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Strategic framework for achieving successful sustainable tourism in Egypt

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Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESSFUL SUSTAINABLE

TOURISM IN EGYPT

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change

by

Maher Abdelwahab

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Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Maher Abdelwahab

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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This research is dedicated as a tribute to my beloved country, Egypt.

Additionally, it is dedicated to all professionals in the Egyptian tourism industry.

EDUCATION

- Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA, Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change
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- BI-Norwegian Business School of Management (Handelshøyskolen BI), Oslo, Norway- Bachelor of Science in Business Administration.
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International Air Transport Association (IATA) License

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Tourist Guide in Egypt.

GDS System for Travel Agents

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EXPERIENCE

Founder and Director of Atlantis Tours LLC, CA

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- Abdelwahb, M., & Hasle, A. (1999). *Bli kjent med gamle Egypts guder* [Get to know the gods of ancient Egypt]. Private Publisher.

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PRESENTATIONS

- Abdelwahab, M., & Fort, C. (2024, January 5). *Fiscal policy review: Tax investments in higher education and the American promise of upward social mobility.* [Poster presentation]. 2024 Hawaii International Conference on Education, Hawaii.

- Abdelwahab, M., & Tafur, T. (2024, January 6). *E-learning as an alternative to private tutoring in Egypt.* [Poster presentation]. 2024 Hawaii International Conference on Education, Hawaii.

- Abdelwahab, M. (2024, July 19). *Artificial intelligence common in research and academics.* [Paper presentation]. 2024 GSEP Research Symposium, Saint-Légier-La Chiésaz, Switzerland.

- Abdelwahab, M. (2024). *Cross-cultural competencies and leadership in tourism in Egypt.* [Paper presentation]. 26th ILA Global Conference, Chicago, Illinois.

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of tourism leaders who operate a tour operator company in Egypt. It sought to examine how the lack of collaborative leadership adversely affects tourism. The study further investigated the challenges the tourism industry faces, and the strategies tour companies' leaders use to achieve successful sustainable tourism. The study revealed the connection between the challenges, strategies, competitiveness, factors of success, and recommendations to create a strategic framework for successful sustainable tourism. The strategic framework promoted collective tourism leadership and sustainable tourism as significant economic drive in Egypt to reduce poverty, develop society, and bring wealth to individuals. Tourism leaders will benefit from understanding the challenges different tourism sectors face and implementing strategies for achieving collective tourism leadership to promote prosperous, sustainable tourism. Such understating of challenges, competitiveness, success factors, and strategies is essential for creating a strategic framework to advance tourism as an economic drive in Egypt. The strategic framework for a sustainable tourism industry will be the remedy to eliminate gaps between involved partners, unite their goals, and provide a key to unlock future opportunities. Incrementally applying the strategic framework will connect and integrate the existing tourism services into a more effective sustainable leadership with higher value offers for the maximization of customer satisfaction, positive word of mouth, and more tourist expenditure to boost the economy.

Keywords: tourism industry in Egypt, Egyptian tourism challenges, Egypt tourism competitiveness, sustainable Egyptian tourism, collaborative tourism leadership

Chapter 1: Introduction

Tourism is one of the major industries in the world (Buhalis et al., 2023; Herrero et al., 2022; Scheyvens & Cheer, 2021; World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2022). Tourism accounts for more than 10% of the World's Gross Domestic Production (GDP). Despite the challenges it faces, tourism has a great potential for growth. International tourist arrivals are expected at 1.8 billion by 2030 versus 1.5 billion in 2019 (Deb & Nafi, 2020; United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2018a), and total tourist expenditure was at $5.8 trillion in the same years, according to Statista (2023). In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the travel and tourism industry's direct, indirect, and induced impacts were among the most significant economic sectors in the world (WTTC, 2022). It is noteworthy to mention that tourism spending is not likely to recover to its pre-crisis levels until 2024, which is the reason behind the researcher's use of 2019 tourism statistics, not 2020 or after (Arlou, 2022; León-Gómez et al., 2021; UNWTO, 2018b).

The tourism industry contributed to global labor with 25% of its newly created jobs in 2019, accounting for 1 in 4 globally with 33% of all jobs or approximately 333 million (Behsudi, 2020). Among the positive impacts of the tourism sector is the tourist receipt or the total spending of the tourists, which accounted for 1.8 trillion dollars in 2019, equal to 6.8% of the world's total exports (The World Bank, 2023). If a suitable investment is made in tourism, it can be used as a poverty alleviation for many countries (Behsudi, 2020). Tourism can protect culture and local communities' integrity in its most benign practice. Tourism uplifts the local economy and develops regions in line with sustainability. As for the advantages of tourism, it allows women and subgroups to run their businesses and sell directly to tourists (WTTC, 2022). Foreign currencies are hard to access in some developing countries. Thus, tourism is an essential source of foreign currency for such developing countries with struggling economies (Matthew et al., 2021).

The strategic plan of the WTTC (2022) was to develop the tourism sector annually by 5.6% between 2022 and 2032, outperforming the worldwide economy's annual growth of (2.7%). This statement proves how lucrative and promising the tourism industry is for the local and global economy. Tourism employment was over 325 million jobs in 2019, but in 2020, the industry suffered a heavy blow, causing a 60% decline due to COVID-19 (Behsudi, 2020). Tourism employment has yet to fully recover since the COVID-19 pandemic (Fotiadis et al., 2021).

Tourism as a Major Economic Drive in Egypt

Egyptian tourism attracted 13 million tourists in 2019, with 14.2 billion dollars, approximately 8.5% of the Egypt's GDP (Galal, 2022). The tourism sector is one of the major employers in Egypt, providing 3.1 million jobs, accounting for 9.5% of the total workforce (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020a). Although tourism businesses worldwide encounter challenges and have commonalities, Egyptian tourism businesses have their specific challenges. Those challenges are related to the nature of the Egyptian tourism business problems. According to Werr (2023), the Egyptian ministry of finance projects a budget deficit of 824 billion Egyptian pounds (approximately US $27 billion) in the fiscal year 2023/24 that started July 2023, while 13 million tourists created revenue in 2019 in the form of tourist receipts (tourist expenditure) equal to 11.5 billion dollars (Galal, 2023). If the number of tourists in Egypt increases to 26 million (double the number in 2019), it will reflect the economic power of tourism in Egypt.

Egyptian Tourism Industry Success Factors

Several factors, features, and advantages made Egypt an attractive tourist destination (Abdel-Latif et al., 2012). Among those factors is that Egypt has one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Among Egypt's enormous cultural heritage sites are the great Giza Pyramids, Valley of the Kings, Valley of the Queens, and several other cultural heritage sites

that date back to approximately 3000 BC (El Sheik, 2020). Among many other factors that made Egypt an attractive tourism destination through centuries are its geographical location as the northeastern gate of Africa, its Mideast entrance to Asia, and the long coastline of the Mediterranean Sea with southern European countries such as France, Italy, and Greece. This unique geographical location enables Egypt to have the tourism opportunities to offer. Egypt has a 1550-mile-long coastline with family-friendly beaches on the Mediterranean (North coast) and Red Sea (East coast), making Egypt a desirable vacation haven for many tourists. The Northwestern European countries consider Egypt as one of their favorite destinations because they lack sun at home, while Egypt offers moderate sunny weather. However, cultural and historical heritage sites are the most appealing factor and vantage (Keese, 2011; Mohamed, 2018). Figure 1 shows a map of Egypt, highlighting its unique geographical location as a one of its valuable assets, and as a travel destination competitiveness advantage (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Michael et al., 2019).

Figure 1

Map of Egypt

Note. Map of Egypt [Image], by Public Domain, PAT, 2023.
(https://ian.macky.net/pat/map/eg/eg_blu.gif).

Archeological discoveries of the great ancient Egyptian civilization in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries made Egypt an adventurous destination (N. Helmy & Soliman Abd Elhalem, 2021). Those discoveries increased when Champollion, the French archeologist, deciphered the Hieroglyphics language of Ancient Egypt written in Rosette Stone. Noteworthy is the discovery of Tutankhamun by Howard Carter in October 1922 (Fritze, 2016; Zimmerman, 2021). Colonization made it very attractive for Western business enterprises to benefit from the emergent and profitable Egyptian tourism industry. Many Western visitors made Egypt their home away from home. Egypt was advertised in all media from the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century as the wanderlust destination for the wealthy class (Blue et al., 2016; Wait, 2021).

With its ancient history and distinctive location, Egypt competes to offer many tourism types (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021; Shaalan, 2005). Among those unique types are religious, conference, festivals, sports, ecological, medical, and most popular, cultural heritage and recreational. Cultural heritage and recreational tourism represent Egypt's tourism identity (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020). Despite Egypt's abundant tourism assets, competitive advantages, and critical success factors (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019), the World Bank (2023) indicated that the country hosted approximately 13 million tourists in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggests that Egypt's tourism industry still has considerable room for growth and expansion.

Background and Historical Context of Tourism Policies in Egypt

Although tourism as a business activity has been known to Egyptians for thousands of years, it is relatively new to Egyptian people in its modern form as a business. Egypt was one of the first tourist destinations outside Europe in the 19th century (Anderson, 2012; Hunter, 2004; Wait, 2021). Despite Egypt's lengthy historical background in the tourism industry, there has yet to be a consensus about when tourism in its modern business and commercial

form developed (Anderson, 2012). However, scholars like Anderson (2012) and Hunter (2004) refer to the instituting of modern tourism development as started by Muhammed Ali (the ruler of Egypt between 1805 and 1849) whose policies, to expand his power and to modernize Egypt, contributed to attract foreigners. The British dominance and expansion in the world provided a feeling of safety and protection for tourists. The consequence of this prominence was a surge in the number of tourists visiting Egypt.

Egypt has a rich cultural heritage, religious, medical, and ancient wonders, which make Egypt a popular destination for travelers around the world (Abd el-Gawad & Stevenson, 2021). The country's tourism industry has been a vital source of income and employment. This has prompted the Egyptian government to implement various public policies to regulate tourism. The tourism business started in Egypt in the 19th century when Europeans were attracted to explore the historical and cultural heritage locations such as the pyramids in Giza and the Kings` Valley in Luxor. However, the Egyptian authorities still need to recognize tourism as a significant source of revenue and thus explore ways to exploit its full potential (El Sheik, 2020). Figure 2 shows few pictures of the highlights of Egyptian culture heritage attractions such as the Giza pyramids, golden mask of king Tut Ankh Amon, and Luxor temple. These pictures are to illustrate three of many unique heritage sites in Egypt.

Figure 2

Pictures From Egypt

Note. The pictures show The Giza Pyramids, Pharaoh Tut Ankh Amon's funeral mask, and the Temple of Luxor.

According to Hunter (2004), the history of modern tourism in Egypt was a uniquely Western phenomenon at its inception. The birth of the tourism industry in its current form started with the interest created by Thomas Cock, the founder of commercialized tourism. After the success of his concept, the Grand Tour, Thomas Cook began the first tourism business in Egypt. With the inception of the first tourism business company, Thomas Cook achieved the same success in bringing wealthy British tourists to Egypt with a high volume of frequency (Hunter, 2004; Wait, 2021).

Tourism has become a feature of life in Egypt with growing sectors, such as transportation, lodging, and established and accepted routes (Anderson, 2012; Elnagar & Derbali, 2020; Wait, 2021). According to Anderson (2012), Egypt received as many as 20,000 tourists a year between 1850 and 1900. Thomas Cook's exploring trip to Egypt in 1869 triggered and inaugurated the commercial modern tourism destination as it developed. The colonization of Egypt resulted from Muhammed Ali and his family's monetary system's failure to pay its debt, giving a reason for the British to rule Egypt with the excuse of protecting their debts in Egypt (Anderson, 2012). Because the inception of the tourism industry in Egypt was initiated by the British colonization between 1881 and 1952, tourism suffered as a profitable industry when Egypt obtained independence, forcing the British colonizer to leave Egypt (Anderson, 2012; Meskell, 2000).

Unhappy with the decolonization moments, the British control over tourism was transferred to the hands of the new nationalist government in Egypt - the regulations and policies needed to be updated with the tourism interest and development (Al Hakim & Hilmi, 2022; Anderson, 2012; Wait, 2021). Egypt encountered a series of wars in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973. Those wars caused a slowdown, if not a complete stop, in the tourism activity and

businesses except those tied to corporate business conduct and non-traditional tourism-related activities (Al Hakim & Hilmi, 2022; Bianchi, 2018).

Following the British decolonization, the new generation of Arab nationalist and socialist regimes have come to power and ruled Egypt until now as of April 2024 (Al Hakim & Hilmi, 2022). The legislations and public policies issued to govern and regulate the tourism industry date back to the colonization era and British businesses in Egypt. Thomas Cook was the father and entrepreneur of modern tourism who transferred the tourism industry to its professional level. The four wars that Egypt was involved in with its neighbor made the tourism business obsolete (Al Hakim & Hilmi, 2022). After the peace treaty in 1979, the number of investors increased in Egypt, both in the private and public sectors. Foreign investors cooperated with local investors and set up their branches in Egypt, such as American Express, the already established Thomas Cook in Egypt, French Club Med, and several other companies. The liberation effects visibly increased in the 1970s-1980s, which positively impacted the reborn tourism sector and provided a sharp breakthrough for the incentives of the Egyptian government (Al Hakim & Hilmi, 2022).

Open Door Policy 1970s to 1980s

To encourage private tourism businesses, Egypt adopted the open-door policy as the entire economy in Egypt did in the 1970s due to the former Egyptian president Anwar El-Sadat's (1970-1981) open-door policy (Bouri, 1993; Rezk et al., 2022). Open door economy policy is based on accepting the government's official development aid, allowing foreign investors to invest in Egypt, and to remove restrictions on the imports and flow of foreign capital to Egypt (Rezk et al., 2022). Following the peace treaty of March 26, 1979, Egypt witnessed a significant increase in foreign investment in tourism and the establishment of joint ventures between Egyptian and global companies. The Egyptian government's priority objective was to entice and attract more tourists. In addition, it sought to diversify the tourism

product to add more types of tourism than cultural heritage by promoting new beach vacation destinations, such as the Red Sea resorts of Hurghada and Sharm El Sheikh (Hillal Dessouki, 1981).

Sustainable Tourism in the 1990s

According to the early research of Pigram (1990) and Sharpley (2000), the concept of *sustainable tourism* emerged out of the effort to diminish the degrading impact of tourist activities on the host destination and its local communities. Tourism economic gains led to tourism expansion and mass tourism in some cases, which is a harmful ecological cost compared to the socio-economic benefits it passes to the tourism destination (Baloch et al., 2023; Simo-Kengne, 2022). The new era in Egypt 1990s focused on sustainable tourism as the Egyptian tourism authority concentrated on creating sustainable tourism development. This made the public policies and regulations target the balance between economic growth and environmental and cultural preservation. Efforts were directed to promote eco-tourism and protect fragile ecosystems, such as ancient reliefs, inscriptions, and the Red Sea coral reefs. The program has started preserving the monuments and restoring historical sites to increase their attractiveness to tourists (Shaalan, 2005).

Egyptian Tourism Reform Program in the Early 2000s

The Egyptian authority's adoption of sustainable tourism resulted in long-term gains in value creation within tourism (Haiying, 2020; E. Helmy, 2004; E. Helmy & Cooper, 2002). Tourism has several ignored benefits and values other than economic values. Those discounted values, such as social benefits, physical facilities, and global tourism contrition, are as essential as tourism economic benefits (Barsoum, 2018).

The tourism industry was based on the facilities created in the colonization era and needed upgrades and modernization between the 1800s and 1950s (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; OECD, 2020a). The reform program was launched targeting the modernization of the tourism

sector to attract foreign investors into the field. This reform was to improve service quality in the field of tourism. Improving roads and infrastructure was necessary to market and promote Egypt as a year-round destination. During this period, the government realized the importance of emerging markets and encouraging diverse tourists from nontraditional countries, such as cultural and adventure tourism (Kisi, 2019; Shaalan, 2005).

Political Turmoil and Recovery 2011 to Present

The Arab Spring in 2011 was a liberation movement from the autocracy and dictatorships regimes in Arabic countries, starting with Tunisia and Egypt, followed by other Arab countries (Shokheh & Ebrahimi, 2018; Volpi, 2013). Egypt's political unrest unfolded and spread since 2011, and subsequent years negatively impacting the Egyptian tourism industry. Tourism numbers significantly dropped due to travel safety concerns, restrictions, and advisories (El-Haddad, 2020). The Egyptian authorities had to implement several strategies to avert a drop in tourist arrivals and restore confidence. These strategies included, but were primarily composed of, enhanced security measures at tourist locations and targeted promotional campaigns.Tourism businesses are sensitive to safety and security. It took time for Egyptian tourism to recover, but the industry started to recover gradually, and tourists' numbers increased in recent years (El-Haddad, 2020). Crises such as political instability, terrorism targeting tourists, and continuous conflicts negatively impacts destinations` long-term investment (Duan et al., 2022; Morakabati, 2013). Economic downturns shock and impede tourism growth and aggravate instabilities that adversely affect in the destination market positions (Duan et al., 2022; Perles-Ribes et al., 2017). Tourism crisis forces destinations and operators to apply strategies to maintain their market competitiveness (Duan et al., 2022), those strategies are financially devastating and threaten the survival of all tourism enterprises com (Latham, 2009). Strategies like lowering prices and increasing

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marketing budget are examples of the strategies that are implemented after a crisis, impacting the net profit as they increase the cost (Duan et al., 2022).

Current Policies and Initiatives

The tourism industry is a vital source of revenue for Egypt (Haiying, 2020). Therefore, the Egyptian authority has prioritized tourism as a critical sector for economic growth. The government prioritized improving the procedures to ease tourists' stay, improve tourism infrastructure, and diversify tourism products (Petrova et al., 2018). The image of Egypt as a safe, welcoming destination is heavily invested in marketing campaigns to attract international visitors (Avraham, 2016; Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite the relentless efforts the Egyptian government has made to challenge the difficulties, the industry still faces several problems at different levels, such as political instability, security concerns, and environmental sustainability (Andrades & Dimanche, 2017; Ramzy, 2018). Thus, the Egyptian government is aware that more must be done to address these challenges. The government has become more committed to sustainable tourism practices and responsible tourism development (Bhuiyan et al., 2023).

Need For a Strategic Comprehensive Framework

The history of tourism's public policies considers tourism a vital economic sector (Elnasr Sobaih & Jones, 2015; Ramzy, 2018). The biggest challenge is the tourism industry's dispersed, unsustainable, and unattainable strategy. There is a vital need to tie all the involved partners with creating a strategic framework for successful sustainable tourism businesses. An example of this dispersion is the lack of connection between the universities as research institutions and the tourism industry.

Several scholars have ensured the vital role University-Industry (U-I) collaboration plays in society development and is a critical premise of success (Ashyrov et al., 2019;

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Berbegal-Mirabent et al., 2019; Cyert & Goodman, 1997; Elnasr Sobait & Jones, 2015; Ferreira & Carayannis, 2019; Mosayebi et al., 2020; Phongthiya et al., 2021). The argument confirms that the lack of U-I collaboration in the Egyptian tourism industry is a significant disadvantage as U-I is the primary source of knowledge necessary for societal transformations, development, and success. According to Elnasr Sobaih and Jones (2015), there needs to be more in the education system of tourism and hotels and the job market. Social science research has little value and is only taught for obtaining an academic degree rather than industry practices. This gap between the education system and the tourism industry is because Egyptian tourism and hotel faculties did not undergo the late 19th-century first academic revolution similar to that in Europe and the US.

This argument demonstrates that the highly bureaucratic socio-political Egyptian system supplemented with a poor education system hinders, to a greater extent, the university as a research institution and the industry-complemented collaboration (Belal & Springuel, 2006: Bond et al., 2012; Elnasr Sobaih & Jones, 2015). Furthermore, the lack of collaborative leadership and government intervention to connect the university-tourism industry research collaboration negatively impacts social and economic development. The U-I is the pathway to knowledge transfer, skills, and innovation for mutual benefits, such as creating frameworks. Recent years have witnessed rapid growth in the tourism industry. This growth is accompanied by its challenges as a distinction as a global concern. Tourism growth means more tourism businesses to conduct and more depletion and load on the environment, governments, and local communities. The more tourists visit a city, place, or attraction, the more gear and destruction this place tourists will cause. Therefore, balancing the environmental, social, and economic objectives is crucial for Egyptian tourism success (Fatima & Elbanna, 2020).

In the meantime, the bigger the tourism business becomes, the more employers will depend on it as their source of living (Liu & Wall, 2006; Ramzy, 2018). This rationale creates sharp competition among tourist destinations to attract tourists and generate more business for its inhabitants. This competition requires Egypt, as a destination, to have and maintain a very high level of customer service and a strategic framework of sustainable tourism (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Baloch et al., 2023; Rasmussen, 2020;).

The complexity that faces Egyptian tourism is rooted in the founder and how it was established by The British colonization between 1881 and 1952 (Wait, 2021). The transformation of tourism into a profitable industry was under British colonization, also called the period of a veiled protectorate, between the 1800s and 1950s. Tourism must be thoroughly and strategically planned as a sustainable business concept (Ramzy, 2018). The interest was in the hands of the British autocrats, who acted only for their welfare. When the 1952 revolution overturned the British colonization interest and businesses and reinforced nationalism, it did not lend attention to tourism as a profitable sector (Blue et al., 2002).

Statement of the Problem

The Egyptian tourism is facing substantial challenges, with the central and most influential factors related to management. These challenges include lack of collaborative leadership, stakeholder engagement, manipulation of interest group decision-making, and coercion of public policies to favor business interests (Elkhwesky, 2022; Ghanem & Saad, 2015; Ramzy, 2018; Wilson & Boyle, 2006). This pressing problem regarding the complex tourism business is causing setbacks in many interrelated but fragmented sectors. Tourism stakeholders often run businesses in silos, using minimal cooperation and organization among them. This individual action in industries makes reaching a consensus on tourism policy difficult, which suffers inconsistency and incoherence. Additionally, a lack of collaborative leadership leads to conflict among different groups, stakeholders, government, non-

governmental, and independent contractors (Azizpour & Fathizadeh, 2016; Dredge & Jamal, 2015). Dispersion among tourism partners and stakeholders inhibits the unity and collective efforts essential to realizing sustainable tourism practices (Dredge & Jamal, 2015).

The fractured, disjointed, and fragmented Egyptian Tourism industry leads to a lack of knowledge sharing and capacity building, which obstructs the incorporation and integration of sustainable tourism practices (Mowforth & Munt, 2016). Policy coherence is a crucial challenge facing Egyptian authorities in response to emerging competitive destinations (Ayoub, 2018; Ramzy, 2018). So, the fragmented nature of Egyptian tourism activities hinders the strategic planning, development, and management of booming sustainable tourism. This considerable gap exists between fine-tuned and well-written rules and how they are used and applied (Guix & Font, 2022). Destination management is crucial to providing the highest quality tourist experience and effectively managing the tourism impacts in host communities and environments (Azizpour & Fathizadeh, 2016).

The tourism business is complex and fragmented due to the inter-related sectors delivering tourists' service from the moment of their arrival in Egypt until their departure (Ladkin et al., 2023; McKercher & Prideaux, 2020). For these fragmented and interrelated sectors and other industries to provide excellent, valuable services to tourists, they must unite. Therefore, the destination's leadership calls for a coalition of these different interests to collaborate and have a common goal, ensuring the integrity and sustainability of Egypt as a travel destination (Azizpour & Fathizadeh, 2016; UNWTO, 2018a). So, a new culture of institutional overhaul with an embedded governance process is needed (Alipour et al., 2011; Azizpour & Fathizadeh, 2016). It is essential that Egypt, as a travel destination, bases its success on its inter-organizational relationship to be comprehensively governed, managed, and coordinated through collaborative leadership (Azizpour & Fathizadeh, 2016; Ghirelli, 2013). Lacking collective leadership inhibits the achievement of a common goal for the

tourism industry in Egypt. Despite the tremendous potential of tourism in Egypt, it is not leveraged as it should be compared to other tourist destinations (Christie et al., 2013). Egypt has a long Mediterranean and Red Seal coastline, unique cultural heritage sites, some considered world wonders, and focal points among diverse cultures (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020). All those make Egypt capable of attracting more tourists. However, a lack of collaborative leadership inhibits the country from optimizing and leveraging its competitiveness as a tourist destination.

Purpose Statement

This research aimed to help tourism practitioners and legislators in Egypt achieve an influential and sustainable tourism industry. This can be accomplished through developing a strategic, comprehensive theoretical framework for sustainable tourism leadership. The rapid change in tourism made sustainable tourism a precondition for a thriving and effective tourism industry. Effective and successful sustainable leadership requires addressing four areas to examine and investigate the factors that can eliminate dispersion and division. Those areas are a few areas that cause this dispersion and division among stakeholders. The study explored the factors that cause the lack of stakeholder engagement and cooperation. It studied thoroughly the reasons behind the lack of collaborative knowledge sharing and capacity building and why the tourism leadership policies are incoherent.

Creating a strategic and comprehensive framework facilitated the regularity structure and apply the practical elements of sustainable leadership. The purpose of this research was to establish and create a strategic framework that will be used as a tool for sustainable tourism leadership practices. This framework was developed by examining the factors contributing to effective and successful sustainable tourism leadership in Egypt. This strategic and comprehensive theoretical framework will bring tourism partners, practitioners, government agencies, independent contractors, academic institutions, and all other direct and

indirect involved actors together in tourism leadership in Egypt. The study investigated the critical factors contributing to the practical and successful sustainable leadership in the tourism industry in Egypt.

Research Questions

- **RQ1**: What are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry to achieve collaborative and sustainable tourism

- **RQ2**: What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces?

- **RQ3**: How do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success?

- **RQ4**: What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders and leaders must develop a strategic framework for achieving sustainable Egyptian tourism leadership.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks for the study are applied to determine the challenges and critical factors for a flourishing tourism industry in Egypt. Finding solutions to overcome challenges facing the Egyptian sector will be the foundation of the strategic framework. Egypt's tourism industry has dispersion leadership and needs collaborative and sustainable leadership. The leadership role actively engages the stakeholders (followers) by interactively influencing them to achieve the common goal (Bass, 1990). This leadership process is meant to accomplish sustainable tourism as the shared goal between leaders and followers (Stogdill, 1950).

The strategic, comprehensive framework will be the tourism leadership tool to bond all parties to practical, prosperous, sustainable tourism as a common goal. This central problem has resulted in other problems and other symptoms. Individuality practice in

leadership, disparities and division, irrationality, and incoherence in policy implementation waste resources and capacity. These factors hinder Egyptian tourism growth, which in its role loss for the gross domestic production (GPD). The increased globalization, rapid technological cultural values, and competition require a holistic view of the industry to include all involved partners to achieve the common goal.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is a strengths-based positive perspective that seeks to identify the factors contributing to and leading to booming sustainable tourism in Egypt (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). It aims to discover, increase, and intensify factors that drive success by exploring positive experiences, organizational practices, and stakeholders' commitment to collaborative and participatory leadership (Guix & Font, 2022).

AI has four Ds phases that will be discussed in the following section(s). The discovery phase is identifying the critical factors to uncover positive experiences in Egyptian tourism experiences. This will be done through interviewing, conducting surveys, and focus groups with the industry panel of experts. Identifying the model of booming tourism industries in other countries such as Spain and France will help to gain insights into the critical factors that led to their success (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2021; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

The dream phase is to formulate a vision of the Egyptian tourism industry`s future, inspired and driven by the previous step. In this phase, the aspirations and image of the tourism industry's key stakeholders and partners in both the public and private sectors will be incorporated. This will allow a profound understanding of how critical factors can shape a thriving tourism industry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Puroila & Mäkelä, 2019).

The design phase creates strategies and practices based on the identified critical factors. In this phase, all stakeholders, including government agencies, tour operators, local

communities, independent contractors such as tourist guides, and, if possible, tourists themselves, must be engaged to work towards designing the strategic framework for booming sustainable tourism. The design phase involves all parties and stakeholders' participation in creating action plans, policies, and strategic frameworks that empower the strengths and positive aspects of the industry (Manetti et al., 2021).

The destiny phase is about implementing and delivering the previous stages' proposed design and vision (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The tourism industry is vibrant and dynamic, requiring continuous fostering of a culture of improvement following the implementation of the strategic framework. The continued monitoring of the tourism industry's recent changes and evaluation of the impact of the developed strategic, comprehensive framework will ensure a thriving, sustainable Egyptian tourism industry. In addition, monitoring and evaluating the effects of these strategies helps identify areas of success and areas that require further refinement. This phase emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and ongoing learning to sustain tourism success in Egypt (Manetti et al., 2021).

Critical Constructivism Approach

Examining the power and dynamics of social structure to reveal the underlying factors that lead to successful tourism practices in Egypt and other competing tourism countries like France and Spain (Butowski et al., 2022; Kumar & Dhir, 2020). Further, applying critical constructivism gives a distinctive lens to create and develop the strategic, comprehensive framework for booming sustainable tourism in Egypt (Butowski et al., 2022; Kivunja, 2018). It is worth mentioning that the critical constructivism approach brings values beyond traditional reach to understand the power of relations, social structure, and ideological influences, which are crucial in shaping tourism practices in Egypt (Sadeghi et al., 2020).

Critical perspectives allow a deeper analysis of power dynamics to operate the tourism industry (Butowski et al, 2022; Zou & Yu, 2022). No doubt, exploring how the power is exercised and distributed among public and private stakeholders impacts the Egyptian tourism industry. The critical assessment of the various stakeholders, institutions, agencies, and policymakers influences the essential factors behind shaping booming sustainable tourism in Egypt (Zaidi, 2022).

The reflective evaluation examines how the social structure impacts tourism practices in Egypt (Abou-Shouk et al, 2018). Local communities in a country with a Muslim majority view tourism practices, policies, and social norms related to tourists, such as open bars that service alcoholic beverages and tourists not following the dress codes in local communities. It is essential to reflect on the underlying social structures that maintain positive behaviors and practices that can be identified and strengthened to contribute to booming sustainable tourism. Consciousness is to uncover ideological influences that shape tourism practices in Egypt. This will examine how ideologies such as neoliberalism, sustainability, and cultural authenticity impact the development and success of tourism. This will help to critically identify and understand how these ideologies affect ideological factors contributing to Egypt's effective and successful sustainable tourism (Zaidi, 2022). Critical theory, as an essential component of constructivism, facilitates scrutiny of power relations and trans-formation within the Egyptian tourism industry. This will help to identify how important it is to understand the social, economic, and political contexts in which tourism operates. It requires a critical analysis of these contexts to develop transformative strategies that challenge existing power structures and promote more equitable and sustainable tourism practices (Sadeghi et al., 2020).

Significance of the Study

This study sought to find the critical factors for a successful and effective sustainable tourism leadership in Egypt, with the aim of developing a strategic and comprehensive framework for a successful, effective, sustainable tourism leadership. The findings of this study will be used to create a strategic framework for Egyptian tourism industry professionals (Pan et al., 2018). The strategic framework can benefit the following: (a) tourism policymakers in Egypt; (b) other government officials; (c) professionals working in direct and indirect businesses in the tourism industry such as hotels, travel operators, tourist transportation, Nile cruises, tourist guides, and other independent contractors, and; (d) educational institutions.

Tourism policymakers, government officials, the tourism public, and the private sector will benefit from this study by appreciating the impact of the strategic framework's role in bonding the tourism industry. They will adopt the strategy of collaborative work, sharing knowledge, engagement work, coordinated capacity utilization, and practice partnership. Developing a strategic, comprehensive framework, all partners, either the public or private sector, who are involved in the tourism industry will use it to address the lack of policies that impede incoherence and lack of sustainable tourism leadership. The strategic framework will develop employees' and leaders' skills to apply the critical factors of sustainable tourism. Furthermore, leaders will be able to build the solutions that will continue to grow the tourism businesses with this strategic framework, identify industry trends, and develop its vision.

Assumptions of the Study

The underlying assumption of this study was that individuals running tour operator companies would share their lived experiences of disorganization, fragmentation, and lacking collaborative leadership in Egypt`s touirsm industry. It was presumed that the participants in

the Egyptian tourism industry may have limitations in expressing their views. This may refer to the cultural norms and levels (Schein, 2020), not to criticize policymakers and government officials. To the researcher's best knowledge, participants are expected to provide their honest lived experience as a part of the research. This follows the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. Interviewees and participants were informed about their rights, ensuring the protection of their welfare and privacy. That measure was done before the interviewees consent to participate in the study. The researcher provided the participants with the fundamental knowledge to guarantee their understanding of the terminology of the research.

Limitations of the Study

Data availability might be limited in terms of accessibility and reliability; up-to-date data can be a challenge in tourism research in Egypt. This can restrict the scope and depth of studies, making it difficult to accurately analyze trends, patterns, and impacts. The degree of freedom of speech will limit criticizing the authorities of policymakers and government officials. This limitation can be a transparency trap for the key persons reporting challenges and hurdles the tourism industry faces. Data source reliability can be challenging as officials favor having more significant numbers when possible because this serves their political purpose and agenda. The need for longitudinal research and studies can limit the analysis of track changes and developments of leadership style and tourism profitability.

Definition of Terms

BC: Refers to the historical area before Christ.

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH): It includes traditions or living expressions inherited from ancestors and passed on to descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge, and practices concerning nature and the universe (UNESCO, 2023).

Sustainable Tourism: Tourism that fully accounts for its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the need of visitors, the industry, environmental and host communities" (Unted Nations, 2023).

Tourism Transformation Theory: The transformation of the tourist to be an active actor in the tourism industry. It is about the co-value creation between tourists and host to learn and grow.

Tourophobia: Defined as "a fear of travel resulting from man-made or natural disasters" (Çakar, 2021 p. 103).

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 1, an introduction to tourism as an economic driving factor was discussed, as how the tourism industry is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally. Tourism's role in the Egyptian economy is that it contributes to approximately 10% of the GDP; according to Galal (2022), the tourism sector hosts about three million workers in Egypt. The historical background of tourism as an economic venture was elaborated and deepened. The root cause of the current tourism policy incoherence and dispersion was discussed and analyzed as an introduction to the problem statement. Disjointed and lacking collaborative leadership is the tourism industry's problem, as stated in the problem statement. This study aimed to explore and find the critical factors that lead to a successful sustainable tourism business to create and develop a strategic framework. The significance of this study was to use phenomenological research to understand the phenomena of tourism's lack of collaborative leadership to design and develop a strategic framework. This strategic framework will be befitting all Egyptian tourism partitioners, stakeholders, and partners.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the established literature about Egyptian tourism industry, sustainable tourism, leadership theories, and relevant frameworks. The literature review analyzes the challenges facing Egyptian tourism to understand their causes and what the literature suggests as possible theories and frameworks that can be applied to eliminate them. The literature offers a fair amount of research about tourism critical success factors (CSFs), which are the factors needed for successful sustainable tourism (Çakar, 2018; Chingarande & Saayman, 2018; Engelbrecht et al., 2014), and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), in addition to Tourism Competitiveness (TC) and other factors that are the fundamentals for successful sustainable tourism. Tourism success factors are critical for success in the tourism industry; those elements of success can be used as guidelines for further progress to ensure a successful, sustainable tourism industry (Bagur-Femenías et al., 2019; Wiranatha et al., 2012). Destinations critical success factors and competitiveness are the keys to running socially, environmentally responsible, and economically profitable tourism, aligning with sustainable tourism's three pillars. Furthermore, several aspects of tourist destination competitiveness, along with well-established studies, are carefully reviewed to define the characteristics that distinguish Egyptian tourism competitiveness.

Tourism as a Global Economy Drives

Tourism is a phenomenon that results from the sum of interactions and activities that take place during a trip or a stay of non-residents as long as this trip or stay does not lead to permanent residence and is not connected to any permanent or temporary gains activity (Andreis & Carioni, 2019; Norris, 2019). Those activities generate job opportunities and contribute to the destination country's economic growth, which are nations targets to achieve welfare and development. Creating successful sustainable tourism is built upon balancing and compromising the three main pillars of society's environmental, economic, and social

objectives (Cucculelli & Goffi, 2016; Streimikiene et al., 2020). Eventually, sustainable tourism focuses on responsible tourism by promoting the driving force to achieve economic growth and social and environmental responsibilities, maximize tourism's socioeconomic contribution, and minimize possible negative impacts (UNWTO, 2023a).

Tourism is a prominent revenue-generating sector that contributes to the economic growth in tourism destination countries (Saner et al., 2019; WTTC, 2020). In other words, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy derived over 10 trillion dollars, equaling 10.4% of the worldwide gross domestic product (GDP), from tourism industry. This number includes direct, indirect, and tourism-related impacts; the sector reports that in 2019 there were almost 334 million jobs (WTTC, 2023). Hosseini et al (2021) concur that tourism is a significant economic resource for many nations and is relevant to their prosperity.

The tourism industry is essentially an integration of a multitude of different sectors of other industries in the economy rather than one self-sufficient industry (Calero & Turner, 2020; Dwyer et al., 2009; Ferro Luzzi & Flückiger, 2003; Hampton et al., 2017; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). Technological developments and the growth of air transportation networks enhanced the world's interconnectedness and comprehensibility. Similarly, these developments transformed tourism and made it proliferate (Gössling & Michael Hall, 2019; OECD, 2016; United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2022). As a significant contributor to economic growth, tourism is also plays a pivotal role in generation income and foreign exchange (Bengtsson et al., 2018).

Tourism contributes to exports because tourists purchase souvenirs and locally produced items. Such items and goods do not accrue tariffs nor shipment expenses (Elgarhy & Mohamed, 2023; Ragab & Meis, 2016). More importantly, the strong growth in 2018 outbound travel from different destinations boosted the international economy with 1.7 trillion dollars (UNWTO, 2019). Because the tourism sector has yet to fully recover from a

48% decline (from 3.5 trillion dollars to 1.7 trillion dollars) in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2019 is the last average revenue year to measure growth before abnormal shut downs. This number, 1.7 trillion dollars, equals 29% of global service exports and 7% of overall exports (Wright, 2020). This growth makes tourism the third largest growing economic sector after fuels and chemicals (UNWTO, 2019). Tourism is a significant catalyst for developing the economy and exchanging culture among nations.

The significant share of production items cluster diverse industries to supply tourists with the consumer goods and services, making tourism a mixture of sectors (Icoz & Icoz, 2019; Shizhao & Mingying, 2023).Tourism is recognized as one of the most-growing industries globally, with the number of tourists rising from 25 million in 1950 to 1.465 billion in 2019. The tremendous number of tourists resulted in a parallel growth in tourist expenditure from 2 billion to 1.9 trillion dollars (Beirman, 2022; UNWTO, 2023b). In view of this, low-income countries can benefit from tourism to improve their low product quality, low-income pattern, and low expenditure, limiting their development (Ahmad et al., 2020; Bakker & Twining-Ward, 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020; Lima et al., 2018).

Tourism provides excellent economic opportunities to increase socioeconomic benefits by focusing on tourism market investment (Icoz & Icoz, 2019; C. Zhang & Jensen, 2005). Among the many great opportunities and values tourism adds to the destination are employment, source of foreign currency, and investment (Icoz & Icoz, 2019; J. Zhang & Jensen, 2005). The tourism sector positively impacts the local economy, boosts economic diversity, and increases revenues and jobs, tax revenues, and national income. It is vital in creating employment opportunities and growing the gross domestic product (Manzoor et al., 2019). As a powerful economic force, tourism provides foreign exchange, where tourists generate economic value for a destination through direct or indirect spending and a multiplier of indirect financial input (Matthew et al., 2021; Medina-Muñoz et al., 2016).

Thus, focusing on the tourism wealth-creating characteristics and economic powers, tourism is an economic booster and life changer for a nation (Çolak et al., 2023; Matthew et al., 2021; Medina-Muñoz et al., 2016). It can also be used as a method of poverty alleviation if the pro-poor tourism concept is implemented Egypt, for example, is one of the most history-rich countries in the world, with a multitude of cultural heritage sites, including the world's seventh wonder, the Giza pyramids (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020). The Egyptian tourism industry contributes approximately 13 million tourists, boosting the economy with 12.6 billion dollars in 2019 and employing a 2.4 million people In the workforce (Galal, 2022). Nevertheless, Egyptian tourism has been dealing with various challenges in the last few decades.

Egyptian Tourism Challenges

The main Egyptian tourism challenge stems from its sectors fragmented, disorganized, and lacking collaborative leadership (Estevao et al., 2020; Kenawy et al., 2019; Ramzy, 2018). The significance of building a sustainable tourism industry is emphasized by several principles, including ensuring the regional development, unlocking and use of idling capacity, belief in the common good for the local communities, and trust between host and tourist (Cole et al., 2020; Streimikiene et al., 2020). The Egyptian tourism industry has economic potential that can increase national income and offers regional development opportunities and boost the welfare of local communities (Ahmad et al., 2020; Andersson et al., 2005; Hazari & Kaur, 1995; Shi & Li, 2014). Although tourism sectors are interrelated to some extent, these sectors are not working harmoniously. In the same manner, these sectors are disorganized and lack collaborative leadership, where as its leadership have neither common goals, nor vision (Çolak et al., 2023; Graci, 2015). As tourism serves as a primary source for hard foreign currency, offers significant employment opportunities, plays a role in poverty alleviation, and has tremendous future growth potential. Many tourism countries are

struggling to achieve economic growth potential, create wealth, and improve its people's living standards (Comerio & Strozzi, 2019). The undermentioned section will succinctly outline the government organization with its several sub-agencies.

Egyptian Ministry of Tourism

The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities is the government agency in charge of the tourism sector (OECD, 2020b). As a government agency, Ministry of Tourism establishes the rules, regulations, and framework for the tourism industry. It has two sub-agencies under its jurisdiction: (1) the Tourism Development Authority, which sets and implements regulations for Tourism projects and investments; (2) The Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA), which are accountable for promoting and marketing inbound and internal tourism (OECD, 2020b).

Another body of authority under the authority of the Ministry, mainly designed to serve the private sector, is the Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF), which has the authority to administrate the private tourism enterprises via its five tourism industry business associations: (1) Hotels Association, (2) Travel Agents Association, (3) Chamber of Tourist Establishment, (4) Chamber of Tourist Commodities, and (5) Chamber of Diving and Water Sports (OECD, 2020c). ETF cooperates with the tourism ministry to plan and manage the tourism workforce, and it reviews and approves any new legislation or measures taken. The Ministry of Tourism also partners with intergovernmental and international organizations to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Ministry of Tourism launched in 2018 what is called, the Egypt Tourism Reform Program (E-TRP) (OECD, 2020c; UNWTO, 2019; 2023a). The program's objectives were strengthening Egypt's tourism competitiveness and align the tourism industry with international quality and standards. In Figure 3, the tourism ministry and its sub-agencies are shown.

Figure 3

Egypt: Organizational Chart of Tourism Body
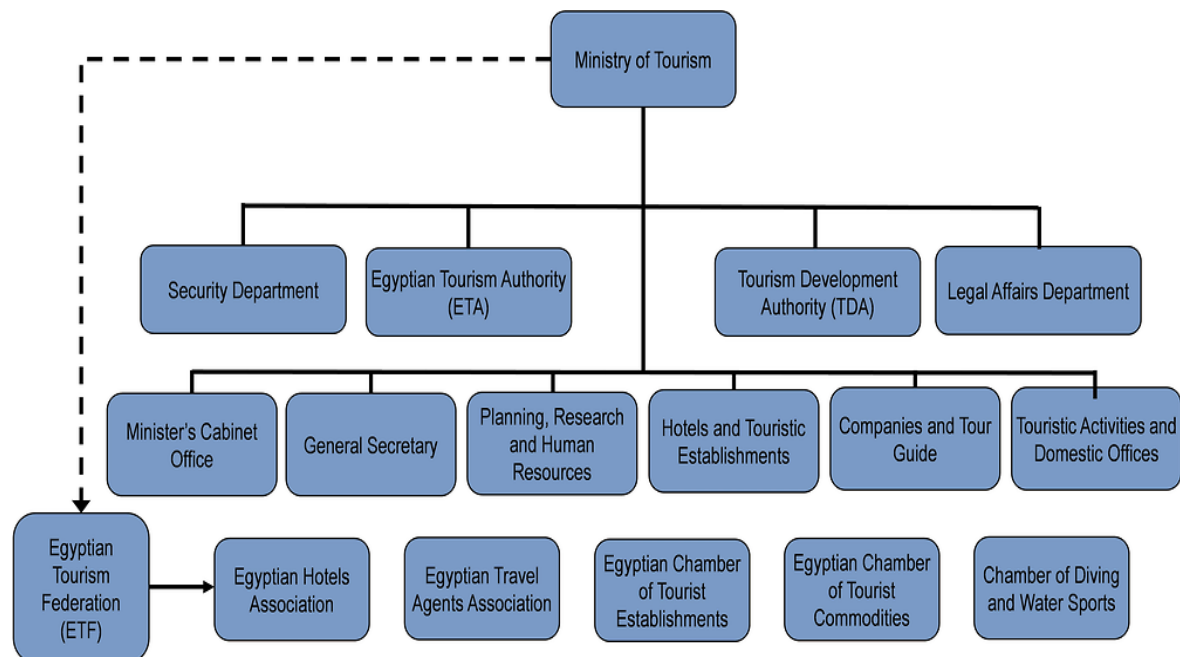
Note. From OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2020c. (https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/74345b15-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/74345b15-en)

The pillars of the structural reform are:

● Update the almost 50-year-old, dated legal framework governing the tourism industry, including the private sector as an active participant in tourism public policymaking,

● Organizational Reform to have a skilled workforce to ensure performance quality,

● Marketing and promoting Egypt using new and contemporary dimensions and trends,

● Develop the tourism Infrastructure,

● Follow the global tourism trends

These pillars of reform are meant to encourage social, environmentally responsible, and economically profitable tourism (OECD, 2020a; OECD, 2020c). Promoting women as

gender equality and diversity in Egyptian social classes and encouraging tourism innovation and digital transformation as Smart Tourism are among the goals of the proposed reform (OECD, 2020c). The Ministry of Tourisms main challenges are updating the 50- year-old, dated framework governing the tourism industry. The desired update implies several layers of change in tourism leadership to have agility and adaptability, which will lead to an effective and successful transformation to digitalization and customer value outcomes (Alsaad et al., 2022; Hadjielias et al., 2022).

The expansion of the tourism sector increases the number of employment; thus, reducing the country's unemployment, which enhances Egypt's overall economy (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2017; Statista, 2023). It is vital to prevent tourism from falling into the condition of a monopoly industry for a specific interest group (Çolak et al., 2023). This monopolization will lead to domestic residents' welfare decline and tourism immiseration (Eden & Chao, 2021; Hazari et al., 1995). Achieving equity in the tourism industry among stakeholders and partners requires a sustainable approach to implementing the pro-poor tourism ideology (PPT), a concept that was adopted by non-governments and international organizations such as United Nations. PPT is meant to reduce poverty in developing countries through implementing tourism initiatives (Akrong, 2019; Hummel & van der Duim, 2012; UNWTO, 2019. The sustainability approach must include local people's participation in tourism development decisions (Anderson, 2015; Çolak et al., 2023).

Egypt has various tourism types that can be offered to the global tourism market, such as conferences, religious, sports, festivals, ecological, medical, and the most popular, recreational and cultural heritage (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020). Cultural heritage and recreational tourism represent Egypt's tourism identity (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020). Such types of tourism make Egypt world famous as a travel destination and uniquely attractive with

moderate, sunny weather, and many tourist attractions, which tailor to all economic classes. Ancient Egyptian historical sites such as the iconic, world-famous Giza pyramids, the step pyramid in Saqqara, the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens, Karnak, Luxor, Edfu, Kom-Ombo, and Philae temples in the cities of Cairo, Luxor, and Aswan are some of the endless tourist attractions (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020).

Egypt has a unique geographical location, considered the gate of Africa between the Mediterranean and the Red Seas (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020; Raslan, 2003; Shohaieb, 2020). This unique location has a wealth-creating potential for tourism as it offers various visitors' activities and seaside vacations. The reasonable flight distance from Northwestern Europe makes it a convenient space for wealthy and sun-seeking Northwestern Europeans. Additionally, its proximity to the wealthy Arabian Gulf countries makes it a popular entertainment and recreational destination (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020).

