable has a low level.

On the other hand from the point of view of tour operators, Table No. 1.5 shows that statement 3 comes at a first rank with a mean (4.563) and std. Deviation of (0.664). Furthermore, statement 2 comes at a second rank with a mean (2.481) and std. Deviation of (1.111). On the other hand statement 1 comes at a last rank with a mean (2.257) and std. Deviation of (1.119). Likewise, statement 4 comes at a last rank with a mean (2.157) and std. Deviation of (1.129). Finally, the total mean of the challenges and gaps was (2.840) with a standard deviation of (0.820), which indicated a low degree of agreement for all the challenges and gaps phrases which means that this variable has a low level.

Although the tour operators and the tour guides have agreed that the development of a cultural heritage tourism products using the thematic interpretation approach would be a great asset to enhance cultural tourism in Egypt, as it will help in

product diversifications, targeting new segments of tourists , adding new locations to the Egyptian heritage tourism map , and will motivate the customers to stay longer in the destination; they highlighted that more market research is needed to determine the kind of themes / topics which are considered authentic, unique, and will let Egypt gain a competitive advantages over its competitors, and at the same time attract potential customers.

Regarding tour guides, Kruczek, Zygmunt (2013) have stated that they play a vital role particularly within the framework of cultural tourism, as they are the authorized people who can provide the customers with detailed information/interpretation on cultural heritage attractions and enhance the authentic experience for customers. According to the above mentioned results, the thematic interpretation of the cultural heritage resources will inevitably introduce new locations into the existing well-known attractions, some of which may be unfamiliar to tour guides. On the other side, adding new tourist locations to the already developed locations is one of the gaps raised by the tour operators and the tour guides, as they indicated that

these new sites lack sufficient tourism infrastructure and services, making them unsuitable for visits in their current condition. The tour operators and the tour guides have indicated that the development of new thematic tourism products needs effective marketing to inform and connect potential customers with the newly developed tourism products.

Interpretive themes that can be developed

The purpose of this variable is to identify the interpretive themes that can be developed from the Egyptian cultural heritage. The collected data is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1.6: Descriptive Statistics of Different Topics Depicted or Caved on Egyptian Immovable and Movable Artifacts

The Axis	Tour Guides	
	Frequency	Percentage %
Art	264	3.8%
Religion and religious life	289	4.2%
Death , Mummification and After life	303	4.4%
Feasts and Festivals	291	4.2%
Crafts and Craftsmanship	289	4.2%

Wars, Weapons and Military Life	292	4.2%
Food and Beverage in Ancient Egypt	287	4.1%
Mining and Stones	275	4.0%
Singing and Dancing	268	3.9%
Agriculture and Plants	302	4.4%
Animals , Fish and Fishing	319	4.6%
Medicine and Surgeries	298	4.3%
Love and Romance	289	4.2%
Women History and Heritage	265	3.8%
Architecture and Engineering	299	4.3%
Myths	296	4.3%
Torturing	278	4.0%
Sports and Games	277	4.0%
Childhood	274	4.0%
Dress and Fashion	293	4.2%
Total	6924	100.0%

Based on Table No. 1.6 the tour guides indicated that different themes had been depicted or carved on Egyptian immovable architecture as well as the movable artifacts such themes can be marketed through thematic interpretation approach. These themes include: animals, fish and fishing came in the first place (Frq.=319, P= 4.6%), Likewise, death , mummification and after life, agriculture and plants (Frq.=302, P= 4.4%). Furthermore, medicine and surgeries, architecture and engineering , myths (Frq.=299, P= 4.3%). Moreover, religion and religious life, feasts and festivals, crafts and craftsmanship,

wars, weapons and military life, love and romance , dress and fashion (Frq.=293, P= 4.2%). Furthermore, mining and stones, torturing, sports and games , childhood (Frq.=277, P= 4%). On the other hand, art, singing and dancing and women history and heritage (Frq.=265, P= 3.8%).

Organic Thematic Routes Developed throughout the Egyptian History

The purpose of this variable is to identify the organic thematic routes /trails that can be revived through thematic based interpretation approach. The collected data is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1.7: Descriptive Statistics of Organic Thematic Routes Developed throughout the Egyptian History

The Axis	Tour Guides	
	Frequency	Percentage %
Egyptian Haj (Pilgrimage)	257	21.9%
Holy Family	239	20.3%
The Great Horus Route	262	22.3%
Route of Alexander the Great to Siwa Oasis	226	19.2%
Qeft - Al Quseir Road	192	16.3%
Total	1176	100.0%

Table No. 1.7 identify the routes that were developed throughout the Egyptian history for religious and commercial purposes. According to the tour guides such routes/ trails include the great Horus route which came in the first place (Frq.=262, P= 22.3 %). "The Great Horus Route" was the largest and most important route between Egypt and ancient Canaan and was used for trade and military activities (Patterns of Evidence, 2022); Furthermore, Egyptian Haj (Pilgrimage) came in the second place (Frq.=257, P= 21.9%). This route linked Egypt to Makkah and Medina, through which masses of Muslim used to come from Egypt, Sudan, Central Africa, Morocco, Andalusia and Sicily, to meet in Egypt, then travel through Sinai to Aqaba (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.). Also, the Holy Family route came in the third place (Frq.=239, P= 20.3 %). This route is classified as one of the routes with significant value as it includes twenty five stops scattered in different places in Egypt over 3500 KMs from north Sinai to Asuit and back. (Abouzied & Abed, 2021) Moreover, the Route of Alexander the Great to Siwa Oasis came in the fourth place (Frq.=226, P= 19.2 %).