Egyptian tourism, compared to other travel destinations such as France, Spain, and Greece, with number of tourists arrivals 217, 126, and 34 million respectively in 2019 (The World Bank, 2020), can increase tourism flow utilizing its tourism future potential growth. Tourism flow brings enormous economic outcomes, boosts the gross domestic production (GDP), creates job opportunities, and the overall nation's prosperity (Manzoor et al., 2019). All the great cultural heritage sites, the long coastline on the midterminal and Red Sea, great religious sites, and many other tourists adventure features are making Egypt a world-famous tourist destination.

Spain has a coastline of 4964 km and received approximately 126 million tourists in 2019, compared to Egypt, whose coastline of 2450 km received around 13 million tourists in the same year (The World Bank, 2023). It is essential to study other destinations critical success factors such as tourist experience, accessibility, and infrastructure, which are discussed in the following sections. Understanding these three success factors helps to

explain the reason behind the number gaps in tourist arrivals, such as Spain and France's numbers compared to Egypt's.

Tourist Experience

Creating a positive tourist experience is a significant factor in achieving successful sustainable tourism (Grilli et al., 2021; Line et al., 2018; Streimikiene et al., 2021; Wondirad et al., 2020). It focuses on enhancing the total experience of tourists across issues like high levels of personalized customer services, cultural involvement, and exclusive attractions (Baloch et al., 2023; Chang, 2018; Streimikiene et al., 2020; Xiang et al., 2021). Customer satisfaction means customer loyalty, which plays a vital role in tourism. A satisfied tourist with travel services provided to him is more likely to have a positive customer satisfaction and feedback, spreading of positive word of mouth, and customer`s destination loyalty (Z. Chen & Yuan, 2020). These customer behaviors related to tourist satisfaction are influential factors in customer destination loyalty (Cetin & Dincer, 2014), which is an effective tool for differentiation and gaining a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive tourism market (Cossío -Silva et al., 2019; Sadq et al., 2019). Customer loyalty plays an essential role in obtaining profitability (Cossío-Silva et al., 2019; Yoo & Bai, 2013). In other words, tourist satisfaction is highly desirable in the tourism industry (Elgarhy & Mohamed, 2023; Othman et al., 2019).

Egyptian tourism success and profitability depend on constructing the tourism sustainability pillars which are social, environmental, and economic (Pung et al., 2020; Steiner, 2006). Tourists' well-being and experience involve meaningful satisfaction and engagement. Tourists, in their travel, seek opportunities to learn and grow; this learning and growth experience is also termed transformative tourism (Pung et al., 2020). Transformative tourism is a positive change in attitude among tourists who participate in such an experience (Filep & Laing, 2019; Pung et al., 2020).

UNWTO (2019) stated that fostering responsible travel leads to a lifestyle change towards sustainable global citizenship and positively influences travel destinations. Understanding the crux of the transformation tourism theory by tourism leaders in Egypt is vital in determining Egypt's travel destination's positive impact on tourists (Pung et al., 2020). Parsons and Shils (1951) based their analyses on observing the tourist's visible actions. The observation of tourists after their trip was to detect the positive behaviors after their return home (Pung et al., 2020).

Accessibility and Infrastructure

Tourism includes all services provided to a nonresident customer (Tsartsara, 2018; UNWTO, 2023a). Customers (tourists) invest their time and monetary funds to experience new traditions and cultures different than their own. Tourists are expected by the local communities to have a level of cultural understanding of the functioning, maintenance, infrastructure management, and accessibility and their economic cost. Infrastructure and accessibility are crucial in determining a positive tourist experience (W. C. Chan et al., 2022; Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2008; Lo et al., 2019; Prayag, 2009). To lead a profitable, thriving tourism industry, all infrastructures must meet specific standards to facilitate positive tourist experiences (Ramyar & Halim, 2020). Infrastructure in tourism includes, but is not limited to, transportation, accommodation, attractions and entertainment, hospitality, environment, cultural heritage, convention centers, and supporting infrastructure.

Transportation is the backbone of the tourism infrastructure (Bursa et al., 2022; Yannis & Chaziris, 2020). Tourists will select their destination choice based upon the mobility and accessibility of their destinations (Bursa et al., 2022). Tourists will use all means of transportation in air, sea, and land, using flights, busses, boats, airports, seaports, roads and highways, railways, and public transportation to their desired destination (Li et al., 2022). Destination Transportation must be well-managed and maintained. According to the

OECD (2016), if transport and tourism synergies are managed effectively, they can improve tourists' mobility, enhance tourist satisfaction, and secure the economic viability of local transportation by servicing both local communities and tourists.

Accommodation is a critical infrastructure element (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Jeong & Kim, 2019; Su et al., 2011). It includes hotels, resorts, motels, hostels, vacation rentals, and camping facilities. Tourist satisfaction is based on their perceived impressions of their destination. This perceived value and tourist satisfaction are critical factors of destination loyalty. Perceived value translates to tourists' satisfaction and is linked with their decision-making in choosing their travel destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Jeong & Kim, 2019; Su et al., 2011).

Infrastructure is the core value in delivering a quality service and serving tourists, maximizing socioeconomic benefits, and enhancing their experiences (OECD, 2016; Su et al., 2011). The tourist experience is essential for tourism sustainability and continues to balance environmental, social, and economic objectives (UNWTO, 2023b). Tourist satisfaction requires maintaining and managing tourism aspects and elements, such as cultural heritage preservation (MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019). The tourists' positive experience results in tourist satisfaction which in turn results in a positive destination image and impression. Tourists' positive experience is earned when cultural heritage sites are preserved, maintained, and balanced with modern development (Balıkçıoğlu Dedeoğlu et al., 2022; Barrionuevo et al., 2019).

Achieving sustainable tourism requires incorporated practices that minimize the environmental impact of tourism (Hongmei et al., 2021; Pekovic, 2021). Environmental diminution will negatively impact the future of tourism, while pursuing methods to protect it will ensure long-term viability. To provide environmental protection, local communities and stakeholders must monitor ecological protection (Pekovic, 2021). The tourism industry is a

multifaced sector that involves several other industries and sectors such as security, food and beverage, healthcare, fire department, and private and public sector institutions. Stakeholder collaboration is a condition for saving idle capacity, guarding a practical tourism experience, and encouraging government bodies, local communities, private sectors, and non-government organizations to achieve a holistic approach to applicable, sustainable tourism (Hongmei et al., 2021; Pjerotić et al., 2016).

Improving and developing a successful sustainable Egyptian tourism implies improving its economic, social, and environmental situation (E. Helmy, 2004; E. Helmy & Cooper, 2002; Sghaier et al., 2019). Despite the high potential of Egyptian tourism, it has yet to achieve suitable leverage of its future growth potential. Thus, this research aims to establish a strategic framework for developing booming sustainable tourism in Egypt. The Egyptian tourism industry's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT factors) are identified through a literature review (Hosseini et al., 2021). Sustainability in tourism has been the priority research and discussion by both tourism institutions and policymakers emphasizing the role of tourism in development. Research on sustainable tourism proliferated in 1992 at the United Nations Rio Conference on Environment and Development. UNWTO launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, underscoring the tourism contribution to economic growth (SDG 8), reduction of inequalities (SDG 10), and justice (SDG 16) (Jokela & Minoia, 2021). Frameworks and theories are the blueprints of the study as they serve as a guide to build it. The frameworks and theories a researcher uses in a study is like a blueprint for a house (Torraco, 1997; Trifiletti et al., 2005). The following sections will discuss the frameworks and theories to create a strategic framework that requires significant critical thinking and planning.

Egyptian Tourism Frameworks

Evaluating Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to Egyptian Tourism

The empirical use of SWOT analyses as a strategic framework emerged in 1952 as Lockheed's Corporate department applied it to unlock strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Navarro-Martínez et al., 2020; Puyt et al., 2020). For this purpose, the framework was later widely applied as a strategic technique for planning used to evaluate industries, corporates, or organizations' competitiveness (Dong et al., 2022; Hossain & Khanal, 2020; Puyt et al., 2020). Improving and developing successful, sustainable Egyptian tourism implies improving its economic, social, and environmental objectives (Ramzy, 2018). Despite the high potential of Egyptian tourism, it has not yet achieved suitable leveraging of its optimal potential (Haddoud et al., 2022). Afromentioned the goal this study aims to estblish a strategic framework for developing successful sustainable tourism in Egypt. To achieve this objective, the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT factors) are identified (Hosseini et al., 2021; Shao & Sun, 2020), then implemented In policies to promote investing in the strengthens and remove the negatives

The results of SWOT analyses will help tourism leaders in Egypt identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These four elements of the SWOT can be applied by leaders to efficiently formulate strategic planning using its findings and identify factors that should be maintained or improved (Phadermrod et al., 2019). Tourism leaders in Egypt can improve, maintain, and increase the number of tourists to visit heritage sites. Leaders must implement policies that enforce more training to the tourism workforce to train a skilled workforce, which leads to higher quality customer service. The tourism business environment in Egypt does not support customer satisfaction (Eraqi, 2006). There is a lack of motivation and measuring system to encourage people to be creative and innovative. Tourism leaders will promote policies that address threats and use the potential opportunities (Adawiyah et al., 2020; Ashley et al., 2007; Edgell et al., 2008; Eraqi, 2006).

PESTEL Analysis for Egyptian Tourism

The use of the PESTEL framework is meant to establish a framework for scanning Egypt's competitiveness as a travel destination (Diaz Ruiz et al., 2020; Rouby, 2019). This will help leaders foster tourism policies to accommodate political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors of Egyptian Tourism. According to Rouby (2019) many travel destinations are trying to increase their competitiveness to attract tourists and provide them with services. Egypt as a travel destination needs to increase its competitiveness through strategic planning. The first step is to scan the industry market for potential disruptions to detect significant market-shaping events (Diaz Ruiz et al., 2020). Egyptian tourism needs a competitiveness measure to detect potential tourism industry disruptions. It is crucial to study and analyze future threats and build a strategic framework to keep the destination share of the global tourism market (Dwyer et al., 2012; Dwyer et al., 2009; Stephens Balakrishnan, 2009). A framework that would enable Egyptian tourism practitioners and leaders to detect potential disruption is the PESTEL framework, which stands for political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal. PESTEL is widely and frequently used by practitioners and leaders as a tool to identify the industry either as a standalone tool or as a key to identify the threats and opportunities in SWOT analyses (Afonina, 2015; Diaz Ruiz et al., 2020; Tassabehji & Isherwood, 2014).

In addition, the PESTEL framework can be used in studying the external influences that can impact the tourism industry in Egypt (Benzaghta et al., 2021; Ismail et al., 2023; Nandonde, 2019; Rahman et al., 2014; Wan, 2022). For example, it examines the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors that can shape the industry's future. Understanding factors is crucial for anticipating future challenges and opportunities in Egypt's tourism sector. The emerging types and forms of progressively borderless and complicated markets are evolving worldwide, henceforth distracting an inescapable conceptualization of tourism industries and product categories. The emerging new

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technologies such as applications like Airbnb, Facebook, Instagram, and Uber are tourism industry disruptors; their impact on tourism accommodation and tourism transportation is considerable (Diaz Ruiz et al., 2020; Mason, 2017).

The emerging technologies threaten the established tourism business concepts, when the business concepts should have a competitiveness advantage. According to the OECD (2020c; Weill & Woerner, 2015), small and midsize businesses will only survive if they invest in digitalization. Embracing new technologies is the key to staying and remaining competitive in the tourism industry. Policymakers' role is essential to help businesses of all sizes, including small and midsize traditional tourism companies, adopt the digital transformation and its paradigm shift (Weill & Woerner, 2015). The government's prominent role is to build the infrastructure needed for tourism enterprises to cope with the evolving digital technological opportunities and challenges from their applications (OECD, 2020c).

Tourism Satellite Account

Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) is an essential and prevailing statistical framework providing data, statistics, and guidelines to measure the tourism sector's contribution to a country's economy (Comerio & Strozzi, 2019; OECD, 2008). TSA measures the size of economic impacts and activities that are not accounted for in the traditional national accounts in the Egyptian economy (Comerio & Strozzi, 2019). Those accounts are inbound domestic tourism expenditure, outbound tourism expenditure, internal tourism expenditure, production account of tourism industries, gross value added (GVA) and gross domestic product (GDP) attributed to tourism, employment, investment, government consumption, and non-monetary indicators (Frechtling, 2010).

Those data sets and indicators offer a comprehensive means to measure the economic tourism`s contribution and assess the direct and indirect tourism contribution to GDP (Frechtling, 2010; Habibi et al., 2018). When utilized, the positive aspect of TSA lies in its

capacity to offer a comprehensive measurement and analysis of the economic impacts of tourism on the Egyptian economy, thereby facilitating a more accurate assessment of its contribution (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013). Governments and policymakers should interpret the TSA's data in formulating their tourism policies to identify Egyptian tourism areas of improvement and growth potential.

The governments will effectively allocate resources and concentrate their research and development on economic sectors that benefit from tourism activities (Sigala, 2020). Tourism sub-sectors, such as hospitality, transportation, entertainment, and Nile cruises, should use the data to predict growth potential and increase their recruitment hiring. Creating job opportunities is an accurate measure to evaluate tourism economic values, which promotes sustainable tourism development (Xiao et al., 2018). However, TSA has some drawbacks, like data limitation related to limited resources or insufficient statistical infrastructure, which lead to skewed outcomes and inaccurate tourism assessment impacts (Xiao et al., 2018). TSA data extensively focuses on economic measurements, which may neglect social and cultural considerations and lead to cultural homogenization, loss of authenticity, and interference with local communities (Pellaton et al., 2022).

Environmental Sustainability and Cultural Assessment

Tourism activities have positive and negative impacts on the environment (Agarwal et al., 2019; Ghulam Rabbany et al., 2013). The environmental impact assessment (EIA) is one of the instruments employed to measure the effect of tourism activities on the Egyptian environment. EIA is the systematic assessment and identification of the conceivable effects of a project, a plan, a program, or a policy action related to socioeconomic, physical-chemical-biological, and cultural components of the environments (Frihy, 2001; Khan et al., 2020a). The socio-cultural and socio-economic tourism impacts are debated by Shahzalal (2016) stating that Egyptian local communities and visiting tourists are jointly and equally

responsible for damaging or keeping the Egyptian culture authentic (Spanou, 2007; Shahzalal, 2016). However, there are both negative and positive cultural impacts of tourism. Adverse effects such as acculturation affect which local people entertain tourists. They adapt to tourists' needs, values, and even attitudes. The result is a hybrid culture reflecting tourism's negative impacts on local people. Hybrid culture happens when tourists' need for entertainment and cuisine is mixed with Egyptian local communities, diluting the authentic and traditional local communities' culture.

Despite local Egyptian cultural loss, local communities feel content due to the value and wealth tourism adds to their life (Dłużewska, 2019). The third detrimental effect of tourism on local Egyptian culture is the commodification of culture elements. When tourists visit local Nubian villages to have a cultural insight, local Egyptians add some artificial effects, such as catching a baby crocodile from the Nile River to show it to tourists as an eye-catching display (Dłużewska, 2019; Shahzalal, 2016; Shepherd, 2002). Cultural debasement as a commodity increases the influences of foreign cultures, such as acceptance of alcohol consumption and local people's acceptance of foreign outfits, that may conflict with local values. As for the positive impacts on local cultures, tourism encourages and rewards cultural preservation, promoting cultural collectivism, and maintaining local host traditions. An example is the tourist's positive behavior, such as hygienic concepts, positive attitude toward learning about others, and merging tourists' knowledge with the local people's traditions (Shahzalal, 2016).

Tourism Social Impact Assessment

A conceptual connection exists between social tourism and sustainable development (Diekmann et al., 2018; McCabe, 2018). A comprehensive tourism social impact assessment on Egyptian society will help develop strategies and manage tourism policies that maximize

the positive social impact and mitigate the adverse effects on Egyptian local communities at the same time (Diekmann et al., 2018; McCombes et al., 2015; UNDP, 2022).

Tourism's social effects on the local communities and tourism stakeholders are essential for sustainable development (Cohen, 1972; McCombes et al., 2015). The tourism social impact assessment framework explores the values of resident's perceptions of tourisms impact on the host communities and its influences on tourists. According to Martín et al. (2017), hosts denote a positive attitude, higher interest, and engagement with their communities. The social impact assessment evaluates the social significance of tourism development on local communities. These impacts focus on local lifestyle change, community interconnectedness, and living conditions (Martín et al., 2017).

Destination Sustainability Assessment Framework

The sustainability assessment framework is a tool that deals with factors like destinations green standards and criteria, such as their relations to nature, environments, culture, and community impact (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2021). The destination sustainability assessment framework determines tourism industry economics, social, and environmental effects (Streimikiene et al., 2021). The financial objective will help Egyptian policymakers prioritize policies ensuring economic gains. Social goals will help increase the beneficial outcomes of tourism on local communities and mitigate the opposing sides. Environment capacity has to be balanced to achieve a long-term sustainable tourism business (Pan et al., 2018; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023).

Egyptian Tourism Leadership Theories

This research objective is to explore tourism challenges as well as strategies applied and used by leaders to overcome them, then examine the leaders` recommendations to create a strategic framework for successful sustainable tourism. Therefore, searching the literature for effective leadership theories that are applied in tourism will help determine which of the

theories are effective in the tourism industry. Effective leadership in tourism requires an amalgamation of leadership theories to create a strategic and practical framework for an effective, sustainable, profitable, and poverty-alleviation tourism industry (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). The key to success for leaders is adaptability and handling various challenges and situations. A significant factor required in tourism leadership is style flexibility (Giotis & Papadionysiou, 2022; Khan et al., 2020b; Quintana et al., 2015). It involves collaborating with stakeholders from various sectors, including local communities, businesses, and governmental and non-governmental agencies (McGehee et al., 2018; Yukl, 2008).

A versatile leadership is needed in Egyptian tourism to create a strategic framework to address the Egyptian tourism industry leaderships common goals (Haley & Bég, 2012; Sok et al., 2021). This versatile leadership involves integrating various leadership theories to effectively guide the transformation and alignment of the industry's modules, mechanisms, and sectors and combining those theories to contribute to the strategic framework. This strategic framework will address the disjointed Egyptian tourism industry (Haley & Bég, 2012; Mousa et al., 2020a). This view is supported by Haley and Bég (2012) and Mousa et al. (2020a), who have shown the need for sustainable tourism leadership in Egypt.

Sustainable Tourism Leadership

As a result of the growing concerns about tourism's environmental, economic, and social impacts, tourism leadership is progressively focused on sustainable practices (Budeanu, 2003; Galuppo et al., 2020; Purnomo et al., 2020). Therefore, sustainable tourism leadership theories aim to integrate sustainability principles into decision-making (Purnomo et al., 2020). The United Nations embraced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), creating a global community of 193 member countries and establishing an actionable plan to implement goals and targets for 17- SDGs (WTTC, 2021). Emphasizing tourism sustainability leadership is crucial to ensure the preparation, management, and monitoring of

sustainable tourism to ensure the distribution of wealth and participation sustainability in the

economic development of Egypt (Allen et al., 2019; WTTC, 2021).

Furthermore, recently there has been renewed interest in the ecotourism espousal, as it

will create profitable tourism businesses, create more jobs, higher living standards, and

tourism sustainability (Allen et al., 2019; Roxas et al., 2020). Hence, the introspective view

and bystanders of tourism, objectives of natural, cultural, social, and economic destination

resources must be changed from depicting tourists as consumers to active, responsible players

with higher awareness (Ammirato et al., 2018). Also, changing the tourists' view from

consumers to active participants will emphasize the tourists' power and responsibilities in

creating a sustainable tourism experience (Force et al., 2018). Sustainability in tourism

requires enriched and committed partnerships to combine the cooperation of civil society,

NGOs, the private sector, government agencies, and all national and international tourism

sector players (Bhutto et al., 2021; OECD, 2020a).

Collaborative Leadership Theory in Tourism

To achieve sustainable leadership in tourism, a dogma of fostering partnerships and

alliances among stakeholders must be adapted (Ammirato et al., 2018; Roxas et al., 2020).

Collective leadership is a flexible process where leaders strategically leverage various skills

and expertise from within a network, adapting to the needs of the situation (Tal & Gordon,

2016). Leaders leverage the collaborative approach to facilitate cooperation between

government agencies, local communities, businesses, nonprofits, and non-government

agencies to play their active role in the tourism ecosystem (Fordham & Robinson, 2018;

Koiwanit & Filimonau, 2023; Sheehan et al., 2016; UNTWO, 2018; Yukl, 2008).

Collaborative leadership is more politically authentic if it entitles stakeholders to influence

decision-making that power their lives (Almeida et al., 2018). Indeed, collaborative

leadership advances the proficiency of tourism policies, sharpens its related actions, and

includes all partners in the tourism industry, including local communities (Keyim, 2018). At the same time, collaboration promotes consideration of tourism's economic, environmental, and social impacts, which results in a potentially more efficient and sustainable tourism sector (Almeida et al., 2018; Lane, 1994). This goal may be impossible to achieve unless a new, more powerful and persevering leadership is in place.

Change Leadership in Tourism

Leading a disjointed Egyptian tourism industry requires leaders who can be adept at managing change (Diaz Ruiz et al., 2020; Soliman & Wahba, 2018) and apply change theories to guide the process of implementing new structures, technologies, and practices across the tourism industry in Egypt (Mooney, 2020; Ramzy, 2017; Sheldon et al., 2016; Sisson & Roberts, 2023). It emphasizes the way tourism changes as a whole mainly depends on its inheritability to respond to these drivers of change (Dredge & Schott, 2016; Gössling & Scott, 2018; Pesonen, 2020; Sheldon et al., 2016; United Nations Environmental Program, 2017).

Inclusive Leadership and Stakeholders' Theory

Fostering a diverse leadership environment is challenging as it is difficult to include everyone's voice with equal consideration (Emery & Flora, 2020; Newman & Ford, 2021; Randel et al., 2018; Smith & Benavot, 2019). Inclusive leadership promotes the stakeholder's participation in developing a sustainable tourist industry. Destination success in sustainability development is critical and may be inclusively based off of effective governance (Roxas et al., 2020). Tourism sector governance is based on how tourism stakeholders cooperate and interact to achieve sustainability. It enables critical tourism industry stakeholders to bridge the gaps and build stronger connections among all stakeholders (Roxas et al., 2020).

In addition, engaging all stakeholders with an emphasis on local communities to share tourism benefits ensures engagement and tourism sustainability (Hatipoglu et al., 2016;

Mtapuri, 2022; Simpson, 2008; Waligo et al., 2013). Setting a strategic cohesive framework that integrates leadership can strategically address the nature of the disjointed Egyptian tourism industry (Heslinga et al., 2019; Rivera & Gutierrez, 2019; Roxas et al., 2020). A strategic framework should incorporate clear vision, adaptability, collaboration, effective communication, and commitment to sustainable practices. (Fastiggi et al., 2021; Kumar & Kumar Singh, 2022; Madi Odeh et al., 2023; Ramirez Lopez & Grijalba Castro, 2020). All these factors are essential for creating a more integrated and resilient Egyptian tourism industry (Abdallah, 2022).

Transformational Leadership

It has been conclusively shown that there is a need for a transformational leadership in the Egyptian tourism industry (Abdallah, 2022; Jacobs et al., 2020; Senaji et al., 2014). Transformational leadership was first coined by Downton (1973), but it was Burns (1978) who used the emergent approach as he emphasized the mutual relationship between leaders and followers. Transformational leadership involves changes in the needs, beliefs, and values of the followers (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Leaders in transformational and transactional leadership are identified by their actions and its impacts on others as internal process which generate acts of transformational or transactional leadership (Bass, 1985 Burns, 1978; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987)

Transformational leadership in the Egyptian tourism industry can be utilized to inspire and rally all stakeholders to a shared vision for a cohesive, integrated tourism industry (Jacobs et al., 2020). Leaders aim to communicate the benefits of collaborations, motivate stakeholders, and encourage innovation that brings value to the Egyptian tourism industry. Transformational leaders will empower followers to achieve sustainable tourism in Egypt (Mishra et al., 2019). Situational leadership helps leaders customize and tailor the applied specific approach and face the challenges faced by each tourism industry segment (Rüzgar,

2018). Each leadership situation is adapted according to the stakeholders' segment and level of knowledge to both leaders and followers to achieve the common goal. This will build trust among stakeholders by acknowledging the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry and addressing those challenges collaboratively. Cultivating a spirit of unity and common goals yields positively effects on the tourism industry and increases transparency and ethical behavior (Hayat Bhatti et al., 2020; Penz et al., 2017).

Across Cultural Leadership Cultural Dimensions

The Egyptian tourism industry is culturally diverse; therefore, leaders should understand cultural dimensions (Badran & Khalifa, 2016; Eraqi, 2009), and be aware of different cultural norms and expectations. Adapting a leadership approach based on cultural dimensions can improve communication and cooperation (Beechler & Javidan, 2007; Javidan & Teagarden, 2011). No single leadership style can be prescribed as the sole remedy for the disjointed tourism industry. Instead, it is a mix of leadership styles to create maximum achievement of desired goals. It is imperative to increase leaders global and cross-cultural competencies as related to have the necessary tools to compete in global tourism market (Javidan &Teagarden, 2011). An example is a mix of transformation and servant leadership, which emphasizes prioritizing the needs of all stakeholders, including employees, local communities, and visitors (Peterlin et al., 2015; Y. Zhang et al., 2021). Servant leadership creates harmonious and sustainable leadership, emphasizing empathy, ethical decision-making, and long-term benefits. A flexible approach of a mix of leadership styles will address each unique circumstance of each segment, market, or region (Schmid, 2006). In the previous section, tourism frameworks and theories were discussed as well as their implementation in creating strategic frameworks for successful sustainable leadership. Identifying trends and policies plays a key role in creating a strategic framework for Egyptian tourism industry (OECD, 2020b). It is essential to understand trends and policies through the industry best

practices and challenges to successfully implement the strategic framework for success and sustainability. The following sections discuss the best practices and challenges in Egyptian tourism industry to identify success in promoting elements and eliminate challenges that hinder tourism growth in Egypt.

Tourism Industry Best Practices

It is evident that the best practices in the tourism sector change depending on the sector and location within the tourism industry (Davahli et al., 2020; Ntounis et al., 2022; Pani & Sahu, 2019; Wyman et al., 2011). Essentially, some of the principles and strategies of the tourism industry`s best practices promote sustainability, safety, and positive tourist experience in Egypt (Fullan, 2011; Miceli et al., 2021). The following section discusses some of those principles and strategies of the tourism industry's best practices.

Practice of Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

Recent developments in tourism field have led to the belief that promoting and implementing sustainable and responsible tourism are two pillars of tourism best practices (J. K. L. Chan et al., 2021; Mihalic et al., 2021; Musavengane, 2019; Mykola et al., 2020). Sustainable and responsible tourism aims to reduce the undesirable environmental effects, increase social responsibility, and boost the destination economy (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017; Su & Swanson, 2017; Su et al., 2018). Support and engagement for local communities and economies through responsible tourism creativities encourage and educate tourists to respect the local cultures, environments, and traditions (Cobbinah, 2015; Edgell, 2019; Naidoo & Sharpley, 2016). Meanwhile, recent studies have considered the relationship between tourism, as well as safety and security practices.

The Practice of Safety and Security in Tourism

Lately, safety and security have become increasingly important issues in tourism. For this reason, it must be prioritized for the continued expansion of the tourism sector (Tseng et

al., 2018; Vidaurri et al., 2020). This practice requires providing tourists and their host destination with clear and accurate information about potential risks and safety presiders. The transparency of information exchange between guests and hosts is crucial for safety and security (Tseng et al., 2018). An example of the practice is the tourist causing a potential health threat that may endanger local communities if the tourist denies disclosing an illness or disease to the host country's authorities. Conversely, the host should maintain the tourist's safety in case of any potential regional threat to the tourists, such as terror or unrest. (Avraham, 2020; Garg, 2015; Walters et al., 2019). In addition to the previous measures, staff training is crucial to maintain the ability of emergency response procedures according to international strategies.

Practice of Quality Customer Service in the Tourism Industry

Tourist satisfaction requires high customer service commitment (Balci et al., 2019). Scholars like De Keyser et al. (2015), Lemon and Verhoef (2016), and Mahr et al. (2019) outline customer service as a multifaceted process that results from the customers (the tourist in this context) direct and indirect interaction with the market, practicing their purchase or consumer process.

In tourism best practice, defining the customer is a prerequisite to determining the customer's needs, expectations, and wants (Balci et al., 2019; Wagenheim & Reurink, 1991). Tourists are consumers who purchase tourism products, such as souvenirs and local handmade products, to meet the needs of tourism pleasure and other experiences. According to Wagenheim and Reurink (1991), each customer is unique. Still, there are common expectations in customer service, such as prompt communication, responsiveness, the information provided being on-time, reliability, consistency in service delivery, and problem-solving. Therefore, customer service in tourism requires quality, technology, staff training, information systems, and collaborative leadership. The tourism industry's customer service

best practice includes generating needs that initiate before-travel tourists' decision-making, onsite consumption, and post-purchase evaluation. The three stages of the tourist experience, before travel, onsite consumption, and post purchase feedback, are influenced by factors such as society, cultural environment, and economy (Caber & Albayrak, 2016; Li & Cao, 2022). Tourism products and services available at the destination, such as accommodation, transportation, and food, are not the only factors shaping customer service. Tourist interaction with host communities is also essential in shaping customer satisfaction, which measures positive and successful customer services (Karayilan & Cetin, 2016; Quang et al., 2023). According to Quang et al. (2023), this mutual relation can have positive feedback that differentiates the destination from its competitors' destinations.

Destinations benefit from economic values and potential growth from the positive customer service feedback, while tourists gain exposure to new cultures. However, this mutual positive relationship can be disrupted if inappropriate behavior occurs from either party (Quang et al., 2023; Weaver, 1995). The tourism industry, with a high-quality infrastructure that lacks high-quality customer service, can be at risk and can be subject to economic loss due to not optimizing the use of its investments (Aizawa, 2019; W. Kim et al., 2015; Turner, 2010).

Tourist experience's empirical and conceptual perspective provides a holistic understanding and classification of the tourist experience (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020). To capture the totality of the tourist's experience at the three stages of the trip, several measures are suggested: pre-visit, onsite, and post-visit. These three stages are based on customer service (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020; Kempiak et al., 2017). The pre-visit is the stage of decision-making that will partially or wholly be based on customer reviews depending on the tourists who visit the destination's customer service feedback. The onsite step is a first-hand experience of the visiting tourists. The post-visit stage is the third and essential, where the

tourist either confirms or rejects his previous tourist's review. The post-visit step is the pre-visit review for future tourists (Altarawneh et al., 2018; El Sheikh, 2020; Marques et al., 2021; Ramesh & Jaunky, 2021). High-quality customer service requires not only commitment, trained staff, and earned positive feedback, but also accessible and maintained infrastructure, to enhance the overall visitor experience (Faraj et al., 2021).

Practice of Accessibility and Maintained Infrastructure

Best practice of infrastructure and accessibility is essential to ensure that the destination is easily accessible and safe for tourists (Domínguez Vila et al., 2020; Porto et al., 2019). Roads to attraction sites and all tourist places must be prepared for the comfort of tourists, including those with disabilities. All transportation methods, including air, sea, and land, must be qualified by the international touristic standards (Aulet & Duda, 2020; Fisu et al., 2022).

Practice of Crisis Management

Tourists' safety carries several essential objectives (Abdullah et al., 2020; Arshad et al., 2018) because of the multiple levels involved in providing tourists security. Those levels start from the moment tourists arrive in Egypt, then escort them throughout their excursions with armed police, and ensuring their safety throughout the entire trip by keeping an updated log that is submitted to the tourism police department (Din, 2020; Hall et al. 2004; Hussein, 2014; Khedr, 2019; 2004; Meskell, 2000). Lacking safety will risk tourists' lives, and in doing so impact travel decision-making (Karl, 2018). Tourist flow into Egypt means economic boosting, as consumer behavior and purchases contribute to the gross domestic production. Developing crisis management plans at macro and micro levels is vital to secure tourists in emergency cases and unexpected events. Those unexpected events include but are not limited to: natural disasters, pandemics, epidemics, war, and terror attacks. Those macro and micro plans must be communicated effectively with tourists to ensure their safety and

stakeholders to get their support to keep tourists safe (Berbekova et al., 2021; Kukanja et al., 2020; OECD, 2020b).

In light of COVID-19 and its health concerns and impacts, implementing and communicating rigorous health and hygiene standards to protect tourists has been prominently emphasized (Salem et al., 2022). In addition, the OECD (2020b) has recommended best practice guidelines when dealing with health events with global or regional impacts such as COVID-19. Those practices protect and ensure the tourists well-being, restoring travelers' confidence by providing clear information and businesses to limit uncertainty. It is also focused on supporting tourism businesses to adapt and survive. All the OECD (2020b) recommendations emphasize building more resilient, sustainable tourism and strengthening cooperation within and between countries.

Practice of Educating Tourists

The tourism industry's best practices include educating tourists about environmental conservation and their responsible behaviors (Lesar et al., 2020). According to Teoh et al. (2023), tourism encounters have significant potential to enhance and influence the daily lives of tourists. Tourism offers cultural, interpersonal, and individual encounters (Coelho et al., 2018), informative opportunities (A. D. Morgan, 2010), as well as benefits for health and overall well-being (Vada et al., 2020). Therefore, tourism practitioners and stakeholders educate tourists about ethical wildlife and nature tourism in this practice. Educating tourists increases the practice of sustainability, safeguards the conservation of cultural heritage sites, and raises tourists' awareness of local communities' culture (Suárez-Rojas et al., 2022) to create a win-win situation where tourists and hosts exchange positive sides of each other's cultures.

Practice of Quality Control and Certification

Enforcing certification and accreditation from the tourism authority and organization demonstrates a commitment to quality and sustainability (Merli et al., 2019; Safaeva et al., 2019). The practice of quality control and certification ensures the safety and high-quality service provided by accredited and approved professionals through the tourism authority. It guards against unqualified and uncertified individuals to practice any profession in the tourism sector (Merli et al., 2019; Safaeva et al., 2019). This practice ensures the safety and well-being of tourists. Authority will have better control when licensed individuals provide tourist services regarding health, security, and professionalism (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019).

Challenges Facing Egyptian Tourism

A considerable volume of studies has argued that Egyptian tourism faces numerous challenges impacting growth and sustainability (Abdel-Fadeel et al., 2013; Hoogendoom & Fitchett, 2018; Mejjad et al., 2022). Lack of coordination and division are among the biggest challenges that inhibit the Egyptian tourism industry from developing. Disorganization results from the lack of connection among tourism sector stakeholders and public and private sectors, which make almost all involved parties act in isolation. A common national tourism goal is necessary to avoid the fracture of Egyptian tourism entities (Abdelhalim & Eldin, 2019; Berman, 2013; Cavlek, 2002; Marais et al., 2017). The lack of collaborative leadership and an industry with a holistic vision create an environment of incoherence, segregates workers, and discourages communication. Tourism stakeholders are independent contractors, permanent employees, private sector employees, government employees, and part-time employees.

Tourist guides (TGs) are independent contractors, and they join the tourist groups to guide them from their arrival until their departure. TGs' job is to guide the tourist groups onsite. Their competitiveness as foreign language speakers and Egyptian history experts

makes them the only group who can do this job. Such advantages make TGs act independently. Their educational background varies based on their licensure, which shows a lack of primary business education among some TGs. Lacking the basic business concepts such as customer service, profit, gain, marketing, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM), among other basic business concepts, leads to an ego business behavior that neglects not only their work colleagues but also their hiring employers and tourists' need (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014).

Additionally, Nile cruise owners have a unique market competitive advantage. The limited number of Nile cruises gives the Nile cruise owners a price market monopoly, which plays a negative role in marketing Egypt as a destination, which hurts the national economy. Their understanding of business advantages and opportunities lacks connection with travel agencies and operators as they also act independently (O'Dell & Hubert, 2011). Hotels, transportation companies, and Nile cruise owners operate under the tourism public policies and regulations. Those policies and regulations do not address the tourism industry as a holistic national income and lack a necessary synergy that enables collaborative leadership. (N. Helmy & Soliman Abd Elhalem, 2021). In low season, Nile cruises run price competitions that hurt the industry by operating with idle capacity in some boats. Conversely, in high season, cruise companies increase their prices unreasonably, which causes market share loss. Egyptian tourism global market share is the percentage of the Egyptian tourism industry tourism global market total sales (Soroker et al., 2023).

According to the Statista (2023), the total sales for the global tourism industry was $10 trillion in 2019, while the total Egyptian tourism sale was $34 billion. When calculating the percentage of $34 billion of $10 trillion, it results in 0.034%, which is less than 1% of the global tourism market. Providing safety and security to tourists is a significant and essential objective of the Egyptian tourism industry. The tourism police department is dedicated to

providing safety and security for tourists in Egypt (El Atiek & Goutte, 2023; Fourie et al., 2020). Tourism Police is an Egyptian public organization. It has the public organizations' bureaucratic and hierarchical leadership (Ekman et al., 2018; Huhtala et al., 2021; Mousa & Ayoubi, 2019; Mousa et al., 2020b).

Despite the advantage the Egyptian industry has with a dedicated police department to protect and secure tourists, it represents a challenge and a hindrance to tourism business mobility (Antonakakis et al., 2019; Falcone, 2019). This challenge is demonstrated when each travel operator has to submit a list of the tourist groups who booked a cultural tour throughout Egypt and an itinerary two days before the tourist group arrives.

The submission is made online, but the tourism police require a paper report that must be submitted in person at the tourism police headquarters by a tourism company representative for the report to be accepted. According to Falcone (2019) and D'Adamo (2019), excessive bureaucracy is among other weaknesses that impede tourism growth. Therefore, the bureaucratic leadership of the tourism police is one of several other challenges to the tourism industry in Egypt (Antonakakis et al., 2019; Falcone, 2019).

Political Instability and Security Concerns

Political instability is a sensitive topic in Egypt (Maher & Zhao, 2022). It generates a sense of instability, economic malaise, and economic loss due to discouraging tourism investment. The geopolitical location of Egypt exposes the country to a highly volatile threat from the competing powers. Instability hinders tourism investment and growth as it causes several tourist security challenges (Tyan et al., 2020). Post-Arab Spring, Egypt has experienced unrest, terrorism, and security issues, leading to a decline in tourist arrivals (Groizard et al., 2016; Tang & Tan, 2018). The impact of the Arab Spring started in 2011 when several Arab countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria had a rise against their

dictatorship regimes (Mohamed, 2018), which has shown the vulnerability of Egyptian tourism.

Middle East's Ongoing War Challenge. Tourism is perceptive to human-made catastrophes and natural disasters (Çakar, 2021; Sausmarez, 2007; Walters & Mair, 2019), which can significantly impact tourist destination image and change tourist behavior. Due to those catastrophes, travelers will be compelled to cancel their trips or travel elsewhere (Çakar, 2021). Egyptian tourism is significantly impacted by external factors, principally the ongoing conflicts, including war and terrorism in the Middle East (Avraham, 2016; Butler, 2018; El-Gohary, 2012; Harrington, 2021; Moneer, 2020; Olimat, 2023). The instability of the region's geopolitical has led to a series of consequences that have reverberated across the Egyptian tourism industry (Saha & Yap, 2014). These consequences have a holistic negative impact on the industry, affecting tourist numbers, long- and short-term industry investment, and the overall Egyptian national economy. The following sections discuss some of those damaging wars and the region's geopolitical instability. Some of the salient impacts of war and insecurity are security concerns, economic impact, changes in global travel trends, and infrastructure and investment (Irimiás, 2014; Kliot & Mansfeld, 1997; Song et al., 2019; Tomczewska-Popowycz & Quirini-Popławski, 2021; Wahab, 1996)

Security Concerns. Tourist destination choice is influenced by many factors, such as personal, psychological, and situational (Pandey & Joshi, 2021). According to Horiachko (2021), risk is an essential motivation for a traveler's destination choice. War and terrorism are immediate and fatal risks for tourists; therefore, an immediate and swift decline in visitor numbers happens and recovers very slowly (Gunaratna, 2015; Moneer, 2020; Song et al., 2019). Çakar (2021) referred to the decline in travel and tourism as an increase in so-called *tourophobia* resulting from the numerous destructive effects of human-made crises and natural disasters. An unpredicted sharp decline in tourist numbers is a loss of investment

across both immediate and enduring time frames (Buultjens et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2019; Zeng et al., 2005).

Economic Impacts. War and terrorism attacks have a strong negative impact on the image and attractiveness of the destination; this causes tourists to replace risky destinations with safer ones (Bassil et al., 2019; Neumayer & Plümper, 2016; Seabra et al., 2020; Song et al., 2019). The media coverage of the conflicts in the Middle East can contribute to a negative perception of the entire region. This negative perception will impact Egypt even if it is not directly involved in the conflict (Moneer, 2020). Misinformation and sensationalized reporting can create a negative travel destination image of Egypt, discouraging potential travelers from choosing the country as their destination. The wars strain diplomatic relations and impact the international relationships that are core to promoting tourism. This negative impact on diplomatic relations can lead to travel advisories or restrictions discouraging citizens from visiting Egypt. A decline in tourist numbers will directly originate a decline in revenue generated from tourism activities such as accommodations, transportation, and guided tours. The economic repercussions of tourism can extend beyond the tourism sector and impact the overall national economy (Gunaratna, 2015; Moneer, 2020; Saha & Yap, 2014).

The Middle East's ongoing conflicts will eventually divert resources, funds, and attention from developing, maintaining, and investing in tourism (Duan et al., 2022; Perles-Ribes et al., 2017). Redirecting the funds and capital to wars and related affairs will lead to a need for improvement and maintenance of tourism facilities and amenities, negatively impacting Egypt's image and competitiveness as an attractive travel destination (Gunaratna, 2015; Moneer, 2020). Prevailing trends influence the global tourist. Wars, instability, and terrorism can lead to a broader shift in travel patterns, directing and forcing tourists to choose alternative, safer, and politically stable destinations. This change will be a long-term

challenge for Egypt's tourism industry (Fielding & Shortland, 2011; Groizard, 2022; Mair et al., 2016).

The Challenge of Inadequate Infrastructure and Services

The challenge of inadequate tourism infrastructure in Egypt is confronted with continuous improvement but still needs further development (Eraqi, 2006; Faajir & Zidan, 2016; E. Helmy, 2004; Issa & Altinay, 2006). Infrastructures such as roads, trains, buses, and accommodations still need to be accomplished (Faajir & Zidan, 2016). Among several factors in tourist travel decision-making are personal, trip, and destination characteristics (Hefny, 2014; Karl, 2018). In this context, destination characteristics are most relevant as they depend on the destination infrastructure and accessibility. Destination characteristics include length of coastline, climate, activities offered while onsite in a destination, range of accommodations, food quality, transportation, and degree of development. Infrastructure development and accessibility, specifically housing and transportation, play a vital role in tourist decision-making and choosing travel destinations.

Crazy Traffic. Transportation is a vital pillar of tourism infrastructure and accessibility, which are crucial in shaping a positive tourist experience, customer loyalty, and destination image (Beerli & Martin, 2004; W. C. Chan et al., 2022; Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2008; Lo et al., 2019; Prayag, 2009). Tourists' destination choices depend on many factors, including the mobility and accessibility of their destinations (Bursa et al., 2022). Tourists prefer to travel in cars because the main advantages of car travel are speed and flexibility (Pereira et al., 2017), which requires a suitable infrastructure and easy traffic when visiting large cities (Albalate & Bel, 2010; Parahoo et al., 2014). Quality of transport in Egypt is determined to influence visitors' experience, overall satisfaction, and future return (Thompson & Schofield, 2007; Shokry et al., 2020). Cairo traffic has several complexities, some of them characterized by static and dynamic assets of vehicles and aggressive driving

behaviors, which has resulted in non-lane-based traffic systems, delays, inadequate traffic signals, modes, traffic management challenges, and overcrowding vehicles (Asaithambi et al., 2016; Makhloga, 2022; Shokry et al., 2020). These traffic challenges lead to high congestion levels, traffic deaths, environmental pollution, and injuries (Asaithambi et al., 2016).

The traffic can negatively impact the tourist's first impression of Egypt (Asaithambi et al., 2016; Parahoo et al., 2020; Thompson & Schofield, 2007). These first impressions can negatively impact visitors, affecting their overall perception of the destination and diminishing the appeal of returning or recommending it to others. Tourists who may ride bikes, vehicles, or even pedestrians will feel vulnerable due to a lack of traffic discipline. Chaotic traffic can limit tourists' cultural immersion, making navigating the local cities on foot challenging and inhibiting their ability to engage with local culture (Cuthbert, 2007; Dredge et al., 2016; Sugden, 2007). These challenges impact tourists and may lead to dissatisfaction. Tourism's primary goal is profit in several ways, such as direct monetary funds, development of local communities, creation of more jobs, and enhancement of the overall economy. A key role of satisfied customers comes from the positive impact it has on tourism profitability (Anderson et al., 1994; Parahoo et al., 2020)

Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Concerns Challenges

Egypt's rich cultural and natural heritage destinations demand the preservation of its sites and balance environmental consumption (Mousazadeh et al., 2023). The biggest challenges for sustainable tourism are improper waste management and the damage to the historical sites. Managing the tourism impacts on historical and cultural sites is crucial, which requires tourists and tour operators' cooperation, respect, and compliance with rules and regulations (Khodeir et al., 2016). There is a balance between operating mass tourism to increase the tourism revenue, create more jobs, and enhance the total economy of Egypt and preserving the environment.

Challenge of Economic Disparities in Egyptian Tourism Industry

Egyptian tourism constitutes a substantial contributor to the national income (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020; Wait, 2021). The Egyptian tourism industry began during the British colonization era between 1881 and 1952, making it undergo an inequality challenge grounded in the Egyptian touirsm sector. The economic benefits of the tourism sector are managed and owned by a monopolization to interest groups of aristocratic families. Despite the change in the structure of those types of interest groups, this challenge of monopolization still exists. This interest group monopolization is summated with regional favoritism in many regions and cities, such as Luxor and Aswan, giving them economic advantages over other cities or regions. Although it is natural to improve infrastructure in cities and areas that have tourist sites to facilitate tourist traffic, a commitment to basic infrastructure and accessibility should be provided to other cities and regions simultaneously.

Challenge of Tourism Public Policy and Administrative Hurdles

The administration of tourism authority is a public sector dominated by a bureaucratic leadership style (Ghanem et al., 2020; Mohammed, 2019). Bureaucratic leadership produces a legitimate power that entitles leaders to have command over their followers or subordinates (Mangset & Asdal, 2019). Bureaucracy is a fastidiously organized and formalized impersonal organization that possesses a clear and well-defined hierarchical framework with unequivocal explicit rules, regulations, and hierarchical lines of authority to oversee and govern its operations (Lumby, 2019; Weber, 1968). The legitimate power produced by bureaucratic leadership authorizes leaders to command their subordinates based on their legitimate ability constructed from their position. This legitimate power command creates hierarchical leadership (Duryan & Smyth, 2019). The hierarchical leadership is a part of the bureaucratic red tape that deters potential tourism growth in Egypt (Fleming, 2020; Mohammed, 2019). Several vital obstacles that can prevent performance and tourism industry growth are lack of

motivation among public sector employees, routinization, centralization, formalization, low

salaries, bureaucratic tight and rigid control, lack of financial resources, red tapes, and above

all, corruption.

Bureaucratic red tape is among the obstacles resulting from the hurdles of public

sector employee behavior (Hattke et al., 2020; Metin et al. (2016). It is stated that

bureaucratic red tape is created when public sector employees consciously generate a high

level of role overload perception in the face of burdensome, ineffective, and unavoidable

tasks from alleged red tape. Those public sector individuals manage to reduce their job

involvement and adopt more negative survival strategies such as procrastination.

Procrastination is happening when public sector employees consciously engage in relaxing

activities to avoid completing tasks assigned to them (J. H. Huang et al., 2022; Metin et al.,

2016; Svartdal et al., 2016).

According to Duvanova (2014), regulatory intervention and corruption correlate

positively. Red tape is a blockage for tourism mobility in Egypt. Although artificial

intelligence (AI) is implemented on a humble scale in Egyptian tourism, the bureaucratic red

tape impedes the use of AI, and causes no improvements in efficiently of bureaucracy

(Muylaert et al., 2022). Red tape impacts most organizations' effectiveness worldwide.

Carrigan et al (2020), Kaufmann (2019), and Kumorotomo (2020) argued that there is a risk

that outdated rules, regulations, and public policies could obstruct innovation and accumulate

barriers to investment in tourism and deter its economic efficiency.

Unlicensed Businesses. The Egyptian tourism public policy needs to address the

phenomena of online -unlicensed businesses built only on social media platforms and

applications (Salem et al, 2022; Ali, 2022). The contemporary technological applications

allow unlicensed individuals to penetrate the tourism industry with no non-compliance risks.

No supporting literature discusses the harm and threat of unlicensed travel- businesses cause

to established companies and Egypt as a tourist destination. But, according to Agag (2019), there are implications for online businesses in general. The results of Agag (2019) revealed that buyers' perceptions of online companies have six dimensions: security, non-deception, reliability, shared value, service quality, and communications. The two most prevalent of those six dimensions are reliability and loyalty. However, Agag's (2019) study addresses the licensed business. To explore the six dimensions of the buyer's expectation from the online seller, it is difficult to determine if they can be fulfilled. No regulations are yet to address unlicensed individuals' online sales of tourism products.

Challenge of Interest Group and Favoritism

Although government resources are extensive and cover many industries and fields, including tourism, there are areas for improvement as the government is expected to know only some of the issues in every sub-sector (Jain, 2017; Tyler & Dinan, 2001). Interest groups provide governments with technical information and expertise in their particular markets and business operating environments. It is almost impossible for government and public sectors to consult all groups and partners in a specific industry. This tends to lead to favoritism, where a limited interest group would take advantage of their government and public sector relationship (Tyler & Dinan, 2001; Jain, 2017).

Challenge of Global and Regional Tourism Market Competition

Egypt's geographical location makes the country an attractive tourist destination. At the time, Egypt experienced an unfortunate situation of instability due to the Post-Arab Spring in 2011 (Berman, 2013). Until 2014, regional competitors such as Turkey, Greece, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have had a stable political and growing economic perspective. In contrast to the offerings of Egypt, the technological advancements, infrastructure developments, and well-organized advancements in competing destinations have led to a considerable disparity in tourist arrivals compared to Egypt. In 2019, Turkey

had approximately 51 million tourists, Greece had 34 million, and UAE had around 25 million, compared to 13 million tourists who arrived in Egypt in 2019 (The World Bank, 2023).

Challenge of Lack of a Well-Communicated Mission and Vision

The mission statement explains the organization's or industry's fundamental purpose, answering the question of "why are we here?" (Kotter, 1995; Senge, 2006). Conversely, the vision statement expresses the desired future position the organization or industry aspires to achieve, addressing where we want to be (Fairhurst, 1993; Kopaneva, 2019). Senge (2006) articulates the profound impact of a shared vision, describing it as "few, if any, forces in human affairs are as powerful as a shared vision" (p. 206). Despite Kotter's (1995) statement more than 28 years ago that there is a need for enhanced communication regarding the mission statement, it is imperative to underscore that this necessity still persists. Kopaneva (2019) contends that aligning and assimilating mission and vision are vital, fostering shared understanding and compliance. This shift towards ownership and internalization of mission and vision inspires a sense of agency, empowering individuals to perceive their ability to enact change, exert control, and contribute meaningfully.

Effective leadership should facilitate the management of the meaning attributed to the mission statement, serving as the lubricant that catalyzes organizational functioning (Fairhurst et al., 1997; Y. Zhang et al., 2022). When examining the Egyptian tourism industry by visiting its website and official bulletins, there was a lack of articulated mission and vision. Thus, it is evident that there is a need for a clear mission and vision to be communicated with all partners, as described by Kotter (1995). Tourism significantly contributes to the Egyptian economy, accounting for 10-15% of Egypt's Gross Domestic Product (OECD, 2020c) and providing over 3.1 million jobs, representing 9.5% of Egypt's workforce. Despite the industry's potential and array of assets, a research gap exists

concerning Egypt's competitiveness as a tourist destination. It would be valuable to determine whether the number of tourists visiting Egypt correlates with its competitiveness as a desired destination.

The absence of clear mission and vision statements in the Egyptian tourism industry hampers employees' connection to the organization's purpose and existence (Kopaneva, 2019). This leads to a gap between employees' everyday activities and the organization's goals, emphasizing the need for clear communication from the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism. The confusion surrounding unclear mission and vision statements underscores the necessity for collaborative leadership.

Leadership plays a crucial role in setting direction, establishing a mission and vision, creating coalitions, committing to goals, and planning strategies (Kotter & Cohen, 2012). Mission statements articulate the primary purpose of institutions, inspiring employees and stakeholders to communicate a shared purpose with external stakeholders and the public (Bunkowski & Shelton, 2019; Fairhurst et al., 1997). Thus, there is a need for a well-communicated mission and vision statement for the Egyptian tourism industry, outlining its primary purposes for internal employees, stakeholders, government, and private organizations.

Leadership also fosters a collaborative atmosphere and articulates the vision communicated to internal and external audiences (Abelman, 2013; Bunkowski & Shelton, 2019). Core values, beliefs, and ideals serve as the foundation for the Egyptian tourism industry to be held accountable, guiding daily practice, long-term planning, and policy creation (Andrade & Lundberg, 2018; Calder, 2014).

In conclusion, leadership and management collaborate to formulate the mission and vision of the tourism ministry (Kotter & Cohen, 2012). Achieving well-formulated and communicated mission, vision, and strategic plans is essential for organizational success

(Fairhurst et al., 1997). The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism will align its objectives with internal and external stakeholders using the power of vision in human affairs (Senge, 2006).

The preceding sections discussed best practices and challenges in the Egyptian tourism industry, highlighting regulations, policies, and obstacles impeding tourism growth. Subsequent sections will elaborate on factors contributing to tourism success and Egyptian tourism competitiveness to foster thriving and sustainable tourism.

Tourism Critical Success Factors

Critical success factors are the conditions that create the best suitable environment for tourism development and economic growth (Chingarande & Saayman, 2018). Those conditions are the prerequisite for tourism success, determining why some destinations are successful while others are not. According to Mutana and Mukwada (2020), critical success factors (CSFs) are the focal point of leadership to ensure the organization's goals are fulfilled. CSFs are essential and central to accomplish the organization's objectives and vision (Marais et al., 2017). Marais et al. (2017) stated that CSFs are initially associated with the information system field (IS), and Daniel (1961) was the first to use CSFs to classify the critical information needs of managers to provide competitive leverage. According to Bullen and Rockart (1981), cited in Mutana and Mukwada (2020), CFSs are linked to the industry's uniqueness, leaders, and their organizations' strategies.

CSFs can be influenced by the nature and type of tourism operation, so an effective strategic management of the industry is to identify the CSFs of each sector as CSFs differ between sectors (Burger & Saayman, 2009; Manners, 2011; Mutana & Mukwada, 2020). Resources efficient allocation is one of the many benefits resulting from identifying critical success factors, which is a key in rationalizing the destination to provide maximum service possible (Elnasr & Jones, 2015; Marais et al., 2017).

Capacity utilization optimization is another significant key performance indication of permanent success (Chingarande & Saayman, 2018; Pan et al., 2018). Furthermore, using and adapting different models, frameworks, and public policies promoting capacity utilization, such as the so-called model Triple-A, which is about awareness, agenda, and action, is an indispensable key factor of success (Pan et al., 2018). The different models are meant to integrate the efficiency of destination use of resources and to evaluate the performance of responsible tourism destinations, which are considered integrated practical measures of success factors (Pan et al., 2018). Identification of tourism destination success factors is associated with the destination success in the efficient use and allocation of resources (Freeman & Thomlinson, 2014), increased potential success (Ferreira & Fernandes, 2015; Marais et al., 2017), satisfied customers, and enriched customer experience, which result in increased revenue. Those lead to increased opportunities, higher returns, profitable tourism business, sustainability, and enhanced success factors (Marais et al., 2017).

CSFs in the Egyptian tourism sector are the reduced areas where successful competitive performance for individuals, departments, or organizations is ensured through satisfactory results (Bullen & Rockart, 1981; Rockart, 1979). Egyptian tourism industry's key areas are, according to Bullen and Rockart (1981), "things must go right" (p. 7) applied for attaining Egyptian tourism industry goals. To plan for strategic management is to ensure the competitiveness alignment between the Egyptian tourism industry and its changing environment.

Rockart's Four Categories of Critical Success Factors Applied to Egyptian Tourism

According to Rockart (1979), there are four categories of critical success factors: industry, environment, strategic, and temporal. First of the four categories is the industry factors, which are the specific characteristics of Egyptian tourism and what must be done to continue economically affordable for customers within the tourism market. Egypt has a

dominating and leading picture of international cultural heritage tourism due to the country's share of the world's most significant heritage sites, such as the Giza pyramids and Valley of the Kings, among many other cultural heritage sites (Hong, 2009; Mior Shariffuddin et al., 2023).

According to Engelbrecht et al. (2014), a combination of activities and processes in the tourism industry are usually identified from crucial success factors, key result areas (KRA), limited factors, strategic variables, and strategic factors to comprise three to 10 aspects that must be well accomplished to attain competitiveness performance and success (Bullen & Rockart, 1981; Engelbrecht et al., 2014; Mutana & Mukwada, 2020). Those factors, identified from Egyptian tourism activities and processes, can be classified into tangible physical elements or intangible service elements according to a specific situation or context (S. Wang & Hung, 2015). The Egyptian cultural heritage sites and recreational tourism are the tangible elements that must be well maintained to ensure the fundamental factors.

The intangible service elements are needed to achieve the big picture of success factors and attain competitive performance (Elnasr Sobaih & Jones, 2015). The gap between U-I and the undervalued social science causes a research gap due to the university and research institutions' society and industry undervaluing standpoint (Elnasr Sobaih & Jones, 2015). Key performance indicators (KPIs) are the indicators employed to measure the success factor in industry practices (Bullen & Rockart, 1981; Engelbrecht et al., 2014; Mutana & Mukwada, 2020).

Conceptualizing the Egyptian tourism industry as any other industry, as a system of interrelated but fragmented sectors, not a single cohort economic sector, makes measuring intangible services such as customer service a challenge (Tyler & Dinan, 2001). This inter-related but fragmented nature of the tourism industry in Egypt also explains that government

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interest comes from various government organizations and departments. The second of Rockart's (1979) four categories are environmental success factors, which empower the Egyptian tourism industry to lead its competitor destinations (Bullen & Rockhart, 1981; Khalifa, 2020). Understanding the destination's environmental situation aspects and identifying future challenges is a key performance indicator of how the ecological success factors compared to its competitors (Alkheyi et al., 2020; Almatrooshi et al., 2020). The market scanning is essential to unlock the environmental CSFs for Egyptian tourism. Egypt's unique geographical strategic location has incomparable advantages. The reasonable distance of a four to five-hour flight from wealthy and sunny vacation seekers from Northwestern Europe makes the country a dream tourist destination. Egypt's strategic location of three to four hours flight from the rich Gulf states makes it an ideal entertainment vacation destination (Elnagar & Derbali, 2020). Another environmental advantage is the recent devaluation of Egyptian currency against its pairs of foreign currencies. To measure the environmental success factors for the Egyptian tourism industry, SPELIT analyses can be the tool that will reveal the social, political, legal, economic, sociocultural, and technological changes and challenges (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). The political environment surrounding tourism has faced challenges and negative consequences. According to Salman et al. (2017), the political unrest in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia in the social and political arena has negatively impacted the tourism industry since 2011.

The environmental success factors include the skills that allow the industry to keep its position in the market (Bullen & Rockart, 1981), which aligns with Kotter and Cohen's (2012) leadership role of establishing directions, developing vision, creating coalitions, and planning strategic change needed. An example of environmental success factors in attaining market advantages is running the market scan required to allocate the threats from competing markets such as neighboring countries like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia opening its border

for a tourist visa for western non-Muslim tourists (Yusuf, 2014). Economic success factors can be seen as a sub-category of both the first category (industry factors) and the second category (environmental factors). Economic success factors positively impact tourism in Egypt because of the government's awareness of the tourism industry's role in employment and bringing foreign currency to the country. According to Rasool et al. (2021), Egypt is among countries that consider tourism one of the top foreign currency sources. Therefore, there are often particular financial policies to encourage tourism investment. Those economic advantages for the tourism sector in Egypt are with drawbacks. Although they promote tourism investments, which will increase employment and, most importantly, boost the overall economy, they suffer from interest groups seeking advantages in public policies and government affairs (Jain, 2017). Interest groups in any society seek to affect government policies to benefit themselves and their causes, such as a policy that exclusively helps group members and society segments.

In the Egyptian tourism sector, the public policies addressing investments support giving incentives such as interest-free loans to tourism investors (H. Chen et al., 2022; Jiang & Ritchie, 2017). This success factor of having lucrative investment opportunities is falling in the basket of interest group concept. The policy's implementation is directed in an interest group's favor, based on the narrative of the foundation and beginning of the tourism industry by the British colonization, making it always controlled by a particular interest group (Wait, 2021). This interest group of Egyptian tourism businesspeople attempts to achieve their goals by lobbying or putting pressure on policymakers to achieve outcomes in their favor (Jain, 2017; Tyler & Dinan, 2001).

The role of economic success factors in tourism is to understand the Egyptian tourism industry's big picture and the changes exploiting those economic opportunities (Aydin & Emeksiz, 2018; Wilson et al., 2001). The lucrative and economically successful factors of the

Egyptian tourism industry, including tourist expenditures, are a direct economic advantage; this helps to subside infrastructures and cultural heritage improvement projects as well as the local communities. Those maintenance projects and upgrades of sites increase the credibility of the destination image and tourists' destination loyalty (Aydin & Emeksiz, 2018).

Bornhorst et al. (2010) attributed tourism infrastructure services to measure tourism economic tourism. Key performance indicators, such as scenery and partnership leadership, strategic planning, support of the government, technical support and tourism information technology, accessibility, and equality of visitors' experiences support, are associated with touristic regions success (Aydin & Emeksiz, 2018; S. Wilson et al., 2001). Success factors have several dimensions, as mentioned in previous sections. Those dimensions are measured from the strategic factors that comprise three to 10 aspects that must be well accomplished to attain competitiveness performance (Engelbrecht et al., 2014; Mutana & Mukwada, 2020). Among many success factors in tourism are seven dimensions resulting from Aydin and Emeksiz's (2018) research on the Turkish tourist city Eskisehir. Those seven dimensions of success factors are cooperation, strategic planning, technical support, support from local government, adequate financial resources for developing tourism, urban image, and financial support from public institutions. Tourism development as a catalyst success factor cannot be realized without strategic planning as the locomotive of the success factors training and cooperation among all entrepreneurs, private and public sectors in tourism (Aydin & Emeksiz, 2018; Y. Wang & Fesenmaier, 2006; S. Wilson et al., 2001). Applying the key performance indicators as measures of the success factors was found to be a research gap for Egyptian tourism.

The third critical success factor that Rockart (1979) categorized is strategic factors. They result from the tourism industry's competitive strategy, including specific tourism features such as the Pyramids as a tourist attraction only found in Egypt. Geographical

location is another strategic feature that enables stakeholders and practitioners to include a variety of tourism experiences in their packages. An example of this is a tourist can buy a week's beach holiday in Spain, while in Egypt, he would have a bonus in his package for visiting the pyramids. Strategic factors also determine whether the destination will have a tourism flow in mass production scale or be selective in selling only to the wealthy social class (Bullen & Rockart, 1981). The researcher finds a research gap in exploring the strategic success factors of the Egyptian tourism industry.

The fourth and last category of the success factors is the temporal success factors, which are the temporal critical factors of the industry (Rockart, 1979). These factors are related to short-term, time-critical situations in tourism. This can be a natural disaster or a terror attack. It is more critical for a short period until the crisis, or the situation is accomplished. Seven essential success factors vary from one industry to another and from one organization to another. The first success factor is the tourism industry's status in the financial market. The second is technological reputation. The third is industry market success. The fourth is risk recognition; the fifth is profit margin. The sixth is moral. And the seventh is a performance for budget (Rockart, 1979).

CSFs are categorized depending on the industry, sector, and situation; therefore, CSF research and study must consider the industry and its geographical location. Different industries have different critical success factors (Manners, 2011; Marais et al. (2017). Marais et al. (2017) meant that CSF research could have different results depending on the research methods, descriptive, analytical statistics, or mixed methods used. It is a determining factor in CSF research conducted on the supply or the demand side from which side of the tourism industry. Marais et al. (2017) identified 491 CSFs including human resources, finances, customers and customer-related, quality, and facilities. However, some CSFs can be explored to accurately align with specific industry situations.

The geographical location of the industry determines the CSF types. In the tourism industry, quality is the most prevalent success factor. Many developing countries successfully exploit tourism-led growth (TLG) characteristics to increase their international tourist receipts and grow their economy (Chingarande & Saayman, 2018). There are eight identified CSFs for tourism development, which are: (1) investment in tourism, (2) safety and security of tourists, (3) human resources, (4) well-developed financial system, (5) technological development, (6) favorable climatic condition, (7) protection of the environment, and (8) trade openness. This tourism-led growth is evidenced by 116 articles, including studies made in 47 countries from 1995- 2013 by Chingarande and Saayman (2018). This study showed that investment, security, and human resources are the three major impacting factors. Investment in tourism is crucial to upgrading old infrastructures, building new ones, buying new technologies, hiring skilled labor, and providing protection and safety to tourism and the environment. The prominent CSFs in touirsm, as per the research by Marais et al. (2017), which identified 491 critical success factors. Quality consistently appeared most frequently across all types of studies, whether descriptive , analytical, or using mixed methdos. Quality is involved in many of the CSF's tangible or intangible forms.

Quality is an intangible asset that can be felt but not touched (El Saghier, 2015; Engelbrecht et al., 2015). However, if the quality is attributed to a tangible asset, such as a hotel building or a bus, it is attributed to a real investment. Meanwhile, if the quality is attributed to services, it is attributed to intangible services. Quality is involved in almost all other CSFs in tourism. An example of this is, when looking at tourism investment and financial resources, availabilities are vital for tourism development and success; it still depends on delivering quality transportation, accommodation, customer service, tourist guides, and all other tangible and intangible services (Engelbrecht et al., 2014; Hughes & Carlsen, 2010).

Egyptian tourism's CSFs are factors derived from the industry's mission, vision, and objective; they set out what goals must be achieved to succeed (Chingarande & Saayman 2018). Some CSFs are universal across the tourism industry sectors, while some can be tailored for a particular sector or situation (Farhan et al., 2018). An example is how crisis management's first success factor is responsiveness. Whereas in hospitality, quality is the first in rank of CSFs. CSFs are to increase profits and improve employee engagement, talent acquisition, and customer retention. In tourism-led growth, CSFs are the success prerequisites and signals for policy recommendations (Chingarande & Saayman, 2018).

Egypt's Tourism Competitiveness

Tourism competitiveness describes how a country, and its public and private sectors can optimize resource utilization to make the country attractive to tourists (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019). Competitiveness is the quality of services delivered to make the country attractive to tourists by competing to get the most significant global tourism market share, offering good value for money. While ensuring support and use of available tourism resources sustainably and efficiently (Bris & Caballero, 2015; Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019; Michael et al., 2019). Therefore, Egyptian tourism stakeholders, government officials, and business managers must identify the factors determining Egypt's competitiveness to compete in the global tourism market. Due to the complexity of tourist destination rankings, many models or ways exist to measure them. To counter this, these rankings are calculated by Composite Indicators (CIs); CIs combine all variables and dimensions that should be well-rounded and objective in measuring the complex multidimensional aspects of tourism competitiveness rankings, which a single indicator cannot measure (Bandura, 2008; Martín et al., 2017).

Tourism stakeholders, officials, entrepreneurs, among all involved partners must develop the country's competitiveness collaboratively to increase its attractiveness (Michael

et al., 2019). Khalifa (2020) conducted a competitiveness study that perceived management and marketing as the two aspects as dependent variables. It was found in Khalifa's (2020) research that strategic leadership can enhance hotel competitiveness and suggests that strategic planning effectiveness increases the sustainability practice to competitiveness. Michael et al. (2019), Enright and Newton (2004), and Dwyer and Kim (2003) have asserted that destination resources, destination human-related factors, destination infrastructure and support, and destination business environment are the four groups of factors determining destination competitiveness.

Several research studies have developed the destination competitiveness model (Azzopardi & Nash, 2016; Crouch, 2011; Mihajlovic, 2014). A competitive advantage is identified as what the destination is blessed with in resources and how it utilizes them to compete against other destinations in attracting tourists (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Michael et al., 2019). The identification of the tourism competitiveness factors varied depending on the destination. Cibinskiene and Snieskiene (2015) categorized competitiveness factors into internal and external factors. They suggest that the external environment affecting city tourism competitiveness is the education system and monetary policy.

Meanwhile, the internal factors such as zoos, travel agencies, and theaters are the most important. Internal factors are the microenvironment effects described as personified phenomena (Cibinskiene & Snieskiene, 2015; Labanauskaite, 2008). It means that businesses create their microenvironment with unique fingerprints, which can be controlled. On the other hand, extreme environmental competitive factors develop due to organizations and are influenced by environmental activities.

The extremal factors are not changeable. Examples of external factors are political and legal factors with nine sub-key indicators, economic factors with seven sub-key indicators, social and cultural aspects with five sub-vital indicators, and ecological and

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natural factors with only water and air pollution as its leading indicators (Cibinskiene &

Snieskiene, 2015). Examples of internal environmental tourism competitiveness are tourism

enterprises, which include sub-key indicator factors like accommodation, recreation

enterprises, conference facilities, travel agencies, tour operators, and culinary heritage.

Internal factors include historical and natural resources (Cibinskiene & Snieskiene, 2015).

With this rationale, it is understood that various factors could serve as metrics for assessing

the competitiveness of a travel destination. According to Michael et al. (2019), there is

currently no universally applicable set of factors that determine destination competitiveness,

and thus, cannot be uniformly applied to all destinations (Goffi, 2013; Michael et al., 2019).

Destination's global environments include technology and demographics;

microenvironments, such as type of financial support, travel agents, suppliers, workforce

education quality and level, and stakeholders (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Michael et al., 2019).

As discussed above, many factors determine the destination's tourism

competitiveness. Most developed models involve common factors, such as resources,

infrastructure, support services, and the general business environment (Michael et al., 2019).

The tourism industry is fragile, perceptive, and sensitive to political, cultural, and business

circumstances, which play a significant function in tourism destinations' competitiveness and

determine their success (Gursoy et al., 2014). Therefore, the factors vary and differ from one

country to another and from one situation to another. As cited by Michael et al. (2019;

Crouch & Ritchie, 1999) classified four leading groups of factors as the contributors to

tourism destination competitiveness:

- Fundamental resources such as physiology, culture, and history activities. If this
  would be used to measure how Egypt stands as a tourism destination, it would
  have a total score. Specifically considering how much the ancient Egyptian history
  and heritage sites will weigh in compared to competing destinations.

- Supporting factors and accessibility measure tourist movement flexibility between cities and sites. It is challenging to have literature support for accessibility and tourist movement flexibility, especially in Egypt. The continued increase of global tourism revealed a conflict between the tentative set of freedoms and the hassle of the so-called market freedom, which does not consider the unequal relations of power as the base of mobility (Bianchi, 2006).

- Destination management is the third group of factors for tourism destination competitiveness. This group of factors is about human capital, also called stewardship, and how the service is delivered to the guest. Customer service experience is a multifaceted concept cornerstone of marketing (Helkkula, 2011; Klaus & Maklan, 2012; Lipkin, 2016; Mahr et al., 2019).

  o Customer service experience has been defined recently as multidimensional and consisting of social, cognitive, physical, sensorial, and affective, and it includes the customer's direct and or indirect communication with the market throughout the consumption process (De Keyser et al., 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Mahr et al., 2019). The competition between tourism destinations has made the request for a better-quality service an essential strategic factor and a priority the Egyptian tourism enterprises must fulfill to survive and compete. The quality of service is vital for retaining tourists and a critical sign of potential economic behaviors (Attallah, 2015; Blešić et al., 2011).The result of the study on service quality feedback based on tourists who flew with Egypt Air and stayed at five-star hotels during their stay showed a neutral concerning four out of five service attributes. Based on tourists' neutral perception of the survey, they suggest more efforts should be made to improve service quality. In another dimension of the surveys

regarding the information availability, especially on ticket prices and flight

schedules, tourists showed neutral feedback.

  o Regarding the five-star hotels, the feedback was positive across all attributes

and a score of 4.4 out of five. Reviewing the service quality results conducted

on tourists who stayed in five-star hotels in both Cairo and Alexandria showed

a satisfactory, not outstanding, level of service quality. This implies that Egypt

scores four out of five in service quality. However, this cannot be generalized

as the population sample and the limitation of the study conducted in only two

cities (Attallah, 2015). In other words, service quality is satisfactory.

However, more needs to be done to compete with other destinations like the

United Arab Emirates, which, according to Michael et al. (2019), scored at a

top level of service quality. According to Michael et al. (2019), studies on

tourism competitiveness of destinations carry significantly more credibility in

establishing tourists` trust compared to the explanatory power of factors such

as destination infrastructure and support services, business environment, and

human resoruces. According to Doeim et al. (2022), few service values affect

customer retention and repurchase intention. Those are service quality,

confidence benefits, service quality, service value framework, and service

reputation. This group of destination management factors includes information

availability and marketing. The previous section elaborated on the critical role

of stewardship, or the human factor represented in service quality. Destination

information availability is crucial to its success and competes in the global

market share (Abou-Shouk et al., 2018).

● The fourth group of factors determining tourism destination competitiveness is the

qualifying determinants factors. Those factors are the destination location,

dependencies, safety, and cost. Safety and security are major impacting factors in destination tourism competitiveness.

Tourists will be discouraged and deterred from visiting dangerous and unsafe destinations (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019). They consider that terror attacks are not among tourists' choices. Tourism destination competitiveness is contingent upon both prices and non-price factors (Dwyer et al., 2000; Reisinger et al., 2019). Changes in price stemming from exchange rate fluctuations, consumer price index regulations, and tourism product costs (Oyewole, 2004; Reisinger et al., 2019). Lower trip prices to a specific destination increase its attractiveness for tourists. The price includes airfare tickets, taxes, airport charges, and fuel prices, among other monetary factors that can represent a hurdle for tourists in choosing a specific tourism destination (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019).

Some of the determent's factors qualify and amplify determinants such as location, safety, security, living cost, and exchange rate effect (Dwyer et al., 2002; Rompf et al., 2008: Reisinger et al., 2019). Location is also crucial for the safety factors as specific destinations are exposed to unsafe issues due to location. According to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index report, Egypt ranks 65 out of 140 global destinations with an overall score of 3.9 out of 7. In contrast, Spain, France, Germany, and Japan achieved a score of 5.4 out of 7. The report covers 140 economies, assessing a range of factors and tourism policies aimed at promoting sustainability and fostering the development of the travel and tourism sector (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019, p. xiii).

Enabling environmental factors is the most essential pillar, according to Calderwood and Soshkin (2019). The indicators aggregated for gauging and evaluating the competitiveness of the destination include the business environment, safety and security, health and hygiene, human resources, labor market, and online services. Analyzing enabling environmental indicators is crucial for a business environment that encourages, motivates,

facilitates, and supports businesses, no matter how many other natural resources, cultural heritage, infrastructure, modern airports, and flights if the enabling environment factors in a particular business environment are not facilitated. The business environment captures the degree of support and encouraging business policies for companies to do business. Policies that protect property rights protection and the degree of efficiency and competency of the legal system framework are conditions for business growth, success, and competition. A fair taxation system will promote foreign direct investment (FDI), while a lack of organized and well-coordinated public organizations will negatively impact the efficiency and productivity of a country. Therefore, factors of enabling environment are essential for all sectors. In the previous section of the challenges, red tape is one of the bureaucratic hurdles that needed reform in the Egyptian tourism industry. In the above sections the researcher discussed the critical success factors and detonations competitiveness as indicators for a thriving industry. Reviewing the literature showed some areas that have research gaps the following section will address the topics in tourism industry that are not fully researched.

Existing Literature Around Recommendations

The research gap is identified while evidence and research fall short, which is an essential indication for developing research questions in this area (Robinson et al., 2011). When a research gap is demonstrated, a research idea may be developed by a stakeholder, a partner, or an educational institute to explore the gap. The university-industry was among the recommendations found in the research gap recommendations. Elnasr Sobaih and Jones (2015) recommend a joint venture between the university and industry, suggesting mapping the characteristics of tourism and hospitality firms to implement a research culture. To create a research and academic archive around research hospitality research culture, size, ownership, and management style.

Future research recommendations are guidelines for academics, researchers, and scholars to explore, study, and survey the phenomena to advance existing knowledge. Senbeto (2022) recommends exploring Africa's tourism industry throughout the different phases of crisis management: pre-crisis, during-crises, and post-crises. Senbeto argued that given the COVID-19 pandemic, further attention regarding marketing strategies and product packages is needed. Research in this field may empirically investigate the significant role of crisis planning strategy (Senbeto, 2022).

The difference between qualitative and quantitative research cannot be explained in one paragraph. However, it is noteworthy that researchers Elbaz and Haddoud (2017) suggested conducting qualitative research to explain the disparities between their research findings and previous literature, which are attributed to cultural differences. They recommend a qualitative study about the correlation between leadership style and workers satisfaction in Egyptian tourism. They base their recommendation on the characteristics of qualitative research that will explain such inconsistencies and reveal more cultural differences, such as employee respect (Elbaz & Haddoud, 2017).

Tourism organization competitiveness is essential for governments, stakeholders, and enterprises to elevate the standard of destination competitiveness to attract more tourists (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019). Khalifa (2020) recommends further research on other competitiveness criteria, especially advantage observation and outcomes correlated to other factors. He also recommends researching other geographical areas and fields, including the public and private sectors, to increase the generalization.

As to the extent of the researcher's knowledge, several research topics have yet to be academically researched. There needs to be more research on the relationship between tourists and hosts. Such research will explore the interaction between tourists and local Egyptian communities to help remove and avoid negatives and strengthen the positive side as

a part of sustainable tourism. The researcher experienced a research gap addressing the role of tourism police and its impacts on the flexibility of the tourist's moves between different cities and attractions. Lack of research availability about tourist behavior as a consumer to tourism practitioners and stakeholders in Egypt is essential to improve the tourism markets. Tourism has several advantages. Among those advantages is bringing the tourist to the seller's shop as a buyer.

Another research gap experienced while exploring the literature review was the image of Egypt as a travel destination seen from different nationalities' standpoints. Destination image is crucial for tourism practitioners and stakeholders to understand how tourists experience Egypt as a travel destination to remove the negatives and strengthen the positives. This will ultimately attract more tourists, revealing factors that attract and engage tourists to Egypt as their travel destination is vital to tailor the marketing campaigns (Avraham, 2016; Omar et al., 2019). There was a research gap addressing the negative sides and the government's role of the new technologies and online applications in making unlicensed businesses compete with legally established businesses.

Scholars like Kenawy and Shaw (2014), Ghanem and Saad (2015), Khalifa (2020), Elbaz and Haddoud (2017), and Wahab (1996) have explored and researched several subjects such as the strategic framework for sustainable tourism, Egypt competitiveness as a travel destination, among several other topics. However, to the extent of the researcher's knowledge, there needs to be a strategic framework to bond the fragmented Egyptian tourism industry through collaborative leadership applying the strategic framework this study intended to develop. However, this strategic framework is not a one-time dose of a solo remedy to the disjointed and fragmented tourism industry. It is meant to be pathbreaking and pave the road for other researchers and scholars to conduct more research for generalization. As mentioned, the literature gaps around the multifaced Egyptian tourism industry are due to

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the complex multiple sectors involved in supplying and cooperating with the tourism businesses.

This study focused on studying, understanding, exploring, and examining all the systems of the interrelated but fragmented parts and sections of the Egyptian tourism industry. The reason this gap was preferred and selected is that by understanding how the Egyptian tourism industry functions as a dynamic and productive industry, the inter-related and fragmented parts and sections of a framework can establish and work toward a common goal to grow tourism in Egypt and bring more economic values, jobs, and implement sustainable tourism industry.

Conclusion

The Egyptian tourism industry contributed 32 billion dollars, 8.8% of the country's GDP in 2019 (WTTC, 2021). Noteworthy, there is an insignificant difference in the US dollar amount and percentage of tourism contribution depending on literature sources such as the World Bank, WTTC, Statista, and UNWTO. Although the COVID-19 pandemic cost the country more than a 55% collapse in the entire industry, it has not fully recovered to its pre-pandemic numbers yet. Tourism employs more than three million of the Egyptian workforce, above 9.5% of the Egypt's workforce. The Egyptian tourism sector is governed by the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, which is the executive body of the Egyptian government, where the Tourism Minister attends official government meetings in the parliament with its two houses. A well-communicated mission and vision are the tools that empower the Ministry as a public organization with the power and hierarchical order to manage and administer the stakeholders, independent contractors, and all other types of tourism enterprises. Tourism is an interrelated and fragmented system that makes it easier to run a synergy with a well-communicated mission and vision (Senge, 2006). Prompting sustainable tourism is running a socially, environmentally responsible, and economically by

emphasizing positive tourist experience, accessible sites, well-maintained infrastructure, and quality customer service (Streimikiene et al., 2021).

Collaborative and inclusive leadership theories are discussed in this chapter as they appeal to all stakeholders, private and public sectors, independent contractors, and practitioners to participate and cooperate towards a common goal. A fair and effective collaborative governing leadership approach encourages and fosters tourism stakeholders, entrepreneurs, all actively involved tourism partners, and local communities. Collaborative leadership positively contributes to the development of rural communities and the socioeconomic (Keyim, 2018). Leadership's goal is to use their leadership style that suits the situation, combine several theories and frameworks with bonding the fragmented partners into a common goal under collaborative leadership, and emphasize the national purpose of tourism to cooperate and work collectively, not in silos. The isolated and disorganized partners are costing idle capacity, depleting the environmental resources, and adding more load and waste of economic value. The tourism best practices showed the parties that promote tourism industry`s growth to increase the destinations' compactivities and provide tourists with a positive experience. All those best practices impact the positive image of the detonation and increase the interest of other potential tourists to visit. This interest is based on other positive feedback about their vivacious tourists' experience, which enhances the destination image (Godovykh & Tasci (2020).

The tourism industry is complex and includes many other vendors and cooperating partners from other government organizations and the private sector. Therefore, the challenges for the industry are in constant change and increase (Ramzy, 2018). Those challenges must be removed and dealt with to promote the detonation image and tourism growth. At the same time, several of her challenges are due to the nature of public organizations. At the same time, several are due to the need for coordination, dispersion, and

the interrelated nature of tourism as an industry. CSFs are the conditions for success in tourism, and they discuss the factors or strategies that ensure success if conducted correctly. Destinations' tourism competitiveness is the factor that distinguishes the tourist destination and makes it more attractive for tourists to choose among other destinations. Those competitiveness factors are aligned with success factors as well. The model or group of factors chosen to measure Egypt as a competitive tourism destination was developed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999).

The four factors determining destination tourism competitiveness are fundamental resources, supporting factors, destination management, and qualifying determinants. Reviewing the literature to investigate, study, and understand the tourism industry in Egypt. It challenges its best practices, success, and competitiveness factors to develop a strategic framework to implement strategies and run a thriving, sustainable tourism industry.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

An outline of the research design and the procedure of the study will be provided in this chapter. A study purpose restatement and research questions will be discussed as well. This section will outline the phenomenological study methodology to collect and analyze data. The chapter will briefly describe how the participants are selected, the protection of human subjects, the study's instruments, and the research design. Finally, the data collection, analysis process, and the researcher's bias statement will be explained. The literature review provided a foundation for Egyptian tourism and why it is necessary to understand the challenges, problems, destination competitiveness, and tourism success factors.

The nature of Egyptian tourism is an interrelated but fragmented set of parties that cooperate to deliver the final product to the tourist. This fragmented Egyptian tourism industry needs more coordination, organization, and collaborative leadership among its sub-agencies and associations (Azizpour & Fathizadeh, 2016; Beritelli, 2011; Tyler & Dinan, 2001). The premise of this research was to give an extensive background and relation to current Egyptian tourism industry leaders on how they can develop their leading concept using the strategic framework to provide an adequate fit for interrelated and cooperative work. This cooperation and collaborative work will leverage the positive tourist experience, impacting the Egyptian image as an attractive travel destination. Leaders ensure that all enterprises providing services to tourists have the same goal of achieving sustainable tourism.

Re-Statement of Research Questions

The research questions (RQs) addressed the challenges that face Egyptian tourism to pursue collaborative and sustainable tourism leadership. Examining the best methods and practices to understand the factors that promote positive tourism practices and avoid opposing sides is crucial. Formulating RQs for qualitative research based on a flexible approach

permits the inquirer to control the possible responses when asking participants general questions. Tourism practitioners and stakeholders will define success in the tourism industry. The last question concerns individuals who operate tour companies' recommendations to achieve a thriving and sustainable tourism industry. The four research questions are:

- **RQ1**: What are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry preventing collaborative and sustainable tourism?

- **RQ2**: What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces?

- **RQ3**: How do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success?

- **RQ4**: What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders and leaders have to develop a strategic framework for achieving successful sustainable leadership in Egyptian tourism.

Nature of the Study

Tourism leaders in all inter-related tourism sectors in Egypt must remain aware of what the tourists expect to have as a positive tourism experience. The constant change in the concept of tourism and the change in expectations of tourist experience made it challenging for tourism leadership to compete in the global market (Dwyer et al., 2009; Gössling & Michael Hall, 2019; Morgan et al., 2009; Peceny et al., 2019). Tourism leaders and stakeholders should grasp the significance of the tourist experience and be responsive to the tourist's needs. The spread of social media and new technologies, including affordable costs of air fares, has made the world accessible. A travel destination is a unification of tourism products that offer a combination of integrated experiences to tourists (Aqueveque & Bianchi, 2017).

This study investigated the inter-related but fragmented and disjoint Egyptian tourism industry. Tourism provides a positive impact to Egyptian society, such as social interaction with tourists (Armenski et al., 2011; Hao & Xiao, 2021). The worldviews or paradigms in conducting qualitative research and diverse interpretive theoretical frameworks in qualitative research shape the study's context. This comprehensive study employs a conditional approach to address the study` questions.

Assumptions of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has five philosophical assumptions that influence the researcher's choice of position toward their disposition or attitude: the researcher's confidence in epistemology, the role of morals in the project or axiology, the language of research or rhetoric, and procedure (Christians, 2005; Creswell, 2007: Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The researcher`s choice of the five assumptions has implications in designing and conducting the research. The qualitative research philosophical beliefs drive the analyst's interest and the research project's topic selection. Each of these assumptions has its unique role in conducting the research and gathering data. Five qualitative questions approaches include grounded theory, phenomenological, narrative, case study, and ethnographic (Creswell, 1998/2007; Wertz, 2011).

After choosing the qualitative approach, the researcher shapes the research by bringing in the worldview or paradigm. A paradigm can be described as the basic set of beliefs that influence actions (Guba, 1990). Those beliefs are philosophical assumptions with epistemology and ontology stances that form the researcher's broadly conceived research methodologies (Creswell, 1998, 2007; Hopper & Powell,1985; Kankam, 2019; Moon & Blackman, 2014; Yates & Leggett, 2016). The worldviews that identify and shape qualitative research are constructivism, postpositivist, advocacy or pragmatism, and participatory (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

The analyst's worldview or paradigm contains the central view substructure of the researcher's philosophical focus, an essential factor in phenomenological research. That is, determining the variables such as the analyst's morals, discipline, communities, monitors, advisers, and prior experimentation will influence the analyst's choice of paradigm (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). There are four philosophical conceptions: constructivist transformative, postpositivist, and pragmatic. The researcher adopts the constructivist perspective for this research project to provide the foundation of knowledge in conditional research (Creswell, 2013; Shan, 2022). The five qualitative approaches include narrative research, which focuses on exploring an individual's life and telling the stories and experiences. Grounded theory is one of those five qualitative approaches; it focuses on developing an approach found or grounded in the collected data. The ethnographic approach is focusing on describing and interpreting culture-sharing groups. The fourth approach is a case study, which creates an in-depth case description. The fifth approach is phenomenological, which describes the essence of all lived experiences (Creswell, 1998, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Qualitative Study Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

A qualitative study has several advantages that a quantitative study cannot reveal. The strength of qualitative research is the holistic and contextual of its inquiry (Byrne, 2001), and the focus on studying behavior in its natural setting, establishing wholistic insights that provide a detailed explanation of studied phenomena (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The understanding of the challenges of Egyptian tourism is extensively revealed in a free text, which allows for the expression of deeper feelings, experiences, and conceptions rather than answering a survey question. The qualitative approach generates a more profound, comprehensive detail of the participants' meanings, opinions, emotions, and exposure

(Denzin, 1989; Rahman, 2020). Johnson and Christensen (2004) observed that qualitative research exhibits five distinct advantages:

- It instills an understanding of the phenomena based on the participants' unique experiences.

- The researcher identifies the participants' ideas and constructs.

- It is focused on the local conditions and settings of the participants' needs and experiences.

- The qualitative research data explain the reasons behind the phenomena subject to study.

- Its flexibility to pivot, modify, and shift the focus of the results accordingly.

A critical advantage of the qualitative approach is in seeking a profound insight that focuses on language-based issues, which historically help to understand human experience in specific settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The study's research question were designed to explore the challenges facing Egyptian tourism and determine how these challenges impedes collaborative, sustainable leadership. Qualitative research produces results not reached by statistical methods; it reveals the issues that need to be documented by numbers or surveys (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Additionally, this research investigated problems like interest groups who work in their own interest, or silos, and are benefiting from current tourism policies rather than a positive tourism policy change. Those challenges are best explored and better understood with a qualitative approach because the phenomenological study seeks to understand the phenomena of interest groups who work in silos (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The second research question is about the strategies that can be used to overcome those challenges. Qualitative research will allow individuals and groups to express their meaning and opinions of the challenges in their own unrestricted way (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Tourism sectors challenges vary depending on the business nature, such as the tourism

transpiration sector faces challenges that differ from challenges that the hotel sector faces, therefore, strategies to address them also vary. Qualitative research will encompass those variations and differences in rhetorical language rather than universal systematic surveys. Some phenomena cannot be expressed in any way other than an individual opinion, such as defining success (G. Morgan & Smircich, 1980). The definition of success varies in its relevance and meaning for different individuals and groups. Hence, qualitative investigation will delve into the crucial significance of achievement for participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). This methodology aligns with the researcher's comprehension of tourism "epistemology" and his grasp of "ontology" within the tourism domain. The language of the research is essential to uncover the hidden values, with the researcher being able to ask follow-up questions that align with rhetoric. The qualitative approach is better aligned with the nature of the study to investigate the definition of success and how it is applied to the success of tourism industry in Egypt (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The qualitative research will capture the language and values of the culture to create a complete picture of the challenges, success, and recommendations. Understanding different participants' voices and meanings is an essential advantage of the qualitative approach. The study participants can articulate the challenges, strategies, and recommendations. However, the most critical value the qualitative approach will reveal is how they feel about the phenomena of the study and their behavior toward creating a collaborative leadership synergy (Fossey et al., 2002; Lazaraton & Taylor, 2007).

Weaknesses

Qualitative studies have some weaknesses that have been noted by Johnson and Christiansen (2004), McMillan and Schumacher (2014) such as:

- Findings of a qualitative research cannot be generalized to additional participants or environments

- It is challenging to establish measurable hypotheses

- In a qualitative approach, it is demanding to verify results or hypotheses with a sizeable population

- Qualitative approach can take longer time to collect and analyze data It takes a longer compared to its counterpart approach quantitative research

- The nature of qualitative research as descriptive, not predictive, makes it influenced by the participant's viewpoint and different interpretations of experiences among participants. This previous point is emphasizing the researcher`s influence and biases (Johnson & Christiansen, 2004: McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Methodology

Qualitative research methods encompass features and aspects that correspond with the envisioned result of the study. The phenomenological approach is the method that most effectively aligns with this investigation. Furthermore, the qualitative inquiry is designed to scrutinize certain facets of the human experience (Donalek & Soldwisch, 2004). It delves into the prevalent emerging themes and comprehends the experiences of how tourism phenomena are encountered (Corbin et al., 2015). The study goals are to fathom and portray the core of the lived encounter with the tourism industry in Egypt.

Assumptions of Phenomenological Study

Phenomenological study centers a thick description of lived experiences, the voices of individuals who share their experienced of Egyptian tourism phenomenon (Bartholomew et al., 2021; Husserl, 1980). According to Trochim and Donnelly (2008) qualitative research allows researcher to understand a phenomenon through an exploration process and develop preliminary theories. The phenomenological allowed the researcher to ensure they are eliciting the same core information from each participant and providing the flexibility to

probe more deeply and rich descriptions of participants shared experiences. This gave the researcher, rather than leading, to follow the participants to express freely the relevant factors associated with their tourism career longevity (Belotto, 2017).

The phenomenological exploration and the fundamental nature of the study are interlinked. This phenomenological research illuminates the specific lived experiences of the participants to identify and grasp the meanings and interpretations of the lived experience of leaders about the phenomena of the tourism industry in Egypt and how the stakeholders and practitioners perceive it (Maxwell, 2005; Petty et al., 2012). This translates into gathering deep information and perceptions through qualitative methods such as interviews, as the researchers will conduct in this study (Barbosa & Fonseca, 2019). Additionally, the study intended to describe leaders who operate tour operator companies with A license from Egyptian tourism ministry day-to-day experiences with challenges, strategies to overcome the challenges, defining success, and recommendations (Creswell, 2007; Wertz, 2011).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Phenomenological Study

The phenomenological method seeks to elucidate a phenomenon by examining how participants interpret it in a specific environment or context (Churchill & Wertz, 2015). A phenomenological inquiry entails collecting 'profound' insights and observations through inductive, qualitative techniques like conversations, interviews, and observations and summarizing them from the viewpoint of the research subjects. Bracketing in the phenomenological study avoids preconceptions or taken-for-granted assumptions as it studies a phenomenon's individual experience and perspective. Phenomenology study provides a vigorous means of theorizing based on first-person experience and perception (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2013, 2018; Patton, 1990). The effectual aspect of a phenomenological investigation stems from comprehending subjective experience, understanding participants' drives and behaviors, and dispelling the haze of accepted notions,

common knowledge, and presuppositions (Cleland, 2017). In brief, a phenomenological exploration excels in the researcher's capacity to directly engage with participants, extend, and act upon the perspectives of fellow researchers. Data analysis is revealed in the participants' own words, which makes the narrative reporting of results informal and easy to understand. Phenomenological approach can be used in multiple settings and percipients (Cleland, 2017; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2013, 2018, Patton, 1990).

Strengths of the Phenomenological Study

The phenomenological study provided a persuasive and compelling interpretation of the lived experience of Egyptian tourism leaders who operate tour companies. It enabled an account of genuine lived experiences of the phenomenon, undisturbed in its original setting.

The data processing allows for an objective analysis of the participant's relation to the phenomenon. This study aimed to extend science to include the subjective experience of the participants in the field of tourism research (Applebaum, 2012; Wertz et al. (2023)

Weaknesses of the Phenomenological study

A major downside to a phenomenological study is that data collecting, and analysis are time-consuming. Furthermore, it is difficult to generalize the results to a broader audience and more challenging to detect researcher bias. Additionally, depending on the setting and conditions of the study, it may be difficult or virtually impossible to replicate the study due to the nature of the study relying on individuals' lived experiences (Churchill & Wertz, 2015).

Structured Process of Phenomenological Study

Phenomenological study has the following features according to Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994) which are as follows:

- It keeps a persistent focus on the phenomenon subject of the study.
- It explores the phenomenon through the lived experiences of 10-15 participants as the subject matter expert in the tourism domain.