Alexander the Great has decided to visit the oracle temple of God Amun Raa in order to legitimize his rule (Hammad & Hosny 2009). On the other hand, Qeft - Al Quseir Road came in the final place (Frq.=192, P= 16.3 %). This is also called the road of pilgrims which is considered one of the oldest roads in history, it connects between the Nile river and the Red Sea (Marsa Alam, n.d.).

Correlations between research variables

Frost (2021) suggests that spearman's correlation serves as a nonparametric substitute for Pearson's correlation in statistical analysis. It is especially well-suited for datasets that demonstrate curvilinear or monotonic associations, as well as for ordinal data. Lehman (2005) and Frost (2021) noted that when interpreting spearman's correlation coefficient, values closer to -1 or 1 signify a more pronounced monotonic relationship, within the range of $-1 \leq r \leq 1$. The intensity of the correlation can be described in the following manner

- **< 0.2** **“Very weak”**
- **0.20 – 0.39** **“Weak”**

- 0.40 – 0.59 “Moderate”
- 0.60 – 0.79 “Strong”
- > 0.80 “Very Strong”

From Tour Guides' Point of View

Table 1.8: Correlation between Research Variables

<i>Variables</i>		<i>DECHTP</i>	<i>TNSID</i>	<i>ESSHTE</i>	<i>CG</i>	<i>DIT</i>
<i>DECHTP</i>	Pearson Correlation (R)	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	326				
<i>TNSID</i>	Pearson Correlation (R)	.753**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	326	326			
<i>ESSHTE</i>	Pearson Correlation (R)	.610**	.730**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	326	326	326		
<i>CG</i>	Pearson Correlation (R)	.310**	.210**	.400**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	326	326	326	326	

<i>Variables</i>		<i>DECHTP</i>	<i>TNSID</i>	<i>ESSHTE</i>	<i>CG</i>	<i>DIT</i>
<i>DIT</i>	Pearson Correlation (R)	.681**	.731**	.580**	.220**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	326	326	326	326	326

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1.8 has revealed the following relationships between each pair of variables:

High correlation (marked relationship):

- Diversification of the Exhibited Cultural Heritage Tourism Products “DECHTP” and Targeting New Segments and Increasing the Demand “TNSID” variables ($r= 0.753$, $P= 0.000$).
- Diversification of the Exhibited Cultural Heritage Tourism Products “DECHTP” and Expanding the Spatial Scope of Heritage Tourism in Egypt “ESSHTE” variables ($r= 0.610$, $P= 0.000$).
- Diversification of the Exhibited Cultural Heritage Tourism Products “DECHTP” and Developing Interpretive Themes “DIT” variables ($r= 0.681$, $P= 0.000$).

- Targeting New Segments and Increasing the Demand “TNSID” and Expanding the Spatial Scope of Heritage Tourism in Egypt “ESSHTE” variables ($r= 0.730, P= 0.000$).
- Targeting New Segments and Increasing the Demand “TNSID” and Developing Interpretive Themes “DIT” variables ($r= 0.731, P= 0.000$).

From Tour operators' Point of View:

Table 1.9: Correlation between Research Variables

<i>Variables</i>		<i>DECHTP</i>	<i>TNSID</i>	<i>ESSHTE</i>	<i>CG</i>
<i>DECHTP</i>	Pearson Correlation (R)	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	330			
<i>TNSID</i>	Pearson Correlation (R)	.791**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	330	330		
<i>ESSHTE</i>	Pearson Correlation (R)	.741**	.810**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	330	330	330	

<i>Variables</i>		<i>DECHTP</i>	<i>TNSID</i>	<i>ESSHTE</i>	<i>CG</i>
<i>CG</i>	Pearson Correlation (R)	.340**	.311**	.241**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	330	330	330	330
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Table 1.9 has revealed the following relationship between each pair of variables:

High correlation (marked relationship):

- Diversification of the Exhibited Cultural Heritage Tourism Products “DECHTP” and Targeting New Segments and Increasing the Demand “TNSID” variables ($r= 0.791, P= 0.000$).
- Diversification of the Exhibited Cultural Heritage Tourism Products “DECHTP” and Expanding the Spatial Scope of Heritage Tourism in Egypt “ESSHTE” variables ($r= 0.741, P= 0.000$).
- Targeting New Segments and Increasing the Demand “TNSID” and Expanding the Spatial Scope of Heritage Tourism in Egypt “ESSHTE” variables ($r= 0.810, P= 0.000$).

Conclusion

The thematic interpretation of Egyptian cultural heritage is considered a creative tool to enhance heritage tourism in Egypt, as it will help in: diversifying the exhibited products, targeting new customers especially those who are searching for non-traditional experience, also increasing the visitor duration of stay in the destination which will result in increasing their expenditure so more economic benefits for the destination will be achieved, also benefiting greater number of the local communities by adding new locations to the current Egyptian cultural heritage tourism map. The interpretive themes of Egyptian cultural heritage sites is a creative tool to offer nontraditional tourism packages, and to link material and immaterial heritage sites through a topic/story that appeal to the customers that provide them with such customized and authentic experiences. Moreover, it can be a very effective tool in helping the destinations on widening its heritage tourism packages and that will help the destination to meet a great number of customers' interests, increase the chance of attracting more potential customers, also it helps the destination to distinguish itself

from its competitors. The thematic based interpretation approach is considered a valuable tool in developing themes/topics which can.

Recommendations

The Thematic based interpretation of the Egyptian cultural heritage can create thematic routes that link the already well-developed tourist destinations with the lesser-known destinations which can't be marketed as tourism destinations on their own, as they need some sort of partnership with the well-developed tourist destinations to create an integrated tourism product.

Tour guides need to be provided with training programs that would enable them to be familiar with the interpretation of the new tourism products. In addition to that, new and less known sites require to be developed in order to be placed in tourist programs.

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