- The research ideas involved include the participants objective and subjective experience of their lived experiences of the phenomenon, as well as possessing an objective relation to others.

- The focus is on participants experiences, setting aside the researcher`s subjectivity and personal experience.

- Data are collected through interviewing selected participants with lived experience of the phenomenon.

- The data are used in summarizing the narrative of what participants lived experiences are and how they lived them and interpret them in an employed systematic procedure.

- The phenomenological study ends with a passage explaining and describing the core findings of the study.

Appropriateness of Phenomenological Study to This Research

This objectives of this research was to identify challenges facing tourism industy in Egypt through exploring leaders` strategies to overcoming those challenges. Also, it aimed to explore the recommendations the leaders have to create strategic frameworks for successful sustainable tourism. The crux of this phenomenological research design was describing the phenomenon of Egyptian tourism industry as described by the research participants lived experience (Applebaum, 2012). The research design involved interviewing 15 participants entailing comprehensive exploration to unveil and discern unerlying patterns of significance. Phenomenological reduction, as proposed by Moustakas (1994) involves an analytical process that considers each participant`s experiences individually allowing for a comprehensive understanding and description of the studied phenomenon. The adoption of a phenomenological approach is perceived and deemed as it seeks to investigate the participants`s subjective interpretation of their lived experiences, with the researcher

assuming the role of a neutral observer, bearing witness to partcipants` narratives (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007; VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009).

Research Design

Research design selection should be tailored to accommodate the specific characteristics, demands, nature, and constrainst of the study, enabling an exploration of the subject matter within the confines of the available resources (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). This qualitative research employed a phenomenological approach to investigate the challenges, success factors, competencies, and suggestions put forward by leaders within the Egyptian tourism industry. There are several advantages to a phenomenological study, according to Creswell (2007), which are: (a) preparing and organizing the data for thematic analyses, (b) noting emerging themes and transcribing data, (c) coding process and establishing themes, and (d) data interpreting and representing (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The final phase of the phenomenological research is after analyzing the data for themes, examining the results, and reflecting on a clear interpretation of the participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Participants and Sampling

Unit of Analysis. When selecting participants, it is crucial to consider their job level, department affiliation, and company they represent, as these factors are pertinent to addressing the qualitative research questions during data collection. These individual participants are commonly denoted as units of analysis (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). This study`s unit of analysis was an individual who operates a tour operator company license "A" registered with the Ministry of Tourism in Egypt aligned with the with the Egyptian Travel Agents Associations (ETAA, 2024). This individual is on the frontline, experiencing all the challenges and difficulties facing tourists.

Population. This study attempted to capture the challenges of disorganization and lack of collaboration in the Egyptian tourism industry. Those individuals encountering the changes facing the tourism industry in their daily work tasks, enabling the leaders and managers of tour operator companies to express their experience on how the tourism policy outcome directly impacts their businesses. Leadership responsibilities and decision-making are the defining characteristics of the target population chosen by the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). In a qualitative study, the investigative characteristics allow the researcher to build upon a reflection of the participants' experience (Creswell, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Sample Size. It is essential to have heterogeneous groups among participants, ranging from three to 15 individuals with the same knowledge about the same study phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). While Morse (1994) argued that a phenomenological analysis should use a minimum of six participants. There is no common agreement on the sample size of a phenomenological study (Bekele & Ago, 2022), therefore the researcher took an average of 15 participants between 5-15 suggested by Creswell (1998) and six and 12 suggested by Kuzel (1992) and Guest et al., (2006). Participants of this study were leaders and managers who operate tour operator companies. This study selected these 15 individuals based on their extensive knowledge and details of the Egyptian tourism phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Purposive Sampling. As previously mentioned, the researcher chose the participant sample of the targeted population based on their extensive experience and knowledge in the tourism field. This is called purposive or judgment sampling (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Morse (1991) stated that when the researcher selects participants according to the needs of the study, it is a purposeful or theoretical sampling. In this study, the research sampling was based on the criteria of being a leader who operates a type "A" license from the Egyptian Tourism

Ministry. Those individuals are exposed to or partake in meeting the tourists at the frontline of the tourism industry in Egypt. Their position as tour operator leaders ensured their experience with this disorganization and the fragmentation of the tourism industry in Egypt. Including the outcomes and impacts they experience due to the disorganized and uncooperative tourism industry (Isaac & Michael, 1995). The researcher ensured the purposive sampling criteria by including individuals who are first-hand experiencing the hurdles and obstacles tourists face while touring Egypt. This altruistically reflected the leaders' experience of the dispersed tourism industry (Horsburgh, 2003).

Participants Selection

The crux of conducting the phenomenological study is to pinpoint participants with the knowledge and experience to reflect upon the phenomena subject of the study and answer the RQs. The researcher collected the data from individuals with phenomenological subject experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gay & Airasian, 2000). The researcher followed specific steps to select the 15 research participants representing the tourism industry leaders and managers of tour operator companies:

1. A master list of type "A" license tour operator companies must be acquired from the directory register of the Ministry of Tourism in Egypt. The master list was obtained through the Egyptian Tourism Ministry's website or printed catalogue.

2. The researcher sent recruitment scripts in both English and Arabic to 100 leaders and managers of tour operator companies operating in various incoming tourism markets, as noted on the Egyptian Tourism Ministry website.

3. The list of leaders and managers of the tour operator companies was checked to see if it met the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4. After the participants accepted to take part in the study, an English version of the consent form was provided to English speakers, while Arabic speakers received a consent form in Arabic.

The researcher primarily targeted English-speaking leaders and managers. If the required number of recruited participants was not completed with targeted English-speaking participants, the researcher accepted Arabic-speaking individuals who operate a type "A" tour operator company. The researcher has translated the recruitment script (see Appendix A; Appendix B), consent form (see Appendix C; Appendix D), and interview questions (see Appendix E; Appendix F) into Arabic and attached a copy to Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Sampling Frame. The researcher identified participants and determined the availability of the potential respondents of the population. The researcher used the Ministry of Tourism headquarters tour operator companies register to obtain the names of those individuals who operate type "A" licenses for sampling. The researcher was dominantly recruiting English speaker participants, or if, as previously mentioned, the number of 15-20 participants was not completed for the research sample, the researcher recruited Arabic speaker participants and translated their transcription into English for coding to formulate a database for the sampling frame selected to engage in this research action.

Criteria for Inclusion

The conditions for inclusion are outlined as follows:

- Individuals who operate a tour company license A in Egypt.
- Must be over 30 years old (this will be noted in their license as a manager or director of the company provided through the website or printed catalogue of the Egyptian Tourism Ministry.

- Must have at least five years as a leader in the frontline who deals directly with tourists on a day-to-day basis (This is known through their license as noted the date they started the job)

- They are affiliated with the tourism ministry and work as an Egyptian tour operator with an A license.

Criteria for Exclusion

The researcher refined the sample after identifying those with inclusion criteria using exclusion criteria. The exclusion criteria are as follows:

- Individuals who operate a tour company license A in Egypt but do not reside in Egypt.

- Unable to meet for the interview during January- April, 2024.

- Unwilling to allow audio recording and transcript of the interview.

Criteria for Maximum Variation

The researcher used criteria for maximum variation sampling to capture the widest range of perspectives possible for the research, ensuring a broad representation of the subject matter, which is used to refine the list of 15-20 participants (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Suri, 2011). The researcher included a broad presentation of the subject matter to ensure maximum variation, recognizing diverse important patterns within sources to enhance study validity (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Suri, 2011). It is essential to include multiple sources for a diverse sampling. The individuals chosen to participate express their lived experiences in their text, giving a profound insight into their challenges and strategies and their recommendations to develop a strategic framework for successful tourism. The researcher selected a diverse tour operator company that deals with tourists of diverse nationalities, such as North and South Americans, Europeans, Asians, and Australians. Factors like tourists` perceptions of destination, hospitality establishment, satisfaction levels,

demographic profiles, and tourist activities present variations based on countries of origins (Armstrong et al., 1997; Calantone et al., 1989; Danaher & Arweiler, 1996; J. H. Huang et al., 1996; Kozak, 2002; Li et al., 2020; Richardson & Crompton, 1998; Streimikiene et al., 2021). Ensuring criteria for maximum variation by identifying the different types of problems and needs of tourists based on their nationalities helps tourism practitioners formulating new marketing strategies tailored on the unique characteristics of each market. The selected individuals have at least five years of leadership experience managing tour operator companies. The chosen participants will be individuals operating tour operator companies who are actively involved with tourists on their day-to-day basis, ensuring that the sampling will include industry experts.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher ensured adherenece to ethical protocols throughout the data collection and research stages. As mandated, the researcher has successfully finished the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Course (see Appendix G), a prerequisite mandated by Pepperdine University to engage with human subjects, thereby meeting the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. The researcher understood that obtaining IRB approval was imperative for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2017; VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). Once granted permission by the IRB to proceed with the study involving human subjects (see Appendix H), the researcher distributed a recruitment script, an interview protocol, and an informed consent form.

The consent form incorporated a request for authorization from the participant, allowing the researcher to annotate and transcribe the interview. The researcher will keep the participants' identities confidential and inform each participant that the interview data will be permanently deleted two years from the recording date. If the graduation of the researcher is delayed for more than two years after conducting the study, the researcher will permanently

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delete the information. The researcher ensured that all transcripts, correspondence, and audio recordings will be kept safe on a Pepperdine University platform or in a fireproof safe inside the researcher's house, which only the researcher can access.

Data Collection

After selecting the persuasive sampling of the population to conduct interviews with participants who have phenomenologically direct experience, qualitative research requires multiple steps to be taken by the researcher to collect the data accurately and securely. For the researcher to address the ethical challenges arising when conducting the research, they must take specific actions such as storing data and taking annotated notes physically and digitally (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Data collection includes the following activities: (a) locating a site, (b) gaining access to participants, building a report, (c) conducting the purposing sample, (d) data collection, (e) recording information, (f) resolve the information, (g) store the data (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Several ways of data collection can be followed for qualitative research, such as observation, documentation, and interviews (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Below are the steps the researcher followed to collect data.

1. The researcher contacted participants via e-mail, after obtaining their names and e-mails from the register of Egyptian Tourism Ministry website or printed catalogue

2. The researcher sent them e-mail through their company e-mail, which was obtained from the Egyptian tourism ministry previous step, with the recruitment script in both English and Arabic languages

3. The researcher used a standard procedure and script to ensure consistency and sent participants the recruitment script attached (see Appendix A). If the researcher could not recruit 15-20 participants of English-speaking tour operators, Arabic

speakers were used to complete the required number of participants for the research. The researcher has translated into Arabic the recruitments script (see Appendix B), consent form (see Appendix D), and interview questions (see Appendix F) to give to Arabic speaking mangers and leaders of tour operator companies.

4. The researcher informed the participants of the purpose of the study before they are selected.

5. The researcher sent the consent form by e-mail to participants who met the criteria and agreed to participate in the study, including the time of their interview and their consent to allow audio recording and transcription.

6. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time for any reason, as well as get a consent form that explains the study's risks, benefits, procedures, and purpose.

7. The researcher required a signature from each selected participant to signify the participants' consent to participate in a 45 to 60-minute audio conference meeting.

8. The researcher ensured that the Zoom invitation is password-protected.

9. The researcher informed the participants about the semi-structured interview questions and an introductory icebreaker.

10. The researcher recorded audio on Zoom and transcribe the audio data.

11. The researcher ensured the confidentiality of participants' identities, and the data will be permanently deleted two years after the recording date or if the graduation of the researcher is delayed by more than two years. The data will be deleted after graduation.

12. The researcher used the same procedure for all 15 participants.

Interview Techniques

According to VanderStoep & Johnston (2009), data collection will be done through interviews tailored to participants' experiences with the tourism phenomena, which is done in a face-to-face interview with a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. The following interview questions were asked:

- Icebreaker: How long have you been working in tourism? What is the most excellent part of it?

- IQ1: What are the biggest challenges you, as a leader, face in tourism?

- IQ2: What are your company's biggest challenges in tourism in relation to the tourism sector? IQ3: What obstacles have you encountered in your position in the tourism industry?

- IQ4: How were you able to overcome those challenges?

- IQ5: What are the leadership strategies that you have used to overcome your company's challenges facing the disorganized, non-cooperative, and dispersed tourism?

- IQ6: What are the characteristics of your personal strategy versus your company's?

- IQ7: What additional approaches do you employ to tackle stakeholder expectations when there is a discrepancy in policy outcomes?

- IQ8: How do you define success in tourism in general, to you personally, to your company, to your nation, and globally?

- IQ9: How do you measure tourism success on the company, national, and global scales?

- IQ10: What is an example of a policy or decision made that you would go back in time and redo?

- IQ11: What are your recommendations for your company, the nation, and the globe to attain sustainability and success?

- IQ12: If you were to decide on behalf of the entirety of the tourism industry to create a synergistic industry, what would your recommendations be?

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was essential to ensure consistency between interviews. The researcher provided the structure and organizational order. The researcher has included the interview protocol document in the dissertation's Appendix E and Appendix F in English and Arabic, respectively. The dissertation committee has assessed and endorsed the interview protocol during the initial review. All selected participants were contacted through e-mail and Zoom audio calls. The researcher obtained e-mails from the formal Egyptian tourism ministry registry of type A licensed tour operator companies. The interview lasted for about 60 minutes. The researcher will maintain a physical copy of the interview protocol, which includes guidance for the process and the questions for the interview. Additionally, written notes were recorded (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Alignment of Research Questions to the Interview Questions

Prior to commencing each interview session, the researcher examined the predefined parameters outlined in the informed consent form (see Appendix C and Appendix D). Data gathering revolved around the 12 questions, in line with the study's focus, concerning the challenges, strategies, competitiveness, success factors, and recommendations pertinent to the Egyptian tourism industry. The reader will understand the range of the challenges based on each participant's unique perspective of decision-making, policymaking, private or public sectors, stakeholders, independent owners, and independent contractors.

- RQ1 asks the following: What are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry to achieve collaborative and sustainable objectives? To delve into this inquiry, every participant will respond to the subsequent three queries:
  - IQ1: What are the biggest challenges you, as a leader, face in tourism?
  - IQ2: What are your company's biggest challenges in tourism in relation to the tourism sector?
  - IQ3: What obstacles have you encountered in your position in the tourism industry?
- RQ2 asks: What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces? In order to tackle this inquiry, each participant will respond to the following four queries:
  - IQ4: What strategies did you employ to surmount those challenges?
  - IQ5: What leadership strategies have you used to overcome your companies' challenges facing disorganized, non-cooperative, and dispersed tourism?
  - IQ6: What are the characteristics of your personal strategy versus your company's?
  - IQ7: What additional approaches do you employ to manage stakeholder expectations in cases where there is a discrepancy in policy outcomes?
- RQ3 asks: How do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success? In order to respond to this query, every participant will address the subsequent two inquiries:
  - IQ8: How do you define success in tourism in general, to you personally, to your company, to your nation, and globally?

- IQ9: How do you measure tourism success on the company, national, and global scales?

- RQ4 asks: What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders should develop a strategic, comprehensive theoretical framework for achieving successful sustainable leadership in Egyptian tourism? In order to address this query, each participant will respond to the following three questions:

  - IQ10: What is an example of a policy or decision made that you would go back in time and redo?

  - IQ11: What are your recommendations for your company, the nation, and the globe to attain sustainability and success?

  - IQ12: If you were to decide on behalf of the entirety of the tourism industry to create a synergistic industry, what would your recommendations be?

Validity of the Study

To align the interview questions with the primary research questions, the researcher undertook a three-step validation process: (a) initial assessment for apparent relevance and content validity, (b) validation through peer review, and (c) validation through expert review.

Prima Facie and Content Validity

There are three types of research validity: (a) construct validity is measuring what is intended to be measured, (b) content validity is the research representative of what is aimed to measure, and (c) criterion validity is whether the results measure the outcome ostensibly to measure (Brown, 2010). Brown (2010) noted that, recently, validity had been conceptualized as a singular component related to validity. In this research context, prima facie is concerned about "on the face of it" or the first impression of the validity of the research. The researcher developed the research questions and related interview questions sufficiently to demonstrate a

presumption. The researcher has generated a table containing research questions and their respective interview queries to establish initial validity. Table 1 was constructed based on the information obtained during the literature review, thus affirming its initial validity. It identifies the four research questions and corresponding interview questions.

Table 1

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions: First Draft

	Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1	What are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry to achieve collaborative and sustainable tourism?	IQ1: What are the biggest challenges you, as a leader, face in tourism? IQ2: What are your company's biggest challenges in tourism in relation to the tourism sector? IQ3: What obstacles have you encountered in your position in the tourism industry?
RQ2	What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces?	IQ4: How were you able to overcome those challenges? IQ5: What are the leadership strategies that you have used to overcome your companies' challenges facing the disorganized, non-cooperative, and dispersed tourism? IQ6: What are the characteristics of your personal strategy versus your company's? IQ7: What additional approaches do you employ to tackle stakeholder expectations when there is a discrepancy in policy outcomes?
RQ3	How do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success?	IQ8: How do you define success in tourism in general, to you personally, to your company, to your nation, and globally? IQ9: How do you measure success in tourism on the company, national, and global scale?
RQ 4	What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders have to develop a strategic framework for achieving successful sustainable leadership in Egyptian tourism.	IQ10: What is an example of a policy or decision made that you would go back in time and redo? IQ11: What are your recommendations for your company, the nation, and the globe, to attain sustainability and success? IQ12: If you were to decide on behalf of the entirety of the tourism industry to create a synergistic industry, what would your recommendations be?

Peer- Review Validity

A peer review was conducted to obtain an external evaluation of the research. The researcher engaged with an external individual, the peer reviewers, to evaluate the validity of the questions by examining and analyzing the qualitative research, aligning with input from other external researchers (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher e-mailed a PhD student in Global Leadership and Change at Pepperdine University, inviting them to act as a critical reviewer. This ensured that the researcher was held accountable by fielding challenging questions about the study's meaning, methods, and interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The student was tasked with reviewing each question and adhering to these instructions: (a) evaluate the summary statement to grasp the purpose and objectives of the dissertation, (b) assess whether the interview questions align with the overarching research questions, (c) decide whether each question should remain (a) unaltered, (b) removed, or (c) suggest a modification. Table 2 shows the four research questions and corresponding interview questions with modifications based on peer reviewer input.

Table 2

Expert Reviewed: Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

	Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1	What are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry to achieve collaborative and sustainable tourism?	IQ1: What are the biggest challenges you, as a leader, face in tourism? a. The question is directly relevant to the research question - Keep as stated b. The question is irrelevant to the research question Delete it c. The question should be modified as suggested: Reviewer 1: Keep as stated. Reviewer 2: Keep as stated. Reviewer 3: Modify as Suggested: "What are the biggest challenges you as a leader face in tourism within your industry"?
		IQ2: What are your companies biggest challenges in tourism in relation to the tourism sector?

		Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
			a.　　The question is directly relevant to the research question - Keep as stated b.　　The question is irrelevant to the research question　　Delete it c.　　The question should be modified as suggested: Reviewer 1: Modify as suggested: What are your company's　most significant challenges in the Egyptian tourism industry? Reviewer 2: Modify as suggested "What are your company's biggest challenges to obtaining collaborative and sustainable tourism objectives?" (unless you mean more than one company then keep as is, thank you!) Reviewer 3: Modify as Suggested: "What are your employer's biggest challenges in tourism"?
			IQ3: What obstacles have you encountered in your position in the tourism industry? a.　　The question is directly relevant to the research question **- Keep as stated** b.　　The question is irrelevant to the research question　　**Delete it** c.　　The question should be **modified as suggested**: Reviewer 1: Delete it. Reviewer 2: Keep as stated. Reviewer 3: Modify as Suggested: "What personal challenges have you faced individually regarding tourism"?
RQ2	What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces?		IQ4: How were you able to overcome those challenges? a.　　The question is directly relevant to the research question **- Keep as stated** b.　　The question is irrelevant to the research question　　**Delete it** c.　　The question should be **modified as suggested**: Reviewer 1: Modify as suggested: What are the most effective strategies you or your company have implemented to address the challenges in the Egyptian tourism industry? Reviewer 2: Keep as stated. Reviewer 3: Keep as stated.
			IQ5: What are the leadership strategies that you have used to overcome your companies' challenges facing disorganized, non-cooperative, and dispersed tourism? a.　　The question is directly relevant to the research question **- Keep as stated** b.　　The question is irrelevant to the research question　　**Delete it** c.　　The question should be **modified as suggested**: Reviewer 1: Modify as suggested: Can you provide examples of best practices from other countries or regions that could be applied to the Egyptian tourism industry to mitigate its challenges?

	Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
		Reviewer 2: Modify as suggested: (I would double check this question with one of the committee members since you are naming challenges) "What leadership strategies help you overcome challenges like disorganization, noncooperation, and dispersion in tourism?" Reviewer 3: "What are the leadership strategies you have used to overcome your companies' challenges facing disorganization, non-cooperativeness, and distribution within tourism"?
		IQ6: What are the characteristics of your personal strategy versus your company's? a. The question is directly relevant to the research question - **Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to the research question **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: Reviewer 1: Delete it. Reviewer 2: Keep as stated. Reviewer 3: Keep as stated.
		IQ7: What additional approaches do you employ to tackle stakeholder expectations when there is a discrepancy in policy outcomes? a. The question is directly relevant to the research question - **Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to the research question **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: Reviewer 1: Modify as suggested: In your opinion, what resources or collaborations are essential for industry stakeholders to effectively overcome the current challenges faced by the Egyptian tourism sector? Reviewer 2: Keep as stated. Reviewer 3: Keep as stated.
RQ3	How do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success?	IQ8: How do you define success in tourism in general, to you personally, to your company, to your nation, and globally? a. The question is directly relevant to the research question - **Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to the research question **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: Reviewer 1: Modify as suggested: How do you and your company define success in the Egyptian tourism industry? How does this definition align or differ from national and global perspectives? Reviewer 2: Keep as stated. Reviewer 3: Modify as suggested: "Generally speaking, how do you define tourism success in the following areas: locally (within your company), nationally, and globally"?

	Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
		IQ9: How do you measure tourism success on the company, national, and global scales? Leave as is/Delete/Modify as suggested Reviewer 1: Leave as is. Reviewer 2: Leave as is. Reviewer 3: Modify as suggested: "How do you measure success in tourism locally (company), national and global scale"?
RQ4	What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders have to develop a strategic framework for achieving successful sustainable leadership in Egyptian tourism.	IQ10: What is an example of a policy or decision made that you would go back in time and redo? a. The question is directly relevant to the research question **- Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to the research question **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: Reviewer 1: Modify as suggested: Can you identify any past policies or decisions within the Egyptian tourism sector that, in retrospect, you believe could have been approached differently for better sustainability and leadership outcomes? Reviewer 2: Keep as stated. Reviewer 3: Keep as stated.
		IQ11: What are your recommendations for your company, the nation, and the globe, to attain sustainability and success? a. The question is directly relevant to the research question **- Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to the research question **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: Reviewer 1: Keep as stated. Reviewer 2: Keep as stated. Reviewer 3: Modify as suggested: "Can you identify any past policies or decisions within the Egyptian tourism sector that, in retrospect, you believe could have been approached differently for better sustainability and leadership outcomes"?
		IQ12: If you were to decide on behalf of the entirety of the tourism industry to create a synergistic industry, what would your recommendations be? a. The question is directly relevant to the research question **- Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to the research question **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: Reviewer 1: Modify as suggested: Given the goal of creating a more synergistic and sustainable tourism industry in Egypt, what key elements or strategies would you recommend be included in a comprehensive theoretical framework?

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
	Reviewer 2: Keep as stated. Reviewer 3: Keep as stated.

Expert Review Validity

To uphold the validity of the both research and interview questions, the researcher

presented the prima facie and peer-reviewed steps to committee members who offered their

expert review as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Expert Review. Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions

RQ1: What are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry to achieve collaborative and sustainable tourism?	**Tell me what interested you in a career in tourism?**
	IQ1: Think of the single most difficult challenge the tourism industry faces today?
	    a. What is that challenge and
	    b. How did you experience it?
	IQ2: In your view, what are other similar challenges that the tourism industry faces?
	IQ3: Are you personally aware of similar challenges that other leaders in tourism believe they face that you may not be facing?

RQ2: What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces?	IQ4: What strategies and best practices did you employ or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge? IQ5: What strategies or best practices did you employ, or resources did you seek to overcome these challenges? IQ6: Are you personally aware of strategies or best practices employed or resources sought by these women?
RQ3: How do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success?	IQ7: How do you define success in tourism in general, to you personally, to your company, to your nation, and globally? IQ8: How do you measure success in tourism on the company, national, and global scale?
RQ4: What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, Stakeholders and leaders must develop a	IQ9: What is an example of a policy or decision made that you would go back in time and redo? IQ10: What are your recommendations for your company, the nation, and the globe, to attain

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
strategic framework for achieving sustainable Egyptian tourism leadership.	sustainability and success? IQ11: If you were to decide on behalf of the entirety of the tourism industry to create a synergistic industry, what would your recommendations be?

Reliability of the Study

In qualitative research, reliability pertains to achieving consistent outcomes upon replicating a study or experiment. It denotes the extent to which measurement tools can yield consistent results when the researcher employs identical procedures across participants (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). Consistency is fundamental for qualitative research and analyses (Carcary, 2009). To ensure reliability in qualitative research, researchers must document the steps and procedures of the research process (Leung, 2015). A pilot study serves as a premative measure to determine the reliability of the search methodology (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). It helps to detect any prospective ethical dilemmas and solve any obstacles that may cause technical challenges before getting on with the full study. The pilot study facilitates the identification of weaknesses that may be addressed and increases research quality, which may achieve relevant aspects of a research process (Malmqvist et al., 2019).

Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study to confirm the reliability of the research by selecting a sample participant who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The sample participant was interviewed utilizing the interview questions. This pilot study was meant to ensure the clarity and understandability of the interview questions. The study pilot feedback ensured that the interview questions were well-constructed and pertinent to the lived experience of tourism leaders in Egypt. Therefore, the pilot study was central to validating

the research design and methodology, setting a solid groundwork for the ensuing complete study (Malmqvist et al., 2019).

Statement of Personal Bias

This study aimed to scrutinize, delve into, and gain insight into the complexities and divisions within the Egyptian tourism industry. As emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2018), researchers must be open about their predispositions and preconceived notions. A researcher's bias can undermine the study's validity (Johnson & Christiansen, 2012). Following Horsburgh (2003), a well-executed qualitative study divulges all research particulars, allowing readers to grasp the subject's importance, context, and historical backdrop under examination, revealing the experience as a process. The researcher has a unique perspective with 30 years of experience in Egyptian tourism as an insider and practitioner. The perspective describes their worldview and opinion on the research study in its socio-political context (Holmes, 2020). According to Holmes (2020), as a tourism insider, the researcher is described as an *emic account* as a long-time tourism practitioner, and the insider will influence the study's conceptual framework. Being an industry insider may cause unknowing biases such as sympatric myopic views and the inability to raise proactive questions or discuss taboo questions. An example related to the tourism industry, but not to this research, is discussing the nature of serving alcoholic beverages to tourists.

Bracketing and Epoché

Epoché as defined by Merriam Webster (n.d.), is the act of refraining from any conclusion for or against anything as the decisive step for attaining ataraxy. Epoché comes from the Greek: to abstain or keep a distance from (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher will avoid the ordinary way of perceiving everyday activities in the research context. The researcher will consciously withhold any preconceived notions during the epoché process, approaching the subject of the study with a fresh perspective for thorough investigation and

analysis. This epoché process entails suspending assumptions and prioritizing knowledge over anything that raises uncertainty (Moustakas, 1994). In qualitative research, researchers deliberately set aside their experiences when describing the participants' encounters with the phenomena. This is particularly relevant in studies involving a small group, employing a phenomenological approach and procedures to elucidate meaning and discern patterns (Creswell, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Data Analysis, Data Coding, and Data Presentation

Data Analysis

When employing a qualitative methodology for data collection in a real-world environment, the researcher's stance is attuned to the perspectives of the study participants. The process of inductive and deductive data analysis culminates in identifying themes (Aguas, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018; T. M. Dawson, 2020). The researcher followed specific steps to ensure confidentiality. After transcribing the interviews verbatim, a designated numerical identifier was assigned to each participant (T. M. Dawson, 2020). To confirm and ensure accuracy, the researcher proofread and annotated the transcripts and wrote an analytical memo. These steps ensured that the research focuses on challenges, strategies, and recommendations of the Egyptian tourism leaders who operate tour operator companies (T. M. Dawson, 2020; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

In this phenomenological data analysis, the researcher followed the following steps:

- The researcher concentrated on the participants' firsthand experiences, perspectives, and understandings of the problem and issue,rather than solely relying on what the research uncovered in the literature review.
- The researcher organized the data in a computer system. The information was transformed into suitable text segments by transcribing audio into written form.

- The researcher took notes and create memos, categorizing them as images and documents and including essential concepts.

- The researcher clarified, organized, categorized, and construed the data by assigning codes and identifying themes. Following this, the coding process was thoroughly examined to merge textual content and data into clear categories and overarching themes. These themes consolidate multiple codes into unified concept.

- The researcher interpreted and made sense of the data to let other researchers incorporate the researcher's interpretation into the more considerable literature.

- The researcher presented and visualized the data in tables, figures, and graphs as necessary.

Data Coding

Coding involves preparation and organization of the data to recognize themes and represent the findings (Belotto, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Miles et al., 2014). Coding involves reviewing each participant`s transcript which are the meaning units of the coding process. Phrases, sentences, and words of the transcript that are expressed were identified and labelled with codes (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The coding process is defined as interpreting text and information`s portions in a new way. The interpretation and assessment of how these meaning units are linked will lead to develop themes of identification is the ground fundament for developing the strategic framework for successful sustainable Egyptian tourism. The researcher attached codes to various sections of the text which is the meaning units of the coding process to characterize the experiences that participants described (Belotto, 2018).

The coding process implies endless choices of characterizations which resulted in creating large number of codes (Belotto, 2018). The researcher applied structural coding by labelling passages with terms that were related to the Egyptian tourism research (Miles et al.,

2014). The research explored the lived experience of individuals who manage tour operator companies. The transcription of the individuals' experiences were labelled with codes that align experiences of challenges facing the tourism industry in terms of day-to-day, short term, and long-term impacting the Egyptian tourism industry. This method reduced the number of codes and provide a context creating several categories of code families that are related to the creation of strategic framework for successful sustainable Egyptian tourism research (Belotto, 2018; Miles et al., 2014).

Data Presentation

The presentation of data in this study was crafted to express and convey the research findings. Tables were carefully structured, featuring the identified themes as column headings, and populated with relevant keywords and phrases derived from the data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ningi, 2022; Saldaña, 2016; Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013). The tables presenting the data are organized according to research questions and grouped related concepts to establish thematic categories. Charts are generated to visualize and illustrate the identified themes based on participants' responses and narratives. Charts aligned with participant statements and narratives highlighting the various leadership competencies, styles, and strategies of individuals operating tour operator companies license type A in Egypt. Thematic categories were color-coded, and noteworthy quotes relating to the themes were obtained from the data transcriptions—interrater reliability was applied to ensure the theme's credibility. In Chapter 4, the researcher will discuss the presentation of the theme in detail and supplement the discussion with charts and excerpts from interviews.

Interrater Reliability and Validity

The researcher employed a four-step process to ensure interrater reliability:

- After completing the first three interviews, the researcher transcribed the data to discern themes related to each of the research questions using coding.

- The researcher distributed the findings, transcripts, and codes to two experts for evaluation. They reviewed the codes and themes and offered their suggestions and feedback.

- After achieving a consensus on the recommendations from the curators was reached, the researcher proceeded to code the other remaining interview transcripts using the same proceedings as the first three.

- The researcher used the same preceding steps repeatedly until they derived the final themes and codes.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an in-depth overview of the research designs and methodology utilized in conducting the study. The researcher reaffirmed the research questions and elaborated on the rationale and relevance of adopting a phenomenological qualitative research approach to scrutinize, probe, and gain insight into the challenges and the strategies employed to overcome them. The characteristics of the study, unit analysis, and sampling framework were discussed and analyzed. Then, the population and sample size, along with exclusion and inclusion criteria, were demonstrated to ensure the selection of the best possible candidates for the study. The research will collect the data from the participants who have direct experience of Egyptian tourism. Careful planning was used to ensure that participants could withdraw from the study at any point for any reason. The researcher followed the proper procedures to maintain confidentiality and safety, as the IRB outlines. The researcher used the prima facie to validate the IQs using peer reviews. Finally, the researcher introduced potential personal biases and processes that ensured the reliability and validity of the data analysis used in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The tourism industry is central factor in influencing a nation's overall economic progress. It has an indispensable role in strengthening a country's foreign trade, creating employment possibilities, and differentiating sources of national income (S. H. Kim et al., 2013; Setiawan et al., 2023; T. L. Wang et al., 2017). The Egyptian tourism industry represents approximately 10% of its GDP and employs between 10-15% (United States Agency for International Development [USAID] 2023), a total of two and a half million people (Galal, 2024). The tourism industry has excellent growth potential given the competitiveness of Egypt as a travel compared to other destinations such as Greece, Dubai, Spain, and France (Albu, 2015). Therefore, efficient destination management relies on collaborative leadership within the Egyptian tourism industry (S. S. Huang et al., 2021; Koufodontis & Gaki, 2020). Collaborative leadership necessitates authorities to embrace a comprehensive approach to administering supply and demand while issuing forceful tourism guidelines and rules (Koufodontis & Gaki, 2020). Government agencies must transcend challenges and apply strategies endorsing collaborative, successful, sustainable tourism practices. Those practices and policies will result in favourable travel experiences and perceptions, promoting repeated tourist visitation (R-Y Huang et al., 2021). Authorities should adeptly integrate tourism resources to promote sustainable tourism (S. S. Huang et al., 2021).

Therefore, this phenomenological study explored, understood, and examined the challenges, strategies, and best practices faced by the individuals who operate tour operator companies license A in Egypt. It seeks to gain an understanding and insight into current practices followed by Egyptian tourism leaders to overcome these challenges. The received feedback and information generate a narrative of the individual's (participants) optimal

approaches. This phenomenological investigation gathered these insights by examining the responses to the following inquiries:

- **RQ1**: What are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry to achieve collaborative and sustainable tourism?

- **RQ2**: What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces?

- **RQ3**: How do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track tourism industry success?

- **RQ4**: What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders and leaders must develop a strategic framework for achieving sustainable Egyptian tourism leadership.

The researcher collected responses to the research's four inquiries by formulating 11 interview queries and acquiring the responses to these 11 interview questions presented to leaders of tour operators in Egypt. The ultimate interview questions were created using inter-reliability and validity methods. The ultimate interview questions were as follows:

- IQ1: Think of the single most difficult challenge the tourism industry faces today. What is that challenge, and how did you experience it?

- IQ3: In your view, what are other similar challenges that the tourism industry faces?

- IQ:5 Are you personally aware of similar challenges that other leaders in tourism believe they face that you may not be facing?

- IQ2: What strategies and best practices did you employ, or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge?

- IQ4: What strategies or best practices did you employ, or resources did you seek to overcome these challenges?

- IQ6: Are you personally aware of strategies or best practices employed or resources sought by these leaders?

- IQ8: How do you define success in tourism in general, to you personally, to your company, to your nation, and globally?

- IQ9: How do you measure success in tourism on the company, national, and global scale?

- IQ10: What is an example of a policy or decision made that you would go back in time and redo?

- IQ11: What are your recommendations for your company, the nation, and the globe to attain sustainability and success?

- IQ12: If you were to decide on behalf of the entirety of the tourism industry to create a synergistic industry, what would your recommendations be?

Semi-structured interviews were employed in the data collecting process, allowing the participants to elaborate on their experiences and insights into the challenges of the Egyptian tourism industry. The open-ended interview questions employed a conversational approach, and these interviews were recorded for accuracy assurance while conducting data analyses. Data analyses and coding processes in the participants' responses are identifying best practices' common themes in the Egyptian tourism industry. Study participant's details, data collection, and analysis process were provided in this chapter. The interview data were provided in graphic and narrative form. The chapter will end with providing a themes, summary, and tabular form for each research question.

Participants

Study participants were selected using a qualitative research purposeful sampling method. According to Bekele and Ago (2022), no universal rule dictates the maximum and minimum number of interviews for one qualitative research. Therefore, the researcher

selected 15 participants, an average of five and 25 (Creswell, 1998) and six and 12 (Kuzel, 1992; Guest et al., 2006). Participants were frontline individuals who operate tour operator companies with A license in Egypt. The researcher interviewed 15 participants, emphasizing the maximum variation of the purposive sampling selection to target different incoming tourism markets from North and South America (10- 15% of the incoming market), West (50% of the incoming market), and East Europe (25-30% of the incoming market), and 5% from the rest of the world (Statista, 2023; Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics [CAPMAS], 2024). There were three female participants and 12 males, ranging in experience from five years to over 40 years in operating tour operator companies. Participants selection included individuals who had started their leader career in tourism 40 years ago experiencing a longitudinal range of involvements and exposed to domestic and international crises and challenges. Participants included individuals who operated in different incoming tourism markets to include the different types of problems as it may vary based on tourist nationality as previously mentioned in chapter three in maximum variation (Armstrong et al., 1997; Calantone et al., 1989; Danaher & Arweiler, 1996; J. H. Huang et al., 1996; Kosak, 2002; Li et al., 2020; Richardson & Crompton, 1998; Streimikiene et al., 2021).

Data Collection

The data process commenced once the Institutional Review Board clearance was obtained on January 23, 2024 (see Appendix H). A subset of leaders from tour operator companies possessing an A type license who satisfied the inclusion and exclusion criteria were identified from the registry of the Egyptian Tourism Ministry, following the guidelines of the ETAA (2024). In order to ensure reaching the 15-20 participants, the researcher sent the recruitment e-mail in both Arabic and English to the most 500 active company leaders identified in cooperation with the company's register managers in the Egyptian Tourism Ministry and confirmed the list with the ETAA as they monitored the latest company

activities. These procedures ensure that participants are up to date in daily tourism operations and not dormant due to any hardship that might make their prospective company inactive, such as COVID-19 or the current Gaza- Israeli war in the Middle East.

Scheduling the interviews was challenging as some participants were abroad for an international travel-fair in Madrid, Spain, and other European countries. Twenty participants responded and agreed to be interviewed. The researcher scheduled the interview, but there was no further response from their side. As the process further unfolded, time mattered. The researcher had to shorten the turnaround time between the initial e-mail contact and the scheduled interview by giving participants a deadline to respond. When the deadline approached, and the response was not received, their names were scratched from the list and moved to the next group of individuals targeted for the 50 interviews.

The turnaround time for the first recruitment round was from January 24, 2024, until February 4, 2024, and the total participants were five interviewed and 12 scheduled for the week of 5 February-10 February 2024. By February 10, 2024, the researcher received responses from the participants who asked if they could answer the questions in writing instead of audio-recording due to concerns about their businesses and refraining from criticizing officials. The researcher understood the cultural and organizational dilemma as reluctant responders are wary of being interviewed because of their sensitive and delicate organizational procedures and interactions (Dundon, 2010). The researcher rejected their request as the IRB approval was only for audio recording and transcription, not written responses. After discussing the written response suggestions with the committee, the researcher continued a new round of recruitment. The second round of recruitment yielded more than 10 participants, but the researcher interviewed 18 participants as more responses were received in the second round. While reviewing the data for the pilot coding inter-rater process, three interviews needed the computative correspondence between the spoken

discourse and the written record. Therefore, these three interviews were excluded from data collection to avoid superfluous and transcripts that cannot be analyzed (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014).

The researcher's primary interest was English-speaking participants, as mentioned in Chapter 3. However, when the researcher reviewed the data from the first three English-speaking participants, he noted in his remarks that responses from English-speaking participants were short and brief. While Arabic speaking, participants` responses were rich and insightful. According to Barker (2016), Dundon and Ryan (2010), and Tsui et al. (1992), proper interpersonal interaction strengthens the social unity between the researcher and interviewees. The researcher found it more convenient to avoid language barrier limitations, ensuring social unity and interaction with the respondents. He conducted the remaining 12 interviews in Arabic, removing the language barriers. This helped participants avoid short answers and challenges in finding the relevant vocabulary to express the problem and have rich, insightful data coupled with their engagement (Dundon & Ryan, 2010). This has added more depth to the research transparency and accuracy in conducting the interviews in Arabic to get the best expression of their lived experience in the freer text.

According to Baron and Pfeffer (1994), and J. Zhang et al. (2018), social exchange theory suggests that interpersonal attraction establishes attachments between identity and subjects. The individuals who operate tour operator companies are considered subordinate to the Egyptian Tourism Ministry as it is the organization that administrates the entire industry, including their companies. Therefore, they can be described as subordinate positions within the multifarious hierarchy. The hidden nature of what these tourism leaders do in their quotidian jobs starkly contrasts the organizational rigidities of the bureaucratic corporation of the Egyptian Tourism Ministry as a government organization (Dundon & Ryan, 2010). In this

phenomenological study, the researcher will organize and analyze the sociological problem of melding structure and agency (Dundon & Ryan, 2010; Giddens, 1979).

In translating keywords for coding, it was essential to reflect upon the meaning of the words in translation. In order to do so, the researcher noted the three levels of translating. The first is the clear forward words that do not need a meaningful interpretation. The second is the language-implied meaning, which is the understanding of culture, and then the third one may be difficult to understand even for native speakers (Schein, 2010). The researcher then employed Schein's (2010) three cultural levels as follows:

- Artifacts are obvious elements of the organization. In translating the transcript, this relates to clear words that do not have more than one meaning.

- Espoused values are declared sets of values and norms. In translating the transcript, this relates to words that may need deeper thinking but are married to cultural understanding.

- Shared basic assumptions are the under structure and solid foundations of organizational culture. In translating the transcript, this relates to the hidden value of the language. For example, if a participant is being sarcastic and says Egypt has the most recent infrastructure and technology, in reality, he means the opposite (Schein, 2010).

The recruitment script was e-mailed to participants in both Arabic and English. Language: When they responded to the e-mail, the researcher sent them the consent form in Arabic and English. Although the researcher stated that he primarily targeted English-speaking participants, the consent form and recruitment were sent in Arabic and English. Some participants were ready to be interviewed as they understood the purpose of the study; others had a few questions regarding whether they may answer only some of the questions. Once an agreement of participating in the study was reached, the researcher explained in

detail the purpose of the study and interview rules according to Pepperdine University

Institutional Review Board (IRB) when a copy of IRB approval was

e-mailed to participants. The researcher ensured each participant that her/ his identity would

be kept confidential and all personal and metadata would be de-identified. Participants were

informed that they had the option to inquire about the study, withdraw at any point, and

consent to audio record the interviews with transcription captions. Despite the fact that the

researcher apprised the participants about the interview times of up to 60 minutes, some

interviews lasted 20 minutes, while others extended to 60 minutes. Table 4 shows participant

interviews dates.

Table 4

Dates of Individual Participant Interviews

Participant	Interview Date
Participant 1	January 30, 2024
Participant 2	February 5, 2024
Participant 3	February 5, 2024
Participant 4	February 2, 2024
Participant 5	January 31, 2024
Participant 6	February 10, 2024
Participant 7	February 8, 2024
Participant 8	February 8, 2024
Participant 9	February 8, 2024
Participant 10	February 9, 2024
Participant 11	February 1, 2024
Participant 12	February 5, 2024
Participant 13	February 5, 2024
Participant 14	February 9, 2024
Participant 15	February 10, 2024

Data Analysis

Qualitative research coding techniques were used to analyze the collected data. To mitigate assumptions and biases in the course of data collection, the researcher documented thoughts and biases that could be preconceived in the exploration of challenges, strategies, and recommendations of the Egyptian tourism industry. This procedure inhibited the researcher's preconceived thoughts and biases to prevail and confirm that only participants provided information was considered during data analyzes. During the interviews', handwritten notes were taken while audio recording and transcriptions were done. Interview recordings transcriptions were reviewed to identify key phrases, words, and viewpoints to mark common patterns in the responses. The codes were organized using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and the codes were colored according to common themes.

Inter-Rater Review Process

The inter-rater review was piloted by sending the coded information derived from the initial three interviews to a peer review panel comprising three doctoral candidates enrolled in the Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change program at Pepperdine University. Interview questions, transcripts, and an Excel spreadsheet of the coded information were shared with the peer review panel through e-mail. The peer review panel consists of doctoral program students with expertise in qualitative research, data analyses, and coding. The reviewer's panel commented on the code sheet after independently reviewing the shared information. The researcher modified the codes based on the panel comments and dialogue discussing the suggested modification. After the researcher finished analyzing the 15 interview transcripts, they shared the results again with the co-reviewer panel and discussed the results until a consensus was reached. This co-reviewer panel provided recommendations shared with the dissertation committee members.

The reviewer panel suggested consolidating comparable codes to decrease the quantity of themes per question and adjusting modifications to more effectively address how and what within the interview questions.

Data Display

Data were systematically arranged based on the research questions and their associated interview queries. Thus, recurring themes were identified from coded terms. Then, data were encapsulated in frequency bar charts, presenting a visual portrayal of the outcomes. Bar charts and tables were arranged in descending order based on response frequency, providing a visual representation of the results. Bar charts and tables were organized by descending order frequency of responses. Themes were described by offering a chart and sample participant quotes obtained from interview transcripts. Participants were numerically identified as participants 1, 2, 3, et cetera, to protect and ensure their anonymity.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 (RQ1) asked, what are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry to achieve collaborative and sustainable tourism? Participants were asked three interview questions to serve as a foundation for addressing this research question. These three interview questions pertaining to RQ1 were formulated as follows:

- IQ1: Think of the single most difficult challenge the tourism industry faces today.
  - What is that challenge, and
  - How did you experience it?
- IQ3: In your view, what are other similar challenges the tourism industry faces?
- IQ5: Are you personally aware of similar challenges that other leaders in tourism believe they face that you may not be facing?

Participants' responses were examined to determine commonalities to the group and report as themes of RQ1interview responses.

Interview Question 1. Interview Question 1 asked, think of the single most difficult

challenge the tourism industry faces today; what is that challenge, and how do you

experience it? Responses to this question were analyzed and presented in two parts: the single

challenge faced tourism industry and how the participants experienced it.

Single Most Difficult Challenge. The question about the single most difficult

challenge yielded a total of 22 responses, which were grouped into five themes: (a) political

instability, (b) war, (c) bureaucracy, (d) infrastructure, and (e) air connectivity (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Coding Results: Interview Question 1A
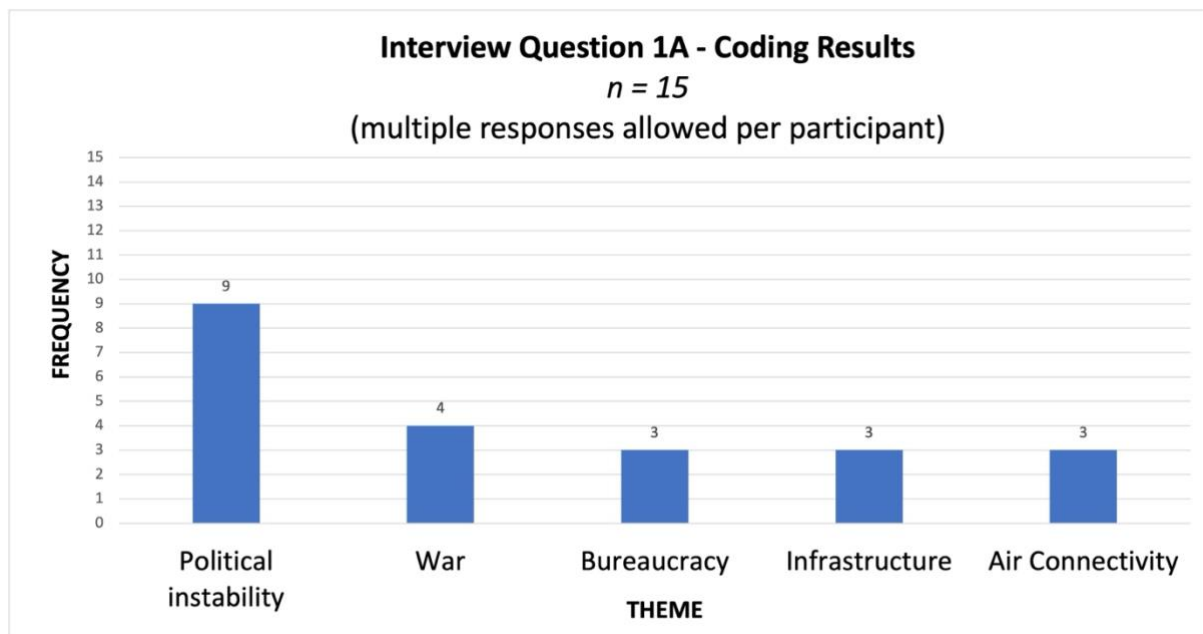
Note. The single most difficult challenge faces Egyptian tourism is highlighted. The provided
chart demonstrates the prevalent themes emerged from responses to initial part of Interview
Question1. Data are arranged in descending order based on frequency. The numerical values
within each theme denote the number of statements articulated by participants associated with
that specific theme.

Political Instability. Political instability is the prevalent theme that emerged among

nine of 15 participants (60%) as the most difficult challenge that faces Egyptian tourism. This

is the highest number of participants stating that political instability is the single most difficult

challenge Egyptian tourism faces. These statements about political instability, war, and the

country`s geopolitical position are supported by Groizard et al. (2016), Maher and Zhao (2022), and Tang and Tan (2015), stating how the political instability, war, and unrest exacerbated and dampens tourism investment by posing security risks. Post -Arab Spring unrest and terrorist threats have sharply reduced tourist arrivals, underscoring tourism`s vulnerability. Participants expressed that political instability is the single most difficult challenge and that the tension between Middle Eastern countries makes tourists worried about traveling to Egypt. Participants shared that political instability gets shorter and sometimes outbreaks in which Egypt's involvement is inevitable because of its geographical location. For example, Participant 1 stated:

> The tourism industry in Egypt is always influenced by the political situation that Egypt is in, so now and then the break could be shorter, and the break could be longer. We have challenges, so we have setbacks in tourism, and there are different reasons every time. Sometimes the reasons are internal, I mean, like because of the political situation, but sometimes they are out of our hands.

War. The second theme is war in the neighbouring countries, with four of 15 participants (26%). Looking at the number of participants who shared that war is the single most difficult challenge, it can be interpreted that participants meant that war is a short-term momentum factor that has an impact. At the same time, political instability was a longer-term factor in the war, aligned with Duan et al. (2022) and Perles-Ribes et al. (2017). The prolonged conflicts in the Middle East are composed to reallocate essential resources, capital, and strategic emphasis from the enhancement, preservation, and capital infusion into the tourism industry (Çakar, 2021; Duan et al., 2022; Perles-Ribes et al., 2017). Participants who announced that war is the single most difficult challenge meant that the region has been politically unstable for more than seven decades, but political instability does not have the drastic impact as the war. For example, Participant 13 mentioned:

The ongoing war in the neighbouring countries and fear of terrorism. There is

nothing we can do about it whatsoever." In the same theme, participant 7 shared, "A

great fear of the war in Gaza and Israel is there, oh, there is a cancellation, oh, a

percentage, not large and not small either.

In Chapter 5, the researcher will discuss why war was an emerging theme and not

included under the theme of political instability.

Bureaucracy. The third theme in interview question one was bureaucracy, with three

of 15 participants (20%) mentioning it as the single most difficult challenge Egyptian tourism

is facing today. From the bar chart, bureaucracy represents the same negative impact on

tourism as war, which tells us how 20% of participants consider bureaucracy to have the

same negative impact as war. The literature supports that bureaucratic leadership in Egypt's

tourism sector, characterized by hierarchy and formalization, hinders growth due to obstacles

like low employee motivation and corruption (Fleming, 2020; Ghanem et al., 2020;

Mohammed, 2019). Despite AI's introduction, bureaucratic red tape impedes efficiency and

innovation, threatening investment and economic efficiency in tourism (Carrigan et al., 2020;

Kaufmann, 2019; Kumorotomo, 2020; Muylaert et al., 2022)

Participant 11 disclosed about bureaucracy:

It sets too many rules, and every time he increases the rules, they become more

difficult, making dealing tiring exhausting, and even more dangerous. Also, no logical

explanations are provided to tourists to justify the distress, which causes

psychological discomfort.

Infrastructure. The infrastructure theme explains the need for more efficient and

maintained infrastructure. Infrastructure was the fourth theme, with three of 15 participants

(20%) sharing their lived experience of infrastructure as the single most difficult challenge

that faces the Egyptian tourism industry. The bar chart shows that themes like war,

bureaucracy, and infrastructure are equally in how participants experienced them challenging Egyptian tourism. The bar chart tells us that bureaucracy and lack of infrastructure have the same negative impact on Egyptian tourism as the war in neighbouring countries. Participant 5 shared, "since you work in a tourist country that does not have the infrastructure, we see in other countries such as Europe and many countries." Egypt's tourism infrastructure, while improving, requires further enhancement, especially in transportation and accommodation (Eraqi, 2006; Faajir & Zidan, 2016). These elements are decisive for tourists, with Cairo's traffic challenges notably impairing visitor experiences and the potential for repeat visits (Asaithambi et al., 2016; Parahoo et al., 2020; Thompson & Schofield, 2007).

Air Connectivity. Air connectivity was a prevalent concern that emerged from participants' responses to interview question 1as a theme, which asked about the most single difficult challenges participants experience in Egyptian tourism three out of 15 participants (20%) shared their frustration regarding the negative impact of lack of affordable prices air connectivity to Egypt and main tourist cities. Participants 3 shared:

> It is so frustrating the limitation of affordable air connectivity to key tourist
>
> destination in Egypt. No doubt that high prices associated with air travel to Egypt
>
> deterred potential tourists, specifically budget-conscious travelers and families. We
>
> must have competitive prices and improved air connectivity to drive tourism demand
>
> and enhance the overall tourism experience in Egypt. Tourism ministry must
>
> intervene and collaborate with airlines to address these challenges and create a more
>
> favourable environment for tourism development in the country.

Egypt's tourism infrastructure is evolving but still demands advancements, including air connectivity, transportation, and accommodation (Eraqi, 2006; Faajir & Zidan, 2016). Effective air travel options are critical for attracting tourists, and issues like Cairo's

problematic traffic conditions significantly affect visitor satisfaction and the likelihood of return visits (Asaithambi et al., 2016; Parahoo et al., 2020; Thompson & Schofield, 2007).

How Do You Experience It. Interview Question 1B was about how participants experienced the single most difficult challenge in the Egyptian tourism industry yielded a total of 20 responses, which were grouped into three themes: (a) business decline, (b) recurrent setbacks to growth, and (c) loss of experienced labor (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Coding Results: Interview Question 1B
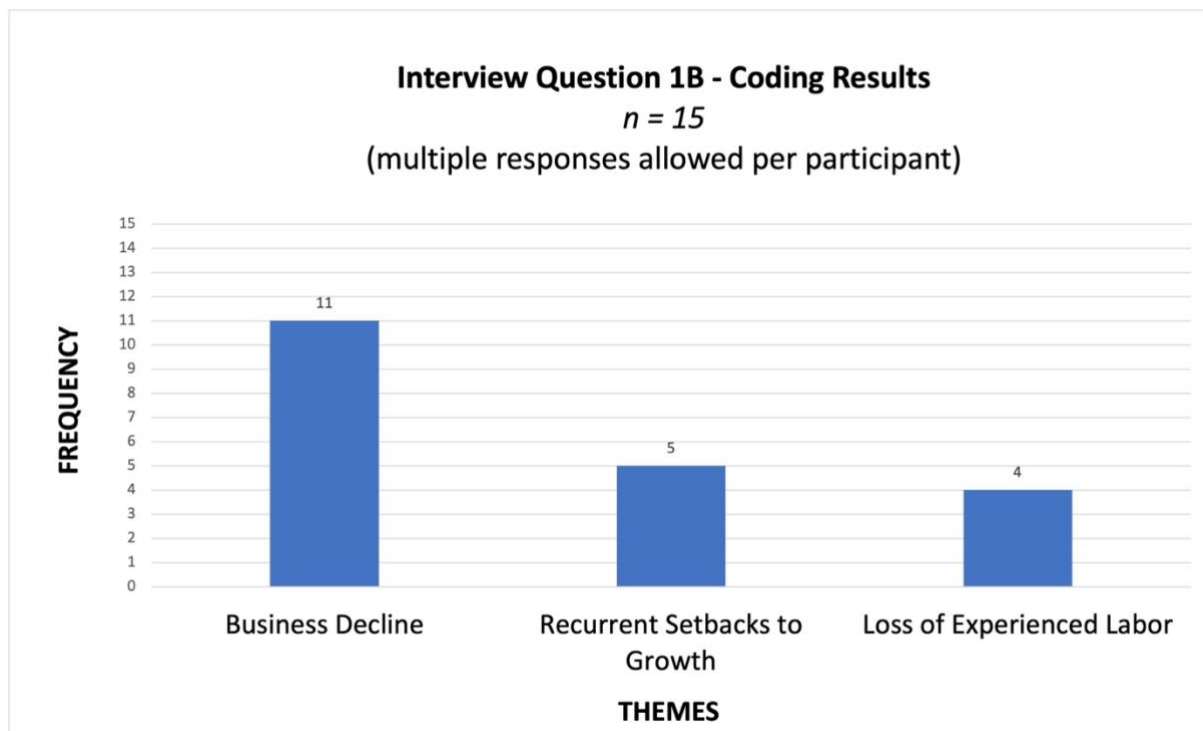
Note. The single most difficult challenge faces Egyptian tourism is highlighted. The above chart shows the prevalent themes emerged from responses to second part of Interview Question1. Data are arranged in descending order based on frequency. The numerical values in each theme denote the number of statements made by participants assigned to that theme.

Business Decline. Business decline is the theme that emerged as the participants experienced the single most difficult challenge of managing and leading their tour operators' companies. Several phrases, expressions, and keywords indicated narrated business decline as a decline in tourist numbers and cancellation of future bookings - 11 of 15 participants (73%)

related to the business decline theme. The highest impact of the single biggest challenge, political instability, war, bureaucracy, and lack of infrastructure was business decline. The highest percentage of participants, 11 of 20 responses (55%) from 15 participants, is that their tourism businesses declined due to political instability. There was no significant relation between themes of political instability or war as a challenge and the effect on business decline in responses to interview question 1, the second part. Participants 1, 8, and 11, (20%) of participants, shared bureaucracy as their single most difficult challenge and had a business decline. War and terrorism, alongside media portrayal of conflicts, significantly tarnish a destination's image, leading tourists to opt for perceived safer options, adversely affecting Egypt's tourism revenue and its broader economy (Bassil et al., 2019; Duan et al., 2022; Moneer, 2020; Neumayer & Plümper, 2016; Perles-Ribes et al., 2017; Seabra et al., 2020). This indicates that business decline can happen due to bureaucracy, political instability, and war. Participant 3 shared:

> We do our best with our operators worldwide to let them understand our positive positions and encourage them to keep us on their publicity to be in the market with an acceptable share when all is well. Business slows down, so we use the time to educate our people.

Loss of Experienced Labor. The third most frequent theme emerged from the participant's experience of the single most difficult challenge Egyptian tourism faces. 4 of the responses from 15 participants (26%) meant that they suffered the loss of experienced and trained labor. Participant 1 shared, "One of the challenges we always face in tourism is that much stuff left this business. Some went to Dubai; some went to some other European countries. Georgia, for example. You have much Egyptian-trained staff working there." Downturns in tourism lead to Egyptian businesses downsizing and layoffs, including skilled workers seeking better prospects elsewhere, eroding the industry's service quality and

innovation (Baum, 2015; Sun et al., 2022). The impact extends to local communities and necessitates crisis management akin to the US pandemic response (Anoushiravani et al., 2020; Dilger et al., 2020).

Recurrent Setbacks to Growth. The second theme emerged as a response to how participants experienced the single most difficult challenge: recurrent setbacks to growth. There were 5 of 15 participants (33%) with 20 responses shared recurrent setbacks to growth. Participant 14 shared: "Unpredicted political challenges, terrorism, and war caused setbacks that made it difficult to have stable growth. Every time we get a booming season, something big unpredicted happens out of our control and stops us, and we must start over." Political instability and war led to a cyclical downturn in Egyptian tourism, causing ongoing setbacks and reduced growth due to prolonged fears and loss of tourist confidence (Buultjens et al., 2016). Industry downsizing results in layoffs, including skilled professionals, degrading service quality, and hampers innovation (Baum, 2015; Sun et al., 2022).

Significant Observation. There were notable responses that considered critical words in the participants to be the single most difficult challenge despite not being prevalent enough to emerge as themes. These responses included words and phrases like unpredicted crises, fluidity, ebbs, flows, low salaries, and entrance fees' sudden increase. Participant 1 shared: "We get a lot of unpredicted crises such as COVID-19, which are out of our hands." Participant 11 mentioned: "The entrance fees to sites like Giza pyramids and museums increase without prior notice. We published our price lists for the current season a year before. We need to prepare for this increase and collect it from onsite customers."

Interview Question 3. Interview Question 3 asked, in your view, what other similar challenges that the tourism industry faces? Analyses of question 3 presented in the bar chart

yielded 55 responses, which were grouped into six different themes as follows: (a)

bureaucracy, (b) Luddite, (c) lack of cooperation, (d) infrastructure, (e) education about

tourism, and (f) lack of vision (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Coding Results Interview Question 3
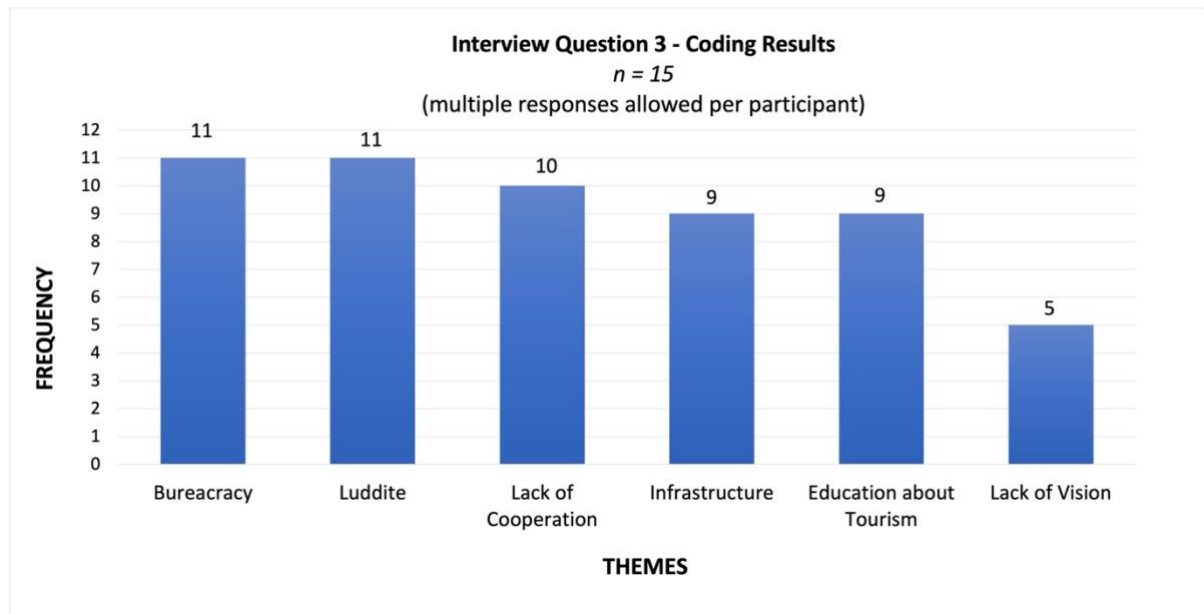
Note. The challenges face Egyptian tourism. The chart illustrates the themes that emerged
from responses to Interview Question 3. Data are presented in decreasing order of frequency.
The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by participants assigned
to that theme.

   Bureaucracy. The most prevalent theme that emerged from the question of what other

similar challenges the tourism industry faces was bureaucracy, with 11 of 15 participants

(73%) - several keywords, phrases, and viewpoints related to how bureaucracy represents

Egyptian tourism's most significant challenge. Participant 8 shared that "Bureaucracy is the

enemy of progression in any industry, especially tourism, which needs flexibility in dealing

with unpredicted situations. We still work in the 1980s when paperwork was the only

possible way to run a business. I think we even overuse those old rules that block the entire

industry's growth." Keywords, phrases, and expressions like no logic, too many papers that

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must be stamped, filled in this form, and exhausting paperwork. Egypt's tourism industry, the prevalent bureaucratic structure with its rigid hierarchy and formalization poses barriers to progress by reducing worker motivation and enabling corrupt practices while also hindering the beneficial integration of AI due to entrenched bureaucratic obstacles, affecting both investment and operational efficacy (Carrigan et al., 2020; Fleming, 2020; Ghanem et al., 2020; Kaufmann, 2019; Kumorotomo, 2020; Mohammed, 2019; Muylaert et al., 2022;). Participant 5 shared:

> Why are all the tourism-affiliated agencies located too far away? It takes a day to reach the two of them. It looks like it was purposely made to waste time filling out paperwork. How difficult is it for the tourism ministry to have one building for all affiliated tourism organizations?

Luddite. The second most essential theme that emerged as a challenge for the Egyptian tourism industry was *Luddite*. There 11 of 15 participants (73%) shared that hiring individuals without experience in tourism represents the second most prominent theme of industry challenges. It is essential to explain the meaning of the term Luddite, which refers to 19th-century English workers who destroyed machinery that they believed threatened their jobs. It now describes those who oppose or fear technological progress due to potential job displacement (Lehman, 2015). Despite the fear of technology-induced inequality and job loss being unfounded, such shifts in labor are short-term and historically lead to more productive roles. The real threat lies in social policies hindering technological progress for equality, which could disrupt labor markets and stifle productivity without resolving inequality (Lehman, 2015; Lunceford, 2009). Participant 11 shared: "One of the most difficult challenges is that government officials who work in tourism are not industry professionals. We suffer from their inflexibility to understand how important tourism is for the country." Participant 5 shared:

Why can't we have experts who can develop the industry like any other industry have

their own research and development department? The new trends and technologies

demand much catch-up; we still work manually because the people in charge are not

the industry technocrats.

Lack of Cooperation. Lack of cooperation is the theme that emerged as the third

challenge to the tourism industry in Egypt. Keywords, phrases, and views related to lack of

cooperation appeared in 10 of 15 participants (66%) who responded. Words, phrases, and

viewpoints were used to express participants' sharing of the challenges of the Egyptian

tourism industry. These words included disorganization, lack of cooperation among agencies,

disorganization of street vendors, conflict of interest, and lack of appropriate communication.

The previously shared statement of Egyptian tourism leaders aligned with Lambert's (2002)

suggestion for the need for collaborative leadership in Egypt's tourism sector leadership

dynamics operations. They confirmed that without top figures, collaborative efforts among

stakeholders are vital for stability and development. Lack of collaborative leadership is

highlighted as the shift from central to distributed leadership, essential for effectively

maintaining Egyptian tourism operations (Miltenberger & Sloan, 2017). Participant 12

shared:

It is frustrating to experience that everyone works in silos; the ministry head office

can require an official document for the company, let us say a bank letter of

guarantee. This document should be shared in a server or cloud, so all tourism-

affiliated agencies use it. No, this is not the case; we as a company must go to the

bank and issue the same document for new fees for the Egyptian Travel Agents

Association. It seems they intentionally want us to suffer, wasting energy and time.

Infrastructure. Infrastructure is the fourth emerging theme in response to other

similar challenges facing Egypt's tourism industry. In nine of 15 participants (60%), words,

phrases, and viewpoints appeared. Participants used words, phrases, and sentences like insufficient five-star hotels, no proper roads between tourist cities, no domestic flights between cities, and affordable air tickets from some countries to Egypt. Infrastructure was also a theme in responses to Interview Question 1, as three participants shared it as the single most difficult challenge. Knowing there is an ongoing war in the neighbouring countries emphasizes how a lack of adequately maintained infrastructure can be as damaging as war. The role of government is to ensure affordable air tickets to promote tourism, and how crucial affordable air tickets are for promoting tourism to the country. The infrastructure challenge, integral to Egyptian tourism, is designed to provide tourists with experiences enriched by local culture and traditions, necessitating robust infrastructure for optimal accessibility (UNWTO, 2023a). Adequate transportation and accommodations are essential for fulfilling tourist experiences, and a well-developed infrastructure is critical to achieving socio-economic advantages and advancing sustainable tourism goals (W. C. Chan et al., 2022; OECD, 2016; UNWTO, 2023b). In Egypt, developing tourism infrastructure is pivotal for capitalizing on the sector's growth potential and ensuring sustainability (E. Helmy, 2004; E. Helmy & Cooper, 2002). In this context, Participant 9 shared:

> Our agents have a problem finding affordable air tickets that can help to sell more holiday packages for an affordable price. It is too expensive to pay between $1,000 and $1,500 for a four-hour flight between Copenhagen and Cairo, while you pay the same price for Cairo to New York or Los Angeles, which is almost a 15-hour flight. Prices have much to say if we want to promote tourism to our country.

Education About Tourism. Education about tourism emerged as one of the themes related to challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry. There were nine of 15 (60%) responded participants who used words, phrases, and viewpoints about the lack of education about tourism among the general public. Participants emphasized the role of tourism in the

economy and how it is one of the major sectors that employs more than three million people. Words, phrases, and key expressions included each tourist, like the last one, with no understanding whatsoever of how important tourism is and no education. Participants have emphasized educating the general public as well as industry professionals on the role of tourism in the country's economy. These responses are supported by W. C. Chan et al. (2022), OECD (2016), and UNWTO (2023a), who confirmed that educated hosts at tourism destinations can significantly enhance the tourist experience and contribute to a positive destination image in Egypt. Knowledgeable locals provide insightful cultural exchanges that deepen tourists' understanding and appreciation, fostering sustainable practices and enriching visits. Participant 4 shared:

> People must be educated that a tourist is not only a blond man or blonde woman with a bottle to drink but also about the economy. We must educate our children about how to treat tourists as guests and show our religions and manners. Our hospitality spreads a good image of our country and makes people return to their home country and remember Egypt as the best country to travel to. All this must start from elementary schools and go to every citizen. I think we have the wrong attitude towards tourists; we must welcome every tourism as a part of not only individual income but also our national income.

Lack of Vision. Lack of vision emerged as the last theme, as five of 15 participants (33%) were about the need for more vision in the Egyptian tourism industry. Participants also expressed a lack of vision in words and phrases such as no strategic planning, no vision, unplanned increase in entrance fees, and lack of government support. Participants also emphasized that targeting a global tourism market share is a key goal. Participant 4 shared:

> I do not know why tourism is not getting the deserved government attention; all our economic problems could have been solved if we developed tourism to compete with

Dubai and other nations that were far behind us when it comes to tourism. We are one

of the oldest civilizations and have historical sites that are not found in any other

country. We don't have a long-term goal to achieve a vision of how many tourists we

can have every five years. We must increase from year to year, and this requires long-

term plans.

Aligned with leaders' insights, articulating a clear mission and vision is essential for steering

the Egyptian tourism sector toward greater competitiveness and collaboration among

participants (Kopaneva, 2019; Kotter & Cohen, 2012). This strategic clarity is critical to

unlocking Egypt's tourism potential and ensuring sustainable growth (Andrade & Lundberg,

2018; Calder, 2014; Senge, 2006).

Interview Question 5. Interview question 5 asked**,** are you personally aware of

similar challenges that other leaders in tourism believe they face that you may not be facing

in Egypt? Responses to this question were analyzed and presented in Figure 6: Leaders aware

of challenges faced by other leaders in the tourism industry.

Similar Challenges Facing Other Leaders in Tourism. The question about the

similar challenges other leaders face that are different from the participants yielded a total of

37 responses, which were grouped into six themes: (a) government support, (b) bureaucracy,

(c) workforce challenges, (d) lack of cooperation, (e) lack of education, and (f) competitive

prices (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Coding Results: Interview Question 5
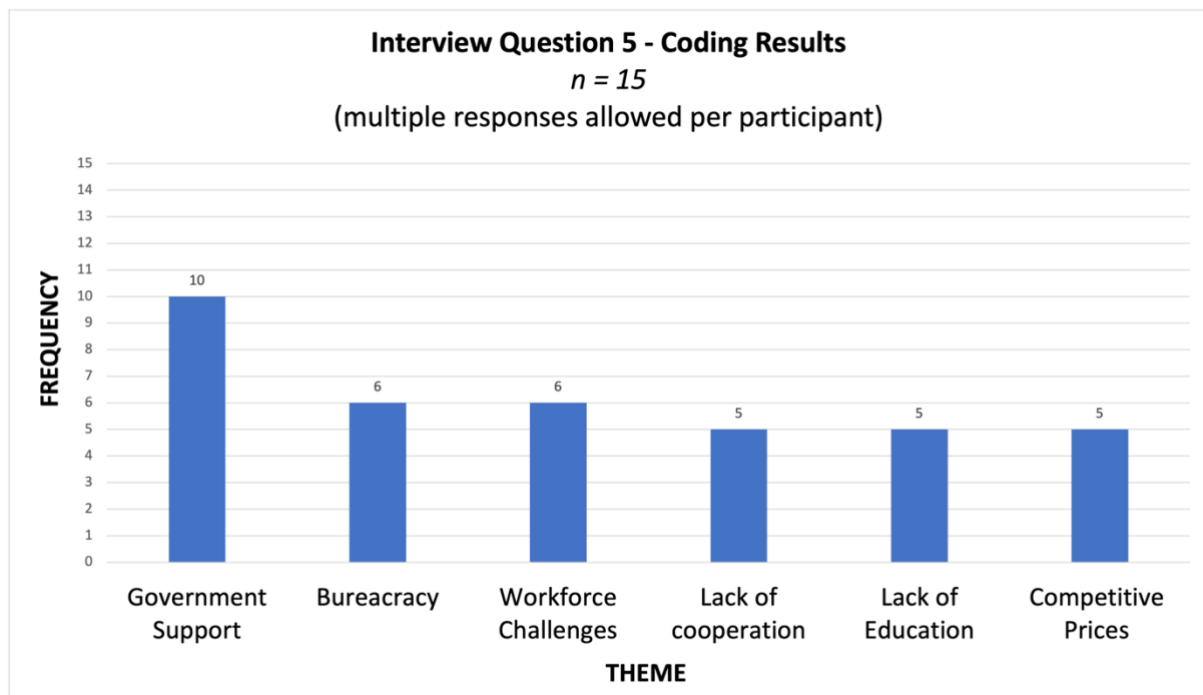
Interview Question 5 - Coding Results
n = 15
(multiple responses allowed per participant)

Note. The challenges facing Egyptian tourism. The chart illustrates the themes that emerged from responses to Interview Question 5. Data are presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by participants assigned to that theme.

Government Support. Government support is the prevalent theme that emerged in 10 of the 15 participants' answers (66%) as the most significant challenge leaders face in Egyptian tourism. This is the highest number of responses among other themes; participants used keywords, phrases, and viewpoints like lack of government support, use of technology, especially in banks, lack of infrastructure maintenance, and entrance fees to historical and attraction site challenges. Participants emphasized that the government has a crucial role in ensuring the safety and security of tourists and heritage sites. However, there is still more to do to develop the tourism industry. In this context, Participant 4 said:

Tourism can be medicine for our sluggish economy, but it needs more attention from the government. The government has to interfere more in demanding that banks

upgrade their systems. Only the government can demand that such a system be improved to facilitate our business. I hope the government steps up its role more strictly, demanding all involved government agencies to respond to the level of competitiveness. The tourism ministry should have a more authoritarian, powerful role in getting things done. I can see the government's huge investments, including building new modern museums and roads, but supplementing those investments will create the ideal investment atmosphere.

Egyptian tourism leaders' statement about government support is aligned with support of sustainable tourism development hinges on government involvement, emphasizing educating communities about sustainable practices (Fletcher et al., 2019; Morrison & Arthur, 2013). According to Kapera (2018), surveys conducted in Poland indicate that although a majority of local governments recognize the importance of sustainability, there is a need for enhanced government-facilitated knowledge sharing and resolution of conflicting interests to strengthen sustainable initiatives (Fletcher et al., 2019; Kapera, 2018).

Bureaucracy. The second theme emerged as one of the challenges other tourism leaders face differently than participants. Words, phrases, and viewpoints related to bureaucracy were 6 of 15 participants (40%). Participants used phrases like too many restrictions on establishing new tourism businesses, dated laws and rules, and overuse of democracy. Participant 12 said:

Sometimes it feels like you work for the bank, not doing tourism business. Providing a single document can take up to two days, sometimes even a week, which wastes time, energy, and money. A digital system is bought and should be used, but the agency still wants to have the old paperwork claiming it is the rule or saying the online system is currently down.

As previously mentioned, in the tourism sector of Egypt, an inflexible bureaucratic framework creates hurdles, dampening employee drive and facilitating corrupt behavior. This rigidity also obstructs the adoption of artificial intelligence, negatively impacting both the attraction of investment and operational efficiency (Carrigan et al., 2020; Fleming, 2020; Ghanem et al., 2020; Kaufmann, 2019; Kumorotomo, 2020; Mohammed, 2019; Muylaert et al., 2022).

Workforce Challenges. Workforce challenges were the third emerging theme in the responses to what challenges other leaders may face that participants need to be facing. Participants used words, phrases, and viewpoints that appeared in six out of 15 participants (40%); their responses were grouped in the workforce challenge's theme. Participants used words like low salaries, lack of human capital development, no vocational education, and lack of skilled labor. In the context of workforce challenges, Participant 9 shared:

> When we get a crisis like war, for example, business stops then; skilled workforce leaves the industry looking for a more stable job. Then, we end up hiring young generations with low salaries, not because we try to save money but because they need the proper skills to do the job. The lack of skilled workforce damages the business and impacts customer service.

Workforce challenges arise in the analyses of the leaders' responses aligns with what Ashyrov et al. (2019), Berbegal-Mirabent et al. (2019), Ferreira and Carayannis (2019), and Phongthiya et al. (2021) shared how insufficient education and training, exacerbated by low profitability, undermine service quality and demand for Egyptian tourism. Partnerships between universities and industry are vital to address this issue and enhance workforce capabilities, which directly affect tourism success and customer loyalty.

Lack of Cooperation. Lack of cooperation emerged again as the fourth theme appeared: 5 of 15 participants (33%) faced challenges similar to those faced by other tourism

leaders. Participants underscored that the lack of cooperation is a characteristic not only of government agencies but also of different tourism sectors. Words and phrases like luddite, favoritism, and disorganization were used to express the lack of cooperation, these lack of cooperation hurdles are supported in (Miltenberger& Sloan, 2017). Participant 2 stated:

It is so challenging to do tourism business with fragmented organizations; each employee demands his own rules and makes his judgment with no rules to govern everyone. Wherever you go, you are hit with piles and piles of miscommunications and get the feeling that everyone is working in his silo. Sometimes you deal with very cooperative Individuals who try to help facilitate rules, but all this can be met with another individual who does not want to cooperate.

Lack of Education. Lack of Education was the fifth theme that emerged from the analyzed responses to similar challenges facing tourism leaders other than those faced by participants. Words, phrases, and standpoints related to the lack of Education appeared in five out of 15 participants (33%). Among those words and phrases appeared: need for more Education about tourism, not understanding cultural differences, and waste of resources. Participant 14 shared:

We must start with elementary school teaching our children and adults the role of tourism in the Egyptian economy. Continued education must be available for everyone working in tourism, teaching them about customer service in general and educating them on the latest in the tourism market. Education will engage the general public, ensuring how important each tourist is for the national economy.

Tourism leaders in Egypt have shared concerns about the lack of skilled labor, underscoring the necessity for enhanced educational and collaborative efforts as supported by academic-industry partnerships to improve service quality and competitiveness in the sector (Ashyrov et al., 2019; Berbegal-Mirabent et al., 2019; Ferreira & Carayannis, 2019; Phongthiya et al.,

2021). Such training is crucial for ensuring tourist satisfaction and fostering loyalty, as indicated by industry practices (Noe et al., 2010; Rust et al., 1995).

Competitive Prices. Competitive prices were the sixth themes that emerged as a result of the analyses of participants' responses to interview questions about other challenges participants had in their view. There were five out of 15 participants (33%) who expressed their concerns regarding the detrimental impact of the lack of competitive prices in the Egyptian tourism industry. Participant 9 shared:

> The high costs associated with expensive flight tickets and accommodations deterred potential tourists from choosing Egypt as their destination. Guests often opt for more economical and affordable options in neighbouring countries, leading to a revenue loss for Egypt.

Participant 11 shared: "The perception of poor value for money resulting from high prices intensifies the industry`s challenges, which makes it hard to attract and retain tourists." Tourism leaders in Egypt recognize the need for better pricing strategies, citing limited air connectivity and geopolitical challenges as key factors affecting competitiveness (Comerio & Strozzi, 2019; Frechtling, 2010; Rockart, 1979; Rouby, 2019). Strategic collaboration and analysis using PESTEL and TSA metrics are supported measures for improving Egypt's tourism appeal.

Summary of Research Question 1

The purpose of RQ1 was to recognize the challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces to achieve collaborative and sustainable tourism. A total of 16 themes were identified by analyzing participants' responses to the three interview questions in keywords and phrases. The following challenges were revealed as analyses of the responses to the three interview questions. The single most difficult challenge was (a) political instability, (b) war, (c) bureaucracy, (d) infrastructure and (e) air connectivity. These single most difficult challenges

have been experienced as the following themes by tourism leaders: (a) business decline, (b) recurrent setbacks to growth, and (c) loss of experienced labor.

Other challenges faced by the tourism industry that leaders shared in their views are (a)bureaucracy, (b) Luddite, (c) lack of cooperation, (d) infrastructure, (e) education about tourism, and (f) lack of vision. Challenges that faced other leaders in tourism that participants are aware of where (a) government support, (b) bureaucracy, (c) workforce challenges, (d) lack of cooperation, (e) lack of Education, and (f) competitive prices.

Research Question 1: Significant Observations

Bureaucracy as the Most Prevalent Theme in RQ1

Bureaucracy theme showed across the three interview questions with 3 of 14 total themes (21%) and 20 out of 45 participants (44%) when all three questions were summed together. Based on these numbers, bureaucracy is the most apparent theme across the three interview questions, with the most significant being the challenge facing the Egyptian tourism industry. While three participants thought it was the single most difficult challenge, 10 described it as similar, and seven shared it as an added challenge. The degree to which this challenge impacted tourism varied among participants but was persistent throughout these three questions.

Education About Tourism as the Second Prevalent Theme in RQ1

Education about tourism is the second significant theme across interview questions 3 and 5. Education about tourism represented two of 14 themes (14%) and 14 out of 45 participants (31%) when all three interviews were summed up. While nine participants shared in their responses to Interview Question 3 as one of the challenges in their view of the tourism industry in Egypt, 5 participants considered it a challenge that faces other leaders in the industry.

Infrastructure as the Third Prevalent Theme in RQ1

Infrastructure showed across interview questions 1 and 3. Infrastructure represents two of 14 themes (14%) in RQ2 and 12 out of the total 45 participants (26%). While three participants considered infrastructure as the single most difficult challenge the tourism industry faces, nine have categorized it as similar challenges in their views.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 (RQ2) asked, What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces? Participants were asked three interview questions as the basis for inquiry to answer this research question. The three interview questions related to Research Question 2 are:

- IQ2. What strategies and best practices did you employ, or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge?

- IQ4. What strategies or best practices did you employ, or resources did you seek to overcome these challenges?

- IQ6. Are you personally aware of strategies or best practices employed or resources sought by these tourism leaders?

Participants` responses were analyzed and then grouped into themes to identify the strategies and best practices tourism leaders used to overcome those challenges.

Interview Question 2. Interview Question 2 asked, what strategies and best practices did you employ, or what resources did you seek to overcome this challenge? Responses to this question were analyzed and presented in bar chart figure 6: strategies and best practices employed or resourced leaders sought to overcome this single most difficult in the tourism industry. A total of 31 responses, keywords, and phrases emerged related to strategies, best practices, or resources leaders seek and use to overcome the most difficult challenge. These

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31 responses were grouped into four themes as follows: (a) marketing, (b) various strategies, (c) use of the network, and (d) training and workshops (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Coding Results: Interview Question 2
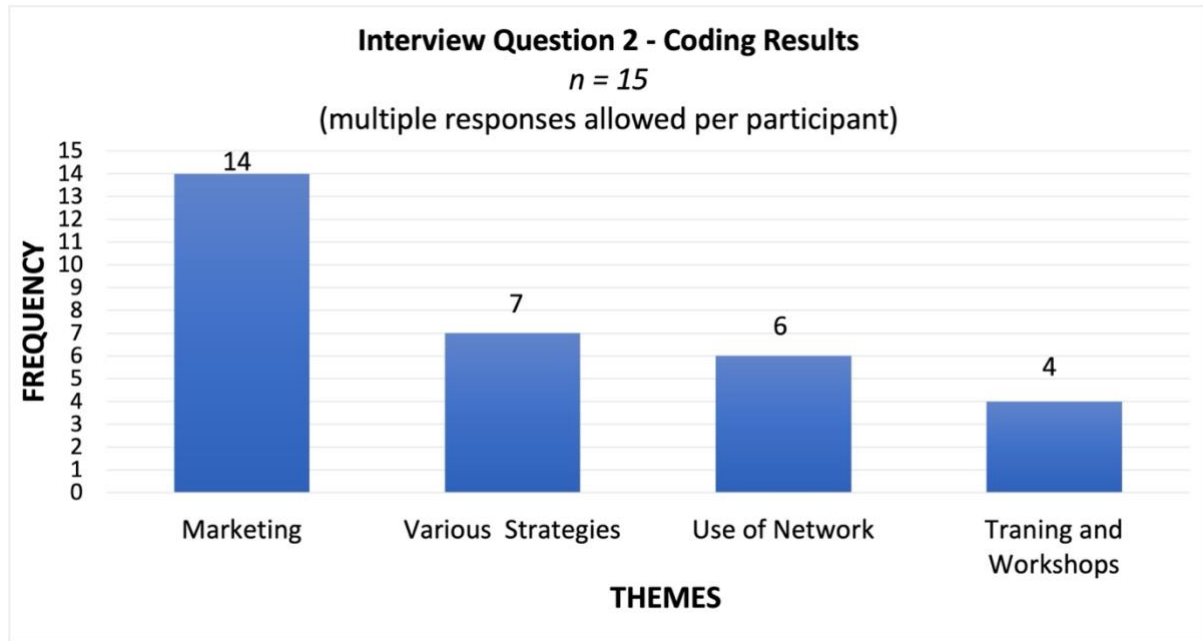
Note. The strategies employed by Egyptian tourism leaders to overcome challenges. The chart illustrates the themes that emerged from responses to Interview Question 2. Data are presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by participants assigned to that theme.

  Marketing. Marketing emerged as the most frequent prevailing theme in Interview Question 2, appearing in 14 out of 15 participants (93%). Participants utilized marketing as their most utilized strategy to overcome the single most challenging issue: political instability, war, bureaucracy, or infrastructure. In the context of using marketing as a strategy, Participant 1 shared:

  Political instability and war cause business decline, sometimes a complete business

  stop. We started to increase our marketing campaigns to promote Egypt as a peaceful

  destination and not involved in war. Agree or disagree with me, the wise Egyptian

  politicians have taken very cautious steps to protect our country from being involved

in war. We use our love for peace and hate of war to market Egypt. Social media is

helping us have a wide reach throughout the world.

Tourism leaders in Egypt have utilized informal, flexible marketing strategies to address

industry challenges, focusing on destination marketing to offer unique experiences amidst

external adversities like political instability (Avraham, 2020; Lesar et al., 2020; Teoh et al.,

2023). These leaders have highlighted a lack of formal strategies, advocating for adaptable

approaches.

Various Strategies. Various strategies emerged as the second theme that participants

used to overcome the single most difficult challenge (particular) challenge facing the tourism

industry. There were seven out of 15 participants (47%) used words, phrases, and viewpoints

to express that there was no fixed set of strategies to deal with the challenge. Participants

emphasized that the government has few strategies for running campaigns through its

Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA) offices, but those need to be more permanent. Varying

strategies to match the need of the nature of the crises depending on the situation. Participant

8 shared, "Of course, we wish we had some fixed set of strategies, which we could follow

when crises and such situations." In the same context of no set of strategies, participant 12

shared, "We get many unpredicted crises that vary on their duration; sometimes they are long,

other times short. To mitigate the impact of war on tourism is different than the impact of

COVID-19." Egyptian tourism leaders utilize various adaptive strategies for challenges such

as security and crisis management, emphasizing the importance of safety and information

accuracy (Avraham, 2020; Garg, 2015; Walters et al., 2019). Training and sustainable

practices are essential, yet there is a noted lack of inter-agency cooperation (J. K. L. Chan et

al., 2021; Hermann & Bossle, 2020).

Use of Network. The use of network was the third emerging theme, with six of 15

participants (40%) sharing words, phrases, and terms to express their responses on what

strategy they use to overcome the particular challenge. The use of the network was expressed as their strategies, such as using in-house tourists to promote Egypt as a safe destination and using our social skills and network. Participant 6 said:

> When crises like war hurt the tourism market, we approach our friends who own tour operators' companies and invite them to come on an inspection trip. This recent war hit on October 7, 20014, and an Australian tourist group cancelled; from our side, we tried to convince our tour operator partner not to cancel, but they did. We invited our tour operator partner to Egypt to see that Egypt is not a part of the war; he regrets cancelling the group as he saw how far Egypt is from the war.

In facing operational challenges, Egyptian tourism leaders rely on their networks for support and insight, particularly during unforeseen events like price hikes, but observe a shortfall in broader agency collaboration within the industry (Din, 2020; Hermann & Bossle, 2020).

Training and Workshops. The fourth and last theme that emerged in responses to Interview Question 2 about the strategies, best practices, or resources employed to overcome the single biggest challenge in Egyptian tourism was training and workshops. Words, phrases, and standpoints appeared in four out of 15 participants (27%) to emphasize using workforce training and participating in workshops to overcome the single most difficult challenge. Participant 13 added:

> We try to keep our business going, so we use the slow down period to learn new skills. Either we train our staff to enhance their skills or look for a related workshop to participate in. This helps to maintain and enhance work skills and expertise.

Egyptian tourism authorities emphasize training and workshops to enhance workforce competencies, a key strategy for adapting to industry changes and maintaining sustainable tourism practices, despite limited cross-agency collaboration (J. K. L. Chan et al., 2021; Hermann & Bossle, 2020).

Interview Question 4. Interview Question 4 asked, what strategies or best practices did you employ, or resources did you seek to overcome these challenges? Responses to this question were analyzed and presented in the bar chart (see Figure 9). A total of 22 responses, keywords, and phrases emerged related to strategies, best practices, or resources leaders seek and use to overcome the single most difficult challenge. These 22 responses were grouped into three themes as follows: (a) various strategies, (b) government support, and (c) perseverance.

Figure 9

Coding Results: Interview Question 4
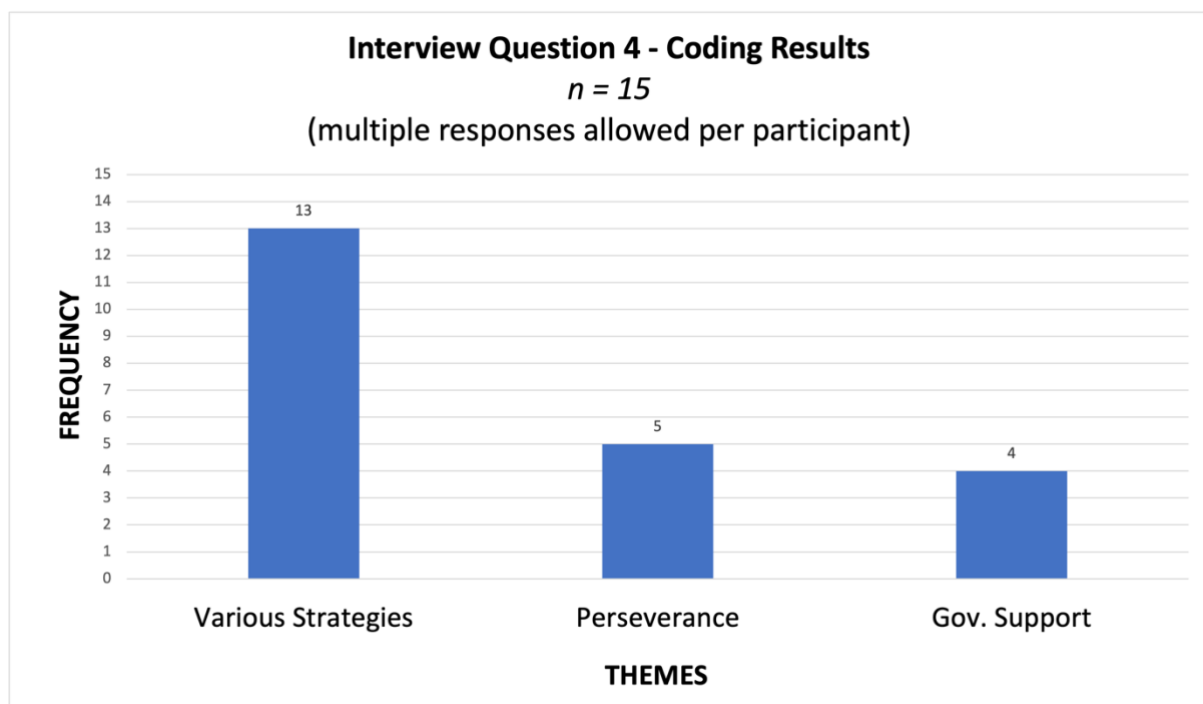
Note. The strategies employed by Egyptian tourism leaders to overcome challenges. The chart illustrates the themes that emerged from responses to Interview Question 4. Data are presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by participants assigned to that theme.

Various Strategies. The first theme that emerged from the responses of 13 of 15 participants (86%) was various strategies. Participants shared keywords, phrases, and viewpoints expressing what strategies, best practices, or resources they sought to overcome

the challenges. Participant 7 shared, "There is no particular strategy that is conclusively applied in crises. It depends on the situation; we may increase marketing, use the network, or cooperate with the Tourism ministry for the best possible support." In the same theme, participant 11 shared: "We adjust our business volume based on the crises or the challenge. If the challenge will last long, we may downsize the business and cut expenses. We use all possible ways to survive and exist."

Perseverance (Business Elasticity). The concept of perseverance was identified as the second theme in five of 15 participants' responses (33%) in words, phrases, and viewpoints shared. Perseverance included downsizing to minimum expanses and waiting, cutting expenses and salaries until the season improves. Participants emphasized that those are tough challenges that may last longer than expected. They shared that the surviving methods enable their businesses to overcome unpredictable challenges that could last for as long as one year with almost no business. Participant 13 shared:

The most important factor here is to survive the hardship and stay in business. Sometimes, doing nothing can be the best strategy to survive such an unpredicted crisis. We adjust to the situation, keeping in mind that surviving crises is a strategy.

Perseverance is key to the resilience and adaptability of Egypt's tourism sector, providing a competitive edge to manage economic fluctuations and crises (Croes et al., 2018). Egyptian tourism leaders have honed survival strategies to navigate the variable performance of tourism income in response to economic shifts (Smeral, 2019).

Government Support. Government support emerged as a theme from the responses of 4 of 15 participants (27%) to answer Interview Question 4 about strategies, best practices, and resources participants seek to overcome Egyptian tourism challenges. Words, phrases, and sentences included marketing campaigns supporting foreign tours and cooperating with the tourism ministry. Participant 13 shared:

In crises like war and terrorism, the Egyptian tourism ministry pursues supporting

marketing campaigns, depending on the crisis type. They finance joint venture

marketing campaigns and cut airline landing fees in recreational cities, among various

procedures to overcome the challenges.

In response to the inevitable crises in tourism, Egyptian authorities have adopted strategies

supported by public funding and financial aids to bolster tourism businesses (Ritchie, 2004;

Petrova et al., 2018). Recent shifts in government focus toward political issues have led to

reduced strategic interventions in tourism, necessitating collaborative efforts for disaster risk

management (Çakar, 2021; Sausmarez, 2007; Walters & Mair, 2019).

Interview Question 6. Interview Question 6 asked, are you personally aware of

strategies or best practices employed or resources sought by these tourism leaders? Responses

to this question were analyzed and presented in the bar chart (see Figure 10). A total of 18

responses, keywords, and phrases emerged related to strategies, best practices, or resources

leaders seek and use to overcome the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry. These

18 responses were grouped into four themes as follows: (a) various strategies, (b)

cooperation, (c) network, and (d) marketing (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Coding Results: Interview Question 6
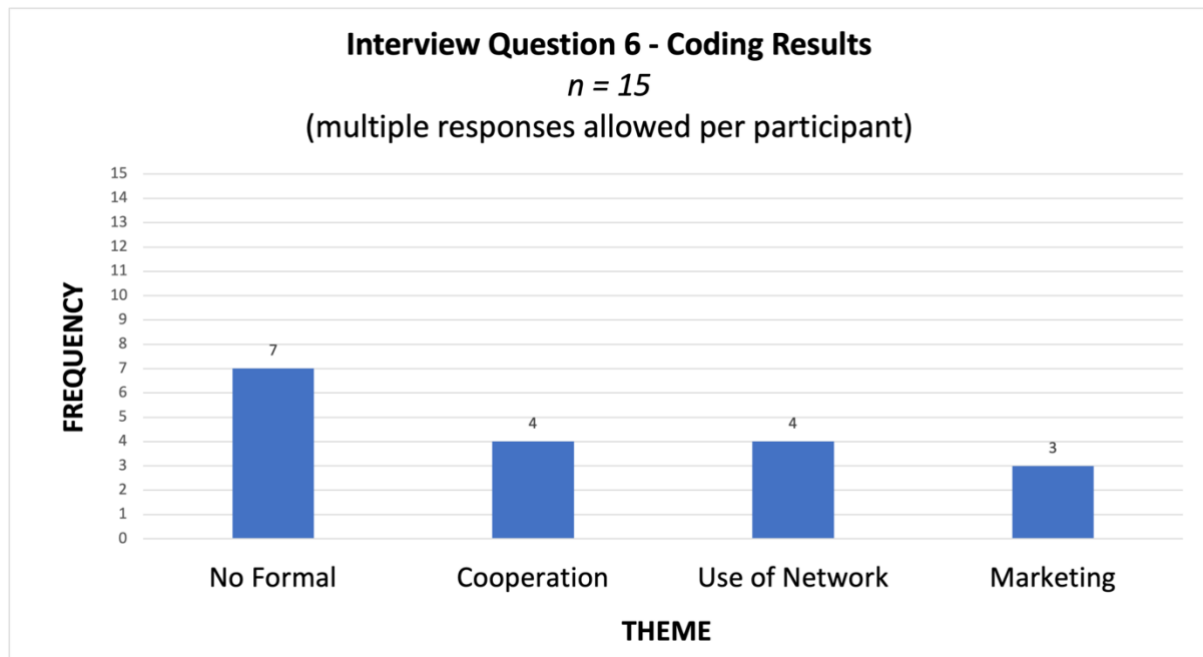
Interview Question 6 - Coding Results
n = 15
(multiple responses allowed per participant)

Note. The strategies employed by Egyptian tourism leaders to overcome challenges. The chart illustrates the themes that emerged from responses to Interview Question 6. Data are presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by participants assigned to that theme.

  ***No Formal Strategies*.** No formal strategies was the prevalent theme that emerged among seven of 15 participants (47%) as the combination of several strategies, best practices, and resources to overcome the Egyptian tourism challenges. The theme had the highest number of participants who expressed various strategies to overcome the challenge. Participant 3 shared: "There is no set of strategies that are used in fixed situations; it all depends on the situation." Participant 8 said, "No formal strategy, but strategies are customized according to our situation. Strategies and practices vary according to the situation we face." Egyptian tourism authorities adopt an informal, adaptive approach, with no rigid strategy, to navigate sector challenges, ensuring tourist safety and crisis management (Avraham, 2020; Garg, 2015; Walters et al., 2019). Emphasizing the value of networking and

workforce development, leaders call for enhanced cooperation among stakeholders to support industry resilience (J. K. L. Chan et al., 2021; Hermann & Bossle, 2020).

Cooperation. Cooperation emerged among four of 15 participants (27%) as the strategy participants employed to overcome the challenges they faced in Egyptian tourism. Participants shared that their connection and cooperation with industry colleagues are crucial to overcoming the challenges they face in the Egyptian tourism industry. Participant 2 shared, "Cooperating with our industry colleagues keeps us updated and follows the strategies to help us survive and overcome the challenges." Leaders in Egyptian tourism recognize cooperation across all sectors as a critical strategy to overcome industry challenges, citing inefficient collaboration as a primary concern (Ammirato et al., 2018; Fordham & Robinson, 2018; Sheehan et al., 2016). Collaborative leadership involving government and private entities is essential for sustainable tourism and addressing resource shortages.

Use of Network. Use of network was the third emerging theme with four of 15 participants (27%) who shared words, phrases and terms to express their responses on what strategy they use to overcome Egyptian tourism challenge. Participants mentioned that they are aware that cooperating with their colleagues is one of the strategies they know about used as a strategy and a best practice; it also allowed them to employ the resources available. Participant 10 said, "Connecting with our colleagues in the industry ensures that we exchange information and best utilize policies and resources available." Egyptian tourism executives depend on their networks to navigate operational difficulties, such as unexpected price increases. However, they note a lack of extensive cooperation among different agencies in the sector (Din, 2020; Hermann & Bossle, 2020).

Marketing. Marketing emerged as the fourth theme in response to Interview Question 6, appearing three of 15 participants (20%). Participants shared that marketing is an excellent strategy to keep Egypt in customers' minds as a travel destination. Words, phrases, and

viewpoints are shared to emphasize how vital marketing is as a strategy to overcome challenges. Participant 11 shared, "When tourist numbers are impacted by war or political instability, new marketing trends must be adapted to revive the desire of travel to Egypt in the mind of the tourists." To navigate operational hurdles, Egyptian tourism officials employ adaptable, informal marketing tactics, emphasizing the promotion of distinctive experiences despite challenges such as political unrest (Avraham, 2020; Lesar et al., 2020; Teoh et al., 2023). They point out the deficit in structured strategies, recommending more versatile methods.

Summary of Research Question 2

The purpose of RQ2 was to identify strategies, best practices, and resources tourism leaders employ to overcome challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces. A total of 11 themes were identified by analyzing participants' responses in critical words and phrases to the three interview questions. The following strategies, best practices, and resources were revealed as analyses of Interview Questions 2, 4, and 6 responses. The strategies, best practices, and resources employed by participants to overcome the particular challenge identified were (a) marketing, (b) various strategies, (c) use of network, and (d) training and workshops.

Strategies, best practices participants employ, or resources they seek to overcome these challenges: (a) various strategies, (b) perseverance, and (c) government support. Then finally, strategies, best practices, and resources participants are aware of what other leaders use to overcome Egyptian tourism challenges: (a) various strategies, (b) cooperation, (c) use of network, and (d) marketing.

Research Question 2: Significant Observations

Various Strategies Prevalent Theme is RQ2

Various strategies were shown across the three interview questions with three of 11 total themes (27%) and 24 out of 45 participants (53%) when all three questions were summed together. Based on these numbers, various strategies are the most appealing theme across the three interview questions, with the most significant numbers being the strategy, best practices, and resources participants employed to overcome the challenges that face the Egyptian tourism industry. While seven participants thought it was the strategy, best practice, or resource they employed to overcome the most difficult challenge in Egyptian tourism. Ten participants described it as a strategy, best practice, and resource they employed to overcome challenges. Seven shared it as a strategy, best practice, or resource they are other colleges used it. The degree to which this strategy employed tourism varied among participants but was persistent throughout these three questions.

Marketing as the Second Prevalent Theme in RQ2

Marketing theme was the second significant theme that showed across Interview Questions 2, 6. Marketing theme represents two of 11 themes (18%) and 17 out of 45 participants (38%) when all three interview questions are summed up. While 14 participants shared in their responses to Interview Question 2 as one of the strategies, they employed to overcome challenges faced by the tourism industry in Egypt, three participants considered it a strategy used by other leaders in the industry.

Use of Network as Third Prevalent Theme in RQ2

Use of Network showed across Interview Questions 2 and 6. Use of network represents two of 11 themes (18%) in RQ2 and 10 out of 45 participants (22%). While six participants shared it as their strategy or best practice to overcome challenges the tourism

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industry faces, four categorized it as the strategy employed by other leaders, of which they are aware.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 (RQ3) asked How Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success. Participants were asked two interview questions as the basis for inquiry to answer this research question. The two interview questions related to Research Question 3 are:

- IQ7. How do you define success in tourism in general, to you personally, to your company, to your nation and globally?

- IQ8. How do you measure success in tourism on the company, national, and global scale? Participants` responses were analyzed and then grouped into themes to identify the strategies and best practices tourism leaders used to overcome those challenges.

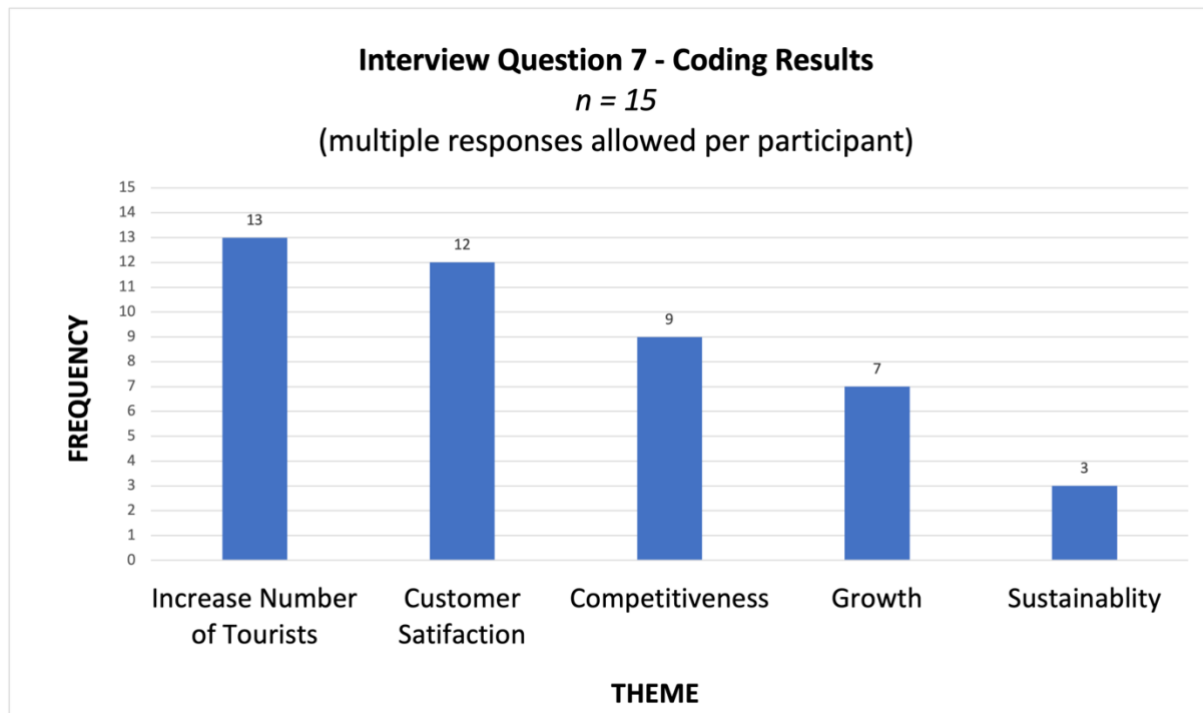**Interview Question 7.** Interview Question 7 asked, how do you define success in tourism in general, to you personally, to your company, to your nation, and globally? Responses to this question were analyzed, grouped, and presented in the bar chart (see Figure 11). Of 44 responses, five themes emerged as follows: (a) increased number of tourists, (b) customer satisfaction, (c) competitiveness, (d) growth, and sustainability (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Coding Results: Interview Question 7

Note. Tourism success defined by Egyptian tourism leaders. The chart illustrates the themes that emerged from responses to Interview Question 7. Data are presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by participants assigned to that theme.

Increase Number of Tourists. The first and most prevalent theme that emerged from responses to Interview Question 7 was the increased number of tourists. There were 13 out of 15 participants (86%) stated that increase number of tourists is a way to define tourism success. Participants expressed that tourism success is getting more tourists, which means continuous business and success. Participant 4 shared, "Of course, numbers tell us if we are on the right track. If tourist numbers visiting Egypt increase yearly, we will be successful." Participant 7 shared: "I am sure there are many ways to define how we are successful, but the direct way that we are aware of is getting more tourists from year to year." Growth in the Egyptian tourism sector, marked by increased tourist numbers, is seen as a measure of success. As noted by leaders, industry expansion involves more significant investment and

job creation (Statista, 2024; World Bank, 2023). However, consistent annual growth is absent, often hindered by political and economic upheavals (Ramzy, 2018).

Customer Satisfaction. Customer service is the second theme in response to Interview Question 7, with 12 out of 15 participants (80%). Words, phrases, and viewpoints were utilized to express that customer satisfaction is defining success. Participants used words like satisfied guests, happy tourists, and positive feedback. Participant 14, shared:

> To be successful in tourism is to have 100% satisfied customers; what else can be the
> best way to say we are successful in doing our tourism business? When our tourists
> are satisfied, they are like a free walking advertisement for free. The real value in
> tourism is to continue in business; there is no way anyone can continue if their
> customers are not happy with their service.

Egyptian tourism officials highlight customer satisfaction as a crucial success metric, where superior service can lead to repeat visits and advocacy (Z. Chen & Yuan, 2020; Fang et al., 2021; Jeong & Kim, 2018). A skilled workforce is essential for this, yet there needs to be more systematic feedback collection, which could be bridged by targeted education (Balci et al., 2019; Galal, 2022;).

Competitiveness. Competitiveness is the third theme that emerged from the analyses of the 44 responses yielded from the answers to Interview Question 7. There were nine out of 15 participants (60%) defined *success* in tourism as competitiveness. Participants used words, phrases, and viewpoints, for example, competing with other destinations, the global image of Egypt, and developing more programs. In this context, Participant 9 shared:

> In my opinion, success in tourism is not measured by one thing; many factors can
> define tourism success. Creating a global image of Egypt is a success; competing in
> the tourism market is a success, and continuing to offer competing tourism products is
> a success. All those factors can define being successful in tourism.

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Tourism competitiveness, as a success indicator, involves a destination's ability to stand out and evolve with industry trends (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019). Egyptian tourism leaders recognize the need to enhance Egypt's market position to reflect its potential, drawing comparisons with Greece and Dubai's tourist figures (Ahmad et al., 2020; Bris & Caballero, 2015; Michael et al., 2019). They also note a lack in the strategic use of the country's offerings to boost competitiveness.

Growth. Growth was the fourth emerging theme in seven of the total 44 responses. Seven out of 15 participants (47%) shared words, phrases, and expressions to express that growth was the fourth theme defining success. Participants stated that the growth of the tourism industry in Egypt is a way to define the success of tourism. Participants 3 shared:

> Success in the tourism field is to grow yearly; if my materialization is 100 tourists in 2024, it should be 200 in 2025. Success is growing and expanding your business from year to year. I cannot grow my company and expand my business market without success.

Egyptian tourism experts view growth, characterized by increased investment and job creation, as a critical indicator of the industry's success despite challenges like political instability affecting consistent advancement (Ramzy, 2018; Statista, 2024; World Bank, 2023). They stress the sector's potential for accommodating a growing workforce.

Sustainability. The last merging theme was sustainability, with three out of 15 participants (20%) sharing their definition of success as sustainable. Participants used words like continues, profitable, and sustainable to share their defining of success. In this context, Participant 8 shared:

> I have been reading about sustainable tourism lately. Many of our tourism professionals who have discussed creating sustainable tourism in Egypt assume that we all know what sustainable tourism is! I did not know that term was used on a TV

talk show before. Then I searched the internet and learned that sustainable tourism has

three sides: economy, society, and environment. I learned that the United Nations has

a lot of programs and policies supporting sustainable tourism. The thing is, I had to

search and learn about it. Success in tourism is sustainability.

Sustainability, integrating economic, social, and environmental factors, is pivotal for the

Egyptian tourism sector's success, yet current practices fall short, necessitating more

inclusive policies and initiatives (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017; Musavengane, 2019; Ramzy,

2018; World Bank, 2023).

Interview Question 8. Interview Question 8 asked, how do you measure success in

tourism on the company, national, and global scale? Responses to this question were

analyzed, grouped, and presented in the bar chart (Figure 12). Of 41 responses, four themes

emerged as follows: (a) customer satisfaction, (b) sustainability, (c) growth, and (d) increased

number of tourists (see Figure 12).

Figure 12

Coding Results: Interview Question 8
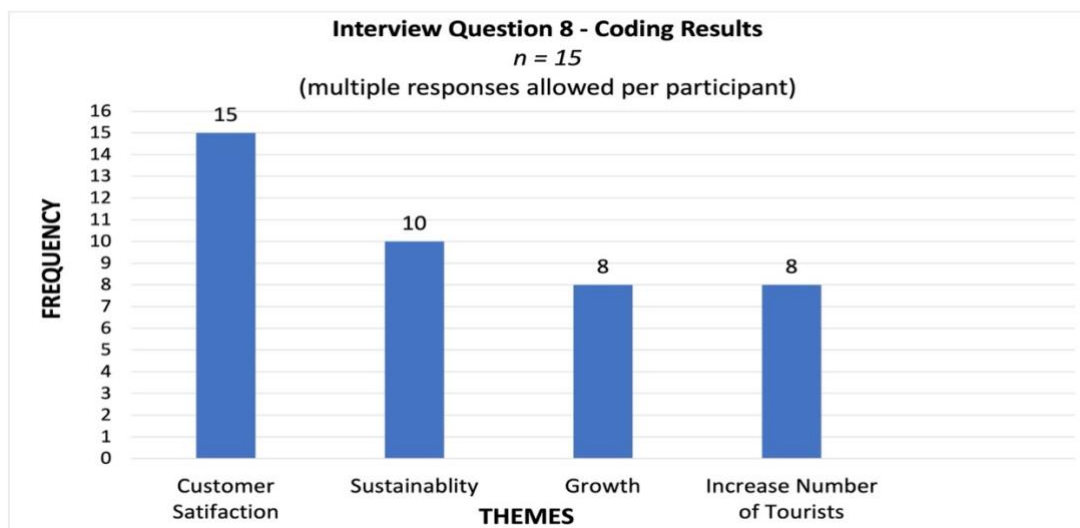
Note. Tourism measured by Egyptian tourism leaders. The chart illustrates the themes that
emerged from responses to interview question 8. Data are presented in decreasing order of
frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by
participants assigned to that theme.

Customer Satisfaction. Customer satisfaction appeared in 20 out of 41 responses, but since each participant counts only once, customer service emerged as a theme in 15 out of 15 participants (100%). This theme is the most significant theme in Interview Questions 1 to 8 as it has 15 out of 15 participants. Several participants have more than one response to express that customer service is the theme used to measure Egyptian tourism success. Egyptian tourism leaders consider customer satisfaction a key indicator of success, leading to loyalty and destination recommendations building destination loyalty (Z. Chen & Yuan, 2020; Fang et al., 2021; Jeong & Kim, 2018). There is a gap in collecting structured feedback, which can be used to improve education of tourism professionals and could address tourists` need (Balci et al., 2019; Galal, 2022). Participant 4 shared:

> Nothing can measure tourism success, not only in Egypt but worldwide, like a satisfied customer. Without satisfied customers, there is no business growth, no repeaters, and, of course, no profitable tourism because bad customer service makes you cut your prices to attract tourists. To measure our success, we need to see our guests' feedback about us.

Sustainability. Continued profitable growth, social development of the local communities, and environmental friendliness emerged as the second significant theme when responses to interview question 8 were analyzed. The responses analyzed showed that 10 out of 15 participants (67%) responded that sustainability is the measure of Egyptian tourism success. Participant 8 shared, "To have profitable, environmentally friendly, and socially developing local communities is to have continuous tourism, which in its description is sustainable." Sustainability is supported in Mathew and Sreejesh, (2017), Musavengane, (2019), Ramzy, (2018), and World Bank, (2023).

Growth. Growth is the third theme that emerged when reviewing and analyzing the 42 responses. Growth appeared in eight out of 15 participants (53%). Words, phrases, and views

were shared to express how growth is the measure of tourism success they use. Experts in Egyptian tourism consider expansion, marked by investment escalation and job proliferation, as a vital success measure even amidst political volatility (Ramzy, 2018; Statista, 2024; World Bank, 2023). They emphasize the industry's capacity to absorb an expanding workforce. Participant 12 said:

> To measure tourism success without using complex systems is to monitor the growth in my company. In 2019, we bought a new vehicle and hired more people. This was right before COVID-19. To easily measure success is to measure how much we grow from year to year.

Increase Number of Tourists. The last theme identified was the increased number of tourists. There were eight out of 15 participants (53%) used words, phrases, and viewpoints expressing that the increased number of tourists was a success measure. Participant 2 shared:

> No doubt that repeated customers indicate success, but when the number of tourists increases, this is the numerical method that ensures our measure. I mean, there will be no doubt about your numbers, as numbers do not lie. Having 12 million tourists in 2019 is a success, but this number should increase and not stay to measure we are staying on the success track.

Additionally, some responses needed to be more prevalent for themes to emerge. The response was about competitiveness as a measure of success in the Egyptian tourism industry. Participants shared words like creating new programs, penetrating new markets, and getting compatible to access new markets. The Egyptian tourism industry views increased visitor numbers as a hallmark of success, requiring significant investments and job opportunities (Statista, 2023; World Bank, 2023). However, sustained yearly growth remains elusive, frequently disrupted by political and economic disturbances (Çakar, 2018).

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The purpose of RQ3 was to understand how Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success. A total of nine themes were identified by analyzing responses from participants replying to Interview Questions 7 and 8. Identifying success and measuring it was addressed and revealed as analyses of Interview Questions 7 and 8 responses. These success definitions and measures were emerging as the following themes: (a) increased number of tourists, (b) growth, (c) customer satisfaction, (d) competitiveness, and (e) sustainability. In how tourism practitioners in Egypt measured success, the following themes emerged: (a) customer satisfaction, (b) sustainability, (c) growth, and (d) increased number of tourists.

Research Question 3: Significant Observations

Customer Satisfaction is the Prevalent Theme in RQ3

The customer satisfaction theme showed across the two interview questions with two of nine total themes (22%) and 27 out of 30 participants (90%) when the two Interview Questions 7 and 8 were summed together. Based on these numbers, various ways of defining success are the most apparent theme across the two interview questions, with the most significant numbers as the definition of success and a measure of it in the Egyptian tourism industry. While 12 participants shared that customer satisfaction defines the success of tourism in Egypt. Then, all 15 out of 15 participants (100%) suggested that customer satisfaction is the best measure of success. The degree to which this strategy employed tourism varied among participants but was persistent throughout the two interview questions.

Increase Number of Tourists as the Second Prevalent Theme in RQ3

Increased number of tourists theme was the second significant theme that showed across Interview Questions 7 and 8. The theme represented two of nine themes (22%) and 21 out of 30 participants (70%) when all three interview questions were summed up. While 13

participants shared in their responses to Interview Question 7 that increasing the number of tourists is one of the ways to define success in the tourism industry in Egypt, eight participants considered it a way to measure success.

Growth as the Third Prevalent Theme in RQ3

Growth showed across Interview Questions 7 and 8. Growth represents two of nine themes (22%) in RQ3 and 15 out of 30 participants (50%). While seven participants shared it as a definition of success in the tourism industry, eight have categorized it as the way to measure success.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 (RQ4) asked, What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, Stakeholders, and leaders must develop a strategic framework for achieving sustainable Egyptian tourism leadership? Participants were asked three interview questions as the basis for inquiry to answer this research question. The three interview questions related to Research Question 4 are:

- IQ9. What is an example of a policy or decision made that you would go back in time and redo?

- IQ10. What are your recommendations for your company, the nation, and the globe to attain sustainability and success?

- IQ11. If you were to decide on behalf of the entirety of the tourism industry to create a synergistic industry, what would your recommendations be?

Interview Question 9. Interview Question 9 asked, what is an example of a policy or decision made that you would go back in time and redo? Responses to this question were analyzed and presented in the bar chart (see Figure 13). A total of 23 responses, keywords, and phrases related to policies or decisions that participants would go back in time and redo emerged. These responses were grouped into three themes as follows: (a) bureaucracy

limiting tourists' positive experiences, (b) several financial policies, and (c) separation

between tourism and civil aviation.

Figure 13

Coding Results: Interview Question 9
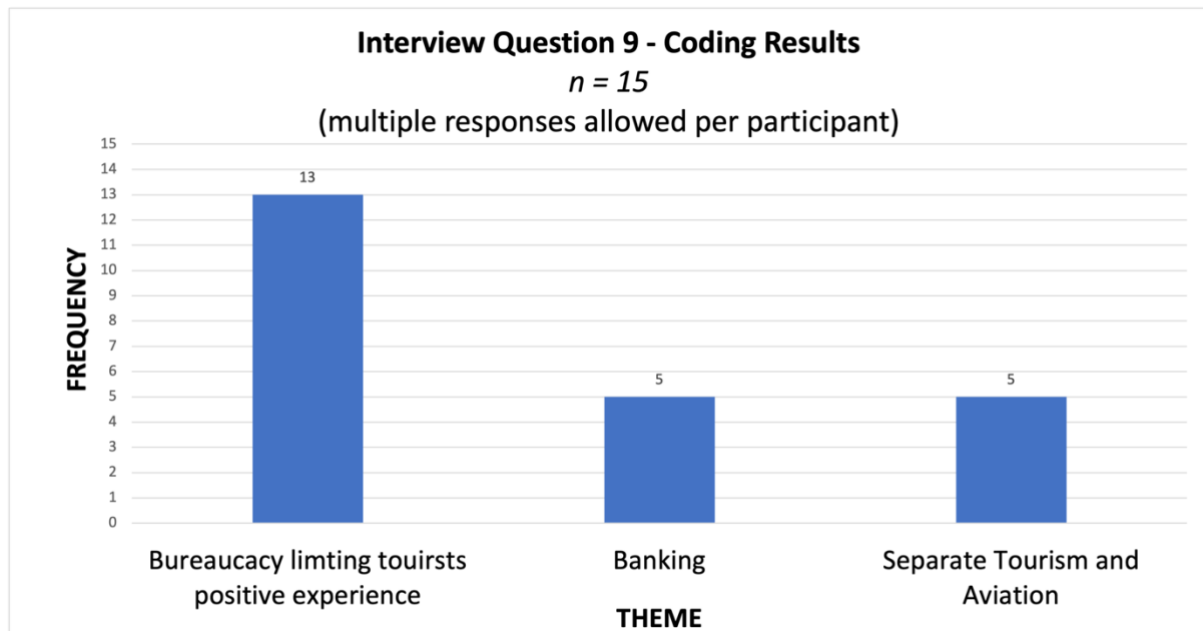
Note. Policy or decision Egyptian tourism leaders would redo. The chart illustrates the themes that emerged from responses to interview question 9. Data are presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by participants assigned to that theme.

   Bureaucracy Limiting Tourists' Positive Experience. The theme of bureaucracy

limiting tourists was the first theme that emerged from the review and analyses of responses

to policies or decisions participants could redo if possible—13 out of 15 participants (87%)

shared words, expressions, sentences, and sayings. Participants revealed what policy or

decision they were able to redo using phrases like hardcopy reports that must submitted in a

very short time notice, overuse of bureaucracy, paperwork and reports, and useless and dated

paperwork and reports. Participants assured that the working system is not updated and is

routinely done to fill the space, not for practical reasons. Participant 4 shared, "So much

paperwork to submit sometimes feels like I work to fill those papers and reports and not

provide quality service to our guests. I wish to redo that paperwork and replace it with digital

submissions." In the same context, Participant 3 shared: "I wish to redo the restrictions on

bank transactions limiting our money withdrawn from banks. These restrictions made us

suffer." The Egyptian tourism sector grapples with bureaucratic challenges that obstruct

policy implementation and innovative growth (Metin et al., 2016; OECD, 2020a; Svartdal et

al., 2016). Leaders advocate for removing red tape to enable progress and sustainability, with

current rigid structures impeding timely business operations and infrastructure developments.

Banking. Banking was the second theme that emerged from the reviewing and

analyses to interview questions about policies or decisions participants could redo if possible.

Five participants out of 15 (33%) shared words, expressions, sentences, and sayings.

Participants emphasized that bank restrictions on transactions and changing the payment

method of entrance tickets to some tourist attractions to be only with a bank card were the

two policies they wished to redo. In this context, Participant 1 shared:

> If I could change one policy, I would redo the restriction on paying entrance tickets to
>
> some tourist attractions with bank cards only. It created much hassle and wasted
>
> guests' time when the system was down for some reason, so the payment device did
>
> not work. I wonder why we could not have a survey to figure out a more flexible
>
> method.

Furthermore, in the same context, Participant 2 shared, "Paying with a bank card is causing a

big-time challenge for us; there is no company bank card phenomenon in Egypt yet. We are

always using cash; we need a transition period to be prepared." Tourism leaders in Egypt

suggest restoring the banking sector to aid tourism businesses, citing inefficiencies and poor

technology integration. They advocate for online and mobile banking enhancements to

streamline transactions and support emerging enterprises, reinforcing the sector's growth and

competitive edge (Chingarande & Saayman, 2018; Colombo & Baggio, 2017; Turkay et al., 2019;).

The Distinction Between Tourism and Aviation. In the thematic analysis of participants' responses, one prominent issue that emerged was the division of tourism and aviation into separate entities. A notable proportion, five out of fifteen participants or 33%, expressed a desire to revaluate the policy that currently bifurcates these two sectors. The respondents highlighted the essential nature of the service industry to tourism, arguing that it acts as a fundamental element of the broader tourism infrastructure. Participant 11 articulated:

> The facilitation of globally affordable airfare to Egypt is an integral part of the infrastructure supporting the tourism industry. This objective was more readily achieved in the 1990s when Egypt Air was administered within the combined Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation. There is a strong inclination to reconsider and potentially rescind the decision that cleaved civil aviation from the sphere of tourism.

Tourism leaders in Egypt recommend consolidating agencies and updating laws to better regulate the industry, including addressing the rise of unlicensed online businesses. Merging agencies like civil aviation and tourism have previously proven effective in recovery efforts during crises (Fairhurst et al., 1997; H. Zhang et al., 2022). Up-to-date legislation is crucial to manage compliance risks informal online enterprises pose (Agag, 2019).

Interview Question 10. Interview Question 10 asked, what are your recommendations for your company, the nation, and the globe to attain sustainability and success? Responses to this question were analyzed and presented in the bar chart (see Figure 14). A total of 57 responses, keywords, and phrases related to recommendations participants have to attain sustainability and success for the company, nation, and global emerged. These

responses were grouped into six themes as follows: (a) cooperation, (b) updating laws and

rules, (c) educating everyone about tourism, (d) customer service, (e) developing

infrastructure, and (f) marketing.

Figure 14

Coding Results: Interview Question 10
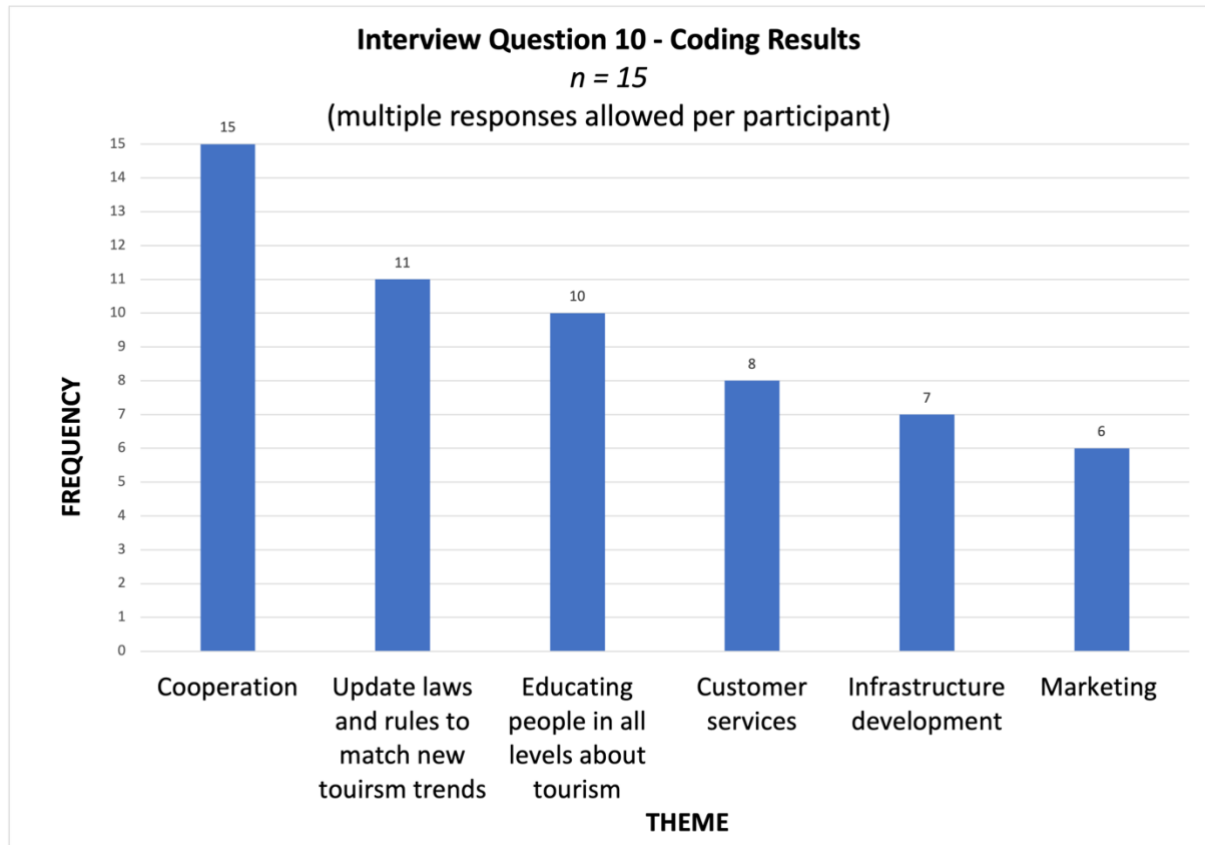
Note. Egyptian tourism leaders` recommendations for successful sustainable tourism. The chart illustrates the themes that emerged from responses to interview question 10. Data are presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by participants assigned to that theme.

     Cooperation. Cooperation was the first theme that emerged from the review and

analyses of the responses to the interview questions about their recommendations to attain

sustainable and successful tourism for their company, nation, and globally. There were 15 out

of 15 participants (100%) who shared separately the same recommendation that cooperation

is recommended to pursue successful sustainable tourism. Words, phrases, and sentences

were shared, for example, cooperation between all agencies, promoting competition but not unethical business manner, cooperation among stakeholders, and teamwork and focus groups. Participant 14 shared, "The only way to create quality and successful tourism is to remove the obstacles between agencies and cooperate between all agencies involved, public and private." In the same context, Participant 11 shared, "My first advice or recommendation is to listen actively to everyone and cooperate with everyone to find solutions, not create obstacles." Egyptian tourism leaders stress the importance of cooperation among agencies for sustainable tourism, placing collaborative leadership at the forefront. This approach aligns with recommendations by Ammirato et al. (2018), Fordham and Robinson (2018), and others, emphasizing that synergy drives innovation and enhances competitiveness in tourism (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019).

Update Laws and Rules. In order to have a successful sustainable tourism industry in Egypt, participants recommended updating laws and rules in their responses to the interview questions about what they recommend attaining successful and sustainable tourism. Updating laws and rules was the theme that emerged from reviewing and analyzing participants' responses. There were 11 out of 15 participants (73%) shared their words, phrases, and sayings, for example, updating rules, hiring technocrats, and removing bureaucracy. Participant 15 shared, "To progress and have a successful tourism industry, we must eliminate all restrictions and all bureaucratic reports, including never-ending paperwork." In the same context, Participant 6 shared: "Sometimes, I feel that we are still in the 80s when I compare our routines with other countries like Dubai; I think we must update the old rules as they are no longer viable." Egyptian tourism leaders advocate for modernizing laws to boost the sector's growth, suggesting updates to outdated regulations to foster industry agility. Aligning with the Egypt Tourism Reform Program's goals, they encourage stakeholder-

inclusive policymaking to embrace digital transformation and customer value, as recommended by Alsaad et al. (2022) and Hadjielias et al. (2022).

Educating People About Tourism. In their responses to the interview question about what recommendations participants have to attain successful sustainable tourism, they responded by educating all people at all levels about tourism. From the review and analysis of the participants' responses, the theme of educating all people about tourism emerged. There were 10 out of 15 participants (67%) shared the theme of educating people about tourism using words, sentences, and viewpoints. Egypt's tourism experts are voicing concerns about insufficiently skilled workers, highlighting a vital need for improved education and joint academic-business initiatives to boost service excellence and sector competitiveness (Ashyrov et al., 2019; Berbegal-Mirabent et al., 2019; Ferreira & Carayannis, 2019; Phongthiya et al., 2021). Practical training is critical for customer satisfaction and building loyalty, aligning with established industry standards (Noe et al., 2010; Rust et al., 1995). Further in this context, Participant 6 shared:

> I think we can attract more tourists' year after year if everyone in our society is well educated about what tourism is and how a satisfied treated tourist is an increase in individual income. Showing our hospitality is showing our identity, love, and loyalty to our country. If we show how we love our country, it will be easier to convince every tourist to love it.

Customer Service. Customer service was the fourth prevailing theme that emerged from analyzing the responses to interview questions about what recommendations participants had to attain successful sustainable tourism. There were eight out of 15 participants (53%) who shared words, phrases, and viewpoints like quality customer service and happy tourists are more money. Participant 13 shared, "Providing quality customer service is the alpha omega of successful tourism. Customer service means satisfied

customers, which means positive feedback and word of mouth." Prioritizing customer service is essential for the Egyptian tourism sector, per industry leaders' recommendations. Empowering the local community through education about the importance of tourism enhances the service quality provided to tourists, fostering a hospitable and safe environment that encourages repeat visits and enhances Egypt's competitive edge in the global tourism market (Çakar, 2020; Lesar et al., 2020; Streimikiene et al., 2021).

Infrastructure Development. Infrastructure development was the fifth theme that emerged from analyzing the participants' responses. There were seven out of 15 participants (47%) who shared words, phrases, expressions, and viewpoints to express that developing infrastructure is their recommendation for attaining successful sustainable tourism. For example, Participant 12 shared:

> We need to maintain our roads, build more hotels all over Egypt but more specifically in Cairo, and facilitate transportation. We do what we can to have affordable holiday package prices, but we still need more flights at affordable prices.

Improving infrastructure is paramount for Egypt's tourism growth, as industry leaders contend. Adequate infrastructure bolsters tourist satisfaction, vital for cultivating destination loyalty and enabling sustainable tourism. These insights are reinforced by the pivotal role of infrastructure in economic success and its influence on key performance indicators such as scenery, strategic planning, support from the government, and technological accessibility, all contributing to a memorable tourist experience (Bomhorst et al., 2010; Engelbrecht et al., 2014; Hughes & Carlsen, 2010). Egyptian tourism authorities recognize infrastructure enhancement as essential for maintaining competitive advantage and ensuring personalized customer service (Baloch et al., 2023; Chang, 2018).

Marketing. Marketing was the last theme that emerged from analyses of the responses to Interview Question 10 about what participants recommend attaining successful sustainable

tourism. There were six out of 15 participants (40%) separately expressed that marketing is the theme that will attain successful sustainable tourism. They shared words and phrases like adopting new marketing trends, marketing Egypt as a peaceful destination, and marketing. Participant 12 shared, "Marketing will inform people about our country; how would people know about Egypt as a travel destination if we do not do wide-scope global marketing campaigns." Egypt's tourism leaders emphasize marketing innovation to surmount industry obstacles and achieve sustainable growth. Traditional methods are obsolete; modern marketing trends must be adopted, aligning with new technologies like AI to understand consumer behavior and offer tailored digital experiences. Integrating sustainability into marketing strategies is essential, drawing on academic insights to shape consumer-centric tactics (Mogaji et al., 2020). This proactive approach is crucial for adapting to changing consumer preferences and embedding sustainable practices within tourism.

Significant Observations. While they needed to be sufficiently prevalent enough to emerge as a theme, other noteworthy replies included sustainability, diversified programs in terms of prices, and obligatory training. Participant 3 shared, "having sustainable tourism is to build upon economic, social, and environmental objectives to achieve."

Interview Question 11. Interview Question 11 asked, if you were to decide on behalf of the entirety of the tourism industry to create a synergistic industry, what would your recommendations be? Responses to this question were analyzed and presented in the bar chart (see Figure 15). A total of 55 responses, keywords, and phrases emerged related to recommendations to create a synergistic tourism industry. These responses were grouped into five themes as follows: (a) cooperation, (b) government support and funds, (c) developing human resources, (d) building destination loyalty, and (e) vision.

Figure 15

Coding Results: Interview Question 11

Interview Question 11 - Coding Results
n = 15
(multiple responses allowed per participant)
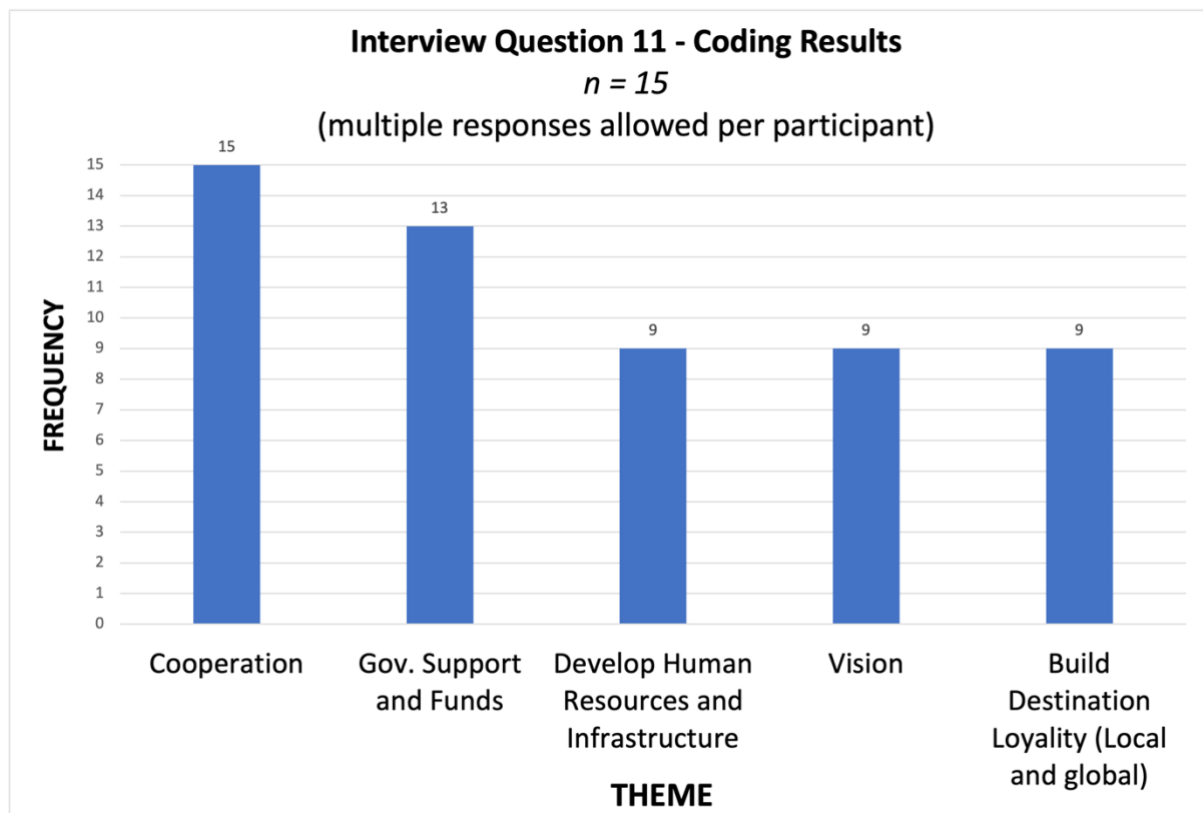
Note. Egyptian tourism leaders` recommendations for synergistic tourism industry. The chart illustrates the themes that emerged from responses to interview question 10. Data are presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of statements made by participants assigned to that theme.

Cooperation. Cooperation was the first emerging theme yielded from the analyses of the participant's responses. There were 15 out of 15 participants (100%) who shared words, phrases, and viewpoints that suggested that creating a synergistic tourism industry requires cooperation. Words and phrases like cooperation among stakeholders, removing hurdles and ensuring joint, and merging all departments in one location to facilitate cooperation. Participant 4 shared, "Tourism ministry must enforce that documents and paperwork can be digitalized, cloud-stored, and accessible to all agencies, and most of all, agencies must cooperate and not work in silos." In the same context about cooperation, Participant 3 shared: "Everyone is working on his kingdom applying his own rules; unless all agencies cooperate

to make our work easier and less bureaucratic, we will not be able to compete in the tourism global market." In Egyptian tourism, enhancing inter-agency cooperation is critical to overcoming sectoral challenges. Leaders stress the importance of unified, collaborative efforts across all levels to address resource gaps and improve efficiency. The lack of coordination, evidenced by disorganization and pricing issues, harms Egypt's tourism reputation. Adopting collaborative leadership, involving government, business, and community stakeholders, is essential for fostering sustainable tourism practices and ensuring equitable participation in policy development. Aligning all partners through shared goals and open communication is crucial for the industry's success and growth (Almeida et al., 2018; Ammirato et al., 2018; Fordham & Robinson, 2018; Jacobs et al., 2020; Keyim, 2018; Lane, 1994; McGehee et al., 2018; Ramirez et al., 2020; Randel et al., 2018; Roxas et al., 2020; Senaji et al., 2014; Sheehan et al., 2016; Soliman & Wahba, 2018; UNWTO, 2018).

Government Support and Funds. Government support was the second emerging theme yielded from the analyses of the participants' responses to Interview Question 11. Participants were asked about their recommendations for creating a synergistic tourism industry in Egypt. There were 13 out of 15 participants (87%) who shared words, phrases, and viewpoints that suggested that creating a synergistic tourism industry requires government support and funds. Government support and funds were the second significant theme that emerged from the analyses after cooperation. Participant 2 shared:

> The government must use its power to enforce rules and update and remove obstacles. Who otherwise will have the power to update these '70s and '80s rules? We all see that the Government is doing what is in its hands to promote and support tourism, but we see a lot more that could be done.

Participant 1 shared, "We are cooperating with the Government to find solutions. We hope the Government will provide more resources and locate more funds to support the tourism

industry." In Egypt's tourism sector, leaders highlight the pivotal role of government support and funding in navigating crises, emphasizing the need for public-private cooperation during challenging times like political unrest. Ritchie (2004) underlines the inevitability of crises and the importance of robust collaboration between sectors to mitigate their impacts. As corroborated by Petrova et al. (2018), government strategies are crucial for stability and recovery. Leaders advocate for financial policies that foster a conducive environment for sustainable tourism growth, affirming the need for investments in infrastructure and community development to drive economic expansion, a stance reinforced by findings from Ammirato et al. (2018), Fordham and Robinson (2018), Sheehan et al. (2016), and UNWTO (2018).

Develop Human Resources and Infrastructure. Developing human resources and infrastructure was the third theme essential to have a synergistic tourism industry in Egypt, which emerged from analyses of responses with nine out of 15 participants (60%). Words, phrases, and viewpoints are shared to express that developing human resources and infrastructure is an important recommendation to achieve a synergistic tourism industry in Egypt. Participant 14 shared:

> To have a successful collaborative industry, we must equip our tourism businesses with well-educated human resources and maintain our tourist attractions, hotels, and transportation. This requires us to educate our workforce to enable them with courses and workshops and improve our infrastructure to perform high-quality service and professionalism.

Participant 1 shared:

We need to train our workforce. As you know, tourism faces often unpredicted crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and war. Due to those crises, our experienced and skilled workforce leaves the industry seeking stability, and our business owners need more funds to remodel hotels and cruise ships and buy new transportation fleets. We hire new graduates with no work skills and no experience; we must create courses and educational workshops to train and educate our new, fresh, inexperienced workforce.

Egyptian tourism leaders highlight the critical role of human resource development in enhancing the tourism experience, underscoring the importance of integrating excellent infrastructure and customer service to foster sustainable tourism as supported in Michael et al. (2019). Aligned with leaders' responses is that quality delivery in these areas ensures tourist satisfaction, cultivating loyalty and boosting attraction to Egypt is Calderwood and Soshkin (2019) emphasizing how tourist satisfaction is crucial for successful sustainable tourism competitiveness.

Chang (2018) confirms the significance of these hedonic qualities in augmenting tourism revenue. To secure destination loyalty, the focus must be on educating and advancing human capital, which is fundamental to providing high-quality services vital for competitive success in the global tourism market. This approach aligns with the insights of Z. Chen and Yuan (2020) and Cetin and Dincer (2014), who link tourist satisfaction to loyalty, thereby increasing Egypt's competitive edge and revenue, as echoed by Calderwood and Soshkin (2019), Bris and Caballero (2015), and Michael et al. (2019).

Build Destination Loyalty. From the analyses of participants' responses to interview question 11, building destination loyalty was the emerging theme, with nine out of 15 participants (60%) recommending it to create a synergistic tourism industry. Words, phrases, and viewpoints are shared to express that building destination loyalty is crucial for achieving a synergistic tourism industry in Egypt. Participant 12 shared:

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It takes a lot of effort and perseverance to build a brand name; in tourism, it builds

destination loyalty. To reach a synergistic industry level, we must take all steps to

build destination loyalty. This requires many other necessary elements to create the

final tourism product. In a satisfied customer as our final product lays, customer

service, high standard accommodations, comfortable transportation, experienced

skilled workforce, and well-functioning system.

Leaders' recommendation to develop successful sustainable tourism is building destination

loyalty which supported in Z. Chen and Yuan (2020). The destination loyalty requiring a

blend of robust infrastructure and exceptional service to satisfy tourists and encourage repeat

visits as in Calderwood and Soshkin (2019). This approach, vital for fostering loyalty and

competitive advantage, is supported by studies emphasizing the nexus between satisfaction

and loyalty (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019; Z. Chen & Yuan, 2020).

Vision. Vision was the fifth theme that emerged from the participants` responses and

analyses, recommending having a vision to create a synergistic industry. There were nine out

of 15 participants (60%) expressed their recommendation to have a vision to create a

synergistic tourism industry in words, phrases, and viewpoints. Participant 13 shared, "Long-

term plans are vital to achieving cooperative tourism success. we must have plans for

everything, including crises and business decline." Participant 11 shared:

Working to achieve a target is necessary to have goals and a plan to achieve these

goals. Unfortunately, the tourism industry plans change every time a new minister is

appointed. In order to achieve these goals, they must have a consensus among all

agencies and a steady administration to pursue these goals.

Egyptian tourism leaders underscored the need for strategic planning and a clear vision to

drive the industry's growth (Senge, 2006). Visionary leadership is crucial in guiding the

sector towards a sustainable future, aligning with the future insights and ensuring a strong global presence as suggested by Kopaneva (2019) and Zhan et al. (2022).

Significant Observations. There were notable responses that needed to be more prevalent to emerge as themes; these responses included removing bureaucracy, having joint ventures between university research and industry, and exchanging expertise with foreign tourism expertise. Participant 5 shared, "Exchanging expertise is very familiar in all industries; we should create a program supporting the exchange of expertise and knowledge with other tourist countries."

Summary of Research Question 4

The purpose of RQ4 was to know the recommendations Egyptian tourism industry leaders have to develop a strategic framework for achieving sustainable Egyptian tourism leadership. A total of 14 themes were recognized by reviewing and analyzing responses from participants to Interview Questions 9, 10, and 11 from identifying a decision or a policy that participants would redo if they could emerge three themes: (a) bureaucracy liming tourists positive experience, (b) banking, and (c) separate tourism and aviation. When participants were asked about recommendations to create booming sustainable tourism, emerged (a) cooperation, (b) updating laws and rules to match tourism trends, (c) educating people about tourism, (d) customer service, (e) infrastructure development, and (f) marketing. Then, recommendations to create a synergistic tourism industry emerged with the following themes: (a) cooperation, (b) government support and funds, (c) developing human resources, (d) building destination loyalty, and (e) vision.

Research Question 4: Significant Observations

Cooperation is the Most Prevalent Theme in RQ4

There was a consistent consensus that cooperation was recommended by 15 out of 15 participants (100%) for creating a successful, sustainable, and synergistic Egyptian tourism industry. Cooperation theme showed across two of the three interview questions with two of 14 total themes (14%) and 30 out of 45 participants (67%) when Interview Questions, 9, 10, and 11 summed together. Cooperation was the most apparent theme across the two interviews of the three questions, and the most significant numbers recommended creating a sustainable and synergistic Egyptian tourism industry. The degree to which this recommendation varied among participants but was persistent throughout two of the three interview questions.

Chapter Summary

This study aimed to explore the challenges encountered by the Egyptian tourism industry, examine the strategies, best practices, and resources leaders employ to tackle these challenges and uncover the recommendations offered by individuals managing tour operator companies to foster successful and sustainable tourism. Fifteen individuals operating tour operator companies directly involved in addressing tourists' concerns and industry challenges participated in interviews to contribute insights to the study.

The participants responded to 11 semi-structured interview questions designed to address the following four research questions:

- **RQ1**: What are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism industry to achieve collaborative and sustainable tourism?

- **RQ2**: What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces?

- **RQ3**: How do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success?

- **RQ4**: What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders and leaders must develop a strategic framework for achieving sustainable Egyptian tourism leadership.

Data were collected from the 11 semi-structured interviews. After data were coded and the findings were confirmed with an inter-rater panel of Pepperdine Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change candidates, the researcher employed phenomenology techniques outlined in Chapter 3 for data analyses yielded 50 themes. A comprehensive summary of the 50 themes is presented in Table 5. Chapter 5 will discuss the study, implications, conclusions, and recommendations.

Table 5

Summary of Themes for Research Questions

RQ1. Challenges facing the Egyptian Tourism Industry	RQ2. Strategies to Overcome Challenges	RQ3. Define, Measure, and Track Industry Success	RQ4. Recommendations for Achievement
Political Instability	Marketing	Customer Satisfaction	Cooperation
War	Various Strategies	Growth	Update Laws and Rules to Match New Tourism Trends
Bureaucracy	Use of Network	Increase Number of Tourist	Educating People in all Levels About Tourism
Infrastructure	Training and Workshops	Competitiveness	Infrastructure Development
Air Connectivity	No Formal	Sustainability	Marketing
Business Decline	Cooperation	Bureaucracy Limiting Tourists Positive Experience	Gov. Support and Funds
Recurrent Setbacks to Growth	Use of Network	Banking	Develop Human Resources and Infrastructure
Loss of Experienced Labour	Various Strategies	Separate Tourism and Aviation	Build Destination Loyalty
Luddite	Perseverance		Vision
Education About Tourism	Government Support		

RQ1. Challenges facing the Egyptian Tourism Industry	RQ2. Strategies to Overcome Challenges	RQ3. Define, Measure, and Track Industry Success	RQ4. Recommendations for Achievement
Lack of Vision	Marketing		
Government Support			
Workforce Challenges			
Lack of Cooperation			
Lack of Education			
Competitive Prices			

Note. This table presents a summary of all the themes resulting from the data analysis process.

Chapter 5: Findings, Implications, Application, and Recommendations

Introduction to the Study

The Egyptian tourism industry has an excellent growth potential to increase tourist arrivals. This potential generates additional employment and improves the overall Egyptian economy. The industry faces several challenges, including the need for collaborative leadership to ensure a synergistic industry. Exploring the challenges that face the tourism industry helps to understand the problems that hinder Egyptian tourism industry growth. Egyptian tourism sectors are interrelated but must be more cohesive and organized. Investigating the strategies of frontline leaders who operate tour operator companies enables the use of strategies that have shown successful outcomes when applied by frontline leaders. Furthermore, exploring challenges, understanding the strategies, and collecting recommendations will create a strategic framework for a synergistic tourism industry based on collaborative leadership. Operating participatory tourism businesses is key in employing Egypt's competitiveness as a travel destination to stand out in an intense global competitive tourism market.

This study planned to create a strategic framework for successful sustainable tourism in Egypt. It is focused on investigating the challenges, strategies, best practices, and recommendations the frontline individuals who operate tour operator companies experience and employ in their everyday work with tourists. Strategies and best practices employed by tour operator companies were recognized as a result of this study. Documenting the challenges, strategies, best parties, and recommendations will complement to the body of the literature. The findings of this study will help Egyptian tourism practitioners in all sectors identify means that help them work to develop collaborative leadership and a synergistic tourism industry. The study is pathbreaking, creating a framework that can be further developed and evolved to be used as a manual for successful sustainable tourism.

The following sections will summarize the study, focusing on the statement of purpose, research questions, and study design. A detailed discussion of the findings for each research question is provided. Implications, applications, conclusions, and future research recommendations are also discussed.

Summary of the Study

This study intended to investigate challenges, strategies, best practices, and recommendations articulated by leaders of tour operator companies in Egypt. A thorough examination the literature led to the designed four research questions. To answer these four research questions 11 open-ended interview questions were meticulously designed. The rationale behind employing this qualitative approach is rooted in phenomenological approach to collect insights from participants lived experience. The phenomenological study sought to capture the first-hand encounters and experience of individuals who operate "A" license tour companies in Egypt, which aligns with scholars such as Creswell (2003), Moustakas (1994), and Morse (1994). The phenomenological approach was chosen to study the consciousness of the lived experiences of the tourism industry phenomena from its first-person point of view (T. M. Dawson, 2020; Privitera, 2017). The researcher identified participants 'narratives and documented its details providing accounts of their first-hand encounters and lived experiences. The selection of the study participants from the official list of registries of the Egyptian Tourism Ministry of license A for tour operators' companies with first-hand experience in Egyptian tourism challenges, strategies, best practices, and recommendations. The study employed purposive sampling of 15 participants who varied regarding incoming tourism markets such as North and South America, North-western and East Europe, and the rest of the world market to ensure maximum variation criteria. Participants have extensive experience based on working in different incoming tourism markets and experience length

that varied between five and 40 years. Purposive sampling was used in the selection process to ensure a broad range of participants.

Discussions of Findings

A summary of key findings for each research question is shown in Table 5. The findings illustrate challenges, strategies, best practices, and recommendations of Egyptian tourism leaders who operate tour companies. Following are the results of the discussion of each research question.

Results for Research Question 1

RQ1 asked, What are the challenges facing the Egyptian tourism to achieve collaborative and sustainable tourism?

The Egyptian tourism industry, one of the essential sources of the nation's economy, faces a web of challenges that impede the realization of collaborative and sustainable tourism. Political instability emerges as the most prevalent challenge, casting a shadow over the region, while conflicts such as the wars in Gaza and Ukraine disrupt the flow of tourists. Bureaucracy arises as a formidable barrier, with burdensome processes reducing the effectiveness and demand of the industry. The limited air connectivity to key destinations within Egypt is another significant hurdle, discouraging potential visitors and repressing the tourism sector's expansion. These issues are compounded by a decline in business due to regional and global tensions, which leads to recurring growth setbacks and the loss of a once skilled and experienced labor force.

Infrastructure insufficiencies, such as underdeveloped roads, expensive flights, and old hotel facilities, exacerbate the situation. Averseness to embrace technology among decision-makers, who are often accused of needing to be more in touch with the industry's demands, stalls progress. Disintegration, disorganization, and fragmentation are evident as agencies and businesses operate in isolation, needing a unified approach. There is a critical

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need for tourism education at all levels, from industry professionals to the general public, to foster a deeper understanding of the sector's significance and operations. Visionary leadership is absent, with strategic long-term planning disrupted by constant instability. A call for more considerable government involvement is clear, pressing a proactive stance in industry oversight, quality reassurance, and financial support. Finally, the challenge of maintaining competitive pricing structures pressures the industry, threatening its growth and long-term viability.

The analyses of the participants' responses and 15 themes that emerged indicated challenges faced the Egyptian tourism industry as follows:

- Political instability in the region and world political situation
- War in Gaza and Ukraine has impacted the tourism flow.
- Bureaucracy is the major challenge that faces Egyptian industry.
- Air connectivity is limited to key tourist destinations in Egypt, citing it as a significant barrier to attracting tourists.
- Business decline as a result of the political instability and war, regionally and globally
- Recurrent setbacks to growth as a result of unpredicted war and political instability
- Loss of experienced labor as a result of recurrent setbacks
- Lack of infrastructure such as roads, affordable flight tickets, and maintenance of hotels
- Luddite decision-makers who lack industry experience
- Lack of cooperation, agencies and businesses work in their silos.
- Education about tourism is needed at both industry professional and general public levels.

- Lack of vision, the challenge of recurrent setbacks, and strategic long-term plans

- Government support and funds, a more active and efficient government role in monitoring and supervising the industry, ensure quality, and facilitate financial funds.

- Workforce challenges, educate the workforce, improve their payment, and ensure their welfare to provide high-quality customer services.

- Competitive prices negatively affect the overall growth and sustainability of the Egyptian tourism industry.

Discussion of Research Question 1

The findings show that the challenges of the tourism industry can divided into three central categories as follows: (a) political instability and economic challenges, (b) infrastructural and operational challenges, and (c) market and pricing challenges.

Political and Economic Challenges. Egyptian tourism has been prone to internal, regional, and global political conflict effects and outcomes. Egyptian tourism leaders stated that political instability is the most significant of their industry's multifaceted challenges. The industry leaders also stated that the ongoing regional war in Gaza is the single most significant challenge facing the Egyptian tourism industry. Egyptian tourism is a vulnerable and perceptive where peripheral factors can instantly and swiftly impact growth and stability. Industry growth and stability depend on many factors, including safety, political, and economic stability (Çakar, 2021). Analogously, political instability and war are external factors that impact the Egyptian tourism industry. These factors cause recurrent setbacks and economic burdens, posing significant obstacles and implications to Egyptian tourism growth and sustainability. These implications are causing the Egyptian tourism business to decline, causing a loss of experienced labor and redirecting government funds to other priorities. It is shared that the war and political instability highlight the urgent need for government support

for strategic interferences to mitigate adverse effects and foster sustainable tourism in Egypt. This is aligned with Çakar (2021) that the nature of the tourism industry is fragile, susceptible and perceptive to human-made catastrophes and natural calamities (Çakar, 2021; Sausmarez, 2007; Walters & Mair, 2019). The Egyptian tourism vulnerability caused by political instability and war are man-made disasters and catastrophes that cause tourists to cancel their planned trips or travel to a safer destination. These regional and global political conflicts, such as the war in Gaza and Ukraine, impact tourism flow to Egypt, causing more recurrent setbacks and business decline. They exacerbate the Egyptian tourism challenges, contributing to business decline and loss of revenue.

Business Decline. The downturns due to the political instability and war cause recurrent setbacks, which in turn slows the growth of the Egyptian tourism industry. Leaders in the Egyptian tourism industry meant that slowing the tourism industry continues as lingering fears and uncertainties persist even though the crises are over. These fears and uncertainties dampened tourists' confidence and aggravated the Egyptian tourism downturns. Thus, the tourism industry is challenged by diminished demand and slackened revenue, supported by Buultjens et al. (2016), about instability, causing an unpredicted sharp decline in tourist numbers. Consequently, the tourists are compelled to cancel their trips to Egypt or redirect them to a safer destination.

As a result of business decline, many Egyptian tourism businesses downsize or provisionally suspend their business operations. Furthermore, leaders expressed that these business suspensions and discontinuances lead to widespread layoffs and extended furloughs for their workforce. Leaders of Egyptian tourism affirmed that the industry is reliant on labour, offering employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled workers, as sun et al. (2022) said. Unfortunately for the Egyptian tourism industry, these layoffs include experienced and skilled Egyptian professionals. They leave tourism seeking stable and

lucrative jobs, as confirmed by (Baum, 2015), which states that tourism's reputation is poor

pay and limited opportunities. The internal and external (outside of the country) migration of

skilled professionals to alternative employment opportunities erodes the Egyptian tourism

industry experience critical for maintaining service quality. Thus, the loss of skilled laborers

hinders the promotion of innovation and creativity in an increasingly sharply competitive

global tourism industry.

Furthermore, the loss of skilled and experienced professionals within the Egyptian

tourism industry hinders its adaptation to consumer evolving preferences to deliver

outstanding tourist experiences. Such broader and more profound implications impact

Egyptian local communities profoundly as they rely heavily on tourism revenues. Small

businesses, including souvenir shops, restaurants, and cultural attractions, which depend on

tourists as their clientele, struggle to stay afloat without their usual tourist traffic. The

aforementioned confirmed by Spennemann and Whitsed (2023) regarding the ramification of

skilled labor depletion in tourism due to war, conflict, and instability, resulting in an

unforeseen significant decline in tourist arrivals, causing loss of investment both in the long

and short term (Smith et al., 2019; Zeng et al., 2005). However, with the emergence of

COVID-19 pandemic there has been a highlighted recognition of necessity for crises

management protocols, which was exemplified by the response of the US government

through initiatives as the Small Business Administration loan relief program (Dilger et al.,

2020; Anoushiravani et al., 2020). Analogously, developing a fund program to help Egyptian

tourism businesses during business decline due to unpredicted crises such as the ongoing war

in Gaza is necessary.

Operational Challenges and Infrastructural Bureaucracy. Bureaucracy surfaces as

a significant challenge that the Egyptian tourism industry faces, as narrated by the Egyptian

tourism leaders. It hinders the implementation of effective policies and creativities to support

industry growth and achieve sustainability. Egyptian tourism ministry and its five affiliated agencies (OECD, 2020a) bureaucratic obstacles stand out as a substantial hurdle blocking Egyptian leaders' way to enact proficient measures and strategies to foster tourism's sustainability and success. Egyptian tourism industry leaders expressed how challenging their daily business is in the intricate web of administrative procedures, regulations, and red tape. The bureaucratic hurdles facing the Egyptian tourism industry, such as red, aligned with Metin et al. (2016) and Svartdal et al. (2016) procrastination. These bureaucratic challenges limit achieving efficient and essential infrastructure development projects such as renewing licenses and getting permits.

Moreover, luddite decision-makers needing more industry experience aggravate and add to the challenges, maintaining a cycle of inefficiency and indisposition within Egyptian tourism industry offices. The luddite decision-makers in Egyptian tourism are supported by Duryan and Smyth's (2019) statement that the legitimate power command creates hierarchical leadership. Thus, Egyptian tourism hierarchical leadership is a part of the bureaucratic red tape that deters potential tourism growth in Egypt (Fleming, 2020). Leaders in Egyptian Tourism described governmental tourism agencies as predetermined, fastidiously organized, and formalized impersonal bureaucratic organizations.

These bureaucratic organizations have well-defined and explicit rules and regulations that the chain of command and authority uses to govern operations (Weber, 1968; Lumby, 2019). The supposed clear, unequivocal rules and regulations can be instead double-edged, one sharp, which gets things done using the power of a governmental organization's leadership. The flip side is the detrimental slow-paced side that slows down everything and kills progression and advancement as leaders suffer the consequences of what are supposed to be explicit and unambiguous regulations instead of having a dual nature, serving as a powerful tool for efficient organizational leadership on one side.

Conversely, bureaucracy's downside manifests as a hindrance, impeding progress and stifling advancement with its sluggishness on the other side. Therefore, the downside of bureaucracy is exemplified as a hindrance and blocking growth, causing authoritarian and sluggishness in the Egyptian tourism industry. Metin et al. (2016) red tape and Svartdal et al. (2016) procrastination is prevalent in Egyptian tourism ministry leadership. Paperwork takes longer and more complex to finish, claiming it is under review. This is depicted as time and resources spent dealing with tourism businesses hindering the efficiency and effectiveness of communications.

Egyptian tourism leaders related their undergoing complex and lengthy processes when obtaining permits, approvals, and licenses. These extended processes slow decision-making, deter efficient business operations, and thus hinder tourism expansion and growth. Consequently, these bureaucratic barriers highlight potential challenges within the Egyptian tourism industry leadership. It is argued that the undue and excessive complication in the permitting and controlling procedures represents a significant barrier to travel tour operators, hotels, tourism transportation companies, and other related tourism businesses. The previous argument is supported by J. Dawson et al. (2017). However, the practice of licensing, issuing permits, and approvals is a characteristic of the Egyptian tourism industry. Enforcing certification and accreditation demonstrates a commitment to quality and sustainability, as supported by Merli et al. (2019), Safaeva et al. (2019), and Elshaer and Marzouk (2019). The practice of quality control and certification is a safeguard ensuring the tourists` safety and well-being.

Vision. Egyptian tourism leaders argued that tourism in Egypt lacks a well-communicated vision. Like other industries, tourism needs a research and development department (R & D), which is a vision to develop, research, and discover where we are and where we want to be. A strategic long-term plan is essential for the Egyptian tourism industry

to expand and grow. Leaders recommended having an industry vision and long-term goals to achieve. Aligning with Senge (2006) describing vision in the researcher's interpretation, hardly any forces in human activities and deeds possess the same degree of influence as a shared vision. Leaders in the Egyptian tourism industry shared their awareness of how political and economic instabilities due to wars and pandemics can block the view of the vision or even redirect the focus to other priorities. However, vision, attainable and measured goals, and helping Egyptian tourism leaders develop assessment strategies that measure the industry's progress, track its growth, and ensure its foresight—unifying leaders and followers towards achieving sustainable tourism.

Infrastructure. A major operation challenge that stands out as one of the foremost challenges confronting Egyptian tourism, as highlighted by industry leaders, is the lack of adequate infrastructure. The deficiency in road maintenance, hotels, and other critical infrastructure factors fronts a substantial obstacle, according to the leaders of the tourism industry statement. There are several main hotels in downtown Cairo by the River Nile that have been neglected, causing a lack of availability in a number of comfort accommodations. The Red Sea cities such as Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada have relied on either local or low-budget markets for their business operations, resulting in a decline in hotel standards. Since the Arab Spring in 2011, the tourism sector has encountered numerous setbacks attributable to regional political instability, domestic turmoil, and terrorism. As emphasized by Maher and Zhao (2022) and Groizard et al. (2016), political turmoil has triggered tourism sluggishness and slowness, thereby discouraging investment in tourism. Thus, these downturns have exerted a financial burden, impeding the availability of funds required for essential maintenance.

Egyptian tourism industry leaders have reported that hotels are contending with bargain occupancy rates and reduced profitability, necessitating the acceptance of lower room

rates. Besides, roads and Nile cruises have suffered from insufficient funding for essential seasonal and annual upgrades. The researcher asserts that infrastructure is critical to the tourist experience and destination image. Insufficient accommodation, marred roads, and lack of signage discourage and prevent tourists from exploring the magnificent heritage sites of Egypt. Hotels and Nile cruises transpiration, including other critical infrastructure components, are not compliant with international standards and lack availability. A few examples of lack of adequate infrastructure are (1) air connectivity, including lack of affordable flight tickets from several North-western European cities, (2) lack of quality trains that match the needs of tourists, and (3) ferries between major cities, such as ferry between Hurghada and Sharm el Sheikh are facilitating tourists' accessibility to tourists attractions and heritage sites.

Furthermore, poor infrastructure can compromise and pose risks to tourists' safety, such as inadequate transportation, networks, and emergency services. The inadequate sanitation facilities in certain tourist attractions sites compromise the tourist's comfort and safety, detracting from their overall experience. Clean and hygienic facilities such as public restrooms and waste disposal systems are significant detriments to tourists' positive experiences. Egyptian tourism leaders shared that this insufficiency falls short of meeting tourists` expectations and reduces Egypt's competitiveness. Thus, it negatively reflects Egypt's commitment to quality tourism.

Conversely, Well-maintained infrastructure is an added value to the destination's competitiveness. Addressing infrastructure deficiencies is crucial for sustainable, profitable tourism that fosters economic growth and the welfare of both tourists and local communities. These infrastructure components compose a significant attribute of tourist experiences. When these facilities are inadequately maintained and not complying with international standards, they deleteriously affect the tourist experience, smearing Egypt`s image. This harmful impact

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hampers Egypt to leverage its tourism assets and attain successful sustainable tourism. This previous argument aligned with Chan et al. (2022), Khadaroo and Seetanah (2008), Lo et al. (2019), and Prayag (2009), saying infrastructure and accessibility are crucial in determining a positive tourist experience. The positive tourist experience leads to a profitable, thriving tourism industry supported by Ramyar and Halim (2020), who assures that all infrastructure must meet specific standards to facilitate a positive tourist experience. Creating a positive tourist experience is central in achieving successful sustainable tourism, as confirmed by scholars like Grilli et al. (2021), Line et al. (2018), Streimikiene et al. (2021), and Wondirad et al. (2020).

Human Resources Education. Leaders in the Egyptian tourism have acknowledged the ongoing struggle to retain skilled and experienced professionals due to recurrent setbacks. The newly hired workforce lacks the necessary skills and experience to deliver high-quality service. This deficiency is primarily attributed to a lack of proper education, training, and essential workplace skills development. These workforce challenges underscore the critical role of university-industry (U-I) cooperation in societal development and success (Ashyrov et al., 2019; Berbegal-Mirabent et al., 2019; Cyert & Goodman, 1997; Ferreira & Carayannis, 2019; Mosayebi et al., 2020; Phongthiya et al., 2021). The low profits in Egyptian tourism contribute to poor compensation and inadequate maintenance, resulting in diminished demand for Egypt as a travel destination compared to destinations like Greece, Turkey, Spain, and France. This cyclical pattern perpetuates a significant workforce challenge. Addressing the workforce challenges in Egyptian tourism requires considering Senge's (2006) recommendation to think in loops rather than linear sequences. This perspective elucidates how the low demand for destinations may not be directly linked solely to factors such as war, political instability, or linear cause-and-effect reasoning.

The researcher strongly emphasizes the critical and indispensable role of workforce education and rigorous training in achieving success within the tourism sector. Successful tourism businesses are largely about people, how they are hired, managed, trained, educated, valued, rewarded, supported with welfare system, and lifelong learning and career growth (Noe et al., 2010). Moreover, it is asserted that a well-educated and adequately trained workforce serves as a cornerstone for attaining customer loyalty. Providing high-quality customer service yields positive tourist experiences, satisfies tourists, and fosters destination loyalty and competitiveness. The researcher aligned the well-educated and trained workforce impact as the tool to achieve these intangible assets. Among these assets are the five factors of L. Wang and Li (2023) that influence tourist loyalty and its sub-dimensions. Tourists are not inherently loyal but must be convinced or won over, especially in today's highly competitive and saturated market (Noe et al., 2010). These factors encompass satisfaction, perceived quality, motivation, experience quality, and perceived value. They are considered intangible assets in the tourism domain and represent the tools to attain tourist loyalty. Attaining loyalty increases destination value, demand, and, consequently, revenue.

The researcher emphatically asserts that intangible assets operate within either a virtuous or vicious cycle. Effective management contributes to the industry's value and the betterment of its performance. Conversely, mismanagement leads to revenue loss and harms the destination image. Thus, these assets necessitate meticulous management and maintenance to promote a virtuous cycle and ensure the success of sustainable tourism in Egypt. The initiation of a vicious cycle often stems from deficiencies in maintenance and education within tourism human capital. Contrarywise, a vigorous human capital framework yields skilled individuals skilful in delivering high-quality services, which are essential for exceptional service and satisfied customers. Ensuring the theory of return on quality (ROQ) by Noe et al. (2010) and Rust et al. (1995). The ROQ theory emphasizes the financial

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accountability of investment in quality. Consequently, increased customer satisfaction, demonstrated through positive tourist experiences, stimulates heightened demand for the destination, thus fostering profitable and sustainable tourism practices.

   Cooperation. Leaders of tourism industry in Egypt agreed upon considering cooperation among all agencies and businesses as the most difficult challenge. They attributed the lack of efficient cooperation among affiliated agencies as the primary cause of many challenges confronting the sector. It is underscored that cooperation among various agencies, stakeholders, managers, and both the private and public sectors serves as a solution to the industry's resource inadequacies. Despite efforts from all parties to collaborate rather than compete, market pressures often lead to disorganization. Concerns were raised by leaders regarding the problem of price delays faced by the industry, exacerbated by the extended wait before the commencement of the season in September 2023, which resulted in significant losses for many travel operator companies reliant on previous year's prices.

   Challenges such as disorganization among various agencies and lapses in business ethics among certain hotels and Nile cruise operators were also highlighted. The erosion of business reliability and trustworthiness is detrimental to Egypt's image as a travel destination. In some instances, hotels and Nile cruise operators significantly raised their room rates in October 2023, causing substantial harm to certain tour operator companies.

   Consequently, the promised customer services were not delivered as confirmed, thus impacting Egypt's image as a travel destination. This indicates a lack of governance by the Egyptian Tourism Ministry, the executive agency in the industry. Leaders expressed genuine concerns about how non-tourism industry intermediaries have dominated the market, established monopolies, and dictated pricing policies. Price challenges were experienced by some tour company managers as each entity managed its business independently. Operating in silos was a prevalent characteristic of the tourism industry, resulting in a lack of common

goals and detrimentally affecting the industry. The absence of clearly defined and effectively communicated shared long-term goals and policies serves as evidence of a lack of collaborative leadership.

To achieve sustainable collaborative leadership in the Egyptian tourism industry, it is fundamental to foster partnerships and alliances among all involved parties (Ammirato et al., 2018). Fordham and Robinson (2018), Sheehan et al. (2016), and UNTWO (2018) emphasize that collaborative leadership entails facilitating cooperation among government agencies, local communities, businesses, stakeholders, and all relevant partners. Collaborative leadership enhances the effectiveness of tourism policies and involves all industry stakeholders (Almeida et al., 2018; Keyim, 2018; Lane, 1994). Additionally, the tourism business operates within the framework of a free economy, where government support is limited to enforcing laws and policies. Government intervention may be necessary to ensure fair business practices, rules, and regulations. Such intervention may include supporting and regulating business practices that could have a detrimental long-term impact on the destination's image.

The lack of cooperation among agencies, partners, stakeholders, and practitioners within the tourism industry is identified as a significant challenge. Tourism leaders assert that fostering collaborative leadership among all parties represents a pivotal step towards achieving sustainable tourism in Egypt. Collaborative leadership is associated with adaptability and flexibility, as highlighted by Giotis and Papadionysiou (2022), and entails collaboration among stakeholders, including local communities, businesses, and governmental and non-governmental agencies (McGehee et al., 2018). Achieving cooperation among all involved partners necessitates versatile leadership (Haley & Bég, 2012; Sok et al., 2021) and the fostering and adaptation of alliances (Ammirato et al., 2018).

The implementation of collaborative leadership within the Egyptian tourism industry requires adeptness in managing change (Diaz Ruiz et al., 2020; Soliman & Wahba, 2018) and ensuring that everyone's voice is equally considered (Emery & Flora, 2020; Newman & Ford, 2021; Randel et al., 2018; Smith & Benavot, 2019). Bridging gaps among stakeholders is essential to foster collaboration (Roxas et al., 2020) and necessitates the development of a strategic plan and well-communicated vision emphasizing adaptability, collaboration, effective communication, and commitment to sustainable practices (Fastigii et al., 2021; Kumar & Kumar Singh, 2022; Madi Odeh et al., 2023; Ramirez Lopez & Grijalba Castro, 2020). Adeptness in transformational leadership is crucial (Abdallah, 2022; Jacobs et al., 2020; Senaji et al., 2014), as fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose positively impacts the tourism industry and enhances transparency and ethical behaviour (Penz et al., 2017; Hayat Bhatti et al., 2020).

Market and Pricing Challenges. Leaders within the Egyptian tourism have identified the global market as a significant challenge attributable to Egypt's geopolitical location in politically unstable regions, resulting in competition against its distinctive attributes. Despite possessing the requisite characteristics for competitiveness within the global tourism market, Egypt's geopolitical positioning needs to be improved. As expressed by tourism leaders, the primary deficiency contributing to non-competitiveness in pricing pertains to inadequate air connectivity between Egypt and key outbound tourist destinations. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated economic inflation in numerous economies, impacting airfare costs.

Consequently, holiday package prices, including airfare, were rendered non-competitive compared to alternative destinations. Furthermore, a threefold increase in entrance fees to various tourist attractions has compounded the challenge. Additionally, fluctuations in Nile cruise prices have further compromised price competitiveness.

The absence of competitive pricing significantly impedes the industry's growth and sustainability. Competitive pricing is pivotal in attracting tourists by ensuring value for money and affordability, aligning with tourists' preferences when selecting travel destinations. Strategic interventions and collaboration among agencies, stakeholders, airlines, tour operators, and hospitality providers are imperative to address price competitiveness and enhance air connectivity, thereby unlocking Egypt's full potential to attract a more significant tourist influx, ultimately fostering sustainable profitability. Consequently, addressing the pricing challenge is crucial for maintaining Egypt's competitiveness as a travel destination.

To sustain competitiveness, the Egyptian tourism industry must leverage critical success factors outlined by Rockart (1979), encompassing industry, environmental, strategic, and temporal considerations. Practitioners and policymakers should utilize the PESTEL framework, as Rouby (2019) advocates, to comprehensively assess the Egyptian tourism landscape. Furthermore, maintaining Egypt's competitiveness necessitates employing metrics from the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), as recommended by Frechtling (2010) and Comerio and Strozzi (2019). The TSA facilitates the measurement of economic impacts and activities not captured by conventional national accounts, thereby providing essential insights into the Egyptian economy's tourism sector.

Summary. In summary, challenges facing Egyptian tourism industry in their daily work with tourists. The leaders shared the single most difficult challenge and other challenges they face in addition to challenges other leaders in tourism face. These challenges were categorized into three main categories. The first category was about the political instability and war and its economic challenge, including the political instability, war and how they impacted Egyptian tourism. Business decline and recurrent setbacks were the two direct impacts of political instability and war.

The second category of the challenges were the operational and infrastructure. Challenges like bureaucracy, infrastructure, human resources education, and lack of cooperation were prevalent as the Egyptian tourism operational challenges. The lack of strategic planning and vision were also among the challenges face leaders of Egyptian tourism industry. The third and last category was the market and pricing challenges. The following section will be about RQ2 results and discussions.

Results for Research Question 2

RQ2 asked, What strategies and best practices can be used by industry stakeholders and practitioners to overcome those challenges the Egyptian tourism industry faces?

In response to the complexities of tourism in Egypt, industry leaders have identified several pragmatic strategies and best practices to navigate and overcome the obstacles they encounter. Networking has emerged as a critical tactic, with leaders leveraging personal contacts to find pathways through challenges. Marketing, tailored to the unique selling points of Egypt's heritage, attracts global attention and interest. A diverse collection of strategies is also essential and adaptable to the flexibility of the tourism environment. Collaboration across sectors fosters a united front against shared difficulties. Comprehensive training and workshops are crucial for enhancing staff skills and preparing them to handle various demands and situations effectively. Remarkably, some leaders admit to a lack of formal strategies, relying instead on resilience and the distinctive drive for business survival to persist through adversity. Lastly, tapping into government support policies and programs is a strategic resource that provides a foundation for the industry to stabilize and grow despite the challenges.

The analyses of responses and 11 themes that emerged denoted the strategies, best practices, and resources sought by leaders of the Egyptian tourism industry to overcome the challenges. These themes were focused on the following areas:

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- Use of Network: Several leaders shared that they employed their network and personal contacts to overcome their faced challenges.

- Marketing: Some leaders used marketing as a strategy to overcome the challenges they faced in tourism industry

- Various Strategies**:** several tourism leaders shared that they employed various tactics and strategies depending on the situation

- Cooperation**:** Cooperation was used by some leaders of Egyptian tourism as a strategy to overcome challenges.

- Training and Workshops**:** Leaders shared that they trained their staff and participated in workshops to improve their work skills to overcome the challenges they face.

- No formal**:** some tourism industry leaders stated that they had no formal strategy used or employed to overcome the challenges

- Perseverance: business survival was the strategy the tourism leaders used to overcome tourism challenges

- Government support: some leaders said they have been employing what the Egyptian government had of policies and programs to help businesses overcome the challenges they faced.

Discussion of Research Question 2

The findings of RQ2 show that diverse strategies, best practices, and resources were employed to overcome the challenges of Egyptian tourism. These strategies, best practices, and resources can be divided according to the categories of challenges they are employed to overcome. These three categories are operational, governmental, and market.

Operational Strategies. Leaders and practitioners in the Egyptian tourism industry disclosed that they use various strategies to address the challenges facing them. These

strategies are tailored according to the challenges. Political instability, warfare, domestic terror and unrest, pandemics, and other problems necessitate adjustable approaches tailored to specific challenges encountered. These strategies are flexible and can be customized to effectively overcome distinct challenges encountered within the industry. Leaders acknowledge the inherent uncertainties faced by the tourism sector, both globally and domestically.

Example to these various strategies tailored to the situation and challenge is the strategy of practicing safety and security. This strategy prioritizes the well-being of tourists by providing them with clear and accurate information and ensuring their safety in the face of potential regional threats such as terrorism, unrest, and warfare. This approach aligns with the findings of Walters et al. (2019), Garg (2015), and Avraham (2020). Another example of adjustable strategies as employing various strategies according to the situation and challenge faced is the strategy of crisis management. These strategies and practices are employed, with the Egyptian tourism ministry pledging to safeguard the protection, safety, and well-being of tourists. Measures include the provision of security personnel to escort tourist buses and groups, as noted by Din (2020), Hall et al. (2004), Hussein (2014), Khedr (2019), and Meskell (2000). Such strategies aim to mitigate the risk of jeopardizing tourists' safety, a significant factor influencing their travel decisions, as identified by Karl (2018).

Operational strategies include all other strategies that were in the findings can be used to manage tourism industry operation. While some of these strategies can be used in both operational and market perspectives. It is apparent that optimal practices within the tourism industry vary based on the specific sector and location within the tourism landscape (Davahli et al., 2020; Ntounis et al., 2022; Pani & Sahu, 2019; Wyman et al., 2011). Use of network is one of these strategies that can be used in managing the tourism daily activity operation as well as a market strategy. Several leaders stated that in times of challenges we tend to rely on

our network to navigate these challenges. Example to this is when there are operational challenges such as unexpected price increase, the leaders use rely on their network to understand the situation.

Organizing training programs and workshops to develop workforce competences is another strategy tourism leaders seek to traverse though the obstacles and challenges. To keep up to date with the industry development and trends, industry practitioners must stay connected and educate their subordinates in how to manage these challenges. this strategy supported by promoting and implementing sustainable and responsible tourism are two pillars of tourism best practices (Chan et al., 2021; Mihalic et al., 2021; Musavengane, 2019; Mykola et al., 2020). It is recommended by leaders of tourism to cooperate with relevant stakeholders to navigate operational challenges. This strategy is applied when the situation allowed. It has been shown in the findings that cooperation among agencies in the tourism is limited. These strategies are addressing the achievement fo successful sustainable tourism which supported by Hermann and Bossle (2020)

Government Strategies. It is emphasized that crises and disasters are inevitable, yet their impacts can be mitigated through effective leadership in both public and private sectors (Ritchie, 2004). Public organizations formulate strategies to address and alleviate challenges and crises faced in the tourism (Petrova et al., 2018). Leaders within the Egyptian tourism industry have articulated the implementation of policies and strategies utilizing public resources to fund programs and provide financial support. These initiatives aim to assist tourism businesses in navigating and surmounting challenges and crises. The researcher highlights a recent decline in government strategies and practices, attributing this trend to the redirection of available resources to address political instability and conflict in Gaza. This assertion is supported by Çakar (2021), Sausmarez (2007), and Walters and Mair (2019).

Government strategies encompass various incentive and marketing programs and funds to support travel companies in overcoming challenges. Challenges may be unprecedented, and businesses can only address them with government assistance (Aliperti et al., 2019). Collaboration between public agencies and businesses is recommended to develop strategies to address challenges through efficient cooperative efforts. The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) framework for 2015-2030 advocates for the integration and promotion of disaster risk management (DRM) methods within the United Nations (UNISDR, 2015).

Market Strategies. No formal was one of the strategies that leaders of Egyptian tourism used to overcome their industry challenges. No formal strategy approach employed as an industry practice due to its inherent of the nature of its flexibility and adaptability to apply without refereeing to adherence to restrictions and formalities. It allowed the users to leverage all available resources to address challenges as supported in (Avraham, 2020). Furthermore, when marketing strategies and best practices are discussed, destination marketing is a key strategy for navigating challenge. Particularly, implemented in the face of external factors such as political instability, terrorism or domestic unrest. Marketing the destination offers is offering tourists new adventure opportunities that align with their desire to enrich and impact the daily lives (Lesar et al., 2020; Teoh et al., 2023).

Perseverance. Perseverance is a crucial aspect of the tourism business resilience including business elasticity and tolerance of the challenges. Resistance is a business competitive advantage which enables them to withstand the crises and challenges. The fluctuation in the tourism economy is subject to the dynamics inherent in the industry (Croes et al., 2018). Tourism leaders in Egypt are accustomed to the fluctuation of the tourism income, which has led to the development of survival mechanism in business. As highlighted in Croes et al. (2018) and Smeral (2019) tourism income is either overperforming or underperforming depending in the economic conditions. Consequently, shifts in tourism

demand due to the income elasticity characteristics of tourism. The elasticity of tourism income has equipped Egyptian tourism leaders with the necessary strategies to navigate these market challenges.

Results for Research Question 3

RQ3 asked*,* How do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders, and leaders define, measure, and track their industry success?

In a competitive global tourism, Egyptian industry leaders have articulated a clear vision of success grounded in measurable outcomes and strategic initiatives. The rise in tourist numbers is a primary indicator, revealing the effectiveness of marketing efforts and the country's growing appeal. Growth is another critical factor, encompassing economic benefits and expanding the sector's reach. Satisfaction among tourists stands as a benchmark, reflecting service quality and the overall experience. Competitiveness keeps the industry agile, ensuring that Egypt remains a top choice against other destinations. Lastly, sustainability is the guiding principle for long-term viability, balancing the present needs with preserving Egypt's cultural heritage.

In the analyses of the responses nine themes emerged explaining how Egyptian tourism leaders define and measure success. These success definitions and measures emerged as the following five themes:

- increased number of tourists, as a way of defining success

- growth, is success in Egyptian tourism

- customer satisfaction,

- competitiveness, and

- sustainability.

Tourism leaders in Egypt's success measure yielded the following four themes:

- customer satisfaction,

- sustainability,

- growth, and

- increased number of tourists.

Discussion of Research Question 3

RQ3 findings explain how leaders in the Egyptian tourism industry defined and measured success. Defining success yielded five distinct themes, whereas the measurement of success yielded four themes. Remarkably, the themes for defining and measuring success were mostly consistent, with the exception of the competitiveness theme, which emerged solely in the context of defining tourism success. In the following sections, each defining success theme will be examined in terms of its conceptualization and then followed by how leaders employed it for measuring success. These themes will be categorized into two main categories: operational and market based.

Operation-Based Tourism Success Defined and Measured

Growth

Growth serves as a critical benchmark in evaluating the success of Egyptian tourism. According to insights from Egyptian tourism leaders, growth entails the expansion of the industry through increased investment, infrastructure development, establishment of additional hotels, and augmentation of employment opportunities. These factors collectively explain success within the Egyptian tourism sector. Particularly, the tourism industry donates to circa 10% of the country's GDP and employments nearly three million individuals (World Bank, 2023; Statista, 2023). Leaders assert that further industry growth would enhance employment prospects, aligning with the sector's potential to accommodate additional workforce. There is a consensus among tourism practitioners and leaders regarding the lack of consistent year-to-year growth within the tourism industry. This phenomenon is attributed

to a multitude of factors, encompassing political instability, conflicts, and unforeseen crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as corroborated by Ramzy (2018).

Sustainability

Sustainability, characterized by its emphasis on economic, social, and environmental dimensions, is widely recognized as a fundamental measure of success within the tourism industry (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017; Musavengane, 2019). Egyptian tourism leaders advocate for sustainable tourism practices to align with the three main objectives of sustainability. Sustainability promotes economic growth by creating more economic opportunities and employing more locals. They also foster social exchange and enhance livelihoods (Simpson, 2008). Leaders of Egyptian tourism industry implied that tourism sustainability practices are not addressed in Egypt. Furthermore, there is a gap in tourism economy as supported by Ramzy (2018) that public policies in Egypt did not include all stakeholders and few of them have been designed to work in tourism. Moreover, supporting sustainable tourism principles correlates with increased tourism revenue and overall economic growth. However, the lack of consistent year-to-year growth in tourist arrivals, as indicated by data from the World Bank (2023), suggests that sustainable tourism practices have not been fully achieved. Based on Egyptian tourism leaders' statements about sustainable tourism practices, Egypt need more focus and resources mobilized to promote and implement sustainable and responsible tourism (Chan et al., 2021; Musavengane, 2019; Mykola et al., 2020).

Market-Based Tourism Success Defined and Measured

Increased Number of Tourists

Numbers do not lie, stated the leaders and practitioners of the Egyptian tourism industry as they defined tourism success. Leaders continued saying that when the number of tourists incrementally increases, it signals the real success of Egyptian tourism. Numbers reflect the effectiveness of the tourism industry practice, marketing, and strategies. Achieving

higher tourist arrivals signalizes Egypt's aptitude as a destination to attract tourists, achieve

higher tourist expenditure, and generate revenue, as supported by Roxas et al. (2020). The

increased number of tourists is an expansion in economic output, generates positive impacts

in capital formulation, and indicates successfully employed strategies (Nepal et al., 2020).

Evidence that economy-driven tourism generates positive impacts on gross capital formation.

Despite their belief that tourist numbers increase means success, Egyptian tourism leaders

may lack clear consensus and support from the research side. The relationship between

tourism and economic growth, as mentioned in Nepal et al. (2020), who suggests that this

area of research remains open to dialogue and its results unfounded.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer service emerges as a dominant intangible asset, capable of driving tourism

success if managed effectively (Fang et al., 2021). Egyptian tourism leaders assert that

customer service serves as both a defining benchmark and a measured for success in tourism.

Emphasizing the significance of delivering high-class customer service that meets or exceeds

tourists' expectations is believed indispensable for real success. High levels of customer

satisfaction not only foster positive word-of-mouth marketing but also incentivize repeat

visits, thereby fostering destination loyalty and sustainable tourism, along with its associated

economic benefits (Z. Chen & Yuan, 2020; Jeong & Kim, 2018). It was implied by Egyptian

tourism leaders that the lack of industry-relevant education presents a challenge, thus raising

concerns about customer satisfaction.

Currently, there is no formal mechanism, such as a survey provided by Egyptian

ministry of tourism, to systematically capture tourists' feedback in an objective way. To

address this gap, several educational courses and lifelong learning programs should be

implemented, focusing on cultural differences and competencies in the tourism sector.

Egyptian tourism leaders emphasized that ensuring high-quality customer service necessitates

a well-educated workforce in tourism. According to Galal (2022), Egypt possesses a workforce of 28 million individuals, and if effectively educated to provide exceptional customer service, it could unlock the country's tourism growth potential. Tourist satisfaction centres upon a dedicated commitment to high-class customer service (Balci et al., 2019). Egyptian tourism leaders further underscored that assessing tourism success involves determine the tourists who leave Egypt satisfied, a notion supported by Z. Chen and Yuan (2020). A satisfied tourist, having received efficient travel services, is more inclined to provide positive feedback, engage in word-of-mouth referrals, recommendations, and demonstrate loyalty to the destination (Z. Chen & Yuan, 2020).

Competitiveness

Tourism competitiveness refers to a destination's capacity to position itself in the market successfully, adapt to changing preferences and trends in the tourism industry, and distinguish its offerings (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019). Leaders in Egyptian tourism suggested that Egypt's competitiveness could be better optimized to leverage its assets and capabilities. They compared Egypt's annual tourist arrivals to those of other destinations such as Greece and Dubai, expecting that Egypt's tourist numbers should reflect the country's competitiveness by increasing steadily over time. Leaders and practitioners emphasized that the quality of services provided to enhance the country's attractiveness to tourists must be reflected in securing the largest share of the global tourism market. These observations align with the insights of Ahmad et al. (2020), Calderwood and Soshkin (2019), Bris and Caballero (2015), and Michael et al. (2019) regarding destination competitiveness.

Reflection

Egyptian tourism leaders underscore the paramount importance of adopting sustainable tourism practices to achieve successful and profitable tourism enterprises. They advocate for the establishment of a consistent educational framework within the tourism

industry, focusing on communicating knowledge on customer service and cultural competencies. While there is flexibility in the leaders' statements regarding their definitions of success, they consistently reference the three pillars of sustainable tourism. Additionally, leaders highlight the critical role of education as the cornerstone of customer service excellence. They emphasize that satisfied customers represent the equity and intangible assets of the tourism industry.

Results for Research Question 4

RQ4 asked, What recommendations do Egyptian tourism industry practitioners, partners, stakeholders and leaders have to develop a strategic framework for achieving successful sustainable leadership in Egyptian tourism?

The analyses of the themes revealed that Egyptian tourism is standing at a crossroads, seeking to unravel bureaucratic complexities and enhance financial processes to ensure a continuous positive tourist experience. The proposed strategic merging between the aviation sector and tourism is essential, with a united front that promises travelers a smooth and enriching journey. Updating legislation to match modern tourism trends and educating locals about the industry's value is vital for fostering a hospitable and knowledgeable environment. Significant investment in infrastructure and human resources is imperative to accommodate the evolving needs of tourists. Meanwhile, adept marketing strategies are necessary to showcase Egypt's unique offerings, and steadfast government support is crucial to sustain these endeavors. Building destination loyalty through exceptional service ensures repeat visitation. At the same time, a forward-thinking vision guides the industry towards a future where Egyptian tourism is not only a gateway to the past but a sustainable promise of economic and cultural prosperity.

In the analyses of the responses, 14 themes emerged showing the recommendations for developing a strategic framework for achieving successful sustainable tourism. The following themes emerged:

- bureaucracy liming tourists positive experience,
- banking, and
- separate tourism and aviation.
- cooperation,
- updating laws and rules to match tourism trends,
- educating people about tourism,
- customer service,
- infrastructure development, and
- marketing.
- cooperation,
- government support and funds,
- developing human resources,
- building destination loyalty, and
- vision.

Discussion of Research Question 4

RQ4's findings show the recommendations leaders in the Egyptian tourism industry to develop strategic framework for successful sustainable tourism in Egypt. These themes are categorized in three categories relevant to the nature of its category relation to strategy, regulatory, and operation. These categories are as follows: strategic planning and government support, regulatory and legal framework, and operational enhancement.

Strategic Planning and Government Support. In their recommendations for developing a strategic framework for successful sustainable tourism, Egyptian tourism leaders emphasize the centrality of cooperation among all agencies and stakeholders involved. They assert that collaborative leadership is vital in achieving sustainable tourism goals and is highlighted above all other recommendations. This perspective is coherent with the findings of Ammirato et al. (2018), Fordham and Robinson (2018), Sheehan et al. (2016), and UNTWO (2018) regarding the importance of collaborative leadership in promoting successful sustainable tourism initiatives. Furthermore, they suggest that collaborative efforts stimulate the creation of innovative solutions. Thus, generating synergistic tourism industry that ultimately enhance the overall competitiveness of tourism destinations, as evidenced (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019).

Strategic Planning. Strategic planning and have a well communicated industry vision is central in shaping sustainability in tourism which aligned with Senge (2006). Leaders of Egyptian tourism shared their statement that lack of vision in Egyptian tourism industry undermines the industry future perspective and goals. Thus, visionary leadership and strategic foresight is needed to steadfast the national goal of developing tourisms. As leadership is about influence the tourism industry partitioners to achieve a common goal (Bass, 1990; Stogdill, 1950). The visionary leadership creating the vision of Egyptian tourism industry in global market map this is supported in Kopaneva (2019) and Zhan et al. (2022). As the industry leaders explicitly stated that vision created by collaborative leadership Engage the perceived ability of action to control, change, and contribute to the successful sustainable tourism as the common goal aligning with Fairhurst et al. (1997) and H. Zhang et al. (2022).

Government Support. Government support and funds are essential components for tourism industry to overcome the ebbs and crises as leaders of Egyptian tourism industry

stated. They contend that some of the crises may have destructive impacts that requires cooperation of public and private sectors to navigate, which is stated in Ritchie (2004). Ritchie emphasized that crises and disasters are inevitable so mitigating their impacts require efficient collaboration among governmental and private agencies. Egyptian tourism is exposed to both internal and external political turmoil since 2011, these challenges cannot be managed by private sectors only as they have lasted over time. These narratives are demonstrating the necessary need for public support in occasions of political stabilities and war as confirmed in Petrova et al. (2018) that public organizations formulate strategies to address and alleviate challenges and crises.

Egyptian tourism leaders indicated that financial regulations and investment policies are essential to establish an enabling environment for sustainable tourism. Government funds and support are allocated towards maintaining infrastructure, promoting destinations, building capacity for expanding the industry, developing local communities, and fostering economic growth. These narratives finding support in Ammirato et al. (2018), Fordham and Robinson (2018), Sheehan et al. (2016), and UNTWO (2018).

Developing Human Resources and Building Destination Loyalty. From this perspective, Egyptian tourism leaders ensured that intangible services and tangible infrastructure were combined with the tourist experience. To achieve sustainable tourism, Egypt must commit to developing its infrastructure and customer service. Delivering these two aspects combined in high quality leads to satisfied tourists. A satisfied customer will incite and increase customer loyalty to the destination, which will increase tourist attraction to Egypt. Thus, this subjective perception of hedonic quality contributes to a rise in tourism revenue, as confirmed in (Chang, 2018). Therefore, to achieve destination loyalty, a destination must have tangible infrastructure and services. To deliver high quality, a destination must educate and develop its human capital; this aligns with Chang's (2018)

statement that the tourism industry relies on the hedonic aspects of tangible and intangible products. Customer satisfaction is translated to customer loyalty a tourism industry backbone. A contented tourist who receives satisfactory travel services is more inclined to offer positive feedback and spread favourable word-of-mouth, thereby fostering destination loyalty (Z. Chen & Yuan, 2020). These behaviours associated with tourist satisfaction significantly influence customer destination loyalty (Cetin & Dincer, 2014). This will increase Egypt competitiveness and improve tourism revenue (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019).

The aforementioned is emphasizing the important role of human capital development in tourism. Leaders of tourism industry stated that the loss of experienced skilled professionals due to recurrent setbacks makes it imperative for Egypt to educate invest in human resources development. The development of human resources enables the destination to deliver the high-quality service necessary to compete in tourism global market. Enhancing tourism quality warranting the long-term goals of achieving sustainable tourism as supported in (Cetin & Dincer, 2014; Fang et al., 2021). To achieve Egypt destination branding, customer service standards, and visitor engagement. These strategies will cultivate loyalty and tourists' attraction, consequently cultivating sustainability. This demand generates revenue and sustainability as supported in Calderwood and Soshkin (2019), Bris and Caballero (2015), and Michael et al. (2019) regarding destination competitiveness as inextricable part of destination loyalty.

Regulatory and Legal Framework. Ministry of Tourism initiated in 2018 the Egypt Tourism Reform Program (OECD, 2020c). Leaders within the Egyptian tourism proposed updating tourism laws, rules, and regulations, emphasizing the necessity of these revisions to maintain industry competitiveness and enhance success factors. They further noted that some regulations within the tourism industry may date back to the 1900s, a point underscored and supported by the OECD (2020c), which indicates that the Egypt Tourism Reform Program

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(E-TRP) aims to strengthen tourism competitiveness in alignment with international quality standards. Outdated laws fail to accommodate innovative business trends, as indicated by the OECD (2020c), some of which are nearly 50 years old. Tourism practitioners recommend enacting new regulations that involve all stakeholders actively in tourism policymaking, fostering industry agility and adaptability. These recommendations are supported by Alsaad et al. (2022) and Hadjielias et al. (2022), ensuring effective and successful transformation to digitalization and the realization of customer value outcomes.

Merging Agencies and Unlicensed Businesses. Leaders within the Egyptian tourism industry have asserted that the division of public agencies, such as civil aviation and tourism, has posed challenges in promoting tourism. They noted that during the period between the 1980s and 2000s, the national airline, EgyptAir, was governed by the tourism ministry. These arrangements facilitated the tourism ministry's efforts to promote tourism during periods of political instability and crises. The leaders further stated that these campaigns have demonstrated effectiveness in hastening tourism recovery. Their assertions are supported by Fairhurst et al. (1997) and H. Zhang et al. (2022), highlighting the importance of leadership in facilitating organizational functioning.

Leaders of Egyptian tourism industry recommended the update of laws and rules to public address the phenomena of online -unlicensed businesses. Emerged technologies in the last three decades made it possible for individuals to start unlicensed online tourism business in platforms such as Facebook, Instagram among others. These online based unlicensed businesses are non-compliance risks. This compliance with Agag (2019) stated implications represented in buyers' perceptions of online companies. These implications can be devastating to the destination image of Egypt. There is a challenge in terms of security, deception, reliability, and control of quality of services offered by the unlicensed businesses

as stated in (Agag, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to update tourism laws, regulations to administer these unlicensed online based businesses.

Egyptian tourism leaders recommended the revision of tourism laws and regulations. These revisions will include several aspects of the tourism industry including addressing the emergence of unlicensed online businesses. Over the past three decades, advancements in technology have enabled individuals to establish unlicensed tourism enterprises on online platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. These unauthorized online ventures pose risks of non-compliance, as highlighted by Agag (2019), with potential implications for buyers' perceptions of online companies. Such implications could detrimentally impact Egypt's reputation as a travel destination. Challenges relating to security, deception, reliability, and quality control of services offered by these unlicensed entities have been identified (Agag, 2019). Therefore, there is a pressing need to update tourism laws and regulations to regulate these unlicensed online businesses effectively in numerous aspects and sectors.

Operational Enhancement. Educating local communities about the role of tourism is crucial for implementing sustainable tourism practices (Streimikiene et al., 2021). Egyptian tourism leaders advocate for the implementation of educational programs aimed at enhancing awareness of tourism's significance in the economy. These recommendations are aligned with Emery and Flora (2020), Newman and Ford (2021), Randel et al. (2018), and Smith and Benavot (2019) stating that fostering a diverse leadership environment to include everyone's voice with equal consideration. It is emphasized that inclusive leadership promotes the stakeholder's participation in developing a sustainable tourist industry. As the leaders recommended that Egypt would increase its competitiveness educating people from early off about tourism will create effective governance (Roxas et al. 2020).

Engaging local communities and educating people is creating responsible co-value creating between host and tourist (Chan et al., 2021). Responsible tourism is fundamental for

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ensuring successful development of a reputable travel destination (Hatipoglu et al., 2016). While high-quality customer service and developed infrastructure are important, they alone cannot foster destination loyalty to Egypt (Hatipoglu et al., 2016). Local communities play a vital role in the tourist experience, making it essential to educate them about the role of tourism in their local and national economies. Such education helps in providing better customer service and avoiding negative experiences that may diminish tourist satisfaction. By understanding and cooperating with tourism practitioners, local communities can contribute to portraying Egypt as a hospitable destination. Thus, enhancing Egypt critical success factors and tourism competitiveness (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019). Moreover, educating local people about tourism as a source of local and national income fosters a sense of safety for tourists, who will feel welcomed and respected during their visit. As stated in Çakar (2020) that tourism is impacted by many factors such as disasters and safety. Furthermore, in the tourist safety and engagement with local communities is supported in (Lesar et al., 2020; Patwardhan et al., 2020).

Leaders of Egyptian tourism recommended that an education program must be initiated to educate the people. Furthermore, to educate people about tourism, authorities cooperating with other agencies to create widespread educational programs, workshops. Using Knowles`s et al. (2015) andragogy to target adult learners, Hodell (2016) to scan and match the program to different learners' groups, Haniya and Rusch (2017) to use e-learning for collective intelligence, Tyler (2013) for creating suitable learning environment, and at the final stage use Kirkpatrick (1994) for emulating the programs and workshops. These programs target tourism enterprises, stakeholders, local communities, tourists, tour operators, and policymakers. A well communicated statement of goals and objective of the program should be published (Senge, 2006) to ensure participatory and inclusive leadership (Chan et al., 2021).

These programs and workshops should be aim raising awareness about, economic, environmental, social, and cultural impacts of tourism on local community and national economy as supported in (Coelho et al., 2018). Moreover, sustainable tourism ethics and pillars should be integrated in the school curricula and vocational training (Streimikiene et al., 2021). The educational programs should implant ethical tourism and environmental stewardship at a young age. As supported in Suárez-Rojas et al., (2022) and Vada et al. (2020) these educational programs will empower local communities with necessary information to support developing awareness and understanding the sustainable tourism.

Banking. Several leaders of tourism industry recommended the improvement of banking system to respond to the tourism business and facilitate their everyday work. Time and efforts are wasted in bank routines and procedures that reflect the lack of technology implementation. It was shared that internet banking and such other procedures that banks are charging annual and one-time fees for are not functioning. These recommendations aligned with what Turkay et al. (2019) stated that banks as intermediary businesses will become irrelevant unless they adapt by assigning new significance to their roles and taking on additional functions. Therefore, banking system in Egypt must foster the technological innovations specifically digitalization including online banking tailored to tourism businesses. According to Chingarande and Saayman (2018) investment in tourism, well-developed financial system, and technological development are among the tourism critical success factors.

Banks must incorporate new features such as mobile banking, secure payment employing the verification of consumer digital identity in user-friendly systems. A well-functioning banking system must facilitate the monetary streamline for tourism businesses, reduce operational inefficiencies, prevent fraud, improve risk averse system, and have policies for new tourism start-ups and entrepreneurs. These technological innovations

encourage transparency and liability in financial operations enhancing Egypt`s competitiveness and successful sustainable tourism. These recommendations comply with Colombo and Baggio (2017) statement that rapid evolution of the internet facilitates online searches and bookings for travel products. Several companies like Airbnb and Uber are transitioning from conventional business models to consumer-to-consumer frameworks. In response to customer demands, the tourism industry is striving to develop innovative platforms that blend financial resources, technology, and expertise to deliver novel solutions.

Customer Service Improvement. Egyptian tourism leaders have recommended that enhancing customer service represents an intangible asset crucial for the tourism sector. This improvement aims to ensure the provision of top-tier services and bolster the loyalty to Egypt as a destination, along with enhancing its success factors and competitiveness. Marais et al. (2017) identified 491 critical success factors, encompassing areas such as human resources, finance, customer relations, quality, and facilities. Consequently, investing in customer service directly contributes to the enhancement of human resources, as suggested by Chang (2018), and the tourism industry heavily relies on both the tangible and intangible aspects of its products, including customer services. Particularly, human resources, highlighted by Chingarande and Saayman (2018) as a critical success factor in tourism, serve as the means to deliver high-class customer service. Moreover, infrastructure improvements represent tangible assets within the tourism industry, encompassing hotels, transportation, museums, and other tourist establishments. Conversely, customer services, as articulated by El Saghier (2015), are intangible assets characterized by their experiential nature. These services include various aspects, including transportation, accommodation, customer service, and tourist guidance, among others (Engelbrecht et al., 2014; Hughes & Carlsen, 2010). The satisfaction derived from enhanced customer service contributes to destination loyalty, thereby attracting more tourists to Egypt. Consequently, the inflow of tourists translates into profitable tourism,

which align with the principles of sustainable tourism, aiming for social and environmental viability.

Infrastructure. It has been shared and discussed in the previous sections that one of the challenges facing tourism industry is the lack infrastructure. When leaders of tourism industry stated their recommendations to create successful sustainable tourism they recommended infrastructure development. Infrastructure development is a crucial part of the tourist experience which is indispensable of tourist satisfaction leading to destination loyalty and so sustainable tourism. The aforementioned is supported in Bomhorst et al. (2010) emphasizing that tourism infrastructure plays crucial role in measuring tourism economic success. Bomhorst highlighted tourisms key performance indicators such as scenery, strategic planning, government support and technological accessibility. These indicators demonstrate the infrastructure development measures as tourism success factors. Well maintained and developed infrastructure means positive tourist experience and so successful sustainable tourism at the end result of positive tourist experience (Engelbrecht et al., 2014; Hughes & Carlsen, 2010). Infrastructure improvement and development stated to be a critical factor for success and destination competitiveness by Egyptian tourism leaders. The leaders` statement is supported in Baloch et al., (2023); Chang, (2018) about committing to positive tourist experience required delivering personalized customer service and accessing tourist attractions.

Marketing. Marketing was discussed in aforementioned sections as a strategy employed by tourism leaders and practitioners to overcome the challenges facing them. They also recommended marketing as a mean to achieve successful sustainable tourism in Egypt. Marketing tourisms is no longer depending on the tradition methods employed until the end of the last century. Leaders stated that Egyptian tourism ministry and its affiliated organization and agencies has to catch up with the new marketing trends and update their

policies accordingly. Recommendations to follow the marketing trends are supported in Mogaji et al. (2020) about the artificial intelligence (AI) transforming business methodologies using the big data advantages and empower businesses to gain deeper insights to customer behaviour and deliver personalized digital content. It is highlighted the incorporation of sustainability practices into tourism marketing. Integrating the insights from research and academic literature in marketing tactics. These facilitates and capabilities will help tourism authorities in Egypt navigate the consumer behaviour and preferences. These procedures will incorporate the sustainable tourism practices and principles.

Implications of the Study

This study aimed to develop a strategic framework for the successful implementation of sustainable practices within the tourism industry, achieved through an examination of challenges, strategies, best practices, resources, measures of success, and recommendations for tourism leaders. Drawing from the study's outcomes, recommendations for the integration of sustainable tourism practices were explained. The findings of this study hold relevance for a diverse array of stakeholders, including leaders, partners, officials, and policymakers. The targeted populations including these stakeholders will be further explained in the subsequent sections.

Egyptian Tourism Authorities

The tourism industry comprises interrelated yet fragmented sectors, which must collaborate to deliver high-quality customer service. This study provides insights and recommendations for various tourism sectors, related industries, and policymakers to implement policies fostering collaborative leadership. The study advocates for the implementation of policies incentivizing inter-industry partnerships, which are influential in promoting tourism growth and facilitating the integration of successful sustainable tourism practices.

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Tourism Leaders, Stakeholders, and Professionals

These groups of private business owners will utilize the recommendations provided by the study to cultivate collaborative leadership within the industry. By leveraging the insights and information from the study, industry leaders, stakeholders, and professionals can develop strategic plans to address the challenges they encounter. Furthermore, they will gain valuable insights into the challenges, strategies, best practices, and recommendations implemented by their counterparts, enabling them to make informed decisions and adapt their approaches accordingly.

Tour Operators, Accommodation Providers, and Local Communities

These three constitute vital segments of the industry. They will leverage the findings of this research to integrate collaborative leadership practices into their operations. Forming alliances among local providers, hotels, and accommodation vendors will enhance accessibility and mobility for customers, thereby enriching the tourist experience. Embracing these collaborative practices will facilitate the achievement of sustainable tourism practices.

Educational Institutions, Universities, and Research Organizations

These institutions play a pivotal role in advancing knowledge within the field of tourism education. This study provides valuable comprehensions into the challenges, strategies, best practices, success metrics, and recommendations for sustainable tourism within the industry. These institutions can utilize the information from the study to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in the tourism sector. Furthermore, they can integrate relevant findings into their tourism curricula, ensuring that students receive up-to-date and relevant education. Additionally, educational institutions can contribute to the

body of knowledge surrounding inter-industry partnerships in tourism by conducting research and providing academic case studies that shed light on sustainable tourism practices.

*Non-Government and International Development Agencies*

The study provides valuable insights into potential strategies for addressing challenges within the Egyptian tourism sector. It advocates for the endorsement of collaborative endeavours between government officials and local communities. International agencies can utilize this information to expand the scope of their studies concerning the development of sustainable tourism practices.

Application of the Study

As a result of this study, the Abdelwahab Tripartite Leadership, Human Capital, and Infrastructure (LHI) model for sustainable tourism was developed to achieve sustainable tourism practices and growth. The Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model emphasizes adapting to collaborative leadership, developing infrastructure, investing in human resources development, and offering a comprehensive framework for creating strategic plans to foster sustainability within the tourism industry by incorporating collaborative leadership principles and highlighting the development of human resources and infrastructure. Leaders and stakeholders in the tourism industry can successfully address the complex challenges facing the tourism industry to attain sustainability. Employing the Abdelwahab Tripartite Leadership, Human Capital, and Infrastructure (LHI) model will empower tourism leaders to overcome ambiguities and complexities and support implementing tourism particles with environmental, social, and economic sustainability goals. By implementing the Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model, sustainable tourism plans can be strategically employed to expand positive influences while decreasing hostile effects on host communities and natural environments (see Figure 16).

Figure 16

Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI Model for Sustainable Tourism
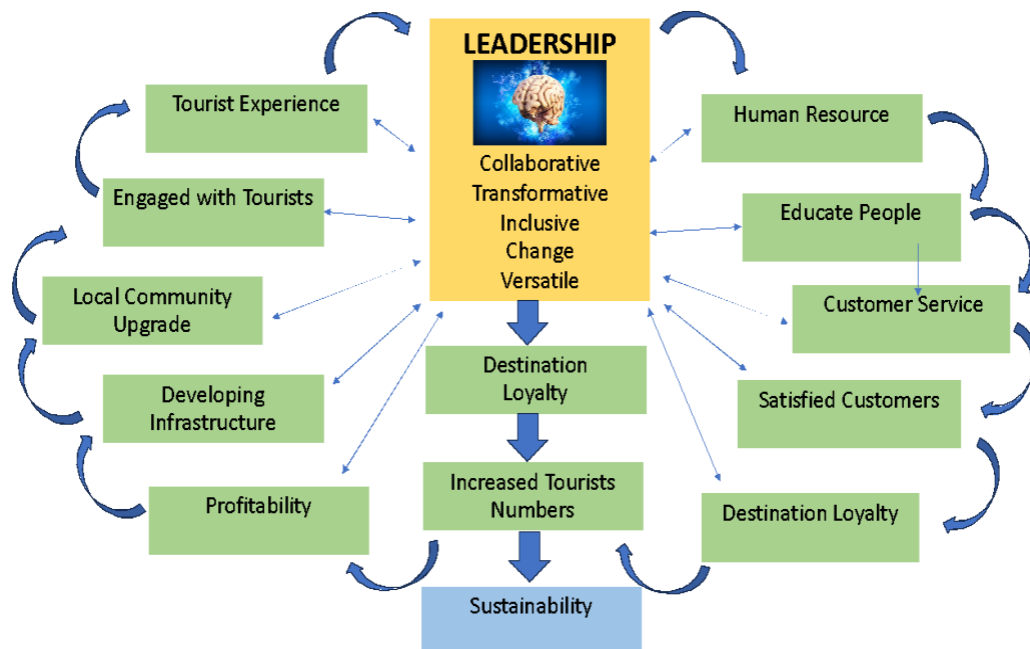
Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI Model Application for Sustainable Tourism Industry

The researcher will include several strategies to encourage tourism leaders to adopt and implement Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model. These strategies include training programs, educational and research institutions, presentations, and workshops. Training will focus on disseminating the research information, giving leaders a more comprehensive insight into the model's core value, in-depth insights, and desired outcomes. Educational and research institutions will increase the opportunities for other researchers to employ the model in the tourism industry. The strategy will also include publication in reputable travel journals and contribution to tourism conferences. Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model dissemination strategies will aim to reach a wider audience of tourism stakeholders, including policymakers, academics, and practitioners. Moreover, consultation sessions with tourism leaders and

stakeholders will be conducted to facilitate discussions of the model's integration into tourism practices and operations

Leadership

The Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model is based on three core components: leadership as the brain and centre, while infrastructure and human resources development are the two pillars. Leadership serves as the cognitive centre of the Egyptian tourism industry, responsible for organizing, responding, planning, and shaping the future course of Egyptian tourism. By applying the Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model, the sustainability approach of the tourism industry will primarily rely on collaborative leadership to develop infrastructure and human resources. Incorporating a collaborative leadership approach involving stakeholders, partners, and all tourism leaders fosters a collective strategy that equally engages all stakeholders and partners in the Egyptian tourism industry. The Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model, for the Egyptian tourism industry implements sustainable tourism practices, makes it imperative to adopt change leadership practices to guide the implementation of sustainable tourism frameworks. These theories allow leaders and stakeholders to embrace and adapt to changes. Collaborative leadership emerges as a central factor for achieving successful sustainable tourism, necessitating the alignment of tourism agencies, partners, stakeholders, investors, local communities, and leaders with a shared vision for the Egyptian tourism industry.

Infrastructure Development

Utilizing the Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model highlights the importance of investing in infrastructure and human resources. These two components of tourism represent complementary aspects essential for developing tourism sustainability. Implementing the Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model necessitates simultaneously leveraging the aforementioned leadership strategies to develop infrastructure and human resources. Infrastructure constitutes

the tangible asset of the Egyptian tourism industry, fundamental in warranting a positive tourist experience. Adequate facilities and accessibility are imperative for increasing tourists' overall experience. Accommodations such as hotels and boats must persist to international standards to ensure customer satisfaction. Additionally, land, sea, and air connectivity require meticulous maintenance to facilitate enjoyable tourist accessibility. Though, more than infrastructure is needed to complete the tourist experience; therefore, the focus must extend to human resources development.

Human Resources Development

In employing sustainable tourism guided by the Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model, Egyptian tourism leadership must allocate resources to enhance the intangible aspect of the tourism human resources. Leadership investment in human resources development is essential to complement infrastructure investments and enrich the tourist experience. Using the Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model to educate human resources is critical in delivering quality customer service, a crucial element in enhancing the tourist experience. Furthermore, human resource investment enables the Egyptian tourism industry and related government agencies to remove bureaucratic processes and foster efficiency. Developing human resources cultivates professional's adept at implementing industry trends, leveraging technological advancements, and tailoring tourist products to meet evolving customer preferences. A well-educated workforce enhances the tourism financial system, supports industry growth, and fosters long-term sustainability.

Future Research Recommendations

The study sought to examine the challenges encountered by leaders in Egyptian tourism industry in their daily interactions with tourists. Additionally, it explored the strategies, best practices, and resources utilized by tourism leaders to address their challenges, as well as explored their perspectives on measuring success within the industry.

Following, the study investigated industry leaders' recommendations and opinions on incorporating successful sustainable tourism practices. Drawing from the study's findings, several avenues for future research in Egyptian tourism emerge. The undermentioned are proposed focus points for future investigation and research:

1. Investigate the interplay between developed infrastructure and destination loyalty in Egypt.

2. Examine the relationship between tourist experiences and engagement with local communities.

3. Conduct a phenomenological study to explore personnel attitudes and customer satisfaction.

4. A quantitative study to discern the connection between customer service, satisfaction levels, and destination loyalty.

5. Conduct a qualitative study to explore the implications of bureaucracy on tourism growth, with comparative analysis to neighbouring countries such as Dubai and Greece.

6. Investigate the correlation concerning tourism and the welfare of local communities in Egypt.

7. Examine the relationship between academic tourism studies and the prerequisites for a career in the tourism profession.

8. Conduct a mixed-methods study to examine the banking system's implications on the tourism industry, focusing on how technology implementation, facilitation, and availability of investment funds impact tourism.

9. Investigate the image of Egypt as a travel destination, exploring the factors influencing travelers' choice of Egypt as a destination.

10. Conduct a mixed-methods survey to explore the number of tourists who opt not to visit Egypt due to political instability.

Final Thoughts

The tourism industry constitutes approximately 8.5-10% of Egypt's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs a workforce of 3.1 million, with annual tourist arrivals ranging between 10-12 million (The World Bank, 2023). Egypt boasts significant touristic potential due to its strategic location and rich historical heritage. Characterized by extensive coastlines, cultural landmarks, religious sites, and diverse entertainment options, the country offers a myriad of tourism prospects. This study is focused on revealing the industry's potential by examining its competitiveness and illuminating the challenges hindering its growth. The untapped potential of Egyptian tourism stems from a lack of comprehensive industry perspective and collaborative leadership. The study offers recommendations were informed by insights collected from leaders within the Egyptian tourism. Tourism practitioners and authorities can utilize this information to follow the strategic framework necessary for the development of successful sustainable tourism proposals.

The study suggests that integration of the strategic framework empowers Egyptian tourism leaders and officials' awareness of the challenges facing the industry. Understanding these challenges and insights into effective strategies, leaders and officials can refine existing approaches to overcome obstacles. The study offers recommendations to Egyptian tourism industry leaders for fostering successful sustainable tourism. Active implementation of these recommendations will strengthen destination competitiveness and prioritize critical success factors within Egyptian tourism. Embracing collaborative leadership, which emphasizes participatory decision-making and inclusion of local communities, is essential. Actively seeking the contribution and participation of business owners to address bureaucratic impediments hindering industry growth and policymaking.

The study recommends investment in infrastructure improvements as it is crucial for ensuring positive tourist experiences and fostering destination loyalty. Thus, attracting a greater number of tourists to Egypt. Increased tourist numbers contribute to the success and profitability of the tourism, accordingly, increasing funds available for infrastructure and human resource development. The economic benefits generated by the tourism industry facilitate the preservation of heritage sites and environmental conservation efforts, ultimately improving local communities' livelihoods and overall economic well-being.

The study findings recommend investing in human resources to enhance Egypt's competitiveness and position it as a desirable travel destination. Improvements in infrastructure also elevate living standards and educational attainment levels within local communities. Additionally, investing in education as a human resource development strategy yields superior customer service, resulting in heightened customer satisfaction. Realizing the full potential of Egyptian tourism necessitates collaborative efforts among industry leaders, officials, and practitioners to foster a conducive business environment that embraces diversity and inclusivity. The study assurance of the intense competition in the tourism global market and the decisive factors influencing tourists' destination choices, the need for visionary cooperative leadership is imperative. Destination selection increasingly hinges on the value-added experiences offered, thus emphasizing the significance of steadfast commitment to successful sustainable tourism practices.

The researcher was surprised that unlicensed travel businesses were not highlighted as a significant challenge facing tourism leaders. Online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have simplified the process for individuals to start selling tour packages without obtaining the necessary government licenses, thereby competing with established tour companies. A significant drawback of these businesses is their lack of accountability concerning taxes, customer legal responsibilities, and other regulatory concerns. This

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omission of unlicensed tourism businesses as a critical challenge could be attributed to the overwhelming political instability and war issues. The unlicensed business based on online platforms are not covered in the literature, which opens for a research gap and future research idea.

It was also unexpected to find that government support is categorized as a strategy and a recommendation. This perspective is supported by Terasawa and Gates (1998), who suggested that government and its bureaucracy are increasingly viewed not as solutions but as part of the problem itself. Tour operators are uniquely managing crises, customizing strategies based on their financial capacities. As a result of these challenges, strategies, definitions of success, and recommendations, I developed the Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model for successful sustainable tourism. The components of this model align like pieces of a puzzle, reflecting the lived experiences of tourism leaders.

It was anticipated that the leadership within Egypt's tourism sector would acknowledge favoritism, the influence of interest groups, and nepotism as significant challenges. However, such issues may remain underreported due to potential conflicts of interest that could arise from critiquing officials. Notably, in recent decades, these concerns have been somewhat overshadowed by the greater urgencies of political instability, domestic turmoil, and conflict, which have cast a shadow over the tourism industry, rendering it less attractive for investment. This context helps explain why, currently, the standing of interest groups and favoritism are not perceived as a predominant challenge.

The Abdelwahab Tripartite LHI model is in its initial phase and may evolve as challenges, strategies, success metrics, and recommendations change over time. Advances in technology may address challenges linked to bureaucratic inefficiencies and introduce new challenges, including the unforeseen issue of unlicensed businesses.

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Recruitment Script

Recruitment Script

Dear [Potential Participant's Name],
My name is Maher Abdelwahab, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of
Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a qualitative research
study examining challenges, success strategies, recommendations, and best practices
employed by Tour operator companies License type "A" in Egypt. You are invited to
participate in the study, it is preferred English speaking leaders and manager, but Arabic
speakers are accepted.

If you agree, you are invited to participate in an audio recording or in-person interview to
discuss strategies, practices, challenges, and recommendations you have for leaders in
tourism industry in Egypt. The interview is anticipated to take an hour at maximum.
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential
during and after the study. Confidentiality will be maintained using a series of security
measures, including password-protected e-mail communication using university firewall
protections, a password-protected Zoom meeting, deidentification of data using pseudonyms,
compartmentalizing the various data elements, and keeping all information separate. If you
have questions or would like to participate, please get in touch with me at my e-mail address:
maher.abdelwahab@pepperdine.edu

Thank you for your participation,
Maher Abdelwahab   BS, MT, MBA.
Pepperdine University| Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B

Arabic Recruitment Script

الملحق (د)

كتاب الدعوة

عزيزي/ عزيزتي [اسم المشتركة المحتملة]،

ا سمي ماهر عبد الوهاب أنا طالب دكتوراه في كلية الدراسات العليا للتربية وعلم النفس في جامعة بيبردين. أقوم بإجراء دراسة بحثية نوعية تتناول استراتيجيات النجاح والممارسات الفضلى المستخدمة من قبل القيادات السياحية في مصر، وأنت مدعو/ مدعو ة للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة. يفضل القادة والمديرين الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية، ولكن يتم قبول المتحدثين باللغة العربية

إذا كنت موافق / موافقة   على ذلك، فأنت مدعوة للمشاركة في مقابلة تتم إما شخصيا" أو عبر تقنية "زووم" لمناقشة الاستراتيجيات والممارسات والتحديات، بالإضافة إلى التوصيات التي يمكنك توجيهها. للقادة و اصحاب القرار في مجال السياحة بكل قطاعاته. المدة التي من المتوقع أن تستغرقها المقابلة لا تتجاوز الساعة. مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة طوعية. سيتم الحفاظ على سرية هويتك كمشتركة أثناء الدراسة وبعدها. سيتم الحفاظ على السرية باستخدام سلسلة من التدابير الأمنية، بما في ذلك اتصالات البريد الإلكتروني المحمية بكلمة مرور باستخدام حماية جدار الحماية الجامعي، والمقابلة عبر تقنية "زوم" محمية بكلمة مرور, وإلغاء تحديد البيانات باستخدام أسماء مستعارة بالإضافة إلى تجزئة عناصر البيانات المختلفة، والحفاظ على جميع البيانات منفصلة. إذا كانت لديك أسئلة أوكنت ترغبين في المشاركة، يُرجى الاتصال بي على البريد الإلكتروني: maher.abdelwahab@pepperdine.edu

شكرًا لمشاركتك،

الباحث ماهر عبد الوهاب

بكالوريوس ارشاد سياحي جامعة المنيا

بكالوريوس ادارة اعمال

BI Norwegian Business School

ماجستير في السياحة من:

UIT Norway`s Arctic University

ماجستير ادارة اعمال من جامعة كاليفورنيا بيكرسفيلد

جامعة بيبردين | كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية وعلم النفس

طالب دكتوراه

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

IRB #: 23-09-2256
Formal Study Title: Strategic Framework for Successful Sustainable Tourism in Egypt

Authorized Study Personnel:
Principal Investigator: Maher Abdelwahab

+1 (661) xxx-30xx

maher.abdelwahab@pepperdine.edu

Key Information:
If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:
- ☑ (Males and Females) between the ages of (30-80) with minimum five years of leadership experience
- ☑ Procedures will include (Contacting participants using the recruitment script, informed consent, data collection via structured interview, transcription of data, analysis of data, and documentation of findings)
- ☑ One virtual visit is required
- ☑ Zoom meeting audio recording only will take 60 minutes in total
- ☑ There is minimal risk associated with this study
- ☑ You will not be paid any amount of money for your participation
- ☑ You will be provided a copy of this consent form

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you

decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a leader in the tourism industry. You must be

30 years of age or older and have at least five years of experience in leading tour operator company in

Egypt to participate.

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What is the reason for doing this research study?

The purpose of this study is to understand success strategies and best practices employed by leaders of tour operator companies in Egypt to achieve successful sustainable tourism

What will be done during this research study?

You will be asked to complete a 60-minute semi-structured virtual interview. The PI will ask you a series of questions aimed at figuring out what strategies are used by leaders in your field. While the research will take approximately 26 to 52 weeks, your interview will only take 60 minutes.

How will my data be used?

Your interview responses will be transcribed, analyzed, and aggregated to determine the findings of the established research questions.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

This research presents minimal risk of loss of confidentiality, emotional and/or psychological distress because the interview involves questions about your leadership practices. You may also experience fatigue, boredom, or anxiety as a result.

What are the possible benefits to you?

You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

The benefits to society may include a better understanding of leadership strategies used within tourism industry. Other emerging leaders might also benefit from additional recommendations shared through this process.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. There are no alternatives to participating other than deciding not to participate.

What will participate in this research study cost you?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?

Your welfare is the primary concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be deidentified and stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during and until the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings, but the data will be reported as a group or summarized data, and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study-related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research, contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: +1(310)568-2305

E-mail: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw') at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent

You are voluntarily deciding whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered, and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

APPENDIX D

Arabic Informed Consent Form

(الملحق (ف

جامعة بيبردين

نموذج الموافقة المستنيرة

مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية #: 23-09-2256

عنوان الدراسة الرسمي: الإطار الاستراتيجي لنجاح السياحة المستدامة في مصر

الأشخاص المرخص لهم بالدراسة:

الباحث الرئيسي: ماهر عبد الوهاب

الهاتف: xx30-xxx (661) 1+

البريد الإلكتروني: maher.abdelwahab@pepperdine.edu

معلومات أساسية:

إذا وافقت على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، سيشمل المشروع ما يلي:

● الإناث اللاتي تتراوح أعمارهن بين 30 و80 سنة

● سيشمل الإجراء (الاتصال بالمشاركين باستخدام كتاب الدعوة، والموافقة المستنيرة، وجمع البيانات من خلال مقابلة منظمة، ونسخ البيانات، وتحليل البيانات، وتوثيق النتائج)

● زيارة واحدة إلزامية إما افتراضية أو شخصية

● المدة التي ستستغرقها هذه الزيارة هي 60 دقيقة بالمجمل

● هناك حد أدنى من المخاطر المرتبطة بهذه الدراسة

● لن تحصل على أي مبلغ من المال مقابل مشاركتك

● سيتم تزويدك بنسخة من نموذج الموافقة هذا

الدعوة

أنت مدعوة للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية. المعلومات الواردة في هذا النموذج ترمي إلى مساعدتك في تقرير ما إذا كنت ستشارك أم لا. إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة، الرجاء عدم التردد في طرحها.

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لماذا يُطلب منك المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية؟

نظرا" لدورك القيادي في مجال السياحة، يُطلب منك المشاركة في هذه الدراسة. تقتضي المشاركة أن يكون عمرك 30
عاما" أو أكثرولديك خبرة لا تقل عن خمس سنوات في ادارة شركة سياحة فئة ءا في تصنيف وزارة السياحة المصرية.

ما هو سبب إجراء هذا البحث؟

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فهم استراتيجيات النجاح والممارسات الفضلى المعتمدة من قبل مديري شركات السياحة التي
يوصون بها لضمان سياحة مستدامة و ناجحة في مصر.

ما الذي سيتم القيام به خلال هذه الدراسة البحثية؟

سيطلب منك إتمام مقابلة شبه منظمة لمدة 60 دقيقة, تتم إما شخصيا" أو إفتراضيا". سيطرح عليك الباحث الرئيسي سلسلة
من الأسئلة التي تهدف إلى التعرف على الاستراتيجيات القيادية المعتمدة في مجال عملك. في حين أن مدة البحث ستتراوح
ما بين 26 و 52 أسبوعا", مقابلتك سوف تستغرق 60 دقيقة فقط.

كيف سيتم استخدام بياناتي؟

سيتم نسخ ردود المقابلة الخاصة بك وتحليلها وتجميعها من أجل تحديد النتائج لأسئلة البحث المعتمدة.

ما هي المخاطر المحتملة للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية؟

يمثل هذا البحث الحد الأدنى من مخاطر فقدان السرية والإجهاد العاطفي و/أو النفسي ذلك أن أسئلة المقابلة بحد ذاتها
تتمحور حول ممارساتك القيادية. من الممكن أن تعاني أيضا" من التعب أو الملل أو القلق نتيجة لذلك.

ما هي الفوائد المحتملة لك؟

ليس من المتوقع أن تحصل على أي فائدة من المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

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ما هي الفوائد المحتملة للآخرين؟

سيسهم البحث في تحقيق فوائد للمجتمع، بما في ذلك فهم أفضل للاستراتيجيات القيادية المعتمدة في مجال السياحة المستدامة

ما هي بدائل التواجد في هذه الدراسة البحثية؟

المشاركة في هذه الدراسة طوعية. لا توجد بدائل للمشاركة بخلاف اتخاذ قرار بعدم المشاركة.

ماذا ستكلفك المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية؟

لا توجد تكلفة للمشاركة في هذا البحث.

هل سيكون هناك أي تعويض عن مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة البحثية؟

لا يوجد أي شكل من أشكال التعويض عن مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة.

ماذا يجب أن تفعل إذا واجهت أي مشكلة أثناء هذه الدراسة البحثية؟

رفاهيتك هي الشاغل الأساسي لدى كل عضو من فريق البحث. إذا واجهت أي مشكلة كنتيجة مباشرة للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فيجب عليك الاتصال فورًا بالباحث أو أحد الأشخاص المُدرجين في بداية هذا النموذج.

كيف ستتم حماية المعلومات الخاصة بك؟

سيتم اتخاذ إجراءات معقولة لحماية خصوصيتك وسرية بيانات دراستك. سيتم إلغاء تحديد البيانات وتخزينها إلكترونيا في خادم آمن لا يمكن الوصول إليه إلا من قبل فريق البحث وذلك طوال مدة الدراسة إلى حين استكمالها.

الأشخاص الوحيدون الذين سيسمح لهم بالوصول إلى سجلات البحث الخاصة بك هم الباحث الرئيسي ومجلس المراجعة المؤسسية (IRB) وأي شخص أو وكالة أو راعي آخربحسب ما تقتضيه القوانين المرعية الإجراء. قد يتم نشر نتائج هذه الدراسة في مجلات علمية أويتم تقديمها في اجتماعات علمية، إلا أن البيانات سيتم عرضها كمجموعة أو من خلال تلخيصها وسيتم الحفاظ على هويتك بسرية تامة.

ما هي حقوقك كمشارك في البحث؟

يحق لك طرح أي أسئلة تتعلق بهذا البحث والحصول على إجابات على أسئلتك سواء كان ذلك قبل الموافقة على المشاركة في الدراسة أو حتى أثنائها.

بالنسبة للأسئلة المتعلقة بالدراسة، يُرجى الاتصال بالباحث (الباحثين) المدرجة أسماؤهم في بداية هذا النموذج.

للأسئلة المتعلقة بحقوقك أو الشكاوى المتعلقة بالبحث، يرجى الاتصال بمجلس المراجعة المؤسسية:

الهاتف: +1 (310) 568-2305

البريد الإلكتروني: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

ما الذي سيحدث إذا قررت عدم المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية أو قررت التوقف عن المشاركة بمجرد أن تبدأ؟

يمكنك أن تقرر عدم المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية, كما يمكنك التوقف عن التواجد في هذه الدراسة البحثية ("الانسحاب") في أي وقت, سواء كان ذلك قبل أو أثناء أو بعد بدء البحث لأي سبب من الأسباب. القرار بعدم المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية أو بالانسحاب منها سوف لن يؤثر على علاقتك بالباحث أو بجامعة بيبردين. لن تفقد أي مزايا يحق لك الحصول عليها.

توثيق الموافقة المستنيرة

أنت تتخذ / تتخذين قرارًا طواعية بشأن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية أم لا. إن التوقيع على هذا النموذج يعني أنك (1) قد قرأت وفهمت نموذج الموافقة هذا، (2) تم شرح نموذج الموافقة لك، (3) تمت الإجابة على أسئلتك وبناء" عليه (4) قررت المشاركة في الدراسة البحثية. سيتم منحك نسخة من نموذج الموافقة هذا للاحتفاظ به.

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

Icebreaker: tell me what interested you in a career in tourism?

IQ1: Think of the single most difficult challenge the tourism industry faces today?

    a. What is that challenge?

    b. and how did you experience it?

IQ2: What strategies and best practices did you employ or what resources did you seek to overcome this particular challenge?

IQ3: In your view, what are other similar challenges that the tourism industry faces?

IQ4: What strategies or best practices did you employ, or resources did you seek to overcome these challenges?

IQ5: Are you personally aware of similar challenges that other leaders in tourism believe they face that you may not be facing?

IQ6: Are you personally aware of strategies or best practices employed or resources sought by these leaders?

IQ7: How do you define success in tourism in general, to you personally, to your company, to your nation, and globally?

IQ8: How do you measure success in tourism on the company, national, and global scale?

IQ9: What is an example of a policy or decision made that you would go back in time and redo?

IQ10: What are your recommendations for your company, the nation, and the globe, to attain sustainability and success?

IQ11: If you were to decide on behalf of the entirety of the tourism industry to create a synergistic industry, what would your recommendations be?

APPENDIX F

Arabic Interview Protocol

بروتوكول المقابلة

0. قل لي ما الذي يثير اهتمامك في مهنة السياحة؟

1. فكر في التحدي الوحيد الأكثر صعوبة الذي تواجهه صناعة السياحة اليوم؟ ما هو هذا التحدي وكيف كان بالنسبة
لك؟

2. من وجهة نظرك، ما هي التحديات الأخرى المماثلة التي يواجهها قطاع السياحة؟

3. هل أنت على دراية شخصية بالتحديات المماثلة التي يعتقد قادة السياحة الآخرون أنهم يواجهونها والتي قد لا
تواجهها؟

4. ما هي الاستراتيجيات وأفضل الممارسات التي استخدمتها، أو ما هي الموارد التي سعيت إليها للتغلب على هذا
التحدي على وجه التحديد؟

5. ما هي الاستراتيجيات أو أفضل الممارسات التي استخدمتها، أو الموارد التي سعيت إليها للتغلب على هذه
التحديات؟

6. هل أنت على دراية شخصية بالاستراتيجيات أو أفضل الممارسات المستخدمة من قادة السياحة الآخرون أو
الموارد التي تسعى إلى تنفيذه عالميا.

7. كيف تُعرّف النجاح في السياحة بشكل عام، بالنسبة لك شخصيًا، ولشركتك، ولوطنك، وعلى الصعيد العالمي؟

8. كيف تقيس النجاح في السياحة على مستوى الشركة والمستوى الوطني والعالمي؟

9. هل يمكنك أن تعطي مثال على سياسة أو قرار تم اتخاذه في الماضي، وتود أن يعود الزمن إلى الوراء وإعادة تفعيله؟

10. ما هي توصياتك لشركتك ووطنك والعالم لتحقيق الاستدامة والنجاح؟

11. إذا كنت ستقرر نيابة عن صناعة السياحة بأكملها إنشاء صناعة متناغمة، فماذا ستكون توصياتك؟

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Certification

APPENDIX H

Pepperdine University IRB Approval Notice

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: January 23, 2024

Protocol Investigator Name: Maher Abdelwahab

Protocol #: 23-09-2256

Project Title: Strategic Framework for Successful Sustainable Tourism in Egypt

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Maher Abdelwahab:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